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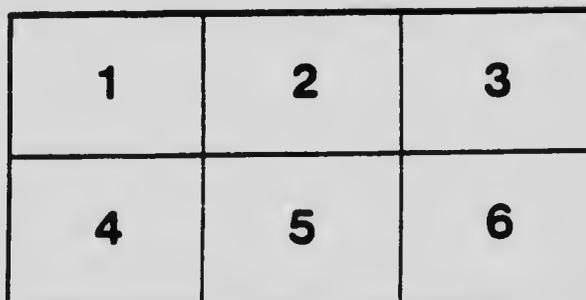
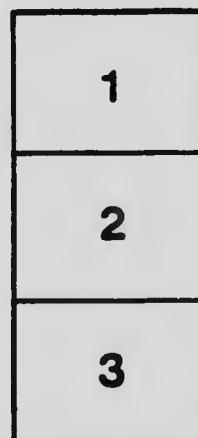
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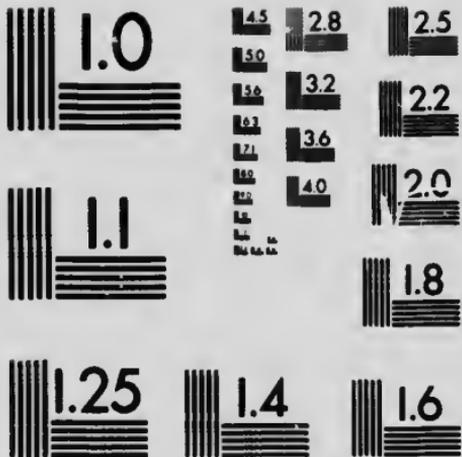
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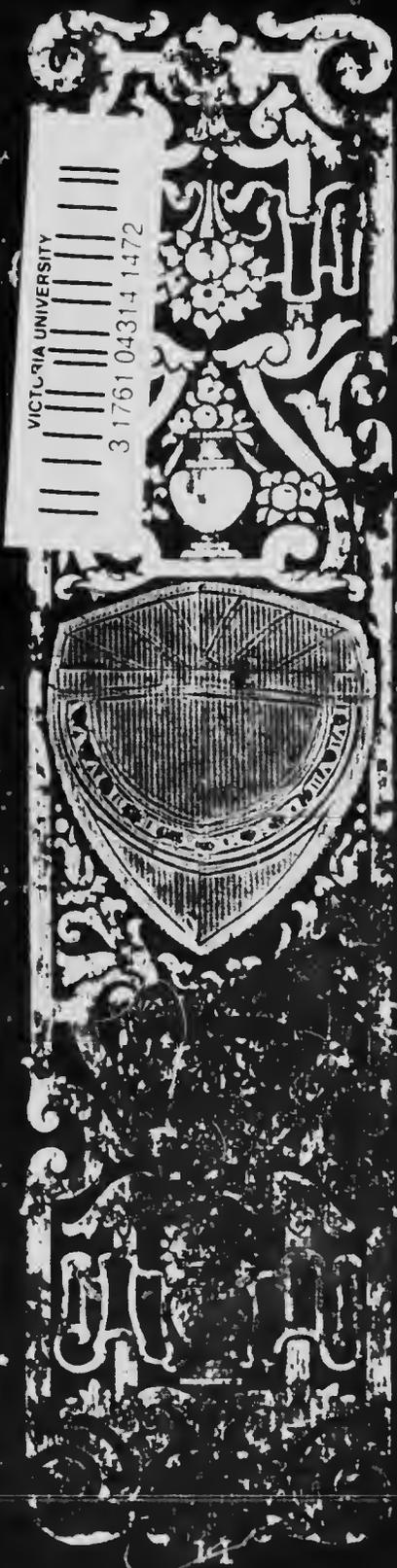
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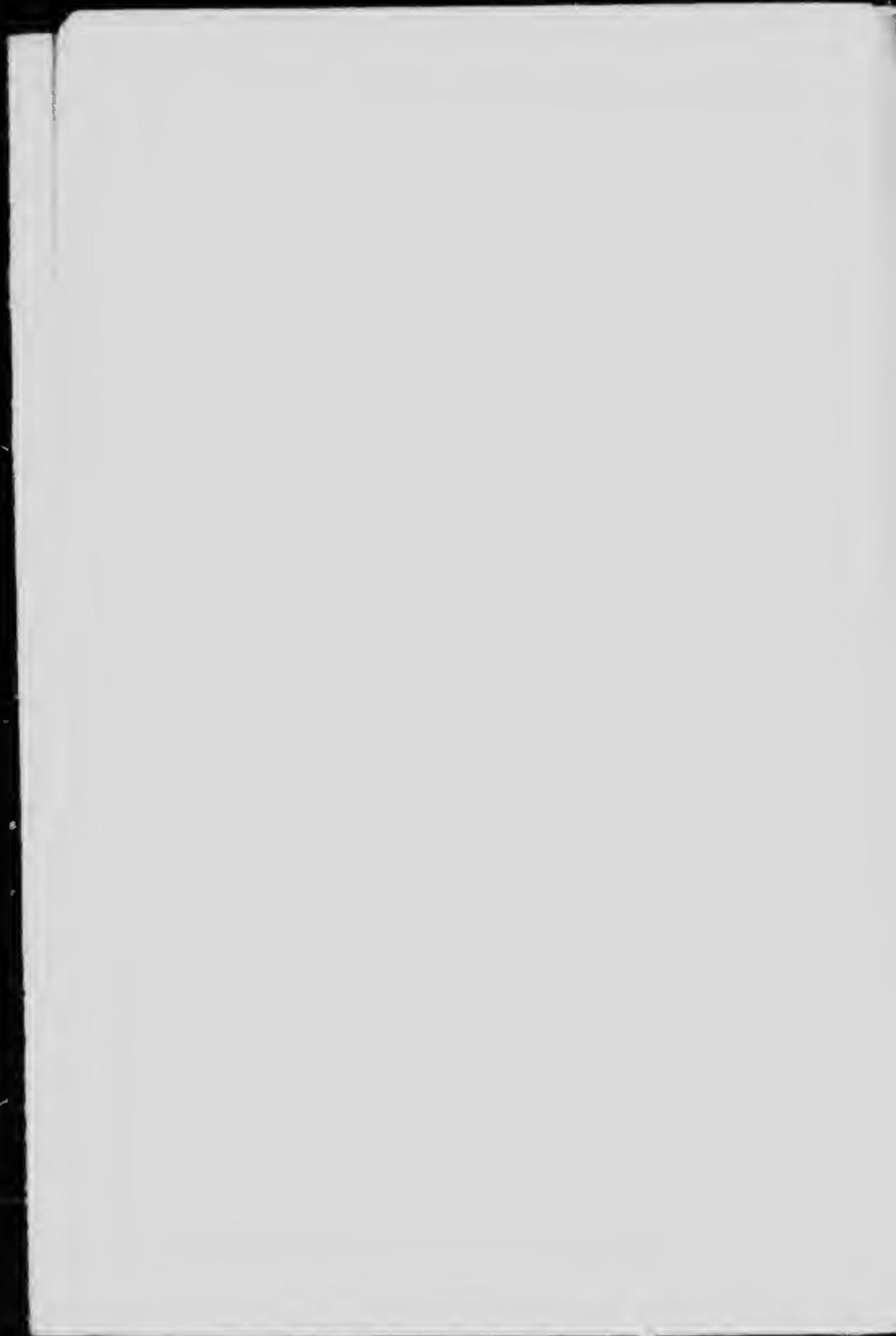


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GROWTH

GRAHAM TRAVERS



GROWTH

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MONA MACLEAN, MEDICAL STUDENT

FELLOW TRAVELLERS

WINDYHAUGH

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

GROWTH

A NOVEL

BY GRAHAM TRAVERS

(MARGARET TODD, M.D.)

AUTHOR OF 'MONA MACLEAN,' ETC.

"Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,"
Said the South to the North,
"That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,
"While affirming of God 'He is certainly there,'"
Said the South to the North."

TORONTO
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1907

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CONTENTS

PART I

CHAP.	PAGE
I. BEGINNINGS	1
II. THE BIG DOCTOR	10
III. THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY	20
IV. A DISCIPLINE CASE	23
V. AFTER THE MEETING	29
VI. IT'S AN ILL WIND—	34
VII. <i>NON DOLET, PÆTE</i>	43
VIII. LETTERS	51
IX. A BRAG AND CHALLENGE	56
X. THE SENIOR DEACON	66
XI. AN EVENING PARTY	71
XII. DUDDINGSTON	78
XIII. FAIRYLAND	83
XIV. THE NEXT DAY	88
XV. LANDMARKS	93
XVI. BEWITCHED	99

PART II

XVII. A SUMMONS	109
XVIII. SISTERS	116
XIX. THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT	123
XX. THE DAWN OF SPRING	130
XXI. MANY WATERS	140

CHAP.	PAGE
XXII. A FLASH-LIGHT	144
XXIII. GROWTH	151
XXIV. ST. FRANCIS	158
XXV. THE CONVENT	166
XXVI. <i>TEVEBRAE</i>	171
XXVII. EASTERTIDE	174
XXVIII. ANOTHER SUMMONS	180
XXIX. FROM THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES	185
XXX. NEW LINKS	194
XXXI. THE BLOW FALLS	201

PART III

XXXII. THE BORDER COUNTRY	207
XXXIII. WOODBINE	216
XXXIV. AFTER THE PLAY	223
XXXV. SURGEON SQUARE	228
XXXVI. THE TERROR BY NIGHT	236
XXXVII. QUESTIONINGS	244
XXXVIII. A TEMPERATURE	253
XXXIX. A PHOTOGRAPH	259
XL. CRACKING THE EGG-SHELL	266
XLI. MUIRSIDE	271
XLII. A FALSE START	274

PART IV

XLIII. MOTHER CHURCH	285
XLIV. PROS AND CONS	293
XLV. THE DEACONS	303
XLVI. IN THE GLEN	310
XLVII. OPEN SESAME !	320
XLVIII. GOING HOME	331

CONTENTS

vii

PAGE	CHAP.	PAGE
144	XLIX. TEMPTATION	334
151	L. ENQUIRIES	342
158	LI. FOLLOWING FEARLESSLY	350

PART V

174	LII. THE JOURNEY	359
180	LIII. THE VALLEY OF TREE FERN	364
185	LIV. THE SACRED FOREST	371
194	LV. THE VIA DOLOROSA	380
201	LVI. THE RETURN	383
	LVII. 'FACING THE MUSIC'	392
	LVIII. SUNRISE	399
207	LIX. THE PARTING OF THE WAYS	407

EPILOGUE

	LX. FIFTEEN YEARS LATER	414
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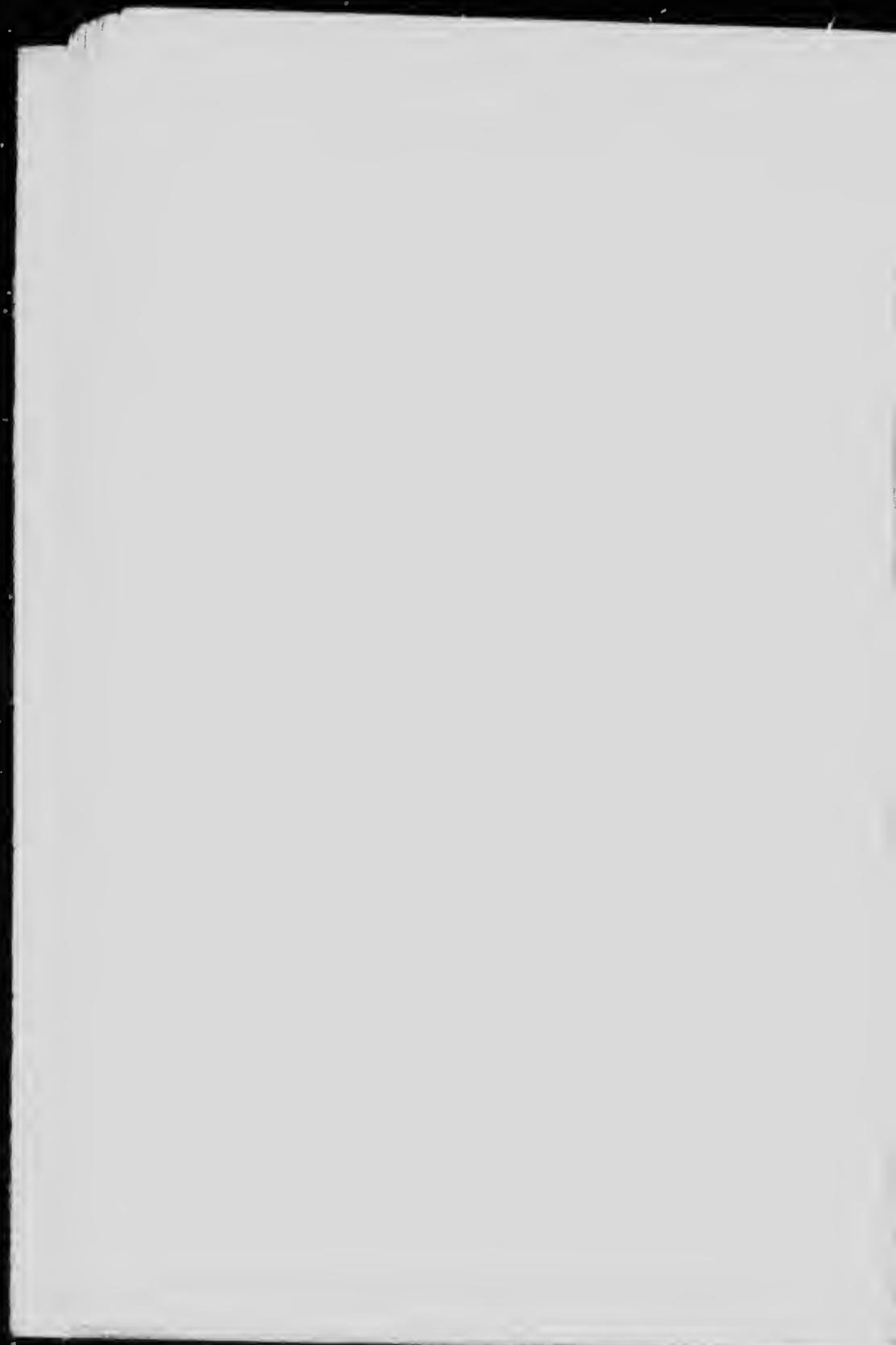
166
171
174
180
185
194
201

207
216
223
228
236
244
253
259
266
271
274

285
293
303
310
320
331



PART I



GROWTH

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

THE chapel hall had been scoured till it shone, and the great blazing fire threw a pool of light upon the floor. Outside the rain dripped drearily from the railings, and night had but deepened the leaden gloom of the day. Only at long intervals did one hear the ring of a footstep on the flint or the rattle of a wheel over the cobbled street.

But the firelight within was not the only token of comfort and cheer. Here, for an hour or two at least, there bloomed the very flower of good fellowship. The Young Men's Debating Society, like most other human institutions, had a habit of passing through successive seasons of growth, languishment, and seeming death. On the night my story opens, while the autumn wind sobbed in the chimney, and made dismal music among the rafters of the great chapel overhead, the Society was putting forth a rich promise of spring.

There is, of course, an unfailing spring which comes to the intellectual world in October as surely as the celandine and primroses crop out in the meadows in March. Who that has lived in a university town as the autumn days draw in has not felt the throb of new life, has not heard, as it were, the very rise of the sap? But something more than that unfailing spring had come to our Society. Some ardent spirit had risen upon it of late, and had called all its forces into activity and conflict.

So the meeting was more representative than such gatherings are wont to be. There were students from all the faculties of the University, first and second year's men, of course, for the most part; there were clerks, tradesmen, teachers, artisans, an accountant or two, and a number who did

not lend themselves to obvious classification. It must have been an ardent spirit indeed that could hold together elements so diverse as these.

For, if diverse in the eyes of their fellow-men, how much more so were they in their own? Was not life with all its possibilities before them? A future Spurgeon, a Livingstone, a Gladstone, may have sat in that homely room,—nay, why put bounds to our dreams? The world produced a Shakespeare once. Why not again?

Oh, yes; of course it was pathetic and *borné* and provincial, that little assembly; so much youth and dogmatism and shyness, ambitions and dreams so far out of touch with sober probabilities. But after all it was alive, and life is the thing that counts.

The discussion of the evening had been provoked by a recent heresy hunt in the Midlands, and the subject was Religious Toleration. Of course feeling ran high, and there was no lack of speakers. One man had vague reminiscences to bring forward of history, learned—not long since—at school; another was fain to unburden himself of gleanings from Matthew Arnold and Sydney Smith; a third was moved by his own honest doubts or religious experiences; and a fourth thought this a good opportunity to show the others what a clever fellow he was. In some respects, indeed, the meeting was not devoid of points in common with a session of the rulers of the land.

‘The English language can only mean one thing,’ protested the dour Scotsman who represented the Conservative side. ‘Pull one stick out of the bundle, and what becomes of all the rest?’ But the sympathy of the meeting was mainly with the breezier spirit from beyond the Tweed, who read a paper that was quoted years after by those who heard it.

‘Shall we learn from the pages of Channing, dead, and close our ears to the voice of James Martineau in the flesh? Shall we stretch out the right hand of fellowship to Fénelon across the gloomy river, and turn our back on John Henry Newman who is still by our side?’

‘Well said!’ cried a lad in a quiet corner, and blushed to find that his unconventional enthusiasm had drawn upon him the attention of the meeting.

‘Speak, man, speak!’ said his neighbours in an encouraging whisper, when the rare pauses fell in the discussion; but, although from time to time his cheek flushed and his breath

came fast, he could not be prevailed upon to break silence again.

The meeting broke up in a storm of conversation and friendly chaff. 'Ah, Dobbs, old man, you're beaten. No use trying to defend the indefensible!'

'Wait a bit!' retorted Dobbs hotly. 'Wait a bit! That's all I've got to say. Easy work trying to pull down the dykes. Wait till you try to build them up again with the river in spate! Give me twenty years, that is all I ask.'

'That was the argument to use, of course,' said the genial president, with the little air of academic superiority that seemed to him an essential part of his office. 'And you worked it for all it was worth. Upon my word you nearly made me swither. Who are the new fellows?' He turned instinctively for information to a little man with red hair.

'The one who shouted out like that is an Arts student—Dugald Dalgleish. Came up last week. I saw him in church last night, and asked him home to supper.'

'Trust you, Menzies! You have a real lynx eye for the angel unawares. What like is he?'

'Shy chap, but with opinions of his own and no mistake. Nuts on Church History.'

'He can talk, then?'

'Rather—when you get him roused. At first he sits as flat as a pin-cushion. "That's true enough," says he, as you ram in your last pin, "but on the other hand——" And then you find you're in for it. You find——'

'The pins returned to your own bosom! That's the sort of thing we want. Is he good for a paper, do you think? The syllabus isn't quite full. I wonder if he'd have the sense to talk about what he knows? That's the *one way to work* a Society like this.' The president seated himself on the high table, and dangled a muddy boot with fine unconsciousness. 'I don't want to be personal, but if anybody is going to read up his Froude and his Freeman for the sake of treating us to an essay on the Stuart dynasty, it's no go, you know. That's not what brings fellows out on a night like this.'

Dobbs chuckled. Had he been an irreligious young man one might have said that he sneered. He was not ungenerous, but the impulsive testimony of the newcomer to the eloquence of his opponent had not been lost upon him. A mere boy like that! 'Try him!' he said. 'Seeing he

only came last week, he'll be for reading us a paper on Edinburgh!

Everybody laughed; but human judgments are fallible things, and it did just happen that at that moment Dalglish might have told them something about Edinburgh worth listening to. His long legs had carried him up to Princes Street while other men were chatting and donning their overcoats, and he stood there now, forgetful of himself and of the present.

The rain had ceased, and far up behind the Castle the clouds had made a ragged window for the moon. The laughter of her light was in the boy's eyes, and the dance of the wind in his veins. This was Edinburgh indeed. The fine hotels and monuments had no place in the picture for him, as he gazed up at the grand old battlements and the many-tiered lights of the 'lands' along the ridge. Even the terraced gardens slipped away from his eyes, and he saw the gleam of stagnant water through the sedge and rushes of the Nor' Loch. Brave little Edinburgh, towering high upon her tiny foothold, not dreaming yet of gaily spanning the valleys that were her defence. How he had loved to picture her as she was in the good old days! And now, on this wild night, the past was all alive; the air was full of ghosts; the thrill of vague rumour was in the boy's ears. That sound of far-off tumult—did it come from the Kirk-o'-Field? He could almost have stopped a hurried passer-by to ask whether Darnley had been murdered indeed.

'Star-gazing?' said a sociable voice, and Dalglish found himself face to face with a man who had made some facetious remarks at the meeting, a man whom the others called Jones. There was no temptation to ask *him* about Darnley.

'I was wondering whether it was worth while to go for a walk.'

'Walk? It's walk enough for most of us to get home on a night like this. But it's all new to you, I suppose.'

Dalglish laughed. 'I seem to have known it all my life.'

'Ah, you take the *Nil admirari* line. I never was one of the *blasé* people myself. Bet you never saw finer shops.'

'I haven't seen these yet.'

'Nor heard a better sermon than the one last night.'

'It was ripping,' said Dalglish, glad to find some kind of common denominator, 'and everybody is most awfully kind.'

'Menzies took you home, I saw. It's our principle to be hospitable, you know. And besides, when a man has sisters, he owes a duty to them—and to posterity.'

Dalgleish made no reply.

'You gave us all the slip. In another minute the president would have asked you to read a paper.'

'Nonsense. Didn't Thatcher score?'

'And doesn't he enjoy scoring? He's so touchingly transparent about it. Did you ever think how many of our human institutions would come to an end if it wasn't for the love of self-advertisement?'

Dalgleish felt unaccountably chilled. 'I don't agree with you,' he said suddenly, with conviction. 'Thatcher said the thing he meant. He would have been just the same if he had felt the whole room was against him.'

'Do you know him?'

'No. My father succeeded his in the pastorate at Muir-side.'

'So you seem to have known him all your life too, I suppose? Well, far be it from me to rob you of your little illusions.'

'Good 'ght,' said Dalgleish curtly. He could think of nothing else to say. He had not come to Edinburgh for the sake of talk like this, and besides he had his college work to do for to-morrow.

His homeward way led him in the direction of that Kirk-o'-Field of which he had been dreaming, though to most of us the neighbourhood would have seemed commonplace and prosaic enough. The street was narrow and noisy, and the 'common stair' was recovering rapidly from its Saturday cleaning. The smell of moisture and bathbrick and whitening had definitely given place once again to the more familiar smell of humanity and ill-cooked dinners—and common stair.

Dalgleish's room on the second floor, however, did not strike him as uninviting. A warm gleam of firelight shone on the supper tray, emphasizing, as is the pleasant way of firelight, the comforts of the room, and throwing its shortcomings into warm, suggestive shadow.

His landlady met him on the threshold. 'Eh, Mr. Dalgleish, is that you? And me never got my dress changed yet!'

The fact was obvious enough, but the kindness of her face went far to atone for any deficiencies. She lighted the gas,

and fussed over her new lodger in a motherly way; her long experience had given her a mingled reverence and contempt for these young college men, so godlike in their attainments and yet so infantine!

'Bide a wee, bide a wee!' she protested, as he took his books from the shelf. 'Ye'll no can read ere ye've had your supper. An' ye maun see and tak' aff thae wet boots. It's an awfu' nicht.'

'It's grand,' said Dalglish tersely; but he pulled off his boots at her bidding. She looked with appreciation at the new hand-knitted socks. Clearly no darning would be required of her yet awhile.

'What like meeting was it?' she asked, pausing with her hand on the door.

'Oh, the meeting was all right.'

'Who would be speaking?'

He opened his Euclid in self-defence. 'H'm—Thatcher,' he said, '—and Dobbs.'

'Thatcher! My word, you were in luck! He has a rael gift, has Mr. Thatcher. They say two or three churches has their eye on him already.'

He drew down his brows as if the problem in his book was a severe one, so she left the room, returning after some delay with a jug of milk and a great steaming bowl of porridge.

'Ay,' she said reflectively. '*He'll* make his mark. What was he on?'

'Toleration.' Dalglish drew his porridge bowl suggestively towards him. There are drawbacks to lodging with a 'sister in the Lord.'

'Eh, it's a mighty subject yon! The president would be there?—Mr. Scrymgeour?'

'Yes.'

'A fine, fair-spoken, gentlemanly young man. Was onybody speaking to you?'

'I hurried away. I've no end of reading to do.'

'Weel, I'll no detain ye,' she said affably, as if the suggestion had come entirely from herself; but she waited for him to taste the porridge. 'I hope they're to your liking?'

'Yes, thank you,' he answered, rather doubtfully. 'I think I'd rather have more salt, please, another time, and——' but he had not the courage to remark on the lumps.

'Eh, my word! I believe I did forget the saut again. I've been that throng. Ye ken'—she paused again at the

door, moved the handle irresolutely, and then said half shyly, with a touch of awe in her voice, 'he's cliver, is Mr. Thatcher, but whiles I think Mr. Dobbs has mair o' the Speerit. Onyw'y he's the safer man.'

Left alone, Dalgleish made short work of his supper, and then seated himself with his books at the other end of the table. It was no easy matter to focus his thoughts on a few pages of print and illegible manuscript, when all life was clamouring for his attention. How could he shut out the castles in the air that crowded round him? And the study, the application, he could achieve to-night at the best were such a grain of sand in the mountain of study and application that would be required of him.

Opening his note-book at random, he wrote four lines slowly and carefully as if he were trying to brand them into his soul,—

'The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.'

He read the quatrain aloud in a fine resonant voice, and then proceeded to efface it from his note-book as carefully as if it had been the record of a crime.

'Were ye wanting anything?'

His landlady was peeping round the door, attired in a déshabille even more unconventional than before.

'No—thanks.'

'Ye'll no be that late?'

'No—no. I say—Miss Brown! I oft read aloud, you know. It's a way of mine.'

'Ay, ay! Nae doubt I'll get used to your ways.'

He worked valiantly after that—worked till his head fell on his arm, and he awoke with a start to the remembrance of an anxious mother and sister looking out for news of him. As he opened the neat new writing-case that formed part of his outfit in life, he blushed to think of all he had meant to say.

'MY DEAR GRIZEL,—I am dog-tired, and have still to do some Greek. I find the Humanity and Mathematics quite easy so far, and I mean to start Rhetoric. Most of the fellows leave it till their third year, but I simply can't get on without it. Who on earth is or was Matthew Arnold? I went to

Fraser's opening lecture. He's immense,—stirs you up to your foundations and turns you inside out. You feel as if you had all the wisdom of the universe in your notebook, but—like the W. of the U.—it's a bit difficult to unravel in cold blood.

'The church was crowded last night. I felt like a lost atom, but some one was struck by my engaging appearance, and asked me home to supper. My lodgings are fairly clean—in a superficial way. Landlady less so, but unquestionably pious.—Your affectionate brother,
D. D.'

On the whole, for sheer solid information, it was certainly not *below* the average of those letters so eagerly longed for by mothers and sisters at home!

With a sense of duty done, Daigleish put on his cap, and ran down to the letter-box at the corner. A great stillness had fallen on everything. The wind had given place to a sudden calm, and the moon cast long black shadows in the narrow deserted street. He had become so used already to the noise and stir of town life that the old familiar silence had gained a new meaning for him. All the world, it seemed, was asleep, and as he re-entered the doorway he almost started to see a woman ascending the stair in front of him. She was young—to judge by her step—and even in that dim light there was something in the pose of her figure that pleased him. His heart beat a trifle quicker. What was she doing alone at this hour of the night? And was she frightened—as frightened she well might be—to hear a man's step behind her on that lonely stair? If she was, she did not show it. She did not quicken her step, and she held herself as one who feels the world a home. Steadily and sedately she went on to the second floor, and paused at the door opposite his. He could catch a glimpse of her face now in the moonlight if he tried. But no. The door seemed to open and shut in a moment: she was gone, and he stood on the landing alone.

Who was she? What was she? The night was very late. This stair was no abode of gentlefolk, yet gentle she seemed to him. His landlady had long since gone to bed; but, even if he had met her in the house as he entered, he would have asked no questions. The mystery pleased him. Why should he be in a hurry to work out the equation? How dull it would be to know that *x* was a superior shop-girl, or a teacher, or a good unselfish daughter. He was well

BEGINNINGS

9

content that x should equal an unknown quantity. Did it not represent the whole vague charm of fair young womanhood?

And so he fell asleep in his dingy box-bed, but life wrapped him round—as full of promise as an orchard in spring.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG DOCTOR

'EH, Mr. Dagleish, it's a gran' thing to be kept straight without getting narrow.'

Dagleish seated himself on the table, and a humorous smile softened his keen young face. 'We agree as to the principle; the question is with regard to its application.'

'That's true,' assented his landlady with quick comprehension; 'but with an open Bible before us——'

'Oh, an open Bible! My dear Miss Brown——' the boyish smile robbed the words of all offensiveness—'if you had lived in the days of the Reformation, you would have pronounced Luther a dangerous heretic, you'd have been afraid to look at an "open Bible," you'd have clung to your priests.'

'Me cling to a priest!'

Dagleish sighed and wished women were less literal. It was not the first time a woman's quick grasp of a metaphor has made a man think her too literal.

'And as to the "open Bible,"—as Thatcher was saying only last night—it is open to more ends than one: we put things in, as well as take them out.' He paused and went on with a sense of daring, 'We all find in the Bible what we take there.'

'And *that's false!*' she protested indignantly, 'Mr. Thatcher or no Mr. Thatcher,—for many's the time we go to our Bibles, and find, thank God, the vera opposite o' what we took there.'

It was an answer that he might have been proud of making himself a short time before, but he was too young to admit that she had 'scored.' It was easier to change the subject.

It will be seen that, as usually happens in such cases, the importunate one had gained her point. Dagleish no longer kept his landlady at arm's length. Silent as a rule, he was a

great talker when the mood was on him, and at such times any listener was better than none. Of course he could not but feel a great deal older and wiser than the woman who made his bed and cooked his food; and her occasional shrewd answers—based on long experience of life and the fine old Scottish habit of sharpening her wits on every sermon that came her way—struck him only as a grown man is struck by the precocious quickness of a child. In justice to him it must be admitted that she made no attempt to conceal her limitations. She was one of those who are apt to mistake their defects for their qualities.

'I didna see you at the prayer-meeting,' she remarked significantly.

'You went, then?'

'I did that. I've seen a better turn-out. Auld Mr. Dewar was awfu' long-winded as usual. He aye prays that we may cast our idols to the moles an' to the bats. He's that leeteral for the maist pairt that I wonner whiles if he has ony clear notion himsel' o' what he'd be at. I think the Pastor was fair irritated—he's a wee thing quick i' the temper, ye ken, is Mr. Atherley—for he said he hoped some of the *younger* brethren would come forward.'

'Well?'

'So young Mr. Menzies engaged in prayer. Ye'll ken him, maybe, wi' the red heid?'

'Yes, I know him. He took me home to supper one night.'

'Did he though? Weel, puir lad, between you and me, he was that nervous it was just a pain to himsel' an' to a'body that heard. Nae doubt he'll improve. It's a mighty ordeal the first extempore prayer in public. You niver can tell frae that if a body has the gift or no. Then we'd a rael fine prayer frae Mr. Dobbs.'

'Oh, Dobbs!' said Dalgleish indifferently. 'Was Thatcher there?'

Miss Brown shook her head. 'I doubt he's no juist sae keen as he was about the prayer-meeting.'

'He can't be keen about everything.'

'It's an ill business,' she said severely, 'when a meenister—i' the making, as it were—isna keen about prayer. Ony-w'y,' she added after a pause, 'he wasna there, an' Miss Dawson's best bonnet thrown away.'

'Thrown away?'

'In a manner o' speaking.' Miss Brown was not so daring as to formulate even in her own mind a wish that men were less literal. 'It's no vera like she put it on to amuse the like o' auld Mistress Dobbs.'

Dalgleish looked rather unhappy. He had an instinctive aversion to talk of this kind. The friendly interest died out of his face, and he slipped from the table. 'I thought it was the correct thing to wear your best bonnet to meeting,' he said, with an amiable wish to 'let her down gently.'

'On a week night i' November? My word! If it was March now, an' a' thing gey far through—— It's queer,' she spoke in a disinterested way, as if she were making a deliberate original contribution to Natural History—'it's queer how some men notice the like o' that an' some men don't. My last lodger now——'

But her former lodgers were the subject at which Dalgleish positively drew the line.

'So you said,' he interposed, and catching up his cap, he rattled down the long stair.

There was a famous bookshop opposite the University, and thither he made his way in the hope that the bookseller would have obtained the second-hand copy of a volume he wanted. Yes, there it was, but unfortunately it was so second-hand that for some minutes he stood turning over the leaves and wondering whether he could not better serve the interests of economy by buying a new one. While he hesitated a mesmeric hand fell on his shoulder. 'Well, are you grasping the hand of a friend or measuring the strength of a foe?'

Dalgleish turned and met Thatcher's enquiring glance. He thrilled with pride to think that the great man should have recognized him. For one moment he stammered, and then to his relief the ready answer came. 'I suppose only time will show. As a matter of fact, I was wondering whether I should take this old thing or buy a new one.'

Thatcher took the book with the little air of decisiveness that was characteristic of him. In the twinkling of an eye he had weighed the title, the binding, and the buyer. 'I should take it,' he said quietly, 'it will serve your turn: it isn't epoch-making—not even "pure crude fact——"' Midway in the quotation he stopped with a sudden sense of its inappropriateness.

Appropriate or not, it was wasted on Dalgleish. He clapped the money down on the counter and turned to his companion.

His attitude was not unlike that of an intelligent dog who waits to see whether he may follow his master or not.

'Care to come my way? Or stay——' Used as he was to veneration, Thatcher was touched by the lad's eagerness. 'Come in and see me this evening, if you are not specially busy. You know where I live? You and I ought to see something of each other, having both spent our childhood, so to speak, in that quaint chapel at Muirside.' He laughed. 'I remember how, after we left, people wrote to my father to complain of the want of rigorous Calvinism in your father's teaching. I suppose *you* heard the other side of the question.'

Dagleish shook his head. 'I was only a very small kid. You see my father has been dead for years. But I always felt a sort of proud proprietorship in your laurels.'

'Nice of you! Do you ever go down to Muirside now?'

'Not to the actual town. My mother and sister have a cottage in that part of the country.'

'Really? You must tell me all about it. I shall expect you this evening.'

In the University Dagleish was still an unconnected atom. In the chapel he had been received as the member of an organism. I am not concerned to deny that there were different social circles, not to say cliques, in the chapel, but as yet Dagleish knew nothing of this. Attractive youth is a *passé-partout*. Everyone looked on him with friendly eyes, and in this case 'everyone' meant a congregation more representative than one would readily find now-a days.

There were a few gentlefolk of the old school whose forbears in an age of faith had thought it no shame to connect themselves with an unfashionable sect which seemed to be the main custodian of the truth; there were intellectual men and artists who no longer sought in the chapel the spiritual temple which their fathers had found there, but who were glad to retain in it a modest *pied-à-terre* which linked them with the past. These, of course, were not the useful working members of the community; some of them attended its services just often enough to keep their names on the roll; but they gave it an atmosphere, a distinction, which some at least of the others knew how to value. Then came the merchants, the bankers, the lawyers, who might or might not be office-bearers; and so on down to the lowest limit of the great middle class, with a fringe of 'poor' at the bottom

scarcely larger than the aristocratic fringe at the top. Surely it was no small privilege for a country lad to be welcomed on trust into a world like this.

And the country lad enjoyed every bit of it, but for him the real thrill of life arose from the ranks of eager growing young men, and chief among these was Thatcher.

So all that day Dalgleish went about with the aspect of a man who has an object in life. He heard himself giving utterance to daring original opinions, and he was invited to enter farther and farther into that wonderful mind,—a mind of which as yet he had only stood on the threshold.

Are any talks so brilliant as those which the disciple holds with his master in anticipation of the actual meeting? What quick repartee they display, what sympathy, what marvellous insight into the working of another mind! How pale and trivial the reality is apt to be in comparison! The idol so often refuses to mount his pedestal: he wants to come down and play with the rest of us, like Murillo's glorious Baby in the Pitti Gallery.

In the first place, Thatcher was not alone; and for one moment—only one—a shade of surprise crossed his face, suggesting that he had forgotten all about his invitation to Dalgleish. If so, he recalled it directly, and the warmth of his manner made up for the momentary chill.

He was standing with his back to the fire, and had apparently been talking eagerly to a big muscular man, who sat in a roomy arm-chair. Dalgleish was struck by the contrast between the two. 'Mind and Matter,' he thought, as he glanced from one to the other, but he was in no mood to judge the intruder fairly. It would have been truer to say that Thatcher looked like a greyhound, his friend like a big St. Bernard.

'This is Dalgleish, a new man,' said Thatcher. 'Dr. Heriot.'

'A colleague of mine?' The doctor smiled and held out a big warm hand. He had one of those smiles that dawn slowly, rather like an infant's, and bring sunshine where they come.

Dalgleish was unconscious of the sunshine. He belonged to a different solar system. 'Arts,' he responded shortly.

'Mr. Dalgleish,' said Thatcher gravely, 'is another of the brave men who contemplate entering the nonconformist ministry.'

'It is a great work,' said the doctor doubtfully, as if wondering in what spirit to take a remark that might be profound and might be so frivolous. '*The cure of souls.* Yet in our profession one is tempted sometimes to think——'

He paused. Clearly he was not one of those to whom the expression of their thoughts comes easy.

'I know,' said Thatcher. 'You are tempted sometimes to think what a comfort it must be to have the discovery of your mistakes postponed till the Great Day.' He spoke seriously, even solemnly. 'You think your mistakes go before to judgment, and ours follow after. I quite see the point of view.'

The slow smile betokened appreciation of Thatcher's gift of utterance. 'It's a mistaken point of view,' the doctor hastened to say apologetically. 'Your responsibility is undoubtedly the greater. One can only say that—mind and body act and interact so constantly—the great brow was furrowed up with thought, but the sentence hung fire—'that each profession encroaches a good deal—on the domain of the other.'

Thatcher nodded quickly. 'It's a mistaken point of view,' he said, 'on much lower ground than that. "*The cure of souls.*" Some of us contrive to let that sit pretty lightly on us now-a-days; but take it from the worldly point of view as a mere profession. We've no Church behind us, we Non-conformists, no mystic office concealing the homunculus it enshrouds, no mighty system of which we are the mere exponents. None of that. Each of us has just to throw the frail, human personality into a sea of ruthless and criticism, a sea of clashing views and conflicting claims.' Thatcher was dropping into his debating society manner; but he pulled himself up.

'Just take a modern city dissenting church,—was there ever so typical a microcosm? There are the old folks who want the old customs and the old gospel, and, while you keep them in mind, you see a smile pass between two of the clever young men, or clever young women, in the pews—a kindly smile enough, it may be—tolerant. Or a pair of eyebrows go up in genuine surprise, and you wonder what in the world you have said wrong now. Was it that mention of King David as the author of the twenty-third Psalm, or a reference to the days of creation, or have you merely perpetrated a sentence that will not construe? I've seen it happen, and I've seen

Atherley's face flush. Worse, I've raised my eyebrows myself, God forgive me; and as for Dalglish here——'

Dalglish was leaning forward, his soul in his eyes. He had been carried away into a memory-world of his own. 'No,' he said almost fiercely. 'With all my sins, I haven't that on my soul.'

A moment later he realised the ungraciousness of the words, and wondering what the others must think of him, he hastened on,—

'When all is said, you would not wish to escape criticism.'

Thatcher bowed with an odd humorous smile. 'True, O King,' he said, 'I would not wish to escape criticism. I mention its existence as one of the things that make the dissenting ministry the grandest sphere of work in the world.'

An expression of relief overspread the doctor's honest face. 'Come, that's better,' he said, as though he felt a patient's pulse respond to a stimulant. He never talked picturesquely himself, and he didn't quite know how it was done. His life was a very busy one, and thinking on abstract subjects had to be wedged into odd minutes. He wished Thatcher would talk a little more slowly, and give him time to debate a point or ask a question here and there. It was all so interesting and new to him; but one might as well try to analyze the water of Niagara as it leaps over the cliff.

So he only said lamely, 'I'm a Churchman myself, an Anglican; but it just shows how different things look from the outside. I had rather thought of you nonconformist preachers as each a little pope in his own domain.'

Thatcher nodded again. 'That's all very well, as long as you feel like a pope and are treated like a pope. I suppose you never thought out for yourself the history of one of our big churches. A man of spiritual insight begins to preach. He attracts clever young men, who come any distance to hear him. They make money, marry, settle down, and their children swell the roll of membership. Probably they outgrow the church and build a new one. You have an immense congregation held together by one slender thread of personal power or charm.'

'And then?'

'He dies perhaps, or worse, far worse, he loses that little gift of feeling or of expressing himself so as to draw the crowd. In the first case a new man has to be found. But in either case, will the mature men of the world, or the lads

of a newer age, continue to dance to the piping? The situation has its possibilities, has it not?’

The doctor's brow was furrowed more deeply than ever, and his smile seemed to come from very far away. ‘Yet your nonconformist principles are so strong—you don't admit a flaw in the system?’

‘There are heaps of flaws in the system, but the hardships I speak of are no flaw. If a man deserves squashing, he ought to be squashed. Your plan—the plan of the party to which you belong—is to bolster him up, a nonentity, a simulacrum, a sacrament-grinding machine.’

The doctor winced.

‘Forgive me,’ said Thatcher, ‘I shouldn't have said that to you.’

‘I have nothing to forgive. You have been talking quite fairly. Of course you don't expect me to share your point of view.’ The very simplicity and slowness of the speaker lent a curious dignity to his manner. Hitherto he had seemed deprecating, apologetic, uncertain. He spoke now as one who has a right to pronounce a judgment.

‘And in any case,’ flashed out Dagleish, ‘we are only the advance guard. It's got to come. You can't check the tendency of the age. We have taken the plunge——’

The doctor rose to go, smiling more readily this time.

‘I heard the other day of a woman,’ he said, ‘—and I only repeat the story because I hope it isn't true—who committed suicide because she was convinced she was condemned eternally. Good-night.’

Thatcher went with him to the door. ‘Good-night,’ he said. ‘I shall never forget your goodness.’

‘Well, old man, glad to see you,’ he said cheerily, as he re-entered the room. ‘I thought I should be alone, but Dr. Heriot kindly looked in as he was passing. He has just done a very serious operation on one of my Sunday scholars.’

‘Is he clever?’

‘He is one of our rising men.’ Thatcher hesitated. ‘His wife died suddenly some years ago, leaving him one little girl. Since then he has worked like a Trojan—fees or no fees.’

‘I nearly fell asleep in the middle of every one of his sentences.’ The boy's admiring glance implied that the big doctor's peculiarities had been thrown into very high relief that evening.

'Till my wild talk woke you up? I had been reading somebody's views on the nonconformist ministry as an easy way to rise in life. You know the "meenister" the writer had in mind—the good old oleaginous type, equally sure of this world and of the world to come! Oh, but Heriot's grand. He just *does* what the rest of us are talking about.'

'Good name—Heriot.'

'Good name and good connection. He is a nephew of Heriot the publisher. Think of his being an Anglican!' Thatcher sprang to his feet. 'Now we'll have a cup of coffee to cheer us up, and we'll thank Heaven that in an age of growth our creed leaves us free to believe that God didn't reveal Himself to the race in a day, or a year, or a thousand years.'

He rang the bell, and the summons was answered by a neat maid-servant, who reappeared very quickly with a dainty and inviting tray. Dalgleish smiled to himself rather too grimly as he reflected on the probable results of gaily ringing the bell and asking for coffee in *his* quarters.

'In any case *you're* all right,' he said. 'I can't imagine you running dry. How they cheered you the other night!'

'They are generous, aren't they?'

'Generous!' Dalgleish took exception to the word. They were barely appreciative, he considered, and some of them not even that. He felt aggrieved, too, that Thatcher should rank him with a common chorus of admirers. 'Of course,' he said, 'there are always people like that beast Jones, who tell you they are not *blasé*, and then try to take all the gilt off everybody's gingerbread.'

'Jones isn't a beast,' said Thatcher. 'Do you know him?'

'He overtook me in Princes Street the first night of the Debating Society. With all deference to you, he *is* a beast!'

Thatcher laughed. 'If you mean that he is not a great soul——! I don't know how it is at Muirside now-a-days, but we don't grow great souls on the hedges here.'

'If you knew now he speaks of you behind your back——!'

Before the words were out, Dalgleish knew that he ought not to have uttered them; but he was too young to look at the matter from Thatcher's point of view—to realize that the assurance of his own loyalty might not be sufficient to atone for the discovery of disloyalty in others.

A flash like summer lightning passed over Thatcher's face,

but he drew a long breath. 'How glad I am that I don't know! I might have to say with Epictetus, "He little knew my other faults, or he would not have mentioned only this."'

'Did Epictetus say that?'

'He did,—makes us feel a bit small, doesn't it?'

It certainly made Dalglish feel very small, and he finally took his leave in a mood of some depression.

Meanwhile the big doctor made his way home, thinking of Thatcher's vivid talk, and of all the good things he might have said in reply. Why, for instance, had he not assured those young men of the appreciation the world always shows for honest work? It was an experience that had struck him afresh to-day as a very humbling thing.

The glow of stained-glass windows roused him from a reverie, and, tired though he was, he stole quietly into a great church. The atmosphere of the place was full of dignity and calm, as he stood listening reverently near the door. He did not know who it was that spoke—what 'frail personality' was thrown out across the intervening space—but, as he listened, the cares of life fell away, and the familiar words fell on his heart like summer rain.

CHAPTER III

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY

YES, Thatcher was a hero, and he, Dalgleish, had shown himself only a very ordinary boy. Even that clumsy doctor had contrived to snub him, and Thatcher would take no pains to see him again.

Ah, well, they should learn their mistake! Wait till the prize-lists came out—wait till life, the revealer, had proclaimed upon the housetops the things that now one dare not whisper in the ear.

He braced himself for storm and stress, and, just when he looked for it least, life sent him a gleam of sun.

Clearly the duty next to hand was to hurry home and get on with his work, and to this end he resolved to indulge himself in a ride on the top of the car. Apparently some meeting in the neighbourhood had just broken up, for a group of people were waiting in the lamplight at the corner. In the foreground stood a young girl, and Dalgleish felt a little thrill of excitement as he seemed to recognize the figure of the 'unknown quantity.' He stalked round carefully, till, unobserved, he could get a full view of her face. The result was perplexing in the extreme. He told himself he was disappointed, and yet his curiosity was not dulled. She was not pretty, but her face was alive and full of purpose: she was not a mere girl, and yet a painter might have chosen her as a type of youth.

The car came up crowded within and without, and she turned away with an almost imperceptible gesture of disappointment.

'What a fool I have been not to get an introduction,' thought Dalgleish, 'I might have walked home with her.'

Other men apparently were more fortunate. A well-dressed young fellow followed her out of the radius of the lamplight, and raised his hat somewhat jauntily. 'May I have the pleasure of walking home with you?' he said.

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY 21

There was a moment's silence.

'Certainly,' she answered simply.

Dalgleish was appalled. Was she so ignorant of town life as this? The man was surely a stranger, for they had not shaken hands, and indeed he had not spoken as men speak to the women they know. Of course he determined to keep the strange pair in sight. The man talked low and rapidly, and, although Dalgleish could not hear her voice in reply, he could see now and then a slight inclination of her head in the lamplight.

They reached the grimy old tenement to find the street-door locked, and Dalgleish realized with a sudden sensation of awkwardness that now he must overtake them whether he would or not.

'This is where I live,' she said.

She spoke with the composure of one who never doubts that she is mistress of the situation, and her companion started and raised his hat somewhat doubtfully with a new air of deference.

'Don't go,' she said, 'I want to speak to you.'

Dalgleish was too much of a gentleman to hang about and pretend he was looking at the moon. He opened the door with his latch-key, and waited frankly for her to come in.

The presence of a spectator made her waver, but only for a moment.

'I don't know why you asked to see me home,' she said. 'You may have wished to make game of me, or frighten me, or worse.'

'I assure you——' stammered the man, but she broke in royally—

'You assure me!'

'—I meant no offence.'

'I don't know what you meant. It's nothing to me. But, honestly, would you like other men to treat your sisters as you have treated me?' She looked straight in his face, and her expression was not unfriendly as she awaited his reply.

He moved his feet awkwardly on the pavement. 'I'm sure I beg your pardon,' he stammered. 'It was a mistake.'

For the first time her voice shook a little and sank almost to a whisper. 'Surely it would have been a far greater mistake if I had been the woman you took me for—too young or too silly to take care of myself. Good-night.'

She passed in at the open door, and Dalgleish slammed it

behind her. His fingers tingled to knock the man down, but with great self-restraint he realized that the girl had done that already.

She did not seem to notice him. She walked upstairs slowly, and he could hear her quick deep breathing as she went.

'Shall I ring?' he said, laying his hand on the bell.

'No, thank you, I have my key.'

'I say—you *have just grit!*'

She smiled. Her face was very pale. 'It is not the first time that sort of thing has happened, and I made up my mind I would give the next man a lesson. But you nearly spoiled it all, coming up as you did.'

'I know,' he said, wondering what her lessons were like when not spoiled, 'but, although I wasn't any use, I'm awfully glad I was there.'

'So am I.'

'May I light the gas for you?'

'Please.'

He was amazed at her trust in him, and, boylike, he could not be content to thank Heaven for it in silence.

'You know,' he said, 'we're not all like that brute.'

There was just a gleam of amusement in her eyes.

'Do you think you need to tell me that? Good-night.'

There was no mistaking the significance of the word.

'Good-night,' he said obediently; but, before he had quite closed the door, he pushed it open again.

'H-how did you know the beast had sisters?'

She laughed, and her voice broke unsteadily. 'I didn't,' she said. 'I trusted God that far.'

Dagleish crossed over to his own room, and walked straight up to the shabby mirror above the chimney-piece. Never before had it shown him so strong and comely a man.

What a strange creature she was! He remembered a night when his sister had come home white and breathless, because a man had spoken to her on the road. That was the sort of thing one expected from women, and that was what made them so lovable. And yet—he would not have wished this girl other than she was, with her little air of belonging to a bigger world than his. Even to the young there is a charm in the unexpected. Of course he would have liked to kick the brute who insulted her, and yet, when he remembered the little break in her voice, and the look with which she had said, 'I trusted God that far,' he felt as if he had defended her against a gang of ruffians.

CHAPTER IV

A DISCIPLINE CASE

THE chapel hall is well filled to-night, but clearly this is no gay irresponsible meeting of the Young Men's Debating Society. The question engaging the attention of the assembled members is evidently of more pressing importance than the Rights of Women, or the Justification of Charles I., and, if any one present is tempted to be facetious, he keeps the temptation to himself. Mr. Dobbs is here, of course, Mr. Scrymgeour, Mr. Menzies, and other prospective pillars of the church, but their position to-night is a subordinate one, and no one seems anxious to hear what they have to say.

The Pastor is in the chair, looking nervous and worried, uncertain of the team he has in hand, and the prominent seats are filled with substantial men who have a vested interest in the chapel and its traditions. There are women and girls present too, some looking keen and judicial, some shy and scared. If chapel life be a microcosm, as Thatcher said, surely the whole breadth of the tiny cosmos lies between the meeting to-night and that at which the right hand of fellowship was light-heartedly stretched across the 'echoing straits' to James Martineau on the left and John Henry Newman on the right.

On the first Wednesday in the month the weekly prayer-meeting gives place to a business meeting, and to-night, in addition to the usual statement of accounts and prosaic questions of heating and lighting, the attention of the members is invited to a discipline case.

Such cases have become increasingly rare of late years, and many would gladly dispense with them altogether, but the microcosm represents all sorts: the upholder of Use and Wont never dies; and, among these outwardly commonplace, well-to-do citizens, are potential Jesuits, popes, and grand inquisitors.

A considerable proportion of the younger members have had no previous experience of such a case, and it is the first that has occurred in the pastorate of the present chairman. No wonder he feels uneasy, uncertain how the rusty machinery will respond to present-day demands. For in many ways, of course, the chapel life has insensibly come into line with modern methods and modern thought, but those who are responsible for bringing forward this case belong mainly to that section of the community for whom the idea of evolution does not exist.

Was there ever so strange and heterogeneous a tribunal? Some bring to it a mind richly stored with experience, others an absolute ignorance of the simplest facts of life. One feels fortified by his loyalty to chapel traditions, another by his knowledge of the world, a third by his kindly indulgence, a fourth by his rigorous justice. There are present—we will not try to count them—'high Christians, carrying on God's noiseless work'; and there are those whose Christianity consists in an isolated emotional experience half buried in the shadows of the past. It is strange to reflect that the one nominal qualification for the office of judge is a realization of the constraining love of Christ, and that every one present is supposed to be in a sense the representative of Christ upon earth.

The preliminary 'exercises' being over, a hard-featured business man states the case. We are all mortal, he admits, and he for one is disposed to strain Christian charity to the uttermost; but things have reached a stage of which the church is bound to take cognizance.

At this point a scrupulous brother rises to his feet and suggests that, before proceeding farther, the meeting should engage in prayer.

The Pastor's patience is somewhat tried. 'I would remind our brother that we have already engaged in prayer.'

No matter. The case is a very serious one, and the speaker for one would feel more at ease—

So, with a little air of resignation, the Pastor calls upon him to pray, and he does so rather touchingly, in a spirit of meekness, asking for grace that those assembled may consider themselves lest they also be tempted.

And then the case for the prosecution proceeds. Here are a husband and wife in full communion with the church, whose walk and conversation are very far from being to the

edification of the ungodly. Their conduct must, in fact, be admitted to be an open scandal, giving great cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Neighbours complain that they are disturbed by angry words and sounds of violence; a charwoman, who is also a member of the church, bears witness to painful scenes; and it has been remarked by many that the husband and wife never partake of the sacrament on the same Sabbath day. The speaker himself has repeatedly been questioned on the subject by outsiders, who have asked what obligations, if any, are incurred by membership in a Christian church.

The speaker resumes his seat, and another rises whose face simply radiates peace and goodwill. They have certainly listened, he says, to a lamentable state of things, but he would like to confess that his own conscience is touched. He does not always find it easy to turn the other cheek, nor even to refrain from seeing offence where no offence is meant. The longer he lives, the more he realizes the difficulty of preserving an equable spirit, and he is often tempted to think, that, if in the frailty of our human nature we cannot wholly forgive, an angry word—even, perhaps, a blow—is better than a spirit of resentfulness and brooding.

A breath of mingled amazement and appreciation goes through the hall, and another brother—perhaps more justly pricked in his conscience than the last—suggests nervously that the state of our bodily health has a great deal to do with our—well, with our temper; that irritability is often a symptom of disease, and that a good income and a good digestion are great aids to the Christian life.

At this point the Pastor feels bound to interpose. He has striven hard to cultivate a right judgment in all things, and he knows that justice must prepare the way for mercy. Moreover he is very human, with all his goodness, and much of what he meant to say in his summing-up is being forestalled. So he reminds the brethren that they must in the first instance listen to facts. There are a number present, he says, who are qualified to throw full light on the case. After listening to them it will be time to think of all that can be urged in extenuation.

In his own heart he feels acutely, as well he may, that a case like this would be better left in his hands. A strong and almost bigoted upholder of nonconformist principles, he is by nature a priest to the tips of his sensitive fingers.

And now the case becomes more painful, for the next speaker is prepared to prove that the source and origin of the trouble is simply indulgence in—in ardent—in short, in *drink*.

One or two others having reluctantly borne witness to this, and a staunch advocate of total abstinence having embraced the opportunity to drive his principles home in a telling little speech, a crusty old member rises to say that he understands the brother in question has more than once been seen in the theatre. If this be true, it explains a good deal, for in his, the speaker's, opinion the theatre is simply a short cut to the bottomless pit.

Now, indeed, the galled jade may wince, and the sons of wealthy members cast their eyes upon the floor. Even the urbane Mr. Scrymgeour looks perturbed, and Mr. Dobbs glances grimly round with the ghost of a smile on his firm temperate lips. Clearly *his* withers are unwrung.

Fortunately for the guilty, a red herring is dragged across the trail by a yet more exacting enthusiast. Talking of the theatre, he ought perhaps to mention that our brother has been known to attend—*Maass*—in a Roman Catholic church. He has never been present at this—this function—himself, but from what he has read there can be little to choose between that and a theatrical performance.

If a newspaper reporter were present, he would be justified in writing 'Sensation' at this point, for a thrill certainly runs through the daring band who, in a moment of expansion, have extended their honest right hand to John Henry Newman. Thatcher is present. Will he speak? Or will Dobbs feel bound to reveal the youthful heresies of a few weeks ago? There is a minute of awful doubt—a sense of being called to account,—'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve,'—and then the issue is changed once more.

There is nothing so infectious as irrelevance, and now a deprecating member wishes to know whether he is correctly informed that our brother is a Freemason. If so, will some one tell him what place the Bible takes in the processions of that body?

Suspense has been so great, relief is so sudden, that a snigger of laughter issues from an irresponsible corner, and, little guessing all that lies behind the laugh, the Pastor rises again. His blood is up now, and there is something almost majestic in his bearing as he takes the reins in hand. He

certainly does not say that the chapel hall shall not be converted into a bear-garden while he is present, but the sniggering culprit takes this as said, and collapses into the smallest possible allowance of cubic space.

It is a little difficult to bring the testimony to an end. Some one remembers having seen suspicious books in yellow covers on our brother's table, and although the speaker is not a French scholar, he will admit that on one occasion he did open these books. He would repeat that he is not a French scholar, and is therefore not prepared to say the books were novels, but—

Finally the speaker calls upon the senior deacon, Mr. Ralph Blount, to speak, and the senior deacon speaks very well. He rises to his feet with a sturdy impressiveness that gives the meeting fresh tone. In common with the preceding speaker, he does not profess to be a French scholar, but—at the risk of incurring their grave disapproval—he will admit that in his youth he did read a famous old English novel called *Tom Jones*. There is much in that book which is very far from being to edification, and more still that he has long since forgotten, but one sentence has always lingered in his memory. In that sentence the author quotes the proverb about misfortunes never coming singly, and goes on to say that this is never more true than in the misfortune of having any of our faults detected, '*for here discovery seldom stops till the whole is come out.*' How many of those present, asks the senior deacon, would be willing to have a search-light turned on their lives?

A great breath of approval rises from the more vulnerable part of the gathering—a breath that is worth a whole tempest of applause—and, having gained their sympathy, the speaker rises to higher planes. His point of view is that of the upright, kindly, tolerant man of the world, who lives up to the law of Christ as he understands it, and who means to have everything within his jurisdiction done decently and in order.

The Pastor's summing-up is brief and restrained. Only once does he let himself go. 'The Pastor,' he says, with the pathetic superiority of one who feels compelled sometimes to assert his own importance in the microcosm—'the Pastor shares many secrets; but this I am free to tell you. That is not necessarily the worst married life of which the worst tales can be told.'

GROWTH

Finally it is decided that the brother and sister shall be put on probation for six months more, and that if they neglect to hear the church, their names shall be struck from the roll of members. The concluding business of the evening is the appointment of two brethren as a deputation to communicate this decision. A number of those present feel how much rather they would fall into the hands of the reserved, high-souled, straight-speaking Pastor, but Use and Wont decree that two brethren shall be sent, and two brethren must go. After several names have been proposed, they are solemnly elected, and the meeting is closed with prayer.

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CHAPTER V

AFTER THE MEETING

DALGLEISH had gone to the meeting from a sense of duty, and without any idea of the business to be discussed. This was his first experience of church discipline, and of course he was profoundly interested, and not a little impressed—as well he might be—with a sense of his own importance. He was too inexperienced to see how much of the discussion was trivial and irrelevant, how much of it would be disavowed by the wiser, more silent members. Narrow chapel traditions were a part of his heritage, and the whole episode seemed to him very awful. The Day of Wrath might indeed come as a thief in the night.

He wished he knew what Thatcher was thinking of it all, and when, at the earliest possible moment, Thatcher took up his hat and plunged out into the night, Dalgleish was by his side in a moment. He longed to say some word that would chime in with his companion's mood, but the risk of guessing the wrong word was too great.

For some minutes they walked on in silence.

'Heigho, God forgive us!' said Thatcher at length.

Dalgleish's instrument was tuned in a moment. 'Amen,' he echoed heartily.

'The faculty of judgment of all things—the last rung of the ladder—the fine flower of the Christian life!'

'I kept hoping you would speak.'

'// What had I to say?' He smiled. 'The experience rather carried one back to the old days at Muirside.'

'Really? I don't think we had any discipline in my father's time.'

At that moment they were overtaken by a party of young men including Scrymgeour and Jones. 'I say, young man,' said Scrymgeour, bringing his hand down heavily on Dalgleish's shoulder, 'have you read your Herbert Spencer?'

'No,' said Dalglish, shrugging his outraged shoulder resentfully.

'Ah, I hoped you had. I want chapter and verse for the statement that the government of society should not be left too much in the hands of old men.'

'We all had a vote.'

'Quite so. And we all knew but you that, if we elected any one out of the unwritten and very short leet, we should get sat upon. What is the main qualification of the men we choose on these occasions, and indeed on every occasion, to represent the church? Simply the fact that they *expect* to be chosen,—they'd be hurt if they were passed over.'

'The expectation must have a history,' said Thatcher, '—and it's not an office one would covet.'

'I believe you there.'

'And Mr. Blount spoke uncommonly well. Especially as, I imagine, his life would stand the search-light as well as most people's.'

'He's a rich man,' said Jones, 'and can afford the luxury of thick walls.'

'Sly old chap! Bet you he was reading *Tom Jones* last night. That quotation came uncommon pat.'

'He doesn't drink,' said Scrymgeour deliberately, 'nor beat his womankind, nor go to Mass, nor read French novels. All that I'll swear to. But he's a keen man of business and a clever investor. He's been bitten pretty sharply once or twice. If he had been bitten a lit 'e more sharply—if the tide had turned a little quicker—'

'But it didn't.'

'Quite true. It didn't. That's the point, isn't it? But a tight-rope-dancer isn't in it with a Christian man on Stock Exchange.'

'Well, we were grateful to him to-night, anyhow, after all that rot about French novels and plays and what not. An occasion like this is the chance for every fool to speak who has nothing to say on questions of real social interest.'

'I wonder what the deputation will make of the case,' said Dalglish, willing to put in his oar.

'Oh, I can tell you that,' said Jones. 'A resignation of membership will be announced at the next meeting, and then our brother and sister can do the Kilkenny cat business in peace, so long as they keep on the safe side—and that, I take it, is the *outside*—of the police-court.'

'I often think,' said Thatcher gravely, glad of an opportunity to change the subject, 'what desirable members of a community those Kilkenny cats must have been—up to their lights. Think of doing all that and leaving—*no mess!*'

'Only two nice fluffy tails?' suggested Jones.

'Draggled tails,' corrected Dalgleish.

'Pardon me, I insist on *fluffy* tails. If you are going to draw on the realm of miracle, you needn't be so nasty particular.'

But Scrymgeour had not followed the digression. 'I don't believe they'll resign,' he said. 'Even you fellows have no idea how you'd feel if you were really cut adrift. Think of your mothers. And these people are too old to take to Theosophy. It's no joke to start something fresh at their time of life.'

Jones laughed. 'As the man thought to whom Satan said, "I say, we can't have you here. Take a few matches and some brimstone and make a place for yourself!"'

Thatcher stopped short—appalled, and the others checked in a moment their half-shocked smile of amusement. 'I can't feel,' said Thatcher, 'that I have ceased to be a member of a Christian church just because I happen at the moment to be outside its walls.'

Dalgleish turned very white, and Jones blushed crimson. 'Sorry, Thatcher,' he said, trying to make the best of the situation, 'I shouldn't have said it; but it was so awfully funny, it would out.'

'Narrow-minded prig!' he protested to Scrymgeour when they were alone. 'A nice one he to plead for tolerance. What has Satan got to do with the Christian Church now-a-days, I should like to know? But Thatcher believes in him, horns, hoofs, and all.'

Scrymgeour did not answer immediately. He often caught himself trimming his sails to catch the wind of popular applause, and he admired Thatcher profoundly for the way in which he kept his eyes on the compass and stuck to his chart. But he did not often find it necessary to say so. 'Fun covers a multitude of sins,' he answered judiciously at length, conscious that his opinion carried weight, 'and it was certainly funny. It is a very nice question to my mind whether it was quite funny enough.'

'I suppose I ought to read Herbert Spencer,' said Dalgleish apologetically, as he and Thatcher made their way home.

'I wouldn't be in a hurry. Stick to your class-work this winter till you see what margin you have.'

Dalglish was under the impression that his margin was wide indeed. 'You know—you'll think it incredible—but I never heard of Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer and people like that till I came up. I've always been keen on history, but I thought Truth—you know what I mean—was settled and done with. I'm one of the people you spoke of that night whose minds work in water-tight compartments.'

'My dear fellow, whose mind does anything else at your age?'

'Oh, but my history should have shown me that truth was bigger than that. The ups and the downs! The saints and the sinners all jumbled together. It came on me like a flash. I felt as if all my life people had been saying to me—

"Of the tribe of Juda twelve thousand.

"Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand.

"Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand."

And all at once you said'—the boyish voice rang out triumphantly—

"And I beheld, and lo, a great multitude that no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues . . ."

Thatcher turned and looked at his companion in the lamp-light. He was much preoccupied with his own mental processes in these days, and had thought of Dalglish mainly as a nature sympathetic to his own. It flashed upon him for the first time that he was dealing with a being as different from the ordinary first-year's man as a galvanometer is from a steel-yard.

'Look here, Dalglish,' he said seriously. 'Take my advice, and stick to your class-work. And don't take my views for gospel. Truth is a big thing, as you say, and, for all I know, I may have far to travel yet. Let me see—you lodge with Miss Brown. I hope she feeds you decently?'

'Oh, I'm all right. I have the digestion of an ostrich.'

'You'll need it all before you have done. Keep her up to the mark. And look here, old man,—don't you give up reading your Bible. There's nothing like it. Good-night.'

Miss Brown had been at the meeting too, of course, and had much to say on the subject. She would have thought it wrong to go to the theatre or to Mass; she was not in a position to speculate on the Stock Exchange; and the

regulations of the Free Masons made it impossible for her to share the festivities of that body. One must find a quota of excitement somewhere, and she found hers where best she could. Of course her judgment fell most heavily on the woman in the case. No man on earth, she declared, could put up with a tongue like that. Dalgleish was regaled with a good deal of scandal that had not found voice at the meeting, and he fell asleep to dream of an awful Wehmgericht, before which he himself was charged with unknown crimes.

He awoke as if from a nightmare, and sprang up in bed, struggling to remember where he was.

Ah, yes, to be sure, this was the good old hole he had become so used to; and that was his sitting-room with the red gleam of fire in the grate. And in the flat across the landing . . .

The thought of her came to him like a breath of fresh air. Life was a big breezy thing after all. He had made her acquaintance now. Nothing could alter that. Only the day before she had bowed to him on the stair—bowed a little stiffly, as a fairy princess should. It was nice to feel uncertain what would happen next.

He threw his window open wide, and returned to his homely bed.

CHAPTER VI

IT'S AN ILL WIND—

JUDITH LEMAISTRE's sitting-room was certainly a contrast to the one in the flat on the other side of the landing. It was characterized by a total absence of the horse-hair and stuffing and dingy maroon so prevalent in that part of the town; it was spotlessly clean, and rather aggressive in its simplicity; and it contained a few things to which the eye wandered back with increasing pleasure.

To-night there were some tall yellow flowers in a blue jar, which harmonized very kindly with the books and pictures among which they found themselves; and the austere aspect of the room gave them an added piquancy and charm.

There was something austere too in the aspect of Judith herself. Without making her actually pretty, Nature had finished her off very neatly. There was a delightful crispness about the fair skin, the clear eyes, the silky brown hair. She was not one of the people who drag about a body for which they seem to hold themselves only half responsible. A dominating vitality ran through every fibre,—

‘—one might almost say her body thought.’

There was no jot nor tittle—no movement nor change of expression—on which one could lay one's finger and say, ‘This is not Judith Lemaistre.’

And by instinct or design she carried out the same idea in her dress. It may have been open to criticism from the point of view of the fashionable—or unfashionable—dress-maker; but it was never an appanage nor excrescence: it too was a part of Judith Lemaistre.

It was Sunday, and the woman of the house had gone out, leaving a simple cold supper on the well-scrubbed kitchen table, but Judith still sat by the parlour fire dreaming.

'Hungry, old girl?' she said at last, stretching herself luxuriously. 'All right. Come along and have some supper.'

She was passing through the small lobby when a distant sobbing fell on her ear. It was no very uncommon sound in that house, but it was a sound to which Miss Lemaistre had not yet grown hardened. She opened the door and listened.

No; it was not a fretful child worn out with the discipline of a Scottish Sabbath. It was the sobbing of a woman, and it came from the flat on the same landing as her own,—the flat where that handsome student lodged with poor old Miss Brown.

What could have happened? Surely something very bad. The sobbing was so unrestrained, so woebegone, as if—after a long struggle—some weary fighter had given in.

Miss Brown was the only woman on the stair with whom Judith had made no acquaintance, but she could not turn a deaf ear to such misery as this. A few weeks ago she would have had some scruple about intruding on a stranger, but she had learned by experience that, in that particular stair, borrowing was an excuse for disturbing your neighbour at any hour.

So without a moment's hesitation, she crossed the landing and rang the bell.

A great silence fell on the house, but there was no other response to her ring. She repeated it, and now she could hear a faint moving and shuffling. A minute later the door was opened on the chain.

'Good evening,' said Judith cheerfully, addressing a chink through which no one was visible. 'I am ashamed to trouble you, but I have run out of matches, and I thought you would be so kind——'

Heavy feet shuffled away, but the matches seemed 'ill to find.' Judith began to think she had been left in the lurch after all, when a cheap and greasy box was thrust over the chain. 'It's all I've got, but you're kindly welcome to as many as 'll do ye.'

Judith's heart smote her as she thought of the abundant supply in her own kitchen. 'Two will be plenty,' she said eagerly, extracting them from the box, and wondering how in the world she was to prolong the conversation under circumstances so unpropitious.

But fortune came to her aid. A bitter draught of wind

was blowing up the stair, and it drew from the invisible occupant of the flat a shuddering, involuntary sob.

'Why, you are in trouble,' said Judith. 'Do let down the chain and tell me about it. I am sure I can help you.'

Reluctantly Miss Brown obeyed, and then, without a word, held out her hand for sympathy, as a child might have done. It was burnt rather badly, and great blisters were beginning to form,—very painful, no doubt; but, as the cause of so much woe, curiously inadequate.

'This must have been just the last straw,' thought Judith.

'That *is* a nasty burn,' she said aloud. 'I've got some splendid stuff for it. Wait one moment.' She hastened across the landing to her own flat, and returned a moment later with a wide-mouthed bottle in which strips of lint were soaking. 'This is what I used last week for little Tom Scott. Why didn't you come for me at once?'

Miss Brown had led the way into the kitchen, where an overturned frying-pan revealed the cause of the disaster. 'To think o' bothering a stranger!' she said. 'An' me niver got my dress changed yet!'

Judith was taking in the details of the situation almost unconsciously. 'Nobody is a stranger who wants my help,' she said simply. The aspect of the room was depressing enough, but there was no suggestion of disgust in her kind, grave eyes. She was conscious mainly of a real fellow-feeling for the forlorn, dishevelled creature she was serving. Life was so pitiful, and men and women were so brave!

Her practical eye did not fail to notice, however, that Miss Brown's sleeve would with difficulty come over her plump red hand in its normal state, and she had no mind to have her bandage surreptitiously removed at bedtime. 'May I cut this?' she said. 'If not, we'll have it off at once, please.'

Miss Brown dissolved into tears once more. 'An' me expectin' my young gentleman every minute. An' the ham and eggs just ready for his supper!'

Greatly to Judith's relief, another neighbour appeared at this juncture. She had heard the sobbing too, and had hurried away the minute she could be spared from domestic exigencies of her own.

'Never mind the young man,' said Judith cheerfully. She felt somewhat as Wellington is said to have done when Blucher's forces appeared. 'Mrs. Scott and I will look after

him. This stuff will take the pain away and then you must get to bed at once. You're overdone.'

She bound up the wound in workmanlike fashion, while good Mrs. Scott restored some measure of order in the kitchen, and hurried off to prepare the patient's bed. Judith was still bending over the injured hand. 'You took something to steady your nerves,' she said in the matter-of-fact tone of one who is not disposed to be severe with the little weaknesses of humanity.

Miss Brown flushed indignantly, but she was too honest to lie. 'I'm that colded,' she began.

So the whisky was the first stage in the catastrophe, not the last. That explained the situation generally. Judith nodded. 'I wouldn't take any more,' she said, as if she had come to that conclusion after really considering the matter. 'It isn't good for the burn.'

And then she turned to see Dugald Dalgleish in the doorway.

'You!' he said.

A young face does not easily express fatigue, but Dalgleish looked very tired. All the mother in Judith awoke at the sight of him. 'Miss Brown has had a nasty little accident,' she said, 'and the good things she was getting ready for you are spoilt. I think—perhaps—you had better come and have supper with me.' She gave the invitation half reluctantly, as if, in the circumstances, it was really the only sensible thing to do. Was he not a mere boy, and she—oh, such an experienced woman of the world?

'May I?'

It certainly is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Dalgleish forgot all about his fatigue as he hurried off to wash his hands and to give one hasty reassuring look in the glass. The purposelike dark tweed suit—that next year must come into work-a-day use—became him well, and so did the spotless Sabbath linen.

He had so often tried to recall the room of which he had received a hasty glimpse that memorable night: the impression he had carried away was mainly one of bareness, and, sensitive as he was on the subject of his poverty, he was glad to think this mysterious friend of his knew the meaning of it too. He liked the room now that he had time to study it at leisure, but he was more struck by the absence of show and luxury than by any definite quality it exhibited.

Judith received him with a frank smile. She was very quiet and self-possessed,—quite a different Judith from the one he had seen off her guard in a strange chance moment of intimacy. To judge by her manner, she might have forgotten all about the meeting of which he had thought so much.

'We had better begin by introducing ourselves,' she said. 'My name is Miss Lemaistre.'

Dagleish had found this out some time ago. 'And I,' he said, 'am Dugald Dagleish.'

Clearly she had not found this out, for her eyes lighted with appreciation. 'Well,' she said, 'you at least have something for which to thank "your godfathers and godmothers at your baptism."'

Dagleish was puzzled for a moment. 'Oh,' he said suddenly, 'I haven't any godfathers and godmothers.'

It was her turn to look puzzled. 'It never occurred to me that such a condition was possible. You don't look any the worse. It just shows how many so-called necessities one can do without.'

'If you mean the mug,' laughed Dagleish, 'I have certainly survived the want of that.'

A minute later she led the way into the pretty blue and white kitchen. Dagleish was glad there was no servant to disturb the *tête-à-tête*. He keenly appreciated the unconventional nature of the little feast; but he had never seen a woman before who would have made no kind of apology for it. He had yet to learn that apologies were not much in Miss Lemaistre's way. She took everything so simply that his shyness began to wear off.

'It was awfully good of you to look after Miss Brown,' he said.

'I think neighbours ought to be neighbourly.'

'Mrs. Scott says you are a real Good Samaritan.'

She frowned. 'How can people talk such nonsense? I *like* my neighbours.' Apparently it did not occur to her that the Good Samaritan may have done the same.

There was a moment's pause. 'I am so glad,' said Dagleish tardily.

She laughed. 'And they never miss an opportunity of helping me. I have no doubt one of them will be good enough to hand me those plates now.'

He sprang to his feet. 'It was an odd coincidence that

she should use the expression, Good Samaritan,' he said, as he seated himself again with a heavy sigh, 'for I had just been giving a lesson in Sunday School on the subject.'

What an admirable boy he must be! 'Is that why you looked so tired?'

He turned very red, but somehow the absence of pretence about this woman and her little *ménage* moved him to unwonted frankness.

He nodded. '*That's why I looked so tired.* I had never taught in Sunday School before, and it was the greatest fiasco you ever heard in your life.'

She professed no courteous incredulity. 'Tell me about it.'

He had meant to bury that episode fathoms deep, but to his own great surprise he went on.

'A lot of the teachers are ill,' he explained, 'and the superintendent asked me to take a class of little girls—*little girls!* You'd think any fool could do that. The subject was the Good Samaritan—a nice safe subject too—uncontroversial—no fear of dropping into heresy unawares.' There was a little ring of superiority in his voice as he said this—his heresy was an acquisition so new!—but it disappeared in a moment. 'I thought I knew all about it, but I looked up a commentary Miss Brown has. Oddly enough it gave me a good beginning. I had a general feeling that my brain was teeming with ideas, and I let the bairns off easily in the matter of texts. I wanted to get to work.'

'Well, I began with a striking picture of the road between Jerusalem and Jericho—lonely,—dark rocks,—no human habitation in sight. But there are worse things than solitude. *Bands of brigands* infested the roads!'

'I hope nobody screamed.'

'No; but I felt the response, the mesmeric thrill orators talk about.' He was really entering into the humour of his story now. 'It was grand. I saw myself enrolled as a teacher permanently—my class growing in numbers every week. I realized how a man must feel who has a vast congregation following him breathless. But the moment I got to the good old Gospel narrative—to the Good Samaritan, in fact—the spell was broken. I tried to pile on colour, but it was no go. Their jaws dropped lower and lower in the most obvious disappointment you ever saw. I was afraid they were going to cry.'

'But there's always a cheeky one in every class. "I say,

teacher," she said with gentle remonstrance, "we've heard *that* story."

'I could have boxed her ears. Of course she had heard the story. Did she expect me to write a new Bible for her benefit? Then a bonny wee thing slipped her hand into mine. "Tell us more about the lonely road," she pleaded. As if I hadn't told her every word I knew—and a good deal more—already!

'And then a third chimed in. "What were the robbers *like*?" quoth she.'

Judith leaned back and laughed whole-heartedly. 'What did you do?'

'I turned and looked at the clock first of all. Of course it was diametrically behind me. And I found this pleasing episode had occupied something under ten minutes; and, on a moderate computation, I had twenty-five still to put in. I saw incidentally that a man called Dobbs—no great shakes in the matter of intellect—was holding his class simply enthralled. He might have been offering them a prize. When I turned back to my little girls—they were all grinning! They were old parliamentary hands—Sunday School *habituées* from their cradle. They knew quite well why I had looked at the clock.'

'You are prepared for the hustings now. And then?'

'Don't ask me! I wallowed. I sank to the deepest depth. Hustings indeed! If I rise to be Prime Minister, I shall never be able to look those little girls in the face again. To put the finishing stroke, the superintendent kept coming round and standing behind my chair; and out of cussedness—out of *deevilry*—he postponed ringing the bell for ten good minutes after the usual time.'

'Oh, come!'

'It's a fact. We were ten minutes late for church. And, as I was leaving the schoolroom, he came up with the smile of a father in God, and asked how I had got on. I looked perfectly blank, and said, "Fairly well." *That* was a lie, if you like, and he knew it.'

'Do you mean to say you had church to put in after that? And church and school, I suppose, equally stuffy?'

'Oh, school was the stuffiest,' he replied, regardless of grammar. 'At least it was a worse kind of "stuff." As a rule I could repeat the sermon nearly word for word. To-night I heard one sentence only. The Pastor quoted the

remark of an infidel to the effect that the one thing he was afraid of was the Sunday Schools.'

Judith's laugh was a thing to hear. 'A sentiment with which you doubtless agreed, though not in the "infidel's" sense. Do they still tell tales of that kind?'

Dalglish nodded. He had not noticed the *double entente*, but her flippant tone was infectious. 'I could have assured him that the infidel—or the devil himself—might have had an easy mind so far as I was concerned. What with one thing and another, if you hadn't asked me in to supper, I believe I should have cut my throat.'

The reckless, extravagant words roused her to a full sense of her seniority.

'No, no,' she said sharply. 'We stop short of talk like that. "Has Nature covenanted with you that you shall never appear to disadvantage?" You must pay your debt to humanity like other people.'

Dalglish looked up, surprised. He had half expected some cheap consolation:—'Nonsense, you're not a fair judge,' 'I'm sure it was very nice.' Judith Lemaistre had struck for him a new note in the gamut of consolation. It was a hard saying, no doubt, and he fervently hoped he might not often have occasion to fall back upon it; in the meantime it rang fresh and true, like this woman herself.

But apparently Miss Lemaistre was one of those women who have no preference for the personal note in conversation. 'Are there many university men in your chapel?' she asked, as if the idea struck her as a novel one.

'Oh, lots. You see they come up from the country with introductions, or without introductions, it's all the same. Somebody speaks to them and asks them home to supper. It's rather like a great family.'

'But I like that,' she said warmly.

'Oh, they're as *kind* as can be. Of course it has its disadvantages. You go into a shop for something, and the grocer tells you you have been wandering.'

'Wandering?'

'Yes; he has seen you going into some other church, or has missed you from your usual corner.'

'That has its terrors, I admit. But on the whole I rather like it too, if the grocer doesn't worry. I've great faith in human brotherhood.'

'Yes, it has its terrors,' said Dalglish. He was thinking of

the discipline case. 'Would you like to come some Sunday evening?' he asked shyly. 'We've a first-rate preacher.'

She shook her head. 'I'm not very keen about sermons. It's the brotherhood idea I like.'

'You'd enjoy our Debating Society. We don't admit ladies,' he threw in parenthetically to avoid difficulties later. 'There are working-men in it.'

'And students too?'

'And students too, of course. We've an awfully fine fellow—Thatcher,' and Dalglish launched forth in praise of his hero. He told her about the paper on Toleration, quoting the famous sentence, and was annoyed that she seemed to find it amusing. So she had her limitations after all.

'You seem more interested in your life at the chapel than at the University?'

'Oh, no! Well, I don't know. I'm tremendously interested in my work, and Masson's lectures are ripping. But I haven't made any special friends yet. You see I didn't come straight up from school. I did some other work first.'

'Teaching?'

He shook his head. 'One of my father's old deacons wanted a sort of private secretary, and I was glad to earn a little money. He was an illiterate old brute, and it nearly broke my mother's heart that I shouldn't go in for the ministry at the earliest possible moment. I suppose that is why I feel so much older than the other fellows. They are like schoolboys. Now the chapel includes all sorts. It's—it's a microcosm.'

'And you study the laws of the ocean in a tea-cup?'

'If you like to put it so.' He thought her very disrespectful. Tea-cup, indeed! If she knew the Pastor, and Mr. Biont, and Thatcher, and others too! Clearly she had her limitations. Dalglish was learning, not without resentment, that nobody outside a chapel ever knows how much culture there is inside.

But they parted excellent friends. 'And if I burn my hand?' he asked tentatively as he took his leave.

She shook her head. 'If *you* burn your hand, my dear sir, you will have the skill of Edinburgh at your disposal. It's well to be a student, and it's well to be young. Miss Brown is neither. Good-night.'

CHAPTER VII

NON DOLET, PÆTE

DALGLEISH awoke the next morning with the reflection that he had been a great fool to monopolize the conversation, and to give himself away with such unsparing frankness; and yet he had a comfortable conviction that Miss Lemaistre had not liked him any the less for his folly. He made a mental resolution, however, on the subject of being 'swift to hear, slow to speak,' and with that he went about his day's work.

His resolution was destined to be put pretty sharply to the test, for Miss Brown was simply bubbling over with curiosity as to his experiences in the other flat. She was looking flabby and weak, but quite a different being from the shattered wreck of the evening before.

'Well,' she said, 'what like is she?'

'Who? Oh!—You saw her yourself.'

'Did you like her?'

'What a question!'

Miss Brown longed to say, 'What an answer!' but prudence compelled her to keep her gift of repartee in firm check. The bird was shy, and she felt very much as she had done some sixty years before, when, in the first bloom of credulity, she had perseveringly stalked a young blackbird with a pinch of salt in her fat baby hand. No German housewife was ever more anxious to say, '*Was gab's?*'—a most kindly and human question by the way—and of even greater importance it was to know what Miss Lemaistre had said about *her*. Miss Brown had not forgotten that significant remark about 'steadying her nerves.'

'Is she clever?'

Now cleverness, as we know, is a gift of many limitations, and Dalgleish was just at the age to overestimate its importance, yet in one way his notion of it was even more limited than its deserts. He was annoyed that he had taken no steps to find out whether his hostess was 'clever' or not.

'I don't know,' he said; 'not specially.'

'Was she nice?'

'Very,' said Dalgleish indifferently.

'How old would you take her to be?'

'I never could guess ages. She has ceased to go on four legs, and has not yet begun to go on three.'

Miss Brown laughed—partly because she at least was a clever woman in her way, and partly because she was genuinely amused.

'There's some mystery about her,' she said darkly.

'Mystery?'

'Well, don't you think so yourself?'

Now Dalgleish had never met any 'mysterious' women, and consequently he had a very clear idea of what they were like. Assuredly they had nothing in common with Miss Lemaistre, and he said so.

'Such a to-do there was painting and papering before she moved in! She must ha' paid for it hersel'. I'll warrant the money niver cam' out o' Miss Jenkins' pocket. I'm wondering if Lemaistre is her real name.'

'Great Scot! Why shouldn't it be her real name?'

'Well, did you iver hear the like o't?'

It did not occur to either of them that an unusual name is a poor thing to hide under, but Dalgleish was very angry.

'Now that is how mischief is done,' he said. 'If she weren't as frank and simple as daylight, you might do her an injury.'

Miss Brown did not answer immediately. She had at least found out one thing—that Dalgleish liked his new friend very much. 'Hoot,' she said, 'I was just talkin' back an' forrit. Did she—the speaker turned very red—'did she say anything about—me?'

'She did not mention you at all.'

This at least was satisfactory information, though he had given it in a moment of pique. He remembered a minute later that it was not even strictly true, but the interests of veracity did not seem to demand its correction.

'I don't believe you ought to be using that hand,' he burst out presently. 'Just leave the coal-scuttle alone, will you? I'll fill it myself when I have finished dinner.'

And so he did, and, just as he was carrying it across the tiny hall, his landlady opened the door to admit Miss Lemaistre.

'Fairly caught!' he said, laughing, and the all-too-ready

blush rose to his face. It did him such an injustice, that blush, he often told himself, coming for choice just when he felt the very opposite of blushing.

The visitor's voice sounded low and soft after Miss Brown's harsh Doric. 'Have I surprised you with the bushel off your light, Mr. Dalgleish? I am so glad. These common stairs want every ray they can get on a day like this.'

'An' he says she's no "specially cliver"!' thought Miss Brown with a snort. But she showed herself generous, notwithstanding his real or assumed obtuseness.

'You may say it,' she said when the two women were alone. Her manner was nervous and awkward, but not half so nervous as Judith had expected it to be. 'He's just a jewel, that's what he is. So keen about his work, aye hame to his buiks betimes; and so wiselike! What that lad thinks about—ye'd wonder! It's a rael edification when it doesna make your hair rise. I think whiles when he's a great man we'll laugh to mind how ready he was to turn his hand to a' thing. I niver had onybody the least like him.'

This was only too true, as any one who had known Miss Brown's previous lodgers could testify.

'He must have a nice mother,' Miss Lemaistre said reflectively. 'I'm so glad you like him, for he doesn't look like roughing it much.'

'My word! He's as strong as strong.'

'Yes; but those young fellows who live keenly at all points are very apt to break down suddenly when you least expect it. They want good food and good fire and good care. Poor boy, I suppose he is not overburdened with this world's goods.'

But, gossip though she was, Miss Brown understood the good old Scottish gift of loyalty. 'You'd wonner,' she said oracularly.

Miss Lemaistre's respect for her patient rose. If she did not wish to speak, she certainly should not be tempted. 'Come,' she said; 'you are a good subject, I see. Your hand is getting on famously.'

'It's been well looked to,' Miss Brown said, with the rather grudging air of one who has been taught to render to all their due. 'No doctor could have done better.' She was half tempted to hate Miss Lemaistre for having caught her at such a disadvantage, and yet she could not help liking those friendly eyes that seemed so quick to see and so slow to

judge. Was it seeming or was it real? So many women can pretend, and the expression of sympathy is a trick all too easily acquired. Still, to do Miss Lemaistre justice, she had never said anything that was worth repeating. It was just a 'way she had with her' that made one feel half inclined to trust her with one's weaknesses as one trusts God with one's sins.

As her visitor rose to go, Miss Brown opened her lips to speak, hesitated, and began again, dropping in a mist of apology into the deepest vernacular. 'What with ae thing—an' anither—my han' being bad an a'—his room is no juist what I'd like to see it. In fac'—I doot it's a' throughither—an' the denner no cleared awa'. But if ye please to gang ben—' she paused and swallowed her jealousy with a gulp—'I ken fine he'd be rael set up.'

The surgical consultation had been a brief one, but Dalgleish had made the most of his time. Setting down the coal-scuttle as if it had been red-hot, he had swept the dishes on to a tray, and thrust them into his bed-closet. Then, shaking the tablecloth out of the window, he had bundled it into a drawer, and was just engaged in blowing the most recent layer of dust off the chimney-piece when Miss Lemaistre was ushered in.

Inspired by what she would have called her 'hobby of neighbourliness,' she had been really interested to judge from the remains of his dinner whether it had been of a kind that could reasonably be expected to yield a fair quota of nourishment, and she was not a little surprised to see nothing but a volume of Herbert Spencer on the crimson table-cover. Had he eaten the dishes?—or thrown them out of the window?—or was it really his custom to dine off Herbert Spencer? She reflected with a smile that there was plenty of 'cut and come again' about that dish anyhow.

Perhaps he guessed something of her thought, for he turned very red again, and contrived surreptitiously to throw a sheet of blotting-paper over the obtruding book.

He was under the impression that his den was now fairly neat, and that in point of solid comfort it compared favourably with her own. Possibly as regards the latter consideration he was right. There is something to be said for those rooms which exact no great show of respect, and which positively *invite* a man to put his feet on the chimney-piece.

'Miss Brown assures me of a welcome,' said the visitor with characteristic simplicity.

'That's decent of her,' said Dalgleish, scarcely concealing his surprise. He had become all too familiar with his landlady's attitude towards her sex. 'She does turn up trumps sometimes.'

Miss Lemaistre nodded. 'She improves on acquaintance. I like the people who keep their ace till the end. Perhaps she is that kind.'

Dalgleish laughed. 'Possibly. She has got rid of a good many smalls since I came.'

Miss Lemaistre reflected how much less generous he was than the woman he criticized. She was looking at his pictures meanwhile. There were two oleographs of the Prodigal Son, a cheap print of Queen Victoria, faded photographs of people who were obviously related to Miss Brown, and an effective reproduction of the 'Awakening of the Soul.' 'That is yours,' she said.

'Good shot,' laughed Dalgleish, 'but it's wrong. Miss Brown confiscated it from the goods of her last lodger, for lack of more negotiable material. Judging by the accounts of him that I haven't been able to dodge, the little lady may congratulate herself on being out of his keeping. Awfully fine, isn't it?'

'I don't care for the picture,' said Miss Lemaistre without emphasis. Then her voice changed. 'But I do like *that* very much.' She had at last discovered what she was looking for, half buried among the books on his little writing-table.

'That's my mother,' said Dalgleish, drawing his sleeve frankly and affectionately over the glass of a cheap velvet frame.

Such a wonderful face, sweet, sad, and worn, with pathetic lines above the brave, firm mouth,—one of the faces that are better worth producing than most works of art. Somehow it brought the unaccustomed tears to Judith's eyes.

'She *does* know life!' she cried. 'Oh, Mr. Dalgleish, you have a goodly heritage.'

'On that side I have,' he said rather gloomily, as if the subject had been in his mind. It so happened that a young medical student had read a lugubrious paper on Heredity at the last meeting of the Debating Society. 'Know life? I should think she does know life.' He could not believe that he was actually going to tell the story that came surging up to his lips, but the tears in Judith's eyes were as deep calling unto deep. 'It's only since I came to town that I've

realized it all. At home one takes everything for granted, and mainly thinks how it affects oneself. But now I seem to see round it. . . . It was a love match. They were both very young, and my father was quite a famous preacher in his small world. I imagine it was always an emotional kind of preaching, you know, even in his palmiest days; but he was awfully popular, and the chapel was crowded, and clever men came to hear him, and even my lady's carriage was known to stop at the door. We were great folk in those days.

'Of course I was a little chap then, and my mother has never spoken of it at any time. Well, I don't know how it began, but somehow he took to saying feeble things sometimes,—almost—silly; and it grew worse, and when I was a great gawk he made my ears tingle with shame, it was such rot you know. And I could see people thought so, though often it was quite average stuff enough. . . . Thatcher was saying one night what a sensitive man might suffer from the critical looks of his hearers, but my father was short-sighted. He never saw. I wish he had. He took himself more seriously than he had done at his best, and blamed the people for falling off. He had always been so humble before. "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us,"—you know. And the congregation got smaller, and I used to fancy people came—for—for—the fun of the thing;—and ye—at home he was always so good to my mother!'

The boy choked down something like a sob. 'If only he had let *her* write his sermons! She had twice his brains at the best, though she never would have admitted it, God bless her! . . . At first she admired his preaching awfully, as well she might, and I never dared to suggest there was anything wrong. She had always made a point of fixing her eyes on his face while he preached, and she stuck to that to the end. So quiet she looked, so placid, as if it was all just the right thing. *Non dolet, Pate!* Since I came here I see that it would have cost her less to put her hand in the fire. She was on the rack all the time. Sometimes in the earlier days when he said something awfully fine I used to see a mist of tears in her eyes. I saw that again one day near the end.' He paused. 'Queer that we should have just—just tears—for everything. When I look back on those days I see lines in her face that I was far too dull to see then. You can see them in her photograph now. . . .'

Judith nodded without raising her eyes from the picture.

‘. . . His very death couldn’t wipe them out.’

There was a great throb of feeling in Judith’s voice. ‘And yet we never think of things like that when we talk of great suffering. So he died?’

‘Yes; but not till she had drunk the cup to the dregs. He took to spending money, and we haven’t got to the end of that worry yet. They asked him to resign, and he asked them why he should. He was very high-handed, but at last we got him away. He fretted terribly, and then he was ill—some brain trouble—and he died.’

‘Then of course it was the brain trouble all along,’ she said quickly, ‘and everybody would know it.’

He sighed. ‘Most people knew it, I suppose, but it was too late then. My mother had worried through.’

‘What a comfort she has lived to let you make it all up to her!’

‘Do you think anybody ever can? But you know now why I got into such a funk last night. Greater drivel than I talked couldn’t be.’

‘My dear boy, could any two things be more different?’

‘I know,’ he said hastily, ‘I know, but it just got me that way.’

He seemed desirous to change the subject now. ‘And that’s my sister,’ he said, tossing down another picture rather unceremoniously.

‘Tell me about her.’

‘Oh, she is a real good sort,’ he said lightly. ‘Devoted to good works. She has never cracked the egg-shell in which she was born, you know. I rather think she never will.’

He forgot that he had only cracked his own a few weeks before.

He drew a long breath. ‘So that’s why we are so awfully poor,’ he said as if she had remarked on the fact. ‘I got a bursary, of course, or I shouldn’t be here, but I believe they are living on porridge and salt at home to help me out.’

‘There are worse things than poverty.’

‘And porridge?’ He bowed, and, if Miss Lemaistre had known it, his bearing and voice were an amusing reflection of Thatcher’s. ‘True, O King,’ he said smiling.

‘Oh,’ she said, ‘it wasn’t a platitude really. It was fresh from the mint, such as it was. I was thinking that in these puzzling modern days so many rich people must feel ill at ease about their money. You at least know that you are not defrauding anybody.’

'Unless it's my creditors.'

She laughed. 'Unless it's your creditors. Good-bye, Mr Dalgleish. Come and see me when you have time.'

She held out her hand very kindly, but as he took it a shade of anxiety came over his face. 'Miss Brown is a good Christian woman,' he said, 'but the moral principle has an odd way of adjusting itself. I hope she hasn't been listening at the door.'

Judith nodded reassuringly. 'Mrs. Scott came in just after I did, and they've been having a cup of tea together in the kitchen. I heard the clatter of the cups.'

She took her leave, and Dalgleish was left to reflect on the manner in which he had fulfilled his resolution of being 'swift to hear, slow to speak.'

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CHAPTER VIII

LETTERS

'WELL, madam,' said Miss Lemaistre when she found herself back in her room, 'this is a new departure for you.' She looked in the glass as she took off her hat, but she was too preoccupied even to see her own grave, sensible face. 'It might be as well to look ahead, and decide what you mean to do.'

She threw her hat on the bed and sat down in a low chair. 'What a temperament the boy has! *Non est pietas*! I think of his quoting that. One seemed to see a whole line of woman heroes through all the ages going to their doom with a smile on their lips, and the doom was life as soft as death. *Non dolet!*'

She rose to her feet again, forgetting that she had meant to remove her wet shoes. 'What that boy has got to suffer!—and his sympathy,—Miss Brown, and the singer behind the counter, and the young man who held out the right hand of fellowship to James Martineau—*James Martineau!*' A laugh of keen appreciation broke up the wrinkles of her face, but it vanished as quickly as it came, and she placed the room in silence.

'If I refuse to be an elder sister to a creature like that whom the fates have thrown in my way, what do I deserve? Kicking, I fancy, at least. Who will misjudge me? I believe honestly no one. "*Les femmes croient innocent tout ce qu'elles osent*"? Yes, and if they dare it generously, and without self-seeking, the world believes it innocent too. I am strongly inclined to think that this good old world of ours is not quite a fool after all.'

She took off her shoes with a will now, washed her hands as a woman does who takes pleasure in their comeliness, and passed into the sitting-room. An elderly woman was placing a tea-tray on a small table by the fire. A foreign letter was

propped against the quaint little teapot. Miss Lemaistre laughed half ruefully as she opened it. 'You poor old Frances,' she said, 'did the Lord send you a thorn in the flesh?' Then, stretching out her feet to the blaze, she sipped her tea and read:—

'MY DEAR JUDITH,—I am sitting in a terraced garden high above Florence, looking down on the city below. After a bout of horrid cold winds, mid-winter has brought us some warm, glowing days, and, on the hill-slopes round about, the olives are shimmering in the sun, and throwing into bold relief the groups of swarthy cypresses.

'It is from here that I would have you see Florence first. Every building stands out clear, Duomo, Palazzo Vecchio, Bargello; the Arno winds hither and thither, and Leonardo's fortifications keep guard like lions round about. Beyond are the hills with their nestling homesteads, and then the snow-covered range against the sky.

'That, my dear, is in my best literary vein. I flatter myself it would look rather well in *Blackwood*; but of course I should have to add some more. Alfred demurs to "swarthy" on the ground that it suggests something burly and muscular. I tell him that comes of reading *Othello* before he was old enough to understand it. I rather fancy "swarthy" myself, don't you?

'Our neighbours go in for vine and olive growing, and Alfred, I grieve to say, is more interested in the production of oil and wine than in all the pictures in the Uffizi. Personally, I prefer the town. We are out of everything here,—except oil and wine—and just now there are quite a lot of our friends in Florence. The Watsons had an At Home yesterday, and there were many enquiries about you. You see you were rather clever as a girl, and everybody expects you to set the Thames on fire. I really wish you would; it would save me such a lot of explanation. Give your mind to it, there's a dear! I often wonder what you would wish me to say when people ask about you. While the nursing spell lasted, one could at least refer to that; but now, what? Am I quite unworthy to share your plans?

'Write me a good long letter, or, better still, answer this in person. You know Alfred will be delighted. He says he'd have married you if he had seen you first, and I tell him I wish he had. There is nothing like a complete understanding between husband and wife.

'How I run on! and how difficult it is to be serious on paper! I so often want to tell you of the sense of rest and peace one gets in wandering about these old churches. They make our modern self-assertiveness so vulgar. I thank God every day I live that I belong to the great age-long wave of adoration that produced such concrete prayers as these cathedrals and pictures and statues. O Judith, can't you see that this is eternal and your little sects and schisms and sciences mere passing fancies? Can't you see that a good woman has only to *be*, and that her influence is as much needed in our walk of life as in any other?—Your affectionate sister,

FRANCES TRAQUAIR.'

Judith's face as she read was like a landscape on an April day. When she had finished, she went to her writing-table and wrote:—

'MY DEAR FRANCES,—I am sitting in a commonplace parlour high above the narrow street, looking out on the tiles of the houses opposite. Mid-winter has brought us some good honest *sleet*, which throws into momentary relief the groups of swarthy chimney-pots. There must be so many people at the present moment in a similar position that I doubt whether the experience would appeal strongly to *Blackwood*, but, if he fails to rise to your shimmering olives, it might be worth while for me to try him with something sterner.

'It is depressing to hear that one has not fulfilled the promise of one's youth; and yet all the nicest people one knows are in the same box. I quite see that it would be a convenience to you to label me Artist, Member of School Board, Wife, even Nurse; but I can't honestly hold out the hope that you will ever be able to do it. "I would write on the lintel of my door-post *Whim*. I hope it is something better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation."

'Is this unfair? Well, dear, I will be as explicit as ever you like. At the present moment I am learning dispensing. You don't know what that means? It means working behind a counter—not a shop-counter—in a big apron and sleeves. Twice a week we make up stock mixtures, pills, and bella-donna plasters,—quite a work of art this last, I assure you. On the remaining days women and children come to see the

doctors and to have their prescriptions made up. They—the patients—look upon it as a sort of club, and chat away quietly in the frankest manner possible. *This I call seeing life*, though I confess there is more oil than wine about it. You know I always did cultivate life for the sake of its by-products.

‘By the way, talking of by-products, I must tell you what happened one day at the Dispensary. A woman came in whom I had not seen there before, but the more I looked at her, the more sure I was that I had seen her somewhere; and she, oddly enough, seemed unable to keep her eyes off me. Finally, I asked to see her card, and then it flashed on me,—“Elizabeth Jenkins.” You remember Jenkins who used to be with us, and who went to Darley Castle? A strange creature, silent as the grave. Her face worked quite painfully when I spoke to her. We don’t encourage tears at the Dispensary, so I asked her to come and have tea with me, and tell me all about it.

‘Poor old soul! (*N.B.*—She is fifty-five now, though we thought her ninety in those days.) She had saved up a good deal, and relatives in Scotland persuaded her that she couldn’t invest it better than in furnishing a flat near the University, and taking student lodgers. I suppose her relatives thought her flat would be a nice little *pied-à-terre* for them. Anyhow she followed their advice, but she couldn’t get the right kind of young men. They had friends in, drinking to all hours, and they didn’t pay their rent, and they broke one leg off her sofa, and propped it up with the Family Bible! I had the curiosity to look and see how the doctor diagnosed her case, and was not surprised to see “incipient melancholia?” following certain definite and more prosaic symptoms.

‘Well, I made short work of that incipient melancholia. I was not very comfortable in the rooms I was in, so I got her flat papered and painted, refurnished a couple of rooms, and moved in as soon as possible. Ostensibly she is my landlady, but of course I am really responsible. It is a perfectly ideal arrangement. She cooks well, takes excellent care of me, and—as of old—is silent as the grave.

‘Quite a pretty story?

‘So much for the Dispensary.

‘I have to take a Chemistry class too, of course, at the Women’s Medical School—such a quaint old place!—and other classes later. Also I swell the number of *real* ladies to

whom a university professor is lecturing on Political Economy—a subject which, I should think, is almost as good as a husband for clipping one's wings.

'You see, dear, I can say nothing which could not easily be turned into ridicule. The scheme of things seems to me very puzzling, and I don't feel sure that we are justified in saying, This is God's will. Mind, I only say I don't feel sure. It *may* be God's Will. Which of us could eat a good dinner with a hungry child unfed in the room? Yet is not that just what we are all doing? How do we expect the hungry child will be fed? Do we expect a hand with a loaf to pierce the clouds? Hundreds of people, you will tell me, have done more harm than good in trying to mend matters. True, true; *but the hungry child is there.*

'You see that for once I give you my thoughts in the making. I tell you frankly that I don't see what to do; but I seem to see what not to do, and that is to wrap oneself up in a fog of conventionalities that blind one to the existence of difficulties—of realities rather. I have no scheme. My fellow-creatures seem to me very plucky and good, and I want to get down among them. I want to learn life, and I can't learn it at afternoon teas and dinner parties. I am not now living among the very poor; but at least my neighbours are not a collection of mirrors so arranged as to reflect one another.

'Honestly, I think you had better give me up. I have thought the matter out all round, and I mean to be of use how I can and where I can, leaving my reputation to take care of itself.

'What about the example to young girls? Oh, my dear, must we *all* be an example to young girls? Can't one be spared here and there? Mind you, I quite see that if one gives up being an example to young girls, one has to pay the penalty. Good-bye for ever to even the most innocent larking.

'Balderdash! I hear you say: and Alfred bites his bushy moustache, and says deprecatingly, "Nice girl, nice girl! Can't you find a husband for her, Francie?"

'I am so fond of you both. I do wish I could be a credit to you.—Your affectionate sister,
JUDITH LEMAISTRE.'

CHAPTER IX

A BRAG AND CHALLENGE

A SHARP frost was setting in, but the lochs were not yet bearing, and there was a grand turn-out of the Young Men's Debating Society to hear a lecture on some subject of great immediate interest. The adjective 'Young' was at all times subject to liberal interpretation, and to-night the audience included not a few who had crossed the brow of the hill. But those who were mature in years were at least young in spirit, and the chapel hall was all athrob with expectation.

The clock struck the hour, and the minutes passed on, gaily at first, and then with an accompaniment of shuffling, stamping, and thumping which the convener of such gatherings understands too well. The speaker had not arrived. Mr. Scrymgeour's manner passed to unknown heights of urbanity; he seemed positively to enjoy the menacing strains of the Students' Chorus. But he too was doomed to disappointment. Just as the meeting was getting really out of hand, a messenger arrived to say that the speaker had slipped on the ice, and had hurt himself so seriously that the delivery of the lecture was out of the question.

An expression of kindly concern from the older men was well-nigh drowned in the exclamation of chagrin and disappointment which represented more accurately the feeling of the majority. On an ordinary occasion the meeting would have accepted the inevitable, and broken up placidly enough, but expectation to-night had run high, and disappointment was proportionately keen. There was a general move, and benches were pushed roughly aside as the members reached out for their coats and hats. Mr. Scrymgeour's peaceful voice rose above the grating and grumbling, and he calmly produced the bijou lemon-coloured syllabus from his waistcoat pocket.

'It's a cold night,' he said, 'and I don't see why we should have our walk for nothing. I note that the subject of discus-

sion for our next meeting is—let me see——’ He carefully adjusted a gold-rimmed eye-glass and read with deliberation, “*Whether is Tennyson or Browning the greater poet?*” As the two gentlemen who have undertaken the rôles of Achilles and Agamemnon are both present, it occurs to me that they may feel sufficiently at home in their subject to proceed.’

He spoke with great apparent seriousness, but the meeting seemed to find the suggestion replete with humour.

‘Good Lord!’ said Achilles, turning white. The paper in question was his first, and it rightly seemed to him the most important thing in the world at the moment.

Agamemnon took the situation more calmly. ‘Thanks awfully,’ he said; ‘extempore speaking never was my special gift. Haven’t read a line of Browning yet,’ he confided to his immediate circle. ‘Only put my name down because I thought that would force me to find out what the fellow is driving at.’

‘In that case,’ proceeded Scrymgeour, ‘I would point out that a *contretemps* like the present forms a well-nigh unique encouragement to our promising young members. Genius is proverbially modest, and there are many who would think twice before calling together an audience like this in mid-winter.’ (‘Hear, hear!’ rather resentfully.) ‘But here we are already assembled. The deed is done. We only ask to be amused, instructed, or—or——’

‘Edified,’ suggested some one.

Mr. Scrymgeour accepted the suggestion gracefully. ‘Or edified,’ he agreed. ‘Some of our friends,’ eyeing a group of medicals, ‘are authorities on—on Vaccination——’

He was interrupted by a laugh, as he expected, and by a half audible, ‘Thinks himself awfully funny, doesn’t he?’

‘Others on Church History. Mr. Dalgleish?’

‘You go to blazes!’ said Dalgleish. He spoke under his breath, but the expression of his face was answer enough.

The meeting was quite good-tempered now, enjoying the fun, when, slowly and heavily, Mr. Dobbs rose to his feet. He was received with a groan.

‘In the absence of bidders for fame——’ he began.

‘Courage, man, don’t be too modest!’ threw in Jones.

‘Hush! Don’t you see? He speaks as ore who has attained.’

‘I would like to say a few words.’

There was a movement in the direction of the coats and

hats again. 'Old Dobbs' was genuinely respected as a consistent Christian, and for this reason his remarks were listened to as a rule with a sort of resentful patience; but this evening the meeting was demoralized. Fortunately undue sensitiveness was not one of Mr. Dobbs' disqualifications. 'Most of you will remember,' he said, 'a discussion held here some time ago on the subject of Religious Toleration. Extraordinary remarks were made by some of the members on that occasion, and I have since been reading a good deal on the subject. As—*failing amusement!*—our President does not altogether bar edification from the programme of the meeting, I propose to offer a few remarks on the subject of *Martin Luther and our Glorious Reformation.*'

At this there was a perfect roar of ironical cheering, during which Mr. Dobbs calmly stood his ground. It was some minutes before any voice could be heard, but at last the meeting gave Mr. Scrymgeour a chance.

'Long experience,' he said, 'has made me as sensitive to the feeling of a meeting as a thermometer is to the temperature of the medium in which it finds itself. Now—I may be mistaken, and many of you will think I have no sufficient warrant for the assertion, but my impression is that if this suggestion of Mr. Dobbs were put to the meeting it would not be accepted without some dissentient voices. (Loud laughter and 'Hear, hear!')

'But I would beg the few dissenters to have a moment's patience. A paper—on vaccination, on Browning, even on the Darwinian theory, requires some special knowledge. The discussion might flag for lack of it. But are we not all authorities on—on—Martin Luther and our glorious Reformation? Is not this the very foundation of our faith? Are not we Nonconformists the only true heirs of Brother Martin in that we did not withdraw our heads from one noose only to thrust them into another?'

'Ay, ay. We'd *nous* enough for that.'

The speaker was a person of no importance. Mr. Scrymgeour looked at him severely. 'I believe I have Dr. Johnson's authority for saying that the man who would make a pun would pick a pocket. Let me remind you that the President can only be responsible for articles of value specially committed to his care. We can rely on Mr. Dobbs to be brief (Oh, oh!) and who knows but that the subsequent discussion may prove to be the most brilliant—even—in the

annals of our Society. I propose that Mr. Dobbs be invited to proceed.'

With a good-natured laugh and a shrug of the shoulders, the company resigned itself in the hope of some good guerrilla warfare later on.

Mr. Dobbs said very much what he had been expected to say, and, although few were ready to admit the fact, he certainly succeeded in impressing the company with his knowledge of the period he was discussing. He succeeded incidentally, too, in rousing a strong spirit of opposition among his hearers. Given the knowledge of half-a-dozen relevant facts, and a fair proportion of the audience would have been only too glad to enter the lists against him. But the discussion had found them unprepared. The challenger was well-armed, and the Catholic point of view was represented mainly by a lacuna in the education of these earnest Protestants.

'Let us shift the ground a little,' said one ingenious spirit, 'and ask what Martin Luther would have said *now*? What was the logical outcome of his teaching?' As the obvious answer to this was a statement of the speaker's own well-known views, the line of argument was not encouraged, Mr. Dobbs proving specially obdurate. 'History,' he said with unexpected terseness, 'is not l—logical.'

A learned-looking man in the background rose, in the name of Hegel, to protest against this dictum. Now the name of Hegel at this Debating Society was a *cul-de-sac*. When the discussion got in there, most people knew that there was nothing for it but to wait till the discussion came out again.

There was an awkward pause, broken only by suppressed talk and laughter, and then—to everybody's surprise, but most of all to his own—Dagleish sprang to his feet.

In some respects his position was an enviable one. He was a genuine lover of history; he had recently come into the inspiring possession of a new system of grouping, a new 'framework'; and, like Mr. Dobbs, he had been induced by the recent debate on Toleration to study the whole question afresh. He had, of course, been brought up with a strong protestant bias, and it was only natural that the pendulum should take a fine sweep in the other direction. All this did not prevent his being exceedingly nervous, and for a minute or two he could scarcely find his voice.

'Can he speak?' asked some one in an undertone.

The Sunday-School superintendent bethought himself of the Good Samaritan, and shook his head; but herein he showed less knowledge of humanity than worthy Miss Brown, who at least realized that 'you never can tell from the first effort whether a body has the gift or no.'

For Dagleish had something to say, and he was determined to say it. He had not yet acquired Debating Society English; but, the first difficulty over, he threw out his thoughts in well-turned sentences. I will not profess that his main interest was truth; if circumstances had thrown him into a Roman Catholic debating society, his line of argument would have been surprisingly different. His main objects were to confute Mr. Dobbs, to make out a rattling good case, and incidentally to state nothing as a fact that could bring his veracity into disrepute.

'We have just refused,' he said, 'to consider in so many words what Martin Luther would have said now; but it seems to me that is just what we all habitually do. We judge Luther by what we are pleased to think he would have said had he been present at our Debating Society to-night. If the Reformation had brought us only what the Reformers asked for *then*, would it have been a Reformation at all? I gravely doubt it. As our President says, we shou^d have withdrawn our necks from one noose only to t^hrust them into another. It was the controversy, the ferment, that did good, and for that we have to thank one party as well as the other. In reading the history of the time with an open mind, one is almost tempted to think that by argument as well as by fire Catholic and Protestant destroyed each other, and that Truth—the truth by which we live to-day—rose phœnix-like from the ashes.'

Like a war-whoop the audacious words rang through the room. Even in the privileged seclusion of the Debating Society no one had ever gone so far as this. A maiden speech, however, must be encouraged at all costs, and the daring flight of metaphor which brought the exordium to a close drew forth a burst of applause, tempered by strong signs of disapproval from a small minority. When the speaker was allowed to proceed he had acquired remarkable self-possession.

'I don't want to overstate my case.' ('Hear, hear!' ironically from Mr. Dobbs.) 'But who can deny that, if the Reformers had foreseen all that was to come of their action, they would

have been as much aghast as the Catholics themselves. In the letter they sounded free. In the spirit they too were hidebound by scholasticism. "There is no infallible Church," they said. "There is an infallible book. It is God's message to the individual soul; but find in it anything different from what we find and—you are damned."

There was a smothered laugh in the background, that inevitable 'crackling of thorns under a pot' for which a more experienced speaker would have been prepared. Dalglish frowned, and nearly lost his thread, but a moment later he found it triumphantly.

"This is Truth," said the Catholics. The speaker drew a small circle on the blackboard. 'And "This is Truth," said the Reformers.' He drew another small circle. 'Was either Truth? God forbid! *This* was Truth.' He made a great sweep with his arm to indicate that the blackboard would not contain it. 'But the Reformers did much for us all, and let us be thankful to them for it. They taught us to say, "That"—he pointed to the first circle—"That anyhow is not the whic'e of Truth;" and if, in the course of time, we have turned their weapons against themselves, if we have rebelled against their own scholastic narrowness, at least we have never forgotten that it was they who taught us to rebel. They initiated the modern spirit without realizing what they were doing. "They builded better than they knew." You remember Cromwell? "A man never mounts so high as when he knows not whither he is going."'

Quotations seemed to rush upon his memory, and he paused to take breath. 'As regards these martyr stories,' he went on, with an irritating little smile of superiority, as if he might safely lay aside his armour now, 'it is just as well to face facts. Did the Reformers avail themselves of their supremacy to manifest the spirit of Christ? Has not the Catholic Church its roll of martyrs too? Does not the cry go up from them, as well as from ourselves,

"Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints!"

'But, if we are to tell martyr stories, don't let us forget to reckon among them the story of—Blessed Edmund Campion.' He paused again, and then very simply he told how passionately Campion had believed in the truth of his views, how he had offered to debate the questions at issue with any Protestant doctors, how his wish had been granted only when his

body was torn and enfeebled with torture and imprisonment, and so on to the tragic, heroic end.

The famous *Brag and Challenge*—read the other day for the first time—had appealed keenly to the boy's sense of chivalry, and he knew bits of it by heart. 'While we have a man left to enjoy your Tyburn,' he rolled out with fine irony, and he quoted the last paragraph almost word for word:—

"'If these my offers be refused and my endeavours can take no place, and I having run thousands of miles to do you good shall be rewarded with rigour—I have no more to say but to recommend your case and mine to Almighty God the searcher of hearts, who send us His grace and set us at accord before the day of payment, to the intent we may at last be friends in heaven, where all injuries shall be forgotten.'"

The story was new to most, if not to all, of his hearers, and so, of course, appealed to them more than similar stories on the other side with which they had been familiar since childhood. Many of them, too, were ready for the return swing of the pendulum, and, where they had no great stake in the contest, they all loved fairplay. Of course the interest of the discussion was purely academic. Mr. Dobbs and the old deacons might—in the terrors of the imagination—see the fires of Smithfield relighted; but almost every man present here would have said with Carlyle, 'Would that there were no greater danger to our Europe than the poor old Pope's revival!' Science, evolution—here were dangers if you like, but the dear old Scarlet Lady! Why, she was on her death-bed. It was almost a case of *De mortuis nil*. Give the poor thing decent burial!

There was no lack of speakers now. Some were anxious to know where they could find the story of Edmund Campion; a few conservatives protested with real dignity against Mr. Dalgleish's treatment of 'the infallible book'; and one enquiring spirit was eager to hear how Mr. Dalgleish would define 'the truth by which we live to-day.'

Dalgleish would gladly have accepted the challenge, but one of the older men rose to protest. 'Mr. Dalgleish has indicated,' he said, pointing to the blackboard, 'that Catholic and Protestant alike drew too small a circle. Is he likely to mend matters by drawing a third circle of his own? The Church in the past has been driven to define, define, always to define,—to precipitate out her conclusions. We are not so hard pressed now-a-days. Why not let the solution stand a bit?

A BRAG AND CHALLENGE 63

“Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum,
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?”

The discussion might well have closed on this restful note, but Mr. Dobbs had still to reply. He was the one man in the room who had not followed the story of the saintly Jesuit, and this was unfortunate, for it would certainly have given him more food for reflection than did the earlier part of Dalgleish's speech. As a matter of fact, he had been hard at work, whittling his reply into a pointed shape, and in this not very difficult task he succeeded fairly well.

‘Mr. Dalgleish,’ he said, ‘has certainly drawn my attention to a serious omission in my own remarks, an omission which I am glad to have an opportunity of supplying. In trying humbly to sum up the debt we owe to Martin Luther, I omitted to include one crowning benefit, the fact that—ignorantly indeed, but not quite ineffectively—the great Reformer was privileged to prepare the way for—(or—) Mr. Dobbs strove to avoid the vernacular, but it was no use; mere southern English would have snapped beneath the weight of his meaning—*‘for the like of Mr. Dalgleish!’*’

Groans and hisses, laughter and applause, greeted this obvious, if well-merited, retort; but beyond all doubt Dalgleish had won his spurs. Like the rest of the world, the Society was always on the look-out for the rising man, and Dalgleish, with his combined shyness and pluck, took the general fancy mightily. ‘*Savoir être prêt, grande chose.*’ No display of knowledge would have impressed the audience at all if Dalgleish had known the subject of discussion beforehand; but this was apparently the sort of thing he kept on tap, and he seemed to care as much about his Blessed Edmund Campion—there was something strangely seductive in the name to young men who had been reared to strict moderation of language—as most people cared about the parliamentary or municipal candidate of the moment.

So congratulations were as plentiful as flowers in May, and there was flattery even in the warnings and reproofs of the wise. In the excitement of the moment Dalgleish accepted no fewer than three invitations to supper.

‘Oh, we had great doings, I assure you,’ he said in a glow of boyish triumph next day to Miss Lemaistre. It had

become no uncommon thing for him to drop into her flat about four o'clock in the afternoon. 'I wonder you didn't see the difference in me the moment I entered the room.'

'I did,' she responded drily.

'Nonsense. I hope I'm not such an ass. It was all a fluke, you know. Happened to be a subject they knew nothing about. If any one had thrown Father Parsons at my head, I should have been a dead man. When the old deacons hear of it, I shall get well sat upon, you may depend.'

'You'll help yourself to sugar, won't you? Where was your great genius, Mr.—?'

'Thatcher?' The lad's face fell. 'He wasn't there. Jones declares he reached the door just in time to hear Dobbs announce the subject of his remarks, and forthwith bethought himself of an engagement elsewhere.'

'Which side would he have taken?'

Dalglish laughed. 'I don't fancy he would have backed Dobbs.'

'He would have backed his own conscience, I suppose.'

'Oh, of course,' said Dalglish conventionally.

'It wouldn't be of course at all with most people. In any dispute of the sort there are many who wish to be clever, some who wish to be kind, a few who wish to be loyal, and —*perhaps—one*—who wishes to be just and true.'

'Oh, I hope it is not so bad as that,' he said uneasily. He wondered why she was so down on him. He had got into the way of counting on her sympathy, and he had so looked forward to telling her of his success.

And, indeed, even while giving utterance to her high sentiments, Judith had an uncomfortable sense of her own smallness. When we have resolved, at some personal sacrifice, to be of real service to a fellow creature, it is a little disconcerting to have our mission taken out of our hands; and, although she would have done much to save Dalglish from one of his real fits of depression, she was woman enough to like him best when he was not quite on the mountain height. She had considerable experience of the kind of person who requires of us a constant change of mental focus, but the strain of adaptation was always irksome to her.

She was taken aback too by the freshness and force of the

lad's views. He had developed his argument since the evening before, and he stated it now with a firmness of conviction that amazed her. A few weeks before he had been a mere schoolboy to whom she had given a helping hand, and now, on this line of thought at least, he had overshot her. How had he travelled? With the patient, plodding feet of study and reasoning?—or with the swift, sure wings of imagination? Was it possible that the lad was a genius?

Had his mind, she wondered, developed all of a piece,—or had it shot out in this direction only? And, if so, how long would it be before he succeeded in making the length of this night the radius of his whole circle?

For some minutes she sat musing. 'And what does your mother say to it all?'

His face clouded. 'Oh, I wouldn't worry her with all this. She wouldn't understand.'

'I should think, with that face, she would understand anything. I have thought of her so much. I never saw a woman's face that impressed me as hers does. If I were an artist, I should like to paint her as some grand historic character, but I can't think of any one with just that—that *balance* of strength and sweetness.'

'I know,' he said softly; 'but you see she was brought up to all the old views, and there's no use in disturbing them now. She thinks her cathedral would fall if you took the scaffolding away.'

'But your sister is young.'

He laughed. '*She'll* never change. If you knew her! So happy in her little round.'

'I picture her sometimes as a sort of Eugénie de Guérin.—How did you come by that cough?'

Dalgleish had never heard of Eugénie de Guérin, and Miss Lemaistre's question seemed an odd change of subject. 'It is nothing,' he said lightly. 'I went home with Scrymgeour last night, and his rooms were infernally hot.'

It struck Miss Lemaistre that 'infernally' was a new word in his vocabulary.

'Will you let me prescribe for it? I am a bit of an apothecary, you know.'

He laughed, well-pleased. 'With all my heart!'

So they parted excellent friends once more.

CHAPTER X

THE SENIOR DEACON

'PROMISING young fellow, that of yours,' said the senior deacon to old Miss Brown. He had met her on the North Bridge, and had filled her cup to overflowing by stopping to speak. 'I hear he had quite an ovation at the Debating Society.' He shook his kind old head mischievously. 'But you mustn't encourage him in these heresies of his.'

'Me, sir!' she cried, inwardly congratulating herself that she was all in Sabbath array. 'I'm forever at him, but it's no use while those who ought to know better are leading him astray.'

He patted her hand with two well-gloved fingers, and nodded reassuringly. Miss Brown's father had been a man of standing in the chapel, and Mr. Blount never allowed himself to forget the fact. 'I wouldn't worry him too much,' he said. 'We must let the colts have their fling. They settle down sure enough. I had ideas myself when I was his age.'

'You, sir!' she cried in surprise.

He looked at her critically. He was a shrewd man, but he never felt that he had got quite to the bottom of this simple woman.

'There was none o' that when he came up,' she went on piteously. 'He was a real edification, so well brought up!'

'It's a great change, you see. Tied to his mother's apron strings, you may say, till now down there in the country, and all at once set free in a great city,' he swept his hand suggestively over the parapet of the bridge. 'Thrown with men of all kinds in a big University——'

'If it was only the University,' she wailed. 'I doot whiles there's ideas in the chapel too.'

He drew down his brows as he looked at her. 'You mustn't take the Debating Society too seriously,' he said. 'They meet to sharpen their wits, not to share their most

solemn beliefs. It is but a game after all. They talk very differently when I get them *tête-à-tête* in a fatherly way.'

'Do they *though?*' she said innocently, as if this were information indeed.

'Some of these scientific theories they discuss are simply an insult to their Creator.' He looked genuinely uneasy. 'But they must discuss in order to confute. *First* prove all things, my dear Miss Brown, *then* hold fast that which is good.'

'So I've aye thought, but I heard it said by a *member of the church*,—her voice sank to a mysterious whisper,—'that Mr. Dalgleish had knocked Mr. Dobbs into a cocked hat. The flippant words contrasted oddly with her anxious face. She seemed torn by the conflicting emotions of pride in her lodger and alarm for her swaying creed.

'Pooh, pooh,' he said. 'I wouldn't think much of that. Trust them to back the little ane. This good old human nature of ours is very fond of the good old stories, and I notice there are two of which it never tires. The one is *Cinderella* and the other is *David and Goliath*. Half the stories that take the public by storm are a variation of one or the other. Not that I would rank the two together for a moment,' he hastened to add.

The idea pleased him, but, when he made use of it next, he substituted *Jack the Giant-Killer* for *David and Goliath*.

He made a move to pass on, but Miss Brown felt herself a person of importance now, and this opportunity was too good to be lost.

'I hope it's no indiscretion to mention it,' she said, 'but that Mr. Thatcher is what I call real unsettling; and Mr. Dalgleish fair worships the ground he walks on. I aye hoped he'd take to Mr. Dobbs—'

'Thatcher is a good man.' The senior deacon spoke judicially.

'Ay, that's the mischief,' she agreed composedly.

'Comes of a good stock. His father is the real old Puritan type. Nerve enough to go to the stake for his convictions, or to send another man. It would break his heart if his son really went astray.' Mr. Blount sighed. 'But, after all, though the work of an office-bearer is a heavy responsibility—a heavy responsibility in these days, I think I would rather a young man allowed himself some latitude in matters of doctrine than in matters of morals.'

'Deed, yes, sir,' said she.

'Nay, it's not so self-evident, it's not so self-evident. For let us suppose that a young man even gets drunk——'

'Oh, sir, a church member!'

'I've known it happen even to a church member. Let us suppose a young man even gets drunk—he at least sees that he is a sinner—he gives one some leverage to work with; but pride of intellect—pride of intellect is an impregnable barricade. How to break it down? That is the problem we office-bearers have to face.'

Had the senior deacon ever heard of Luther's awful sermon about '*des Teufels Braut, Ratio*'?

'You'll excuse my mentioning it, I am sure, sir; but is there anything fresh about—about the Discipline Case?'

His figure stiffened significantly, and she saw she had committed an indiscretion. 'Ah,' he said, 'we must hope for the best, we must hope for the best.'

The lines of his face were very stern as he gazed across the valley down below, but a moment later he was the kindly, prosperous citizen again.

'Well, well, well,' he said cheerily. 'They're good lads, good lads. In any case my advice to you is this. Don't take too much notice. Young folks think old folks fools, and'—is it possible that the senior deacon *winked*?—'old folks know young folks are fools.'

'I'm sure, sir, he thinks me terrible old-fashioned.'

He nodded gravely. 'I know, I know. When folks are young, I say to myself, "Patience, patience. There's no use talking. If they're worth anything, they'll see the point some day. If they are not worth anything, what does their opinion matter?" Let their "ideas" alone. They may be a mortal complaint, but they're oftenest just the measles. He's a clever lad—I'll never forget a sermon I heard from his father—we'll all be proud of him yet.'

'That will we, sir!'

'My girls have sent him an invitation to a little party, just a few young friends.' His voice dropped to a whisper. 'And you'll get your hamper as usual.'

His face grew stern again as he turned away, for the words recalled another worry—such a little one, a mere mosquito-bite. He was the most indulgent father in the world, and his daughters were dear, good girls, but there had been a battle royal between him and them that morning. Three years ago these 'parties' had been such simple things—drawing-room games and music, with a first-rate supper, and

a hymn before breaking up, and every one so happy. But now the girls wanted dancing, and nothing but dancing would do. Games were so childish, they said, and he, who in the order of nature was old enough to be their grandfather, could laugh so heartily still over blindman's buff or musical chairs!

'Is it fitting to have prayers or even to sing a hymn after dancing?' he had asked.

'Perhaps not,' they had agreed, seizing their opportunity; 'but why sing the hymn?'

They always had prayers at night. Why should the custom be omitted as if they were ashamed of it?

'Now, father,' the eldest girl had said, the one who had been at a boarding-school, 'do you think any one can look at you and doubt that we have family prayers?'

'Then why omit them?'

'Is there not a time to mourn and a time to dance?'

Did she think to overcome him with *that* weapon? The return strokes came swift and sure. 'But in *everything* by prayer with thanksgiving.' 'Is any merry, let him sing psalms.'

The girls ventured no reply, but agreed afterwards that whatever one's own tastes might be, the singing of psalms was a poor way of making other people merry.

The most trying thing was that he saw their point of view. He had watched them so carefully since his wife had died, the mother who had been bonnier than the best of them, though always so ready to yield to his slightest wish. If he could only have talked it all over with her! Life did grow very difficult. What had he not done for those girls compared with what his parents had done for him? How would the young folks have stood the old régime? He recalled the day when, a mere boy, he had taken ten pounds, his first earnings, home to his mother, and she had given him sixpence for himself!

The social question, too, was a growing perplexity. He himself found no difficulty in crossing clefts and chasms, and yet he could not fail to see that the clefts and chasms grew deeper. The invitation list for the party had brought that home to his mind. There had been friction on that subject too, and his bonny girls had chafed at the duty of dressing even for one night with an eye to the weaker brethren. Yet the girls were good girls—none better—God bless them!

With a sigh he allowed his thoughts to drift back to the Debating Society. In the old days, as now, there had been

young men who were 'unsettling,' and young men who were the hope of the church; but whereas they had once been two sharply defined types, it seemed that now the two types were rolled into one. They had to be thankful in these days for young men who were earnest in the main, even if they showed a strong tendency to kick over the traces, like Thatcher and Dalgleish. There were so many who thought attendance at chapel on Sunday was all that could be required of them. Was it false shame, or was it indifference that made them so loath to put their hand to the plough? As if false shame could exist without indifference! Scrymgeour was keen, but the senior deacon suspected him of carrying more sail than ballast, as Carlyle said of a famous Edinburgh professor; and a little bird had told Mr. Blount a sad tale about a week in Paris not long ago, a week concerning which Scrymgeour had shown no disposition to be frank. 'Ay, ay,' thought shrewd Mr. Blount, 'he kept his thumb on that.'

Menzies? Well, he feared Menzies was a soft, and sotts were a class for whom there was assuredly a home in heaven, but not much opening on earth. Samuel Dobbs was all very well; but would Samuel Dobbs ever take the place, alike in the church and in the world, that he, Ralph Blount, had taken? Had Nature broken the mould in which men like himself were made? It seemed so at times, and it seemed a terrible pity. The more reason for working while it was called to-day.

If Christian principles can be successfully applied in a big bustling nonconformist chapel, they can be successfully applied anywhere, and Mr. Blount was very far from being one of those who consider the problem an insoluble one. On the contrary, he had in his mind's eye a detailed picture of a beautiful social organism,—the Christian man, the Christian family, the Christian community. He was prepared most loyally to play his part if only others would play theirs, and indeed, on the whole, he played it loyally, whether others did so or not. Of course, he knew too much of human nature to expect perfection of himself, much less of others. He only asked that each man should take his proper place in the perspective of the picture, and that was just what they seemed so unwilling to do. Mr. Blount was a sanguine man who relied on the promises, but he scarcely conceived that their fulfilment might come about otherwise than in the realization of his dream.

And meanwhile the young men saw visions,

CHAPTER XI

AN EVENING PARTY

In these later days, when novelists compass sea and land in search of matter wherewith to tempt the jaded appetite of the reader, when they annihilate space and time, throw up the curtain of the invisible, and, like Joshua of old, bid the very sun to stand still, how can I hope that my tiny microcosm will arrest attention for a moment? And yet, if it be a microcosm indeed, the element of romance cannot be wanting, and a reader here and there will understand that for no daring navigator of old did the pulse of life beat quicker than it did in these days for poor young Dugald Dalgleish. What if he lived high up on a dingy stair? Were not magic doors opening in every direction? Were not the hidden places rich with buried treasure? For what, do you think, would he have bartered his stake in life, his unknown future? For any deed accomplished in the past that the world rates high?—for the record of a Columbus, a Newton, a Garibaldi? Not he. All these things are *done*, can be valued and appraised, but who shall set a bound to the romance of the unknown?

So it is in the morning of life when the harvest stretches golden, and the sickle throws back its gleam to the sun. Too surely the night cometh when the dreamer creeps home tired, when he would be thankful, perhaps, if he could but lay claim to the sheaves of the *dullest* day-labourer of them all.

‘O Mr. Dalgleish, I do wish you would admit ladies to your Debating Society!’ cried Rosie Blount. ‘I hear it was most exciting. Do tell us all about it.’

He laughed and shook his head. ‘Would you have me stick a pin in my own toy balloon? I am far too grateful to your kindly informant for that.’

He was pleased with the turn of the phrase. He had been keenly conscious of bungling hitherto.

It was the evening of the deacon's party, and a capital party it was. I suppose they call them 'At Homes' now, if indeed they have not developed into full-blown dances; and no doubt the present generation has well-nigh forgotten the days when every inch of ground was hotly contested between the old and the young. The great roomy house seemed built for hospitality, and Mr. Blount was never so happy as when its doors were thrown open wide. The girls might be simply dressed in accordance with chapel traditions, but, to the unpractised eye, they looked like a galaxy of fairies. Delicious tea and cakes warmed everybody's heart, and then the amusements of the evening began. They formed a regular patchwork of compromise, those amusements, but the outsider would never have suspected anything of the kind; and, if some of the guests were aware of discords lost in a prevailing harmony, their shrewdness was to be explained on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief,—they had come through similar experiences themselves.

There was a good deal of amateur music. Girls, most of whom seemed innocent alike of talent and training, were urged to perform on the piano; but, as no one felt compelled to listen, the resulting discomfort, except in very glaring cases, was confined mainly to themselves. That, too, we have changed—for the better no doubt. They come straight from the Leipzig conservatorium now, and ask one or two highly technical questions about the piano before they begin to adjust the music-stool.

It was the girl one thought of in the old days, rather than the performance, and, if she took her failure gracefully, it ranked quite as high as a success, and, of course, every one loved her the better for it.

'Now don't you give in,' Mr. Blount would say if she retired in discomfiture, 'don't give in. Never sit down and look at a failure. You'll get it right next time.'

There were musicians in the microcosm of course, a strange little clique, rather out of drawing with the rest of the community. It was not easy to attract them to tea-parties; but, when funds were wanted for some special end, they could be induced sometimes to give a real concert in the chapel. Then well-trained voices chimed together in fine old glees, and the strings called forth laughter and weeping by turns,

and the organ shook off its Sabbath-day restraint and pealed forth great waves of sound that rolled up royally among the rafters.

That was music indeed.

But if the music to-night was worth little, the conversation that drowned it might be worth a good deal. Not *as* conversation perhaps, for in truth it seldom attained the perfect *via media* between obvious facetiousness and serious discussion. Mr. Dobbs had a fixed idea that humour was the gift required of him on these occasions, and humour was a thing of which, in his happiest moment, he could produce only a tolerable counterfeit. Thatcher, on the other hand, seldom exerted himself to speak on any subject which did not interest him; there seemed to be no reason why he should, for women were glad as a rule to meet him on any ground he chose. It was impossible to come in contact with Thatcher and not feel that one had talked to him. He was so much in earnest, his face was so full of thought, that he communicated virtue of some kind without knowing it. But by him, as well as by others, books of the hour and questions of the hour were often discussed with flashes of humour or insight, oftener still with a fine sense of background,—the background of the eternal realities.

To-night Thatcher was in one of his rare gay humours, full of jest that never quite lost touch with earnestness, full of earnestness that kept breaking into sunny ripples of jest. You could have told in a moment had you entered the room that he was the guest who 'counted' most, you could have foreseen that, when the company dispersed, the first question in many homes would be, 'Was Thatcher there?'

Scrymgeour watched his opportunity to buttonhole the great man in a quiet corner. As President of the Debating Society he was instant in season and out of season. 'You won't fail us on Monday?' he said. 'The discussion depends on you.'

'No; I'll be there. But you seem to have got on swimmingly without me last time.'

Scrymgeour lowered his voice. He was always at his best with Thatcher. He had gone to him once in real trouble, and now in his society the cheap urbanity was apt to drop away. 'Dagleish spoke uncommonly well. Extravagant, of course, but the real thing and no mistake. You have been the making of that young man.'

'I!' The speaker seemed to consider the compliment a doubtful one.

'You heard about his speech?'

'He told me himself. He takes my breath away.'

Scrymgeour laughed. 'He did that pretty effectually for all of us. But you would have backed him if you had been there.'

'Should I?'

'Wouldn't you?'

'I wonder.' Thatcher drew down his brows, his gaiety all gone. 'Do you know the mood—a passing one fortunately—in which every path seems to end in a *cul-de-sac*—every line of thought in a *reductio ad absurdum*? It is a mere trick of the mind no doubt; but it requires a real effort to shake it off sometimes. An infallible church? We've done away with that. An infallible book? We are attacking it on every side. A scheme of salvation?—the whole stock-in-trade of countless preachers?' He smiled and his eyes grew dreamy.

"Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man."

What then? Is every lad to preach what seems good in his own eyes? If so, *what have our fathers lived for?*

'What indeed?' But Scrymgeour was staggered. This was not what the Debating Society expected from Thatcher.

But apparently Thatcher cared very little what the Debating Society expected. 'I suppose,' he went on reflectively, 'I suppose Martineau would say, in effect, that all essential religious truth is capable of verification in the experience of the individual saint. That is all very well for Martineau. But are they saints, these young men who come up? Deprive them of their infallible book, give them the right to apply the knife to it where they can't agree, and what remains—I won't say of *it*, but of *them*? I heard one preach last Sunday, and all through the sermon I was thinking of the words, "*Springs without water and mists driven by the wind.*"'

A crash of chords on the piano died into unexpected silence, and Thatcher's low level voice carried farther than he had intended. There was surely no voice in the world so capable of expressing the dismalness of the outer void, the drifting isolation of a lost soul. A number of people dropped

their own conversation and tried to hear. Now it was nothing uncommon at a chapel party to have quiet little eddies of conversation even more serious than this; but by common consent the two men slipped out into the deserted hall.

'You wouldn't do away with the Higher Criticism?'

'No, no,' said Thatcher hastily. 'God forbid! I wish sometimes we could keep it on its heights. What we want is scholarship.' He smiled rather drearily. 'And there is another *reductio ad absurdum* if you like.'

'Scholarship—yes; but you have always pleaded for liberty.'

'I know, I know; but this boy takes my breath away. He makes me wonder where it is all going to end.'

'It begins and ends at present in a devout worship of you.'

Thatcher raised his hands in half-amused deprecation. 'Don't, don't! I have enough on my shoulders without that.'

'A word from you is all he wants, just to steady him a bit.'

'From me?'

'Yes. Have you said all this to him?'

Thatcher nodded. 'Last night. All this and more. But what's the use? Look!'

Through the open doorway of the drawing-room they could see Dalgleish talking enthusiastically, the centre of an eager group.

Thatcher smiled whimsically. 'The tiger has licked blood, you see.'

His companion sighed, but not for Dalgleish. There was much that was good and genuine in Scrymgeour, notwithstanding his talk and his pose, notwithstanding that week in Paris on which he had 'kept his thumb.' He had a real belief in Thatcher as a leader, and he did not like to hear the trumpet give an uncertain sound.

But there was to be no more intimate conversation that night. The decks were being cleared for the inevitable impromptu charade, and Mr. Scrymgeour was indispensable. No one in the chapel could vie with his gifts in this direction. His most successful parts this winter were a society lady and a deaf country lout, and, as his fame in these rôles had gone abroad and everybody wanted to see them, much time was wasted in the endeavour to find a word whose syllables could be so strained as to make room for both. The bolder spirits

rebelled bitterly against this bondage of the word; but of course it was indispensable; but for that the performance would have been mere play-acting.

If the patchwork of compromise, as regarded the amusements of the evening, showed anywhere a want of adjustment, a tendency to drag and strain, it was of course in the matter of the dancing. A number of staid square dances paved the way gradually for a Highland schottische. At waltzing Mr. Blount resolutely drew the line; and, if some of his guests were sufficiently enthusiastic to adapt the steps of the waltz to the jerky strains of the schottische, if they muttered *Slow!* in a stage whisper each time they passed the piano, Mr. Blount was too innocent to find it out. But he was no fool: he looked with disapproving eyes at the more languid dancers, and expressed a strong preference for those who threw 'most spirit' into the business on foot.

His face cleared as if by magic when the piano took on the honest skirling notes of the pipes, and the company broke into a good Scottish reel. The solid floor shook, the chandelier jingled ominously, and barbaric whoops and cries roused the echoes of a respectable neighbourhood that was fast settling to sleep. Mr. Blount's keen kindly eyes scanned the dancers one by one. A work of art is a good Scottish reel. It is no easy matter to let yourself go with sufficient abandonment and yet keep yourself well in hand, and Mr. Blount's sense of the fitting was not too easily satisfied. *Ex pede Herculem.* It was in moments such as these that he formed some of his shrewd judgments about the young people. A great revealer of character is a good Scottish reel.

Frankly weary and out of breath, the dancers resumed their seats, and just at the psychological—or physiological—moment supper was announced.

Such a supper! Dalgleish had never seen anything like it. Garnished meats and pinnacles of confectionery blazed with all the colours of the rainbow, and the sparkle and gleam and glow gave many present a new standard by which to measure magnificence.

And now, when hearts beat high and barriers of self-consciousness were broken down, was the time for unaccompanied songs and recitations. A number of grand old favourites were given with gusto, and then, not without much pressing, Dalgleish found himself in possession of the boards. He had drunk nothing stronger than lemonade, but he had

spent the evening in an atmosphere of adulation and well-being that was more potent than any wine. He could not be induced to sing, but he recited Longfellow's 'Legend Beautiful' with great verve and feeling. The poem was new to Mr. Blount; and it went straight home to his sound old heart.

'Well done, my boy!' he said kindly. 'What was that last line again?'

“‘Had'st thou gone——?’”

He repeated it wrong several times in spite of Dagleish's promptings, and, when at last he got it right, he turned to his daughter with beaming, beseeching face.

'Now, Rosie, my dear, I *do* think we might have a hymn!'

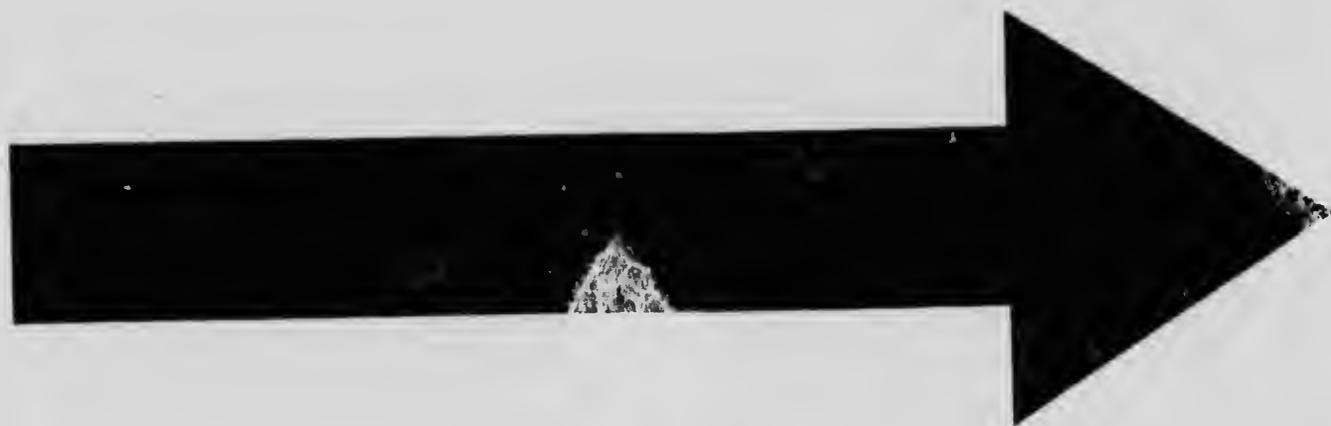
'Yes, do!' cried Dagleish impulsively in the sheer gladness of his heart.

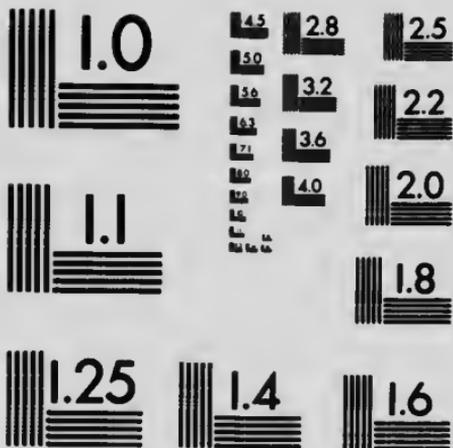
Mr. Blount smiled on him affectionately, and Rosie admired him more than ever for falling in so prettily with an old man's whim.

So they sang 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' as that was a hymn they were all sure to know, and they sang it with a will. The young men may have smiled next day at the recollection, but to-night they were not ashamed to throw in a strong bass and tenor; and Rosie's clear soprano rang out in a way that gladdened her father's heart.

There was a final tempest of talk, and the party broke up in high good humour.

Mr. Blount, alone in his room, prayed devoutly for all the young folks, and fell asleep with an easy conscience and a happy heart.





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CHAPTER XII

DUDDINGSTON

It was a hard winter for the poor, and Mr. Blount's charity purse, as he called it, had many times to be replenished from receptacles less definitely labelled. But a hard winter for the poor in Edinburgh—if it be only hard enough—is a memorable time for the young and strong. In fact an Edinburgh man is practically too old to be of much account if he has ceased to reckon among the main landmarks of life the winters when Duddingston is bearing.

I do not mean the years when the daring skim round the margin of the lake, and the police are at hand with ropes and danger-posts to warn the foolhardy from the ever-widening jaws that yawn to devour them,—when the ice is blue and half-hearted, with horrid cracks and pools of sloppy water on its surface. I mean the years when the arms of the frost stretch out like the pillars of the universe, when Arthur's Seat itself seems scarcely more enduring than that solid snow-white plain, when the depth of water beneath is a forgotten myth, like the fire at the centre of the earth.

Did we take our pleasures sadly, we Edinburgh folk in those days? Ask Dalgleish what he felt when, with a gay party of students, he neared the border of the loch one sunny Saturday morning.

The landscape lay in an opalescent light; the Lion was white with snow, save for its scarp and cliffs, and Samson's Ribs loomed awful in contrasting blackness.

'*You're* all right!' laughed one of the students, as Dalgleish looked up with a shudder. 'They're doomed to fall when the wisest man passes by. That's why the Greek professor never comes this way. But you'll see all the rest of the world.'

So it seemed. Below all was life and stir—a gay Scottish carnival. The beautiful drive was thronged with carriages,

and the troop of skaters seemed to move forward in a great wave of expectancy, like the tribes going up to Jerusalem. A gay brass band made the whole air merry, and merrier still in the pauses was the great *swirr* of the skates.

'You don't mean to say that's Duddingston?' asked Dalgleish, who had only seen the loch from the top of Arthur's Seat on an autumn morning,—a dreamy mirror of beauty with swans half asleep on its surface.

'Even so,' said a man of the world. 'Looks like a big day at Tattersall's.'

'Or a revival meeting,' suggested some one whose sphere of experience was more limited.

Skates were not then quite the inexpensive toys they have since become, so the picture that Saturday morning was a dainty one. Bright cheeks, gay bits of colour and flying tresses of hair relieved the prevailing blackness. But some great slides near the margin had been burnished into terrifying brightness by the heavily-nailed shoes of a party of working-men, who went thundering down one after another with the momentum of a locomotive.

On the shore were a few rough tables, from which uninviting old women dispensed cakes, oranges, and lemonade. The big aprons concealed capacious pockets from which black bottles were to appear surreptitiously as the day wore on, when the gentry had gone, and dusk, with kindred kindly influences, had veiled the eyes of the police.

For I write of a time gone by.

But why anticipate night and gloom when as yet the day is young, when, arm-in-arm with a class-mate, Dalgleish is skimming gay as a swallow over the ice?

'Pon my soul, you've made good use of your time, old man,' said his companion, when a third or fourth gracious greeting fell to our young friend's share. 'I believe I came up the very day you did, and none of the luck runs my way. I wish you'd tell me how the trick is done.'

'What church do you go to?' was the apparently irrelevant response.

Dalgleish expected to be told that the lad had not gone at all, but to his surprise he was given the name of a well-known and popular minister.

'Honour bright?'

'Honour bright.'

'And nobody has spoken to you?'

'Not a cheep. Why would they?'

But at that moment, as Dagleish was about to expound the idea of brotherhood according to Miss Lemaistre, his eye fell on Rosie Blount, looking radiantly bonny in her costly furs, and to all intents and purposes his fellow-student dropped out of existence. Miss Blount and her sisters had just arrived under somewhat grim chaperonage, but Dagleish took the outworks by storm, and was graciously allowed five minutes spin.

Of course the five minutes lengthened themselves out unconscionably, and they both said how lovely it all was, and she told him she had serious thoughts of becoming a Companion of St. George, and she laughed—discreetly—at the women who could not skate, and he—less discreetly—at the men who were showing off.

When they passed the great slides, his eye fell on a lady, who was deep in conversation with a couple of working-men: the strange thing was that they were talking and she listening with obviously unfeigned interest. The blood came rushing to his face as he lifted his hat.

'Who's that?' asked Miss Rosie with an audacity that took his breath away.

'A friend of mine.'

'What is she talking to those men for?'

'Shall we skate back and ask her?'

'Nonsense! Perhaps she was giving them tracts. I used to do that when I first joined the church.' She sighed pensively.

Dagleish laughed outright at the notion of Miss Lemaistre engaged in such an occupation. 'What made you give up the practice?' he asked.

A gleam of mischief shot from the pensive eyes. 'I suppose Father would say,

' "The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon."

Not that he approved of my distributing tracts.'

'No? How was that?'

She blushed—adorably, as the real old novelists used to say—and Dagleish wished blushes had sufficient sense of the fitting to confine themselves to regions they could so beautify.

'Oh, well—a young man said something horrid one day.'

'The brute!' Dagleish looked ready to devour the young man.

'Not herrid, you know—but silly.'

'What did he say?'

He noticed the length of her eyelashes now that they shaded her cheek. She looked very timid, but her mother's premature death, and her father's position in the city and in the chapel, had made it a duty for her to overcome a good deal of her natural shyness, and there is no operation in the world so delicate as the adjustment of the balance in such a case.

'Oh, it was just nonsense. . . . He said, if I would give him a kiss, he would read as many tracts as I liked.'

'Confound him!'

'Wasn't it stupid? Of course I didn't tell Father, but it came to his ears, and—well, he wasn't pleased.'

'I should think he just wasn't.'

There was clearly no harm in Rosie, for at this juncture she drifted into another subject.

'But do ask that lady what she was talking about.'

'I shouldr.'t dare,' said Dalgleish gravely.

'It's not that I'm curious. I only want to know.'

He laughed, and she went on gaily—'She seemed so awfully interested, and they're quite common men.'

'Quite, I thought; but they may be Felix Holts or Alton Locker for all we know.'

'Oh, how *awfully* interesting! Would you—' she glanced up coaxingly—'would you *mind* introducing me to her?'

He laughed again and shook his head. 'I don't know her well enough.'

'I thought you said she was a friend.'

He reflected that he had been a fool to lay himself open to this.

'Well,' he said, 'don't you think there are people with whom one has a sort of feeling of friendship from the first?'

She looked up slowly and gravely into his eyes, and he would not have been human if he had not just pressed the hand he held. 'Don't you think so?' he repeated, with a new inflection in his voice.

And she blushed more charmingly than ever as she answered, 'Yes.'

At that moment the chaperon claimed her own, and Dalgleish felt bound to lift his hat and retire.

'I say, old chap,' said his fellow-student when they met again, 'you omitted to mention what church *you* go to. You bet I'll be there to-morrow, even if it's a Quaker conventicle.'

Dagleish skated back to look for Miss Lemaistre, but she was not to be found. It was very absurd, of course, but he had somehow taken for granted that she would still 'e there when he parted from Rosie, and he felt angry and resentful. With great sweeping strokes he ranged the lake in search of her, but his quest was in vain.

As he chased hither and thither, he came more than once upon the big doctor whom he had met some time before in Thatcher's rooms. Dr. Heriot was accompanied by a lady aged about twelve, with golden curls and a bright pelisse—a lady who seemed to appreciate her knight's society amazingly. They formed a prettier pair than most lovers—such unconscious trust on the one side, such unconscious strength and chivalry on the other. Dagleish could not but admire the man's athletic build and fine muscular movement now that he saw him in big surroundings, and it occurred to him, almost for the first time, that the tongue after all is not the only organ of expression.

Luncheon time made a great difference in the *personnel* of the skaters, but the crowd grew denser than ever. Carriages rolled away one after another, and the carnival went steadily down in the social scale. There were gracious greetings still for Dugald Dagleish—shy greetings now, preceded by a little glance of enquiry—from the shop-girls and others who had seen him at chapel meetings, and scarcely knew whether they were to reckon a brother in the Lord as an acquaintance or no. It was good to see their pleasure when he lifted his hat.

Voices rose louder as darkness fell. Snatches of song and laughter came ringing over the ice. Lamps gleamed and torches flared; and high over all the moon rose royally into a cloudless sky.

Ah, yes! we reckon as landmarks still the years when Duddingston was bearing.

CHAPTER XIII

FAIRYLAND

THE frost held for weeks, and skating came to seem a necessity of life to the young and strong. But at length Nature bethought herself of the old and weak. The wind veered round to the south, and there was a faint breath of Spring in the air.

'The ice will bear for one night more,' thought the young folks, eager as ever to drain the cup to the dregs, and a band of them turned their steps to the Queen's Park. But Spring was faithful to her promise, the ground grew moist under their feet as they went, and before they reached the gates of the park they met the vanguard of the returning revellers. 'Warned off.' 'One or two accidents already.' 'Police in full force.' 'Old woman taken up for shebeening.'

'I told you so,' said Dalgleish ungenerously to the friend who had tempted him out. He had got into arrears with his classwork, and it was a relief to blame somebody.

'Beastly sell, isn't it? Never mind; we'll do a pit at the theatre. They say there's a rattling good piece on just now.'

'Not I. I'm going to swot.'

'Nonsense, man. The night's wasted now. You'll never settle. I'll stand treat. I had a windfall yesterday.'

Dalgleish shook his head.

'What's your objection?'

Ay, what was his objection? That was precisely the question he was putting to himself. He had been well warned before he came to Edinburgh about the temptations of city life, and, of course, the theatre was the very centre and hotbed of those temptations. It had never till this moment occurred to him that he might actually some day find himself within its precincts; and, although the idea certainly crossed his mind now, he felt quite sure that it would be rejected in another moment.

'A short cut to the bottomless pit.'

He shivered as the words recurred to his mind; yet, come to think of it, what a lot of rot those old stagers had talked that night! One learned to question many things that had been branded into one's mind and heart. Was it not the essence of narrow-mindedness to condemn what one had never seen? Dalgleish had not lived in Edinburgh for months without finding out that some 'good' people went to the theatre. He tried to think of any actual 'converted Christian' who had gone, but drifted on to ask in the light of his more recent thought, what *was* a converted Christian? In the old days at home he had often argued in his mind the question whether Shakespeare had ever been converted, making the most of every scrap of evidence for the defence. Some of the scraps were admirable and almost conclusive—if one could only shut one's eyes to the mass of evidence that pointed the other way.

Miss Lemaistre saw no harm in the theatre. She had startled him more than once in the early days by the *sang-froid* with which she had referred to leading actors; but Miss Lemaistre, he felt sure, had not been converted. She was not a mere backslider; she was *unconverted*. Thatcher? No; Thatcher would not go to the theatre. The liberties he claimed were all for conscience and thought—never for mere pleasure.

Was it mere pleasure, or was it an education——?

At this moment his companion drew up at the end of a short queue, and Dalgleish stood still by his side. He did not mean to go in, but he meant to have a sufficient reason for not going in, and at present the argument in his mind was incomplete.

Meanwhile the waiting playgoers formed an argument he had not thought of. They were not precisely the class one would see in such a position now, for public opinion in Edinburgh has changed considerably since those days; but for the most part they were commonplace respectable citizens, eagerly looking forward to the evening's entertainment, and quite determined not to let a moment's absent-mindedness rob them of their place in the queue. Dalgleish would not have been human if he had not instinctively held his own. No one about him seemed in the least degree conscious of wrongdoing, and he felt a new resentment against his own puritan upbringing, a new envy of those who were 'alive without the law.'

Suddenly the pressure in front gave way, and the argument was still incomplete. A minute later Dalglish found himself in the theatre.

Well, it was squalid enough to be reassuring. There was no suggestion of the primrose path here. The seats in the Latin classroom were scarcely less seductive.

At that moment the lights were turned up, and as the young men pressed forward to the front, the general effect of crimson and gold, together with the gay figures on the act-drop, produced their due effect on unaccustomed eyes. Dalglish's heart thumped as if it would choke him. The sheer physical discomfort of it was almost unendurable.

Sudden death in the theatre. He pictured his grey-haired mother reading the final paragraph next day. What was he doing here? It never meant to come. It was all a mistake. He had been trapped into it.

What should he see when the curtain rolled up? He had heard of 'nude women' on the boards—he to whom powder and rouge spelt sin.

The reserved seats were filling steadily. A sudden tumult of shouting, whistling, and stamping from the gallery overhead hailed the arrival of the Greek professor; and then Dalglish took courage. His riotous pulse settled into a rhythm that at least was measurable. What harm could there be if the Greek professor was there? Was he not on the side of the angels? Had he not given utterance to all sorts of improving sentiments about life and self-culture?

At that moment the orchestra emerged from their discords into an air half pathetic, half dancing. The act-drop quivered with intolerable suggestiveness. A second later it rose slowly and steadily. One could not move now without making a fool of oneself. For time and eternity the die was cast.

Dalglish instinctively closed his eyes. When he opened them again they rested on nothing scandalous or shocking. The stage was occupied by a simple, idyllic, domestic scene—a morning-room full of sunshine, opening on a conservatory that was all aglow with blossom. The staging was far from elaborate, but the suggested elegance and luxury were delightful to the boy, the dainty gowns of the ladies were a revelation.

They seemed to have been in the middle of a conversation when the curtain rose, and they talked on somewhat stagily

till—just when somebody had said nothing in particular—a tempest of applause shook the house. For a moment Dalgleish could not guess the cause of it; then he realized that a woman had entered the conservatory, had paused to caress a flower, and was standing now in the middle of the stage. It struck him as odd that she made no effort to go on with her part. She stood there quite simply, yielding herself up to the enthusiastic admiration of the house. She wore a rose-pink gown, and her brown hair was knotted loosely at the nape of her neck. She looked as young and fresh as the dawn, and her eyes had a shy appeal that took men's hearts by storm.

Surely such applause would turn a more experienced head. But no; it ceased, and there she was unscathed—simple, winning, gracious, exquisite in every gesture and motion—a woman after Nature's own heart.

No need to follow the story step by step. It was a simple, touching, impossible melodrama, a sequence of events as much to be preferred to real life as, in the eyes of children, are the sweets in the gaily-decked shop to the dinner waiting at home. What chances that woman got to show the goodness that lay hidden deep in her wayward being! How splendidly she rose to the last demand of self-sacrifice and heroism! Many a plain wife and sister present must have wished that she too could live in a world where loving hearts may

‘dare
To seem as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they are.’

Before the play was over, many women were in tears, and Dalgleish's face was tense with emotion. He felt for the first time the full force of womanhood.

‘Thanks awfully,’ he said to his friend, as they made their way out into the street. ‘I'd no idea it was like that.’

‘Ripping, isn't she?’

The glowing gaslight fell on a dense crowd in front of the theatre. There was a calling of numbers, a trampling of horses' feet, a fierce competition for cabs. Human nature was not at its loveliest. On the outskirts of the crowd a tall man had paused to look on sadly, scornfully, but not unkindly, at the struggle and confusion. In a moment Dalgleish recognized the white firm face of the Pastor. He had just been telling himself, in the conventional phrase, that such a

play was worth a dozen sermons, but the old tradition was very strong. He tried to escape the keen dark eyes in vain. His step faltered, the light died out of his eyes, and his face looked jaded and weary with the heat and excitement of the theatre.

The Pastor's heart yearned over the lad. He longed to lay a fatherly hand on his shoulder, and walk with him down the street. But he saw that Dalgleish was not alone. He held out his hand. 'Ah, Dalgleish, good evening,' he said, unwilling to shame the lad before his friend. His face said a great deal more, but Dalgleish could not meet it. Shamed and impenitent, he lifted his cap, and strode off with his companion into the dark.

The pastor was on the way home from the deathbed of one of his flock. He was one of the inconsistent Christians who are always depressed by death, but the depression of the deathbed was nothing to what he felt now.

So this was the outcome of their debates, their free discussion, their tampering with the powers they did not understand. What nonsense men talked now-a-days about the harmlessness of doubt, the duty of enquiry, of free thought! Let them see Dalgleish as he was two months ago, and as he was to-night. What need was there of farther testimony?

He laughed a little bitterly at the fashionable toy doubt—shared by so many—which rejoices in itself. The doubt he knew was a sterner thing than that.

For the Pastor was no man of straw. He had his hours of darkness too; hours 'when life has lost its meaning and seems shrivelled into a span, when the grave appears to be the end of all, human goodness nothing but a name, and the sky above this universe a dead expanse, black with the void from which God Himself has disappeared.'

Yes, he knew such hours, and he fought with them strenuously as brave men of every creed have fought in all generations. But to court such conflict, to talk about it, to play with it, to pride oneself on it, that was an attitude he could not even conceive.

It made him scornful and indignant, though he knew too well that scorn and indignation were not the means to win the young folk back. A great sense of his own powerlessness and sinfulness came upon him as he neared his own house.

His wife was waiting for him by the fire, eager and loving, but he looked at her with unseeing eyes, and, refusing to eat, passed into the cold dark study and shut the door.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEXT DAY

DALGLEISH hastened home, thankful to escape from his companion. Life had indeed opened out to-night in a way that made his head swim. He fancied that the familiar aspect of his room would steady him. Was it not full of sane old friends,—his Euclid, his Plato, his Hallam? But he had no sooner thrown his skates on the table, than he realized that his room would not hold him, and, slipping from the house again like a thief, he hurried downstairs.

There was no moon to-night, but the temperature had risen steadily, and he felt as if body and soul were alike bathing in a great sunlit pool.

He did not reason, nor think; in a sense he did not even feel: he had passed out of the limits of his own personality into a strange land of Faerie, the very existence of which he had never guessed till now.

He wandered about the streets till sheer physical exhaustion drove him home. The door opened to his latchkey, but was caught on the chain.

'Confound her!' he said under his breath, but before he could make up his mind to ring, his landlady appeared, looking weird and toothless in the dim light. She had forgotten all about her own appearance, but her motherly eyes were quick to notice his. He was worn-out, dishevelled, and distraught, but at least, thank God, he was sober.

'Eh, laddie,' she cried, 'I was feared ye had gone doon-hill!'

For the first time her ugliness struck him as an outrage. The closeness of the house and the faint smell of whisky made him sick. He thought of the dainty morning-room on the stage, with the gay flowers in the background.

'Nonsense!' he said. 'What on earth made you put up the chain? I'm sure we're no great catch, you and I!'

The words were harmless enough, though unli' e him, but his laugh hurt her like a knife.

'There's a nice piece of cold ham,' she said apologetically. There are some women who instinctively make the apology that should have been made to them. 'I thought it would make a change from the porridge like.'

Her experience of young men was extensive, and the fruit of her philosophy was *Principiis obsta*. She had not slept, and her eyes were heavy. But before returning to bed, she let herself slowly down on her stiff old knees.

'Lord Jesus,' she sobbed, 'whaur are ye? Safe i' the fold wi' the ninety an' nine, an' that puir lamb oot i' the wilder: ss his lane? Awa' an' seek him, Lord!' She broke down altogether, and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. 'He'll no heed an auld woman like me. Awa' an' seek him! Bring him hame this vera night'—there was a long pause—'*an' no anither drap shall enter the hoose*—so help me God!'

It was a quaint composition, and yet surly there was something in it of the real stuff o' prayer.

Dagleish fell asleep almost immediately, and awoke within an hour to a grim overwhelming realization of the Pastor's stern kind face rising above the crowd of pleasure-seekers. It was typical—that face—of the puritan world in which he had been brought up, the world of which, for the matter of that, he was a denizen still. There was no shaking it off like a dream. In all probability the Pastor would call this very day, and, although he might be evaded this time, sooner or later he had to be faced. Dagleish felt at the moment as if he would rather meet the whole diaconate. He had so revered—nay, he *did* so reverence the Pastor. He thought he would gladly have discussed the whole question with him,—if it were possible to discuss one's position with a man for whom space was a thing of two dimensions!

Then, like Aphrodite from the waves, the radiant vision rose before his eyes, and the black shadows fell away.

So it went on, hour after hour, and there was no more sleep that night. For the first time since the prehistoric days when there was a rash or a sore throat to account for the unusual experience, Dagleish rose feeling utterly unequal to the day's work.

In the course of the lecture on Rhetoric he found himself nodding, and sat up with a start, looking very much ashamed of himself. Fortunately only one man noticed the momentary

lapse, and he, as it chanced, was a good sort. Only one *man*; but the Olympian professor, descending from the daïs in his robes, paused for a moment as he passed out. 'You look tired to-day,' he said kindly. 'There is nothing to be gained, you know, by working *too* hard.'

Dalgleish blushed furiously all over his face. The professor had never spoken to him before, and he felt so flattered that for one moment he actually wished he could talk his difficulty over with this great being, whose rugged face seemed to have seen so much,—this poet who spoke so wisely of the poets of long ago. It might have been the most sensible act of the lad's life had he done so; but unfortunately such an impulse is one of the few on which youth very rarely acts.

Every event of the day only brought home to him more and more the extent to which the old landmarks were submerged. The old interests proved so tame, the women he had known so colourless and cold. He had fancied himself half in love with Miss Lemaistre, half in love with Rosie Blount, and now the one woman in the world was the one he had seen for the first time the night before, the woman who chose to be known as Ianthe Brooke.

The Pastor did not call, though his first thought on awaking had been of Dalgleish on the threshold of the theatre. It was a thought that darkened his outlook for the day; but he did not mean to act in a hurry. If he was lacking in intellectual sympathy for the young people of his congregation, he had a very keen appreciation of their instinctive reserve in talking to older men; and he knew one was apt to lose more than one gained by trying to force their hand. He strove to make them feel that if they wanted him, *he was there*; he was more than ready to meet them half-way, but, except in cases of downright sin, he would go no farther. His attitude in this matter was instinctive, as such an attitude always is; but of course it had been accentuated by the readiness with which the coarser fibred of the deacons rushed into the fray. They told him to his face that he was not sufficiently 'per-r-sonal' in his methods, and they felt aggrieved when he smiled quietly, and retreated yet a little farther into his background of proud reserve.

How far he fell short of his aims he alone knew, but in such matters at least he would be judged by his peers.

Probably his decision not to speak to Dalgleish was a wise

one, for the lad spent some time and thought in the choice of weapons by which he could keep the Pastor at arm's-length. He did not mean to commit himself on questions of dogma or morals. Such a course of action might lead to far-reaching consequences. He meant to treat the whole matter quite airily. Yes, it was true; he had dropped into the theatre with a friend. He had not mistaken it for a church or a picture gallery. He knew a number of the chapel members went to the theatre, and he wanted to know for himself what there was to condemn. It was very unlikely—this with an air of lofty detachment—that he would go again.

In his own mental picture of the discussion he carried matters with a high hand and gained an easy victory. He almost overlooked the little question of personality which goes for so much more in such encounters than mere words. Had the two men actually met at this time, the chances are that, so far as the argument was concerned, Dalgleish would have surrendered without terms; but, although the Pastor would have rejoiced over his victory, it does not follow that the victory would have been a thing to be desired. Youth must live its own life and gain its own experience, and a short cut at the moment may only mean a lengthy *détour* later in the day.

And so I think the Pastor was right in keeping aloof, though, when all is said, he probably blamed himself. Implicit reasoning in the hands of such men is apt to be a surer weapon than explicit reasoning.

All that day Miss Brown prided herself on holding her peace, but she sighed repeatedly, and her every tone and gesture were a reproach. Dalgleish resolved to tell her that he would have to 'make other arrangements'; but on his more than limited allowance he was well aware that such arrangements would not be easy. The lady of the awakening soul, too, looked at him from the wall with an air of child-like surprise that was maddening. He could not read *out* of the picture all that for months he had been reading *into* it.

'Oh, stow that!' he cried at last. 'I'd like to slap your silly face.' In sheer despair he turned to the other pictures on the walls, and found himself face to face with the Prodigal Son!

As night came on he looked at the clock and wondered

why the Pastor had not come. Oddly enough it did not strike him that the Pastor might have other things to do. The story of the Good Shepherd had sunk too deeply into his bone and marrow for that. He did not funk the interview in the least, he told himself, but it was one of the things that, like a visit to the dentist, occupy a juster perspective in the past than in the future.

Unconsciously he rehearsed that conclusive statement of his. 'It is very unlikely that I shall go again,' he said aloud, and he repeated the remark several times within a very short period. Then he drew the *Scotsman* towards him. A daily paper was one of the luxuries he owed to Miss Lemaistre's neighbourliness. Yes; his eyes had not deceived him; she was to be there again to-night, and the queue was already beginning to form.

A moment later he stood in the lobby, cap in hand. 'I'm going out, Miss Brown,' he called bravely. 'I shan't be late; but don't put up the chain, and in heaven's name don't sit up. Good night!'

Miss Brown tumbled out of her shabby old arm-chair and hurried into the hall; but she was greeted only by the bang of the flat door, the clatter of flying feet, and the far away bang down below. She strained her ears to follow his steps till they were lost in the crowd, and then she went back to the kitchen and burst into tears.

Was this the answer to her prayers?

CHAPTER XV

LANDMARKS

MISS LEMAISTRE was deep in her Roscoe that evening when Jenkins looked in to ask if she could see Miss Brown. With a sigh Judith thought of her class examination on the morrow. The Fates seemed to have decreed that she never should shine in a class examination.

'By all means,' she said resignedly.

'I'm weel aware I shouldna be here,' was her visitor's disarming salutation.

'I wonder why not?'

The answer came with unexpected intensity. 'It's leaning on an arm o' flesh, that's what it is.'

Miss Lemaistre's face brightened into a good open smile. 'There are many worse things than an arm of flesh,—if it doesn't give way under your weight.'

Miss Brown was not listening.

'But I've reason to think you're discreet.'

'I am so glad,' Judith sighed. 'I've doubts about it myself sometimes.'

'And in any case you're fond of the lad,—you'd wish him well.'

'Mr. Dalglish?' Judith would not stickle over a word.

'Yes, certainly, I like Mr. Dalglish.'

'I doot you're no a church member, but maybe you're aware that when a body falls, it's no a mere question o' where they fell *to*. It's a question o' where they fell *from*.'

'That's perfectly true.'

'If a man steals, for instance, it may be quite a different sin like from what it would be if another body stole.'

Miss Lemaistre reflected how much more interesting this was than ordinary drawing-room conversation. 'But you were talking of Mr. Dalglish.'

'Ay, I'm coming to him. Maybe you've no had much experience o' these student lads.'

'You certainly have the advantage of me in that respect. But I don't need to be told that Mr. Dagleish is above the average in many ways.'

Miss Brown's face lighted up, then darkened suggestively. 'What hour do you think he cam' in the morn?'

Miss Lemaistre shook her head.

'*The clock chappit twa as he cam ower the threshold.*'

'I wouldn't worry about that. He was probably calling on a friend, and the time slipped away.'

Miss Brown produced a crumpled sheet of paper with dismal triumph. '*That,*' said she, 'is the friend he was calling on!'

Miss Lemaistre did not study the paper with intensity, as her companion had done half an hour before. She glanced at it with just such an air of casual recognition as Miss Brown might have vouchsafed to an old *Monthly Visitor*.

'I suppose you mean he was at the theatre,' she said reflectively. 'The performance was over soon after eleven. I happen to know because I was there myself.'

Miss Brown rose to her feet with dignity. 'I was weel aware I had made a mistake,' she said severely.

'Sit down,' said Judith good-humouredly. 'You may as well get the good of the mistake now it's made. You're not afraid of my corrupting your morals in five minutes' interview?'

'*Mine?*'

'I thought it better to tell you the truth, just to clear the ground. Lying has always seemed to me an over-rated expedient.'

'A what?'

Miss Lemaistre nodded, as if to indicate that she had spokenly advisedly. 'It is quite a useful expedient,' she said, 'on occasion, but I think it is overdone. Tell me now why you object to his going to the theatre.'

Miss Brown opened her lips to speak, then heaved a great sigh. 'Eh, lassie, what w'y would I waste my breath on you an' your theeries. I've no lived for naethin'. I've seen *time an' again* that the theayter is the first step on the doonward road. What wi' the drink, an' what wi' they brazen-faced hussies——' She sighed again. 'Wha' manner o' woman do ye fancy is this *Ianthie Brooke?*' The stage name was pronounced with biting sarcasm.

'Miss Brooke is a very gifted woman,' said Judith coldly;

'and I heard yesterday that she is a "good" woman—good I mean even in our cheap little conventional sense of the word.'

Miss Brown's face turned a deeper crimson. 'Cheap!' she said, 'cheap! It may come cheap to the like o' you to be "good"; you who have all to lose by a false step an' naethin' to gain. If Mr. Dalgleish—as clean-mirred a lad as iver stepped from his mither's hame, mind ye—keeps himself "good," do ye think it'll come cheaply to him?'

Miss Lemaistre did not answer. She was one of the modern women who decline to go through life blindfold, but for other reasons she was a good deal taken aback. She had expected to have this discussion all her own way.

'But maybe you're one o' them that would encourage a lad to sow his wild oats. You're young yet, an' vera like you havena been called upon to assist at the harvest.'

Still there was no answer.

Miss Brown gathered courage. 'I'm tempted whiles to think that it's the like o' you that does mair harm than a' the "Ianthie Brookes" i' the warld. You make the first steps easy. You lure lads ower the line. Dinna forget there's a curse on them that removes their neighbour's landmark!'

Here was an interpretation of Scripture that surpassed even the methods, literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical, of the later schoolmen, but Judith scarcely recognized the quotation. She was sitting quietly with her hands clasped round her knee. Her face was rather pale. For the first time in her life she felt the puritan atmosphere, saw the puritan point of view.

'You have certainly stated your case, very plainly——'

'An' whose examp' was I following? Who said she would tell the truth, just to clear the ground?'

Judith nodded gravely.—'and you're a very clever woman. But it's my turn now. Did you ever know a young man come up to the University, and *not* get his landmarks removed?'

Miss Brown threw up her hands. 'Why, heaps an' heaps! The best part o' our chapel members has niver crossed the threshold o' the theayter.'

'How do you know?' The restraint of Judith's manner was in strong contrast to her visitor's excitement.

'There's a few I hae my dooc... about,' Miss Brown confessed candidly. 'That's to say, I'd no suspect them, but on

the ither han' I'd no answer for them. But I'd swear Mr. Dobbs has never been in a theayter, nor Mr. Menzies, nor Mr. Thatcher, nor——'

'Mr. Thatcher?' cross-examined Judith.

Miss Brown nodded defiantly. 'I'll no deny that his landmarks are a wee thing wobbly in some respects,' she confessed; 'but it's neither the world nor the flesh that's a temptation to him.'

She spoke with an odd certainty that carried conviction. Judith forgot her argument, and her hands drifted apart. 'How *can* you know?' she asked, with genuine human interest.

Miss Brown shook her head. She could not tell. If she had been pressed for an answer, she would have given a wrong one.

Miss Lemaistre returned to the point. 'I have admitted that you know more of these young students than I do; but at least I can answer for Mr. Dalgleish. He could not have come up to the University without having his landmarks removed. And is it desirable? You might as well put him under a glass case at once.'

Miss Brown leaned back in her chair, and folded her hands across her portly person. 'Ay,' she said, 'I ken that argument fine.'

'The argument may have been abused,' said Judith, goaded into some show of indignation at last; 'but that is no reason for denying it any weight at all. And then you must look at the matter from my point of view. I didn't ask Mr. Dalgleish to go to the theatre. I wasn't even aware that he had gone. But suppose I had? I wasn't brought up to think theatre-going a sin. Would you have had me act a lie, and pretend to see harm where I saw none?'

'The greater the responsibility o' them that brought you up!'

'I think we won't enter into that,' said Judith coldly. 'I owe a great deal to the theatre. It has always been to me a healthy source of amusement and education, a great help in shaking off little worries and cares.'

'Eh, ye pair thing!' The tone implied, as only the tone of a good and full-blooded Evangelical could imply, that the speaker was wont to have recourse to higher sources of consolation than this.

Judith looked her visitor full in the face. 'There are people,' she said, 'who in times of annoyance and pain can

always lay hold of the highest philosophic consolations. I confess I'm not one of them. *Are you?*'

Miss Brown's eyes fell, but the thought of her vow gave her courage. Had she not kept it for nigh on four-and-twenty hours? 'I'll no deny that the way is dark enough *whiles*,' she confessed; 'but that's no reason——'

'For falling into sin? No. My point is that theatre-going is no sin.' Miss Lemaistre rose and walked up and down the room, her hands clasped behind her. 'You have spoken to me pretty plainly, and, although I don't agree with you, I will think over what you have said. In the meantime you are woman enough to see that you have given me the right to speak plainly to you. Here is a young man, clever and highly impressionable, just waking up to the possibilities of life. If his father had lived and kept his health, the boy would have grown up in a pleasant home, with gracious, cultured women for his friends, drinking in beauty, and temperance, and self-control with every breath. As it is—what is his life? I have no doubt you give him abundant value for the pittance he pays you, but what does it amount to? Is it the life a creature like that is entitled to?'

Miss Brown faltered and then took courage. 'He has his pleasures,' she said almost defiantly. 'He has been at three or four tea-parties, and I can assure ye you're not the only woman that makes a work wi' him.'

Judith bit her lip, but there was nothing to be gained by losing her temper. 'If you pretend to think I flatter him,' she said, 'you're not the clever woman I took you for. You know as well as I do that I don't talk to *him* in this strain. In any case you may be sure of one thing. He *will see life* whatever you do to prevent it, and you won't do any good by making him feel himself a sinner.'

'*Five* tea-parties,' said Miss Brown, coming to the end of a calculation, 'and one *denner-party*—at the house of his professor!'

'As to sowing his wild oats,' Judith went on desperately, determined to be heard, 'that's another thing. At the theatre, as elsewhere, I suppose a man has to choose between walking in the Spirit and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.'

Miss Brown gasped for breath. Apparently the plain speaking was not to be all on one side.

'*Do you mean to tell me*,' she said, 'that it is possible for a man to walk in the Spirit—at the theatre?'

Judith hesitated. She had ransacked her mind for a quotation that would tell, and this one perhaps had committed her to more than she meant. But she thought of the 'power not ourselves which makes for righteousness,' and was reassured.

'If it is possible anywhere,' she said, 'I am sure it is possible in the theatre.'

Miss Brown looked at her doubtfully, and, when she returned to her own room, she stood for a moment deep in thought. 'She's honest,' she said, 'an' I'll no deny that she can tak' a tellin'; but I'm sair mista'en if she has so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost!'

Judith had great difficulty in returning to her Roscoe. She had an uncomfortable feeling that, contrary to all antecedent probability, Miss Brown had in some respects got the best of the argument. 'It's extraordinary,' she said, 'for of course she is entirely wrong. Interesting—to see another person's point of view like that. Poor boy! What a life they would lead him if they could! Still, one must not forget his upbringing and traditions. Perhaps he actually feels that he has sinned!' She laughed softly. 'I must be so wise, so wise. But what a comfort that he has me for a friend!'

With a real effort she gave her mind to her Roscoe, reflecting, for the fiftieth time, what an easy subject Chemistry would be if there were no such thing as Carbon.

CHAPTER XVI

BEWITCHED

As soon as the performance was over, Dalgleish strolled round the building, looking for the stage-door. From time to time he stopped to glance with unseeing eyes at a pretty woman or a fine pair of horses. It seemed to him that every one in the crowd must guess what he had in mind, and he kept turning round to assure himself that the grave eyes of the Pastor were not upon him.

He thought he should find a group of people waiting for the goddess to come out, and he had a stupid fancy that from the outer door he should look straight upon the sunlit stage; but the entrance, when he found it, was dimly lighted, deserted, and dreary. His own common stair was more lively. Glancing over his shoulder once more, he stepped, with an awful sense of daring, into the passage and up the gloomy staircase. The inner precincts were not more seductive. Planks of wood and shabby side-scenes were stacked in odd corners, and long ribbons of paper that had been trampled underfoot accentuated the general air of depressing *déshabille*. The lean, unwashed-looking man who leaned sleepily against the banister seemed the fitting spirit of the place. Dalgleish started guiltily at the sight of him.

‘Want anything?’

‘No, thank you, not to-night. I’m looking for a friend’; and, depressed more by the inanity of the remark than by its falsehood, he turned on his heel and ran back into the street.

The carriages had all gone, and the lights were being extinguished. From a gulf of darkness a shabby brougham emerged into view, and drew up at the stage-door. Should he go back and tell her—tell her——?

The blood went surging through his veins at the thought of his own audacity. He pictured her turning to him with

that gracious, wonderful smile of hers. 'Did you want to see me?' And he—what would he say? Would the chivalrous speech come ready, or would he blush and stammer, 'No, thank you, not to-night. I am looking for a friend'?

He laughed aloud in the silent streets at his own gaucherie, and, as the laugh rang in his ears, he wondered whether he was going mad. There were voices now on the stair. What a fool he had been to fancy she would come alone! In another moment he should see her.

But Dagleish did not wait that moment. He turned up the collar of his coat, and strode off in the direction of home.

Preoccupied though he was, he could not but be struck by the unwonted air of comfort in his eyrie. The fire was burning brightly; the ashes, for the first time in his experience, had been swept away; and, wonder of wonders!—a few cheap chrysanthemums adorned the supper-table. This led him on to notice the clean tablecloth, an unheard-of thing in the middle of the week, and the pathetic sprig of parsley that adorned the real dairy butter.

'Poor—old—soul!' he said drearily, as he grasped the significance of it all.

A note lay by his plate. Fortunately he did not grasp the significance of that.

'DEAR MR. DALGLEISH,—It seems a long time since I saw you. Will you come in and have tea with me to-morrow? I have got some new books. Yours sincerely,

'JUDITH LEMAISTRE.'

With a groan Dagleish buried his face in his hands. The note would have given him so much pleasure a few days before, and now—God forgive him!—he felt as if there were no one in the world whom he cared less to see than Miss Lemaistre. He wrote the answer before sitting down to supper.

'DEAR MISS LEMAISTRE,—It's awfully good of you to ask me; but the fact is I have been spending so much time on the ice that I've got behind with my work. I must grind now for all I'm worth. Yours sincerely,

'DUGALD DALGLEISH.'

'I suppose I ought to begin grinding at once,' he said to himself, and he laid an open book beside his plate; but lost ground is difficult to overtake, even when one brings a whole heart to the business. A dozen times Dalgleish dragged himself out of a dream, and then he fell asleep in good earnest.

He woke, feeling as if life contained no more sleep for him. The fire had gone out, and the gaslight looked weird and uncanny. He loosened his collar and picked up his note-book from the floor. Straightening a crumpled page, he noticed a smudge, as if something had been erased.

'What's this mess?' he said, catching at any straw that would occupy his mind. He rose to his feet and held the book close to the light. For a time the script seemed indecipherable, but slowly observation and memory solved the riddle together. The answer seemed to come like a flash.

*The heights by gr. * men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night.'

Dalgleish put the end of a pencil between his teeth, and sat for a long time looking fixedly across the room.

When afternoon came the next day, he almost wished he had not refused Miss Lemaistre's invitation. He felt like a ship in a storm, and the thought of her sanity gave him a restful sense of anchorage. 'Upon my soul,' he said, 'if I had lived a hundred years ago I should think I was bewitched.' It was a comfort to think that he had only to walk across the landing in order to get back to actual human life.

But as yet he was not quite sure that he wanted to break the spell. 'If I could only get a good night's sleep,' he said, 'I should feel all right.'

He made an honest effort to study, but, having achieved nothing at the end of an hour's effort and strain, he put aside his books and strolled down to Princes Street. Of course Edinburgh had lost something of its first glamour for him, and indeed his mood to-day was very different from that in which on a wild stormy night he had heard the far-off tumult in the Kirk o' Field. He turned to Princes Street

now because it was commonplace, because the shops were amusing, because he wanted to meet the ordinary people of his acquaintance. Miss Brown was ordinary enough, but, although she played the game manfully, actually brushing her hair and donning a decent gown at midday, she looked at him with eyes that knew, and he wanted eyes that did not know. What a fool he had been to refuse Miss Lemaistre's invitation!

But Fortune proved very kind. Dalgleish turned his face westward from the foot of the Mound, and before he had gone very far he met Rosie Blount on her way home from a lecture at Shandwick Place—Rosie Blount at her best, very smart in a nice new hat, very glad to see him, and very anxious to talk about *Piers the Plowman*. Might he turn back with her? Yes, indeed, and come home to tea. Father would be so pleased.

But 'Father' was a little too suggestive of actual life even for Dalgleish's taste at the moment. *Piers the Plowman* was better, and Rosie was a thoroughly jolly girl, but oh, so young, so innocent! What could a man find to say to a child like that? Dalgleish seemed to have lived twenty years since the night of the party.

'You know,' she was saying, *à propos* of *Piers the Plowman*, 'it's a real trial to me that Dad is so rich.' She did not think it necessary to add that the new hat she was wearing had been coaxed with some difficulty out of Dad that morning.

'I think I could bear up under a trial of that kind.'

'What do you think is the explanation of the story of the young man with great possessions?'

'Straightforward story enough, isn't it?'

'Yes; but *did he do it*.'

'Judging by my experience as one of the poor, I should say *not*.'

Rosie laughed reproachfully. 'George Macdonald says he did.'

'I suppose he has his own sources of information.'

'You *are* wicked to-day. And why was it asked of him?'

'You *are* serious to-day.'

'I often am,' said Rosie earnestly. 'And is it asked of us?'

She was brimful of the most admirable sentiments, and sorely disappointed that he would not enter into them.

Judging by the expression of his face in church, she had fancied that he lived habitually among thoughts like these.

In any case she did him good, and when they parted he felt more like his old self than he had done for days.

'It's ridiculous to suppose there's any harm in a good play,' he said to himself as evening came on; 'but twice is enough for one bout, and in fact I can't afford to go again, so there's an end of it.'

So he kept saying, but his restlessness increased, and at last he sprang to his feet. 'I'll go and see Miss Lemaistre after all,' he thought. 'I'll tell her quite incidentally that I've an immense admiration for Miss Brooke, but that I don't mean to go and see her to-night. That's burning my boats if you like.'

He crossed the landing and rang the bell.

'Miss Lemaistre isn't at home,' said the severe-looking woman. 'She has gone abroad.'

'Gone abroad!' Dalgleish could not believe his ears. Going abroad, in his experience of life, was a momentous event.

'Yes.'

'But—she hasn't had time!'

'No?' An unaccustomed smile made its difficult way through the resisting lines of her face.

Dalgleish involuntarily put out his hand to prevent her closing the door. He was gradually realizing how much Miss Lemaistre's friendship had meant to him. 'Did she leave no message for me?'

'What message would she leave? She had to start three-quarters of an hour after the telegram came.' And, realizing that she had opened the way to farther questions, Jenkins resolutely shut the door.

'So that's all she cares about me!' said Dalgleish resentfully. 'I may go to the devil and be hanged to me, I suppose.' He felt as if the Fates were fighting against his good resolutions. 'Well, no matter! If she is pleased, I am. I'll go and see Thatcher instead. It's an age since I set eyes on him.'

A mist had crept up since the afternoon, and houses and men loomed ghostlike. There was no wind, and the air made one warm and breathless. The light of a street lamp opposite Thatcher's house seemed to pick out of the general obscurity a single horse and vehicle standing by the pavement.

Dalglish stared at it in amazement. It was so strangely like the shabby brougham of the night before.

'I *am* bewitched!' he said to himself, and he laughed uneasily.

He had gone half-way upstairs when he turned and came down again. The street was a quiet one overlooking the Meadows, and the carriage could not have rumbled away without his hearing it; yet he wanted to assure himself that it was still there. The driver on the box looked at him with an uncanny wink. 'I know what's in your mind,' he seemed to say; 'but it's all right. It's a real brougham.'

'Of course it can't be the same,' thought Dalglish. 'These things are all alike.'

But the driver nodded mysteriously, and the nod said, 'It's the same, and you're the same man I saw last night. It's magic, you know, just magic.'

'Well, I'm going to see Thatcher in *any* case,' thought Dalglish, retracing his steps.

The door of the flat stood about an inch ajar. Dalglish paused for one moment before ringing the bell, and while he paused, a woman's voice, low and vibrating, full of invitation, called, 'Come in!—*you dear boy!*'

Dalglish felt his heart stand still. Here was magic indeed. There was only one voice like that in the whole world. If it called him, he must follow to the world's end.

The study door stood open wide, and she sat alone in the dim firelight. A stray gleam fell on her face, and on the wonderful white wrap she had thrown back. There was no mistake. He had not come to the wrong floor. The study was just the same. She was sitting just where the big doctor had sat—so long ago!

She leaned forward, as if unable to understand his silence. 'Don't be angry,' she said coaxingly. 'I wanted to see you so much!' Then her voice rippled over with girlish mischief and glee. 'I've sent your maid out for change. I was so afraid you wouldn't come. But I've still got whole ten minutes to spare—' She paused. '*John!*' she cried, in sudden apprehension.

Dalglish could not speak nor move.

She struck the fire sharply, and a flame sprang up. It seemed to the boy more penetrating than the noonday sun.

The poker fell from her hand with a clatter, and she rose

to her feet slowly and proudly, all the varied caressing tones gone from her voice.

'Who are you?' she said coldly.

'I called to see Thatcher,' stammered Dalglish. 'I'm just going.'

'Is it your custom to walk into his private rooms like this?'

His eyes fell. How could he explain that he had wandered into Fairyland, that—poor fool!—he had fancied her call was for him?

'I beg your pardon,' he stammered again. 'I am just going.'

'No. Stay,' she said imperiously. 'I must go myself. *Forget that you saw me here.*'

He smiled rather wanly. 'Yes.'

'Don't say anything to Mr. Thatcher.'

'No,' he said, and his voice shook like a reed.

Her face softened, and she looked at him more keenly. Some echo of the caressing note crept back into her voice. 'Why, I believe he'll do what I ask!' she said playfully, as if he had been a child, and for one fraction of a second she touched his cheek with her hand.

Effleurer. Dalglish recognized the word long afterwards when he met it. It was like the fall of a rose-petal, her touch, but it threw the room into a dazzling blur before his eyes. Those sunlit waves were closing round him now. He was sinking slowly, surely—

With a great effort he caught her hand and pressed it to his lips.

Her heart smote her. What did she want with his kiss? He was forcing her to reap a harvest of devotion, of young ideals that should have enriched some woman's whole life.

Well, clearly she must not leave him here with that telltale face.

'Silly boy,' she said sharply, but kindly. 'No; leave me. Go! Good night.'

And a moment later he found himself alone in the mist.



PART II



CHAPTER XVII

A SUMMONS

THE hotel dining-room was unusually bright that evening. Some distinguished guests had arrived; the staff was doing its best; and almost unconsciously the visitors danced to the piping. Rich gowns were worn, conversation ran with greater vivacity than usual, and altogether the social pulse beat gaily.

'Mrs. Traquair has it,' said a languid-looking man to the lady by his side. 'She is not merely fascinating to-night as usual: she is a beauty.'

'She is a very clever woman,' was the guarded response. 'Lovely gown.'

'It's the wholesomeness of her that appeals to me. You can't lay your finger on a flaw. I don't believe she has so much as a weak tooth.' The speaker chose a roll with suggestive deliberation as he spoke.

'Her husband is in great form too, to-night. I sometimes think she wears him to death.'

'Oh, he's all right. You can't have a charming young wife without paying the price.'

Mrs. Traquair, the lady who had just been mentioned, was one of the few women who can realize to the full the admiration they excite without betraying their enjoyment of it. She seemed quite engrossed now in her conversation with an earnest-eyed ecclesiastic.

'How she is humbugging him!' said the lady.

'Herself, more likely. I shouldn't fancy a fashionable confessor has many illusions left about the sex. If one fair penitent collapses, she brings so many down with her.'

'We're all of a piece, we women, of course.'

'One seems at least to have met Mrs. Traquair's type once or twice before.'

But the lady seemed more interested in the priest than in the penitent. 'Why do you call him fashionable?'

Her companion smiled with the self-sufficient protestant air of knowing all about it. 'My dear girl, don't you know it is just that ascetic type that *is* fashionable?'

'I wonder why.'

'Can't say. I suppose they think if they get round a man of that kind, they will have no difficulty with a friendly old soul like St. Peter.'

'Or is it that they needs must love the highest when they see it?'

'Call that the highest?'

'Pretty well up the hillside, I should think.'

'He certainly has his facial muscles well under control. But do you fancy he isn't enjoying himself?'

'Why shouldn't he?'

'Why, indeed? We must allow even a priest to enjoy being humbugged at dinner-time. But they needn't pretend that celibacy hasn't its compensations.'

If the critics could have heard the conversation that was the subject of their remarks, they might probably have been disappointed, for, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Traquair was only describing a visit paid that afternoon to the Certosa. She was full of enthusiasm for the idyllic life led by the good old monks, every one of whom to her mind had the ideals of a Thomas à Kempis, and if the man by her side smiled a deep inward smile as he compared her vision with what he knew of the reality, his fine face certainly revealed nothing but sympathy.

Before the meal was over he rose to go, and, with a simplicity suggestive alike of the saint and of the courtier, he took his leave. He seemed wholly unaware that every eye in the room was upon him.

The lady who had been criticizing him sighed. 'If they were all like that——'

Her companion nodded. 'We'd be tempted to choose "the Catholic horn of the eternal dilemma"? Ay. But we mustn't forget the greasy black lot in the street.'

The seat beside Mrs. Traquair was not long left vacant. A young *attaché* dropped into it in a moment, eager to make himself agreeable, and wholly unconscious of the hopelessness of competition with the man who had preceded him. How could he guess that it was the afterglow of the priest's per-

sonality that lighted his companion's eyes and threw a sympathetic ring into her voice, as she talked contentedly of the merest nothings?

'Curious,' he said, 'how people write themselves down without knowing it. In the Belle Arti to-day a party of American women were standing in front of Botticelli's 'Spring,' and one of them was reading aloud from her guide-book. "This," she read automatically without looking up, "is the finest picture in the world." "WHAT!" they all interrupted at once.'

Mrs. Traquair laughed a little absently, and, as she laughed, a lady leaned across the table. 'Pardon, madame,' she said; 'I fear monsieur is ill.'

For a moment Mrs. Traquair looked perplexed, and then she turned to her husband. Five minutes before he had been full of animation. Now he was leaning forward in his chair, breathing heavily, and his eyes had lost their look of recognition.

'Alfred,' said his wife in a low anxious voice. '*Alfred!*'

But he took no heed.

In a moment her social aplomb had dropped from her utterly. The grand lady was lost in the primitive woman. She sprang to her feet. 'Where is Father Bernard?' she cried. 'Bring him back, bring him back! Fetch me an English doctor instantly!'

Surely there are few things more terrible than a sudden breach in the smooth conventions of social life. The very fact that we so carefully taboo awkward subjects of conversation which graze the polished surface puts us all the more completely at the mercy of the *event* which at any moment, like some brute force, may rip up the whole gracious fabric.

It is such moments that show the stuff of which men and women are made, not the sufferers merely, but the most distant onlookers. The prevailing feeling perhaps is one of outrage, almost of outraged decency. Few of us realize that the Eternal Powers have made no covenant with our particular cockle-shell.

There was a general stir and murmur. The head-waiter ran to find the landlord. Mrs. Traquair looked round at the useless faces, then dropped on her knee beside her husband.

'Alfred,' she entreated, 'speak to me! Tell me what to do for you! Oh, will *no* one fetch a doctor?' She raised her hand to her head in the effort to think, then cried out sharply,

'Father Bernard was leaving by the night train. *He must be stopped!*'

The *attaché* seemed to have melted away; but now a few of the more sensible people began to make themselves felt. 'Open the window!' 'Give him air!' 'Loosen his collar!' urged some. 'Lay him on the floor!' 'No, no; keep his head up!'

The landlord was on the spot now, outwardly calm. The first thing to be done was to restore order in the dining-room, to remove the unsight. The Traquairs must be got under cover. They had ceased to be a valuable asset in the hotel.

But Mrs. Traquair in distress was a force to be reckoned with. She would neither be soothed nor browbeaten. They might carry her husband into the hall, but not one step farther should they go without a doctor's permission.

It was most annoying. The omnibus stood at the door with some new arrivals from England. It would be a cheerful experience if they were met on the threshold by a dying man and a woman all distraught.

Already the porter was depositing wraps and handbags on the floor, and now the travellers came in, looking dazzled and travel-worn in the brilliant light.

They were only three, and the last to enter was a big burly man in a rough tweed suit. His face was heavy with fatigue, and an involuntary frown crossed his brow as his eye fell on the invalid.

'Monsieur has had a little stroke,' diagnosed the concierge light-heartedly.

For a moment the big man hesitated, and then he walked up to the group in the hall. 'Is any one in charge of the case?' he asked, with an obvious desire to be answered in the affirmative.

'Are you a doctor?' cried the lady. Her voice, even in the absence of all conscious control, was cultured and full of charm. 'Oh, I am so glad. I am quite, quite alone!'

He looked at her gravely, taking in at a glance the beautiful neck, the costly gown, the elaborately dressed hair.

'You can't afford to think of yourself now,' he said dryly; and then, with the rest-giving air of one who has been through it all many times before, he laid a great sensitive hand on the patient's pulse.

The tears rushed to her eyes at his unmerited brutality. How little he understood her! But it is not only the voice

that speaks. There was something in his presence that steadied her. She held her peace and waited.

He asked a few questions, and she answered them better than he had anticipated. Then he turned to the landlord. 'I see there isn't a lift,' he said. 'No doubt you can give him a room on the ground floor. Surely some one will be glad to exchange if need be.'

Half an hour later the patient was in bed, and the doctor had completed his examination. 'I am afraid I cannot say anything very definite to-night,' he said, speaking slowly and without fluency. 'Undoubtedly he has had what they call a stroke, but at present I see no reason—why he should not recover. Of course I must not conceal from you—that such an attack is always—a very serious thing. I will go and speak to the landlord now. You must have a nurse, and I must enquire about the doctors here. I am quite a stranger. I thought it better not to choose one in a hurry.'

The anguished look returned to her eyes. 'But you won't give him up! Indeed—indeed——'

He looked unhappy. 'I think I can honestly say I have done all that could be done at the moment,' he said, turning to look once more into the patient's eyes. 'But I am bound to tell you that the case is out of my special beat. I am a surgeon.'

'But a surgeon is what I want!' she cried.

For the first time a slow smile broke over his face.

'I shall be in Florence for some days at least,' he said, 'but we will lose no time in getting the advice of a local man.'

'Is it going to be a long illness? Can't I have him moved to Rome? Oh, it is terrible that it should have happened here!'

'I am afraid that has just got to be faced,' he said, with grave kindness. 'You will want some friend to be with you. I will send a telegram now if you will try to think of some sensible woman who will be of real use.'

'My sister, Miss Lemaistre,' she said, with unexpected promptitude.

He looked a little doubtful, as if wondering whether the sister of so mercurial a creature could be a very desirable acquisition under the circumstances. But he produced a workmanlike note-book.

'Lemaistre,' he repeated. 'Her address?'

'Edinburgh. Oh, where *have* I put her last letter. I never *can* remember her address.'

'Edinburgh?' He spoke with interest, as if he had some sort of claim on the place.

The letter was found at last, and he made a note of the address, marvelling greatly as he did so. He knew the street so well, and the ideas it suggested to his mind were so very far removed from this exquisite woman alone in a Florence hotel.

'And now what am I to say?'

'Alfred dangerously ill. Come immediately.'

He hesitated and looked at the patient again. 'Suppose we say "seriously"?'

'No,' she insisted. "'Dangerously.'"

'It's a very trying thing,—a long journey in great anxiety of mind.'

'Oh, Judith is all right. She isn't easily upset.'

That was a comfort at least. Judith Lemaistre. The quaint combination pleased him. Was she, true to her name, the puritan member of a picturesque family? But how, how did it come about that she lived in such a street?

He smiled again, the slow characteristic smile. 'You think nothing short of "dangerously" will bring her?'

'Oh, she'll come all right, whatever I say.'

He looked completely nonplussed, having little taste for the dramatic in private life; but after all the telegram was hers, not his. He put the note-book in his pocket and rose to go.

'You won't leave me,' she cried. 'If he tries to speak and I can't understand, it will kill me.'

'I must make arrangements for you,' he said, speaking with laborious patience as if to a child, yet not without a trace of severity. 'I don't think he will try to speak to-night, and if he does, surely you are more likely to understand him than I am.' He glanced at his travelling clothes. 'I have come straight through from England—'

'What a brute I am! But you know—*God* sent you to me.' She spoke, and indeed she felt, as if that were abundant compensation for any overstrain.

He looked frankly unhappy.

'Don't you believe it?' she said, smiling through her tears. 'Ah, but *I—know!*'

He made his escape after that, but she called him back before he was out of hearing. 'I told them to send for Father Bernard,' she said; 'he was leaving by the night train. Will you find out whether it was done; and, if

not, tell the landlord to send to the station *instantly*, on the chance of his still being there?'

The big doctor looked at her dumbly. He wished to reply, but it might have puzzled even a master of words to express all that he felt at the moment. Never before had his social armoury seemed to him so inadequate. Finally he turned on his heel and left her without a word.

An eager crowd in the hall was waiting for information. Mrs. Traquair was the woman of the moment.

'*C'est une femme superbe!*' said a Frenchman. 'It was a scene for the stage.'

CHAPTER XVIII

SISTERS

IT was on a wonderful sunshiny day that Judith steamed along the line of coast from Genoa to Spezia. From sheer weariness she had given up all attempt to open the windows between the tunnels, but she was not too tired to enjoy the radiant flashes of sea and sky that broke the long monotony of smoke and darkness. It seemed to her that she had never known what sunshine meant before. The dancing blue waves were full of it, and the rocks glowed with colour. What a country for brigands, with its precipitous rocks and inaccessible eyries! And here was a grove for lovers, and there a faint suggestion of the acres trod long since by 'blessed feet.' It was all very new, and very, very old, a wonderful change from the mud and mist of the north, from the life of a common stair.

She wondered—as people wonder perhaps when they reach the Celestial City—how the common stair was getting on without her. Poor little Dugald Dalgleish! It was very hard on him that she should have been swept away in this unforeseen fashion. She must write him a good long sympathetic letter, bright and chatty, with a mine of wisdom beneath.

She was anxious about her sister, but not unbearably anxious. She knew Frances so well, her impulsiveness, her love of the picturesque, her pretty gracious ways that won friends wherever she went. Poor old Francie! So many times in life Judith had seen her sister riding as if for a fall, so many times there had been, as it were, a last tragic signal of fare well; but when the crash was over, and the dust had settled down, there she was on her feet, smiling and buoyant as ever.

Her religion too was such a resource to her. Judith smiled a pathetic superior little smile as she thought of Francie's fervour, her passionate joy and pride in believing the impossible.

If she merely chose to cling to the big old myths that lay at the heart of Christianity, one could at least see the object of it; she got some solid value there in return for her great self-committal; but these ridiculous rags and footprints, what were they at the best but so much dust on the scale!

Ah, well! It was very unphilosophical, of course, but if illness, or bereavement and death, had to be faced by people like the Traquairs, one could not but be glad that they should have the consolation even of superstition. Judith longed to save them suffering, and where her own arm was shortened, she was thankful that even an imaginary arm should supply the need. She had her own philosophy, but how utterly impossible to translate it into a language her dear ones could understand at a crisis like this!

‘Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep;
For still He giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.’

‘It’s no time for talk,’ she thought; ‘I must just be as kind and unselfish as ever I can. There won’t be any temptation to quarrel and spar this time. Poor old Francie!’ Her eyes filled with tears, and gazing across the blue water she prayed, ‘Lead me, O Zeus, and thou Destiny, whithersoever ye have appointed me to go, and may I follow fearlessly. But, if in an evil mind I be unwilling, still must I follow.’

And then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she laughed. Here she was, working herself up to a pitch of high tragedy, and in all probability she would find her friends at Florence in a full tide of prosperity.

But the Frances who met her at the station was the old Frances with a difference.

‘No; he is no better,’ she said, releasing Judith at length from her embrace; ‘but one gets strength.’

‘Which one?’ The question actually trembled on Judith’s lips, but she suppressed it in time, realizing with a shock of horror that ‘sparring’ was not going to be so entirely impossible after all. She was determined to be sisterly and sympathetic, but she found herself very tired and unexpectedly cross.

It was Mrs. Traquair who re-opened the subject when they were seated in the cab. ‘It has all been so providential—I mean—if it was to happen at all. Every one is so kind. Mrs. Watson has put her flat at our disposal, and we got him

comfortably moved. The nurse would do anything for me, and the doctor——'

'I am so glad, but do tell me about Alfred.'

'I forgot you hadn't heard.' A wave of emotion passed over the speaker's face. 'I wonder the brain-waves did not tell you.'

There was a little air of injury in the words, and Judith bit her lip lest she should apologize for her own want of perception.

'O Judith, I don't know how I lived through it. No unmarried woman can guess what it was. In a sense, of course, one's husband is one's world—he makes all the arrangements, sees to things—I didn't rightly even know the coinage!—One moment all that. The next—a useless log! And one has to lift him up, as it were, and face the gaping mob!'

It struck Judith as rather a fine conception. 'How glad you must have been to be able to do it.'

'Oh, one gets strength, as I say, and it has all been so providential. Think if it had happened up at Settignano!'

'Beautiful air, wasn't it?'

'Oh—air! And when should we have got a doctor, and what sort of doctor? You know, Judith'—she lowered her voice to the whisper that suggested religion—'months before this happened *it just seemed borne in upon me* that we must get down into the town.'

Judith bit her lip. 'Yes, you indicated in a letter that you were bored.'

'Oh, it wasn't that! But, I assure you, *you* would have been bored, Judith, up there in the wilds.'

A moment later her manner changed. She leaned back in the cab, and gripped her sister's arm with real emotion. 'We shall be at the house in another minute. What if we should find him dead?'

'We are much more likely to find him better. There! Courage! Brave old girl!' Judith felt thoroughly ashamed of her impatience. How absurd, in the face of real trouble, to be indignant with what she had long recognized as 'only pretty Fanny's little way!'

'Yes, he ought to be better,' agreed Mrs. Traquair gravely. 'Father Bernard has been so kind. He brought the relics 'his afternoon.'

'The *what?*' But the question died on Judith's lips.

Frances had touched the bottom. There was no more to be said.

'Now don't give me another thought,' Judith pleaded, as the man carried in her modest luggage. 'Go straight to him. The maid will show me my room.' Never in her life had she so longed for water and food and a clean white bed.

But Mrs. Traquair had never made the same journey save by easy stages or by *train de luxe*. Without replying, she laid her hand upon her sister's arm, and led her in. 'This is the room,' she said simply.

It was large and dimly lighted. A crucifix cast a huge shadow on the wall. By the wood fire sat a nun, dozing or lost in thought. And on the bed—'a useless log'—lay the expressionless figure of the man whom Judith had last seen tramping through the heather with the dogs at his heels. His face was in deep shadow, and for a moment she thought he was dead: the bed was so spotless and straight, and a bunch of white lilies stood on a tiny table by his side.

Judith struggled against an untimely threatening of faintness, and following the shock of horror came a weird inclination to laugh. He had so hated gimcrack tables.

Mrs. Traquair knelt down, and kissed his hand as if it had been the face of a sleeping infant. Her lips moved in prayer, and then she rose and went over to the nurse. 'No worse?' she asked, with trembling lips.

The nun had risen to her feet. 'Better, if anything,' she said, smiling.

'Thank God! I was afraid I should find him dead. Take Miss Lemaistre to her room, please, sister, and see that she has all she wants. I should like to remain here alone.'

It was years since Judith had seen her sister so plainly dressed. She looked very sweet and sad,—like a Madonna of modern art.

'She is an angel, is she not?' said the nun. 'A great lady with the joys of life all open to her, but what does she care? Her devotion to her husband and her God—that is her world. She is better than we are, we religious.'

Judith longed to ask a few prosaic questions about the invalid, but the room was turning round her in a most disagreeable way, and instinctively she laid hold of the rail of the bed. 'Thank you very much,' she said. 'Will you tell me when dinner will be ready?'

The nun looked surprised. 'Madame does not care for food. She eats a mere bite now and then. But she has ordered supper for mademoiselle. It will be ready in a few minutes. Perhaps mademoiselle can persuade our dear madame to eat a morsel too. Every one but herself, that is her way. Only an hour ago she was planning how mademoiselle can best see something of the galleries!'

She left the room, and Judith dropped into a chair. Galleries indeed! She had meant to come into this household like a strong angel of help, but no one seemed to have the smallest need of her, and here she was, just a tired, unappreciated, ordinary visitor. If Frances had only told her the nature of the illness, she could have read it up in the books. The case was one of which her experience was very limited; certainly she could throw no fresh light on it; and the necessary nursing seemed sufficiently provided for. And at home people needed her so much! Little by little the dispensary patients had come to look upon her as a friend, and at this very moment she was trying to negotiate some exceedingly delicate business. Had Mrs. Lauder gone back to her husband? And, if not, what was to become of the children? And then there was Dugald Dalgleish. How was he getting on? Were those narrow-minded chapel people forcing him to occupy the penitent's stool? Were they driving him to despair? Class examinations too—two in the next three days—and she had been hoping to do them rather well this time. What was she here for? Had her sister telegraphed in the first impulsive intolerance of unaccustomed pain? *Galleries!*

She felt a sudden ridiculous temptation to lock the door, and, pleading a headache, give in to a real bout of self-pity. Nay, the years with their wisdom were blotted out, and she was almost jealous again of the bewitching sister of long ago who had won all hearts without an effort. A hot tear made its way through her grimy hands. She looked at its track with interest.

'Don't flatter yourself you are a sin,' she said viciously. 'You are the product of sheer fatigue and starvation. Judith, my girl, get washed *and eat!*'

She felt very thankful a quarter of an hour later that she had not yielded to the childish impulse. Mrs. Traquair was awaiting her at the bright little supper-table, and clearly she was making a great effort to be cheerful. 'It is good to see

you,' she said, kissing her sister, as if they met now for the first time. 'Well, what do you think of him?'

Judith looked troubled. 'I have seen so few cases, but I have seen one or two that were much worse. His breathing is fairly natural, and his pulse——'

'You should have heard his breathing at first!'

'But the doctors look forward to his recovery?'

Mrs. Traquair shrugged her shoulders. 'They are guarded. Want to keep my spirits up. I fancy they don't apprehend anything sudden. That was my great dread. You know what a dear, good fellow he is, but men are so thoughtless, and—he had been a bit neglectful of his religious duties.'

'I wouldn't fret about that.'

Mrs. Traquair turned away with the gesture of impatience. 'You are so odd, Judith. You bring your science and your microscope to bear on the spiritual world, and you think your first crude impression must exhaust all there is to be said. I might just as well look at one of your precious microscope slides, and say, "H'm—a piece of linoleum!" What would you call me?—an impertinent fool?'

'Perhaps. No; on the whole I should reflect that my treasures were wasted on you.'

'But that is the whole point, dear. I keep telling myself *what* a Catholic you would make! I do wish you could have a talk with Alfred's cousin, Godfrey Carew. He is extraordinarily clever.'

'Dear girl, I don't want to talk to anybody. I am not in search of a religion. But I enjoyed Mr. Carew's article in the *Quarterly*.'

'There is so much that is admirable in your life, Judith, but such a want of—of continuity!'

Judith's lip curled almost imperceptibly. Coming from Frances this was too much. 'We won't discuss it, dear,' she said. 'Talk to me of what I do understand.'

Partly in answer to Judith's questions, Mrs. Traquair related what she knew about the case, and in a few minutes all pose was shaken off. Now on the brink of laughter, now over the brink of tears, she told the story of the last few weeks. No one could tell a story like Frances in a mood like this. She had no reserves, no concealments. She lingered long in the shadow that had darkened the last few days, but it had not clouded the whole of her landscape. The joy was still joy, and the joke was a joke for ever. The story bubbled out just

as it had impressed her at the time; the caustic word was caught up by the quick sob or the ripple of irrepressible amusement. She drew much comfort from the kindness shown her by doctor and priests, but what helped her even more was the consciousness of the interest she excited in them. Only a woman in trouble; yet how piquant, how queenly, how devout, how utterly unlike every one else! Yes, the Frances who moved through it all was a strangely gracious being, but if you smiled even an inward smile at the vision of her charms, her eye met yours with an answering gleam that seemed to say, 'I see, I see! Don't fancy that you have that joke to yourself. It's all a part of the game.' Wonderful Frances, bewitching Frances! Was she not entitled to all the foibles she chose to possess?

'That big Scotch doctor began by thinking me a selfish brute,' she said, a gleam of amusement breaking through her tears.

'And now——?'

She laughed. 'Oh, I suppose he is just puzzled.' The laugh died into a smile that seemed full of reminiscence. 'Just puzzled,' she brooded. 'Just puzzled.'

She came back to the present at last with a great sigh. 'Well, well, well!' she said thoughtfully, looking at the despoiled supper-table. 'That is the first meal I have eaten for days. You have done me good, Judy, after all. . . . I wonder what you'll think of him?'

Like a phrase of Wagner's music, the expression of her face told to whom she referred.

'I don't seem to care much for grumpy people.'

'Grumpy doesn't exhaust the subject exactly. *Wasn't* he grumpy that first night? But you'll see him to-morrow.'

'What is his name?'

'Didn't I tell you? He has a nice name. Dr. Heriot.'

'*Dr. Heriot?*'

'Do you know him? How very odd! He didn't know you.'

'No,' said Judith quietly. 'I have never met him. I can imagine that he didn't know me.'

CHAPTER XIX

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

JUDITH fell asleep almost as her head touched the pillow, and it seemed only a moment later that she heard her sister's voice.

'Judith, dear, get up, get up! There is a change.'

For a moment Judith thought she was dreaming, but the faint fragrance of her sister's presence hung about the bed, so she struggled out of a pit of sleep and threw on her dressing-gown.

The silence of the house seemed terrible as she opened the door of her room. It had come then, the great change, and as usual it brought with it a desolating sense of personal smallness. How had she dared to be angry and resentful just because she was summoned away from her trumpery interests at home? 'Lead me, O Zeus, and thou Destiny——!'

The door of the sick-room stood ajar, and she entered noiselessly. The lamp had been moved, and the crucifix no longer cast its dread shadow on the wall. The table with the lilies occupied an out-of-the-way corner, and the bed had lost its air of grim suggestiveness. The invalid had moved.

'He is *better*!' said Judith in a low voice.

Mrs. Traquair did not answer. She was kneeling by his side, one arm thrown over his pillow, as if she longed, yet feared, to caress him. Her eyes were full of tears.

'She'll make him think he is dying,' thought Judith, and, with the simplicity of one who has been trained to look upon sickness as an integral part of the programme of life, she went to his other side.

'You are better,' she said reassuringly, 'but you must keep very quiet.' A cup of warm milk stood by his side, so she raised it to his lips.

'The sister gave him some nourishment before she went,' interposed Mrs. Traquair.

Judith thought the nun had gone to lie down, but a moment later she heard a key turn in the door of the flat. Mrs. Traquair rose and slipped from the room. There was silence for a minute or two, and Judith wondered whether the patient was listening to the whispered conversation in the hall.

When he spoke, it was in a thick voice that she would not have recognized. 'What room's this?'

'Your bedroom. Frances has got a nice little furnished flat for a few weeks.'

'How'd I get here?'

'I don't know. You have been ill, you know, but you are better to-night. You must keep quiet for a day or two.'

'I'm not dying, eh?' A one-sided smile accentuated the weirdness of his attempt to ask the question in joke.

'Certainly not. Now don't talk. You must sleep. Shall I read to you?'

'Queer—it's all just blackness.'

'Don't try to think about it. You must rest now—for your wife's sake.'

'She wants me to see the priest.'

Judith almost gasped for breath. 'Not now?'

He made a gesture of assent.

At that moment the nun entered the room and gave Judith the opportunity she wanted to go in search of her sister. What frantic nonsense was this? She tried hard to speak calmly. 'Frances,' she said, 'you don't seem to understand. Alfred is better. What he wants now is to sleep. Do you realize that his brain is injured and that only sleep and quiet of mind can heal it?'

Mrs. Traquair looked more like a modern Madonna than ever. 'Quiet of mind is just what I am trying to procure for him,' she said. 'His brain is clear now, but who knows how long that may last? You have heard of the last flicker of the candle?'

A dozen cutting remarks rose to Judith's lips. She chose one.

'And you call this faith?'

There was no mistaking her sister's sincerity. 'Yes,' she said simply; '*I call this faith.*'

'You are risking his life.'

'So be it!'

'Thank goodness,' thought Judith, 'I shall die in my bed

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT 125

when the time comes, without rousing the whole town to help me!' She clenched her teeth in the effort to keep the thought to herself, and it was a minute or two before she spoke again. 'Hadn't you better twist up your hair?'

'Is it loose?' Mrs. Traquair moved slowly up to a mirror and wound the great waves into a careless knot. What beautiful hair it was!—so full of light and colour. Gloomily Judith resumed her travelling dress, and as she finished a step was heard outside. Mrs. Traquair went to the door. 'Ah, Father,' Judith heard her say, 'thank God you have come. . . . This is my sister.'

Judith looked the priest full in the face as she returned his salutation. She resented his presence acutely, and had no scruple about taking his measure quite frankly. She had seen hundreds of priests in the street. For the first time she met one under the same roof.

Well!—She was forced to admit that Frances was not such a fool after all. Judged by any standard whatever, here was a citizen of no mean city. His presence was fine, and he had an air of simplicity that seemed to include one's ordinary ideas of dignity. The shabby cassock belonged to quite another order of shabbiness from the cassocks one saw in the street, and there was something curiously distinctive even about the well-worn leather case which he placed on the table. His face was not handsome, but well-cut, wholesome, clear-eyed.

His bow was courteous, but it gave Judith the impression that she had not arrested his attention even for a moment. He turned to Mrs. Traquair with straightforward kindness. 'I was surprised to hear Mr. Traquair was worse. The last news was rather reassuring.'

'I don't think he is worse. I told sister to say there was a change. He is conscious, and I was anxious to lose no time. You know, Father'—her smile was very pathetic and winning—'St. Alphonsus Liguori says, "If there is a danger of danger"——'

He inclined his head gravely.

'You will come right in?'

'After the doctor has made his visit. I understand he is summoned too.'

'Sister is getting the room ready. She understands, I suppose?'

'Yes.'

Mrs. Traquair left the room, and Judith felt herself alone with the priest. She wondered whether he knew that she was a Protestant.

'It is very hard on you to be called out at this time of night,' she ventured at last.

He smiled. 'One takes life as it comes.'

It was a very ordinary remark. Any Protestant might have made it. Altogether there was a surprising absence of unctuousness about the man.

A minute later two doctors arrived. Judith would have liked to go forward and meet them, but the bracing discipline of a hospital training had entered into her blood, and she did not covet the task of explaining that they had been summoned in the middle of the night because the patient was better. So they went straight to the sick-room, and she followed them quietly.

Mrs. Traquair made a little gesture of introduction. 'Dr. Agneti, Dr. Heriot—my sister.'

They certainly formed a curious contrast, the small, lean, keen-faced Italian and the big, burly Englishman. Their examination of the patient was brief. He had rallied wonderfully, but of course there was always danger of a fresh attack.

'Marked hemiplegia, of course,' said Dr. Heriot, 'but we need not go into that now. I confess I don't quite like his pulse.'

The Italian shrugged his shoulders. It was rather more forcible than one would like perhaps, the pulse, but in these great muscular Englishmen what did you expect?

The big doctor raised his eyebrows, and almost automatically laid his hand on his own pulse.

'Well?' said the other, holding out his hand.

'Oh, I am not a fair test at present. I am supposed to be recovering from influenza.'

As they left the room Judith took courage to address Dr. Heriot. It seemed to her there was a hopeful protestant cut about his strong square face. 'Can't you persuade them to let him sleep?' she pleaded. 'From a nurse's point of view this is perfectly brutal.'

He seemed surprised, and uncertain how to reply. Then—'I will hear what they say,' he said simply.

She accepted the snub, and, standing in the background, watched the three faces eagerly. Their expression—which

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT 127

to her was a matter of life and death—was quaintly emphasized by the bright lights and dark shadows of the hanging lamp. To the Italian doctor it was a pure matter of business—a delicate bit of prognosis—this question of the rites of the Church; to the priest it was a grave matter of judgment and routine; the Scotsman looked on, profoundly solemn, with an air of 'vigilant repose,' more inclined to listen than to speak.

'The face of the unaccustomed,' thought Judith, and then she fell to wondering how far this accentuated lamplight picture represented the views of these men on a given subject, and how far it was simply an involuntary disclosure of their attitude to life in general.

'From our point of view it is as likely to do him good as harm,' said the Italian, with a shrug.

'Surely, surely,' agreed the priest; and for the first time a delicate touch of the brogue lent new fatherly kindness to his voice. 'Surely, surely, if it be the will of God. "*Oratio fidei salvabit infirmum, et alleviabit eum Dominus.*"'

Dr. Heriot smiled—a slow, pleasant smile. He liked the quotation, and he liked the soft, sonorous ring of the vowels. Apparently he did not mean to interfere.

Judith's heart beat fast as the priest lifted his leather case and made his way to the sick-room. There was something so relentless, so inevitable, about that simplicity of his. How could the patient cry out, 'I v. r't!' when, with the whole Church Militant behind him, the priest's bearing said so calmly, 'Of course you will.'? It was all superstition, of course, but what a stupendous thing it must be to pull oneself together and prepare for death at this eerie hour of the night. 'It will kill him,' she thought again indignantly. Unlike the Scotsman she had not recognized the priest's quotation, and indeed she would not have been greatly impressed by it if she had.

Dr. Heriot turned to her half apologetically. 'I don't think there is any need for us to stay,' he said. 'Will you tell Mrs. Traquair we will call again——?'

'Wait one moment, please, while I tell her you are going.' Judith knew Frances of old, and had no wish to be sent in pursuit of these men, tracing their footsteps through the dark echoing streets of a town she did not know.

The door of the sick-room was ajar, and Mrs. Traquair was kneeling outside, her hands clasped against the door-post

above her head. Judith knew she really was not aware that her beautiful hair had once more come free from its moorings; but she wished she had seen to it herself instead of merely making the suggestion. From within the sick-room she heard the faint murmur of voices, and she wondered, shivering, what poor old Alfred was confessing. Had he the least idea what his sins really were? With instinctive reserve she drew back within the doorway of the salon. 'Frances,' she said, in a voice just loud enough to be heard, 'the doctors are going.'

There was no reply.

'Frances—the doctors are going.'

For a moment Mrs. Traquair did not hear, then she rose to her feet. 'Oh, don't go!' she pleaded. 'Not quite yet. Of course one doesn't quite know how this will affect him physically. One has to make one's choice, but it is staking everything.'

There was a real light of life in her eyes, and Judith saw it, though she allowed herself a grim reflection concerning the wisdom of having two strings to one's bow.

The doctors looked at each other. 'I'll stay,' said the Scotsman kindly. 'There is no need for both of us, and I haven't a day's work before me to-morrow.'

If a reproach was meant it fell entirely on Judith. Mrs. Traquair thanked him in a way that might have atoned to any man for the sacrifice of some physical comfort. 'And, to do her justice, she'll make it worth his while,' thought Judith. 'It is worse for the priest, who has to do it all for love.'

Mrs. Traquair slipped away again, but returned a few minutes later. The light in her eyes shone more brightly than ever. She could not speak, but she beckoned to them to come. Surely, surely, if Judith could be present now, she would understand. Through the mists of the valley the Celestial City was shining so bright that even the blind must see.

Nothing loath, yet trembling as if on forbidden ground, Judith approached the open doorway of the sick-room. If Frances could see into her heart, surely she would feel that her invitation was sacrilege. And yet, and yet—Judith could not deny that the scene had a power of its own. The whole aspect of the place had changed. The crucifix once more was the dominating note, but no longer a note of gloom. Lights and flowers clustered confidingly round it. The table

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT 129

had been transformed into an altar. The nun seemed lost in prayer; the priest in his white and purple made a fine figure of reconciliation.

Judith had seen all the 'trappings' before; it was something new to see them hold their own in the presence of death. It was as though the stranger whom we pass day by day in the street should suddenly appear in friendly converse with the King. The least suspicion of uncertainty, the least undue emotionalism, would have turned the whole thing for Judith into something dangerously resembling a drawing-room performance. But there was no suspicion of uncertainty, no undue emotionalism. The age-old ceremony ran its solemn level course, taking its place quite simply in the whole order of things. It flashed upon Judith that generations of people had lived and died in these rooms firmly believing in the presence of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, and the more human and imaginable saints. The spiritual climate of their faith seemed to hang about the place. The effect was very strange. Her sense of superior enlightenment fell away. Despite her dislike of the overdecked table, despite her almost brutal knowledge of her sister's inconsistencies, despite her human indignation at the untimeliness of it all, Judith had difficulty in resisting the spell. A movement at her side made her turn, to see the big doctor kneeling on the polished floor. He too! Stiffing a last impulse to rebel, Judith fell on her knees by his side.

CHAPTER XX

THE DAWN OF SPRING

WHEN Judith awoke next morning the sunshine was flooding her room, and an Italian maid-servant stood by her bedside with a tray.

Judith drew a great breath, stretching her arms above her head. If one must wake up, it was pleasant to wake to sunshine and coffee—such sunshine and such coffee!

She only vaguely remembered where she was, but, little by little, it all came back to her; the journey, the sick-room, the strange old-world ceremony in the watches of the night.

'And monsieur?' she cried eagerly.

The maid-servant shrugged her shoulders, and gave her feelings the rein in a rush of idiomatic Italian.

Judith shook her head, but she was somewhat reassured. In any case the worst had not happened. She would have understood *that* in any language, and indeed the arrival of the coffee showed that some one in the house had leisure to think of the visitor, which would not have been the case if—
—if—

She wondered whether she should leave the coffee untasted, while she went to make enquiries, but while she hesitated her sister entered the room. Mrs. Traquair was suffering a profound reaction from the exaltation of the preceding night. 'No, he is no worse,' she said wearily. 'His head aches, but he always did have headaches, poor boy! It has nothing to do with his illness. He was too happy to sleep at first, and now, of course, he is very drowsy. I thought Dr. Heriot would be up long before this. They are trained to do without sleep, aren't they? I haven't slept since the attack. Do you think I should send in his coffee?'

'I told him to ring when he wanted it,' said Judith bravely. 'He is recovering from influenza.'

Mrs. Traquair started up. 'How do you know?'

'He said so last night—in your presence.'

Mrs. Traquair gradually relaxed into her former attitude of utter weariness. 'I suppose he must feel sure there is no risk of infection or he would not have undertaken the case.' She raised both hands to her brow. 'Talk of headaches, Judith!'

'You poor old girl! Have some of this heavenly coffee. I don't believe you have tasted anything yet.'

'Haven't I? I can't remember.' She allowed herself to be coaxed into drinking a cup.

'And now you are going to bed to have a good sleep. I feel like a giant refreshed. I'll watch him so carefully, and remember every word the doctors say.'

Mrs. Traquair shook her head. 'You won't bully them half enough.'

'Oh, yes I will. I'll be a Gorgon. You see I have had so much to do with doctors. I ought to know how to manage them.'

'I believe Dr. Heriot has given me his influenza. I only hope he has not given it to Alfred too. That headache must mean something. Can you have influenza on top of a stroke?'

'Dear girl, what nonsense you do talk! Of course the infection was over before Dr. Heriot left Edinburgh.'

'As a nurse, you assure me of that?'

As a nurse, or in any other capacity, Judith would have sworn black was white at that moment; but as a matter of fact she had no difficulty in reconciling the assurance with her conscience. After much pleading she gained her point. Frances allowed herself to be put to bed like a child. As her sister was leaving the room, she caught her hand.

'I have so much to be thankful for,' she said. 'Haven't I?'

Judith had some difficulty in replying. The proposition might be true, but this scarcely seemed the moment to give it prominent enunciation.

'Wasn't it wonderful?'

'It was very impressive.'

'And did you see the effect on him?'

'Yes.' Judith's philosophy was quite equal to the explanation of that phenomenon, but she did not say so.

'To think that he should have been able to go through it all with understanding! And yet people can doubt the value of the relics!'

It was not long before Dr. Heriot appeared in the dining-room. Like a true Englishman, he scorned to drink coffee

in his own room. He greeted Judith as people greet one another who have come through strange happenings together.

'I hope you have slept?' She asked the question in a sedate impersonal way, but she was obviously interested to hear the answer.

His face lighted up as if she had reminded him of something pleasant. 'I have had a grand night, thank you.'

'This is not just the treatment one would suggest for a convalescent from influenza.'

'Do you know I don't believe it has done me a bit of harm.' He laughed genially and raised his hands to his head. 'I dare say I look a bit unkempt, but in the middle of the night——'

'No,' said Judith with frank reassuring criticism, 'you are not at all one of the people who appear in the morning looking as if it was still yesterday.'

His glance unconsciously returned the compliment, but he hastily dropped the subject. 'No, I don't think it has done me a bit of harm,' he repeated. 'I was told to seek a complete change——'

Judith's smile bubbled up irresistibly. 'Whoever finds my sister, usually finds that.' She checked herself. 'Mr. Traquair did not sleep at first. He is drowsy now and his head aches.'

'Ah!' Clearly the report did not please him.

'And my sister is very poorly too. She is overdone.'

He drew down his brows. Every day he meant to move southward and drop the shackles of this unsought-for responsibility, but every day there was some fresh reason for remaining. The case was out of his beat, as he had said in the first instance, but he had become thoroughly interested in it, and still more interested, perhaps, in the domesticity to which it had introduced him. No student of human nature would have refused to know more of the etiology of these two sisters. He reflected now that he had meant to find out why Miss Lemaistre elected to live in such a street, but the time had not come for that.

For the next few days Mrs. Traquair was destined to give the doctors almost as much anxiety as her husband, and Judith's desire to be helpful found ample scope. She knew her sister's mercurial temperament sufficiently well to keep calm and useful in the face of signs and symptoms that in most people would have been profoundly alarming.

On the fourth day Mrs. Traquair was greatly better, and

Judith was very tired. Dr. Heriot looked at her with his great honest eyes. 'I am going to prescribe for you now,' he said. 'You must get out into the air.'

She shook her head.

'I don't believe you have seen anything of Florence since you came.'

'I didn't come to see Florence,' she answered almost testily. ('Galleries, indeed!')

'No.' His face ran into furrows, and he spoke slowly and unwillingly. 'We doctors often come upon conscientious devotion and self-sacrifice. It's one of the cheering things in our life. But it is apt to be the first stage in a good old humiliating complaint which the country doctors still call Hysteria. It's always a grief when a woman one admires falls a victim to that complaint—for it means—that one's admiration is put pretty severely to the test. As a rule there's a middle stage—Unreasonableness.'

This certainly was delivered straight out from the shoulder. It was the kind of stroke that Judith approved of in theory, but at the moment she had extraordinary difficulty in taking it gracefully. So she looked perfectly blank, and it took some courage—or doggedness—to go on,—'Wh—which stage are you in?'

Judith looked up. His face was not conducive to frankness. It expressed his dislike of personalities much more than his generous kindness. She positively longed to lie, but, although her system of ethics admitted lying as a useful expedient, she had never resorted to that expedient merely to 'save her own face.' 'Oh, the middle one, I suppose,' she said desperately.

His face cleared up radiantly, partly in admiration of her honesty, partly with pleasure at getting his own way. 'Come, that's right. Put on your hat and walk with me up to Settignano.'

'And if Mr. Traquair has an attack while I am gone?'

He frowned again. 'I'm not going to tell you that he certainly won't. One can predict nothing of the kind in life with absolute certainty. To-day it is your duty to go out. I take the risk.'

That ring of final conviction came so seldom in his talk. *When* it came, it had a curious way of relieving other people of the necessity of decision.

Judith went in search of her hat.

Does anything—anything—linger in the memory like some of those walks—landmarks in the history of a growing friendship?—when all we say and all we hear is full of delightful possibilities, when we feel that we need not strive nor pose, but may simply lie open to the eyes that would fain take a kindly view of us.

If Dr. Heriot had met Judith first in the Royal Infirmary, it is possible that she might not have impressed him more than other competent women whose work lay in the wards. It was a different thing to meet her as Mrs. Traquair's sister, to realize the unconsciousness of her *savoir-vivre*, the value of her deliberate docility. His unready tongue was loosed as they made their way through the vivid sunshiny streets. Of course they talked first of 'the case.' 'I don't fancy there is any immediate cause for anxiety,' he said, 'but one doesn't like this recurring coma and headache. It is a little suggestive of an inflammatory process round about the clot.' He drew a diagram in the air as his manner was. 'In any case it is a great comfort you are here. Mrs. Traquair is not very fit to face the world alone.'

'I assure you,' said Judith laughing, 'she has always got her way a great deal more successfully than I have.'

'Ah, yes; no doubt. That is another thing.' He smiled as if to himself, and Judith felt half jealous of the smile. Clearly Frances was not mistaken in thinking she interested him.

'She is so whole-hearted in her admiration of you,' he went on.

'That's odd,' said Judith, 'for she always succeeds in drawing out the worst side of me. It is most humiliating. Away from her, I feel myself growing so old and wise—so fond of her too—but put us together and my hard-won virtues are moonshine.'

'I think I can understand that,' he said with a slow smile.

'It's partly her religion. Alfred was born a Catholic. I can understand him—in a measure. But, although piety never was our strong point, we are Protestants through and through. Picture her telling me in an awestruck whisper that Father Bernard had "*brought the relics*"—she who was brought up on *The Chronicles of a Schönberg Cotta Family*, as I was!'

'Yet I don't think,' he ventured deprecatingly, 'that anyone could see Mrs. Traquair the other night without feeling how real her religion is to her.'

'You see—I can't help feeling that she *wants* to believe it all.'

'Is there any harm in that?'

'Is there any good in it?' she asked a little bitterly, playing on his words.

'Some good—yes, I think so. It is surely a more fruitful frame of mind than wanting not to believe any of it.'

Judith sighed. 'I will confess that I was genuinely impressed the other night—genuinely impressed. I liked Father Bernard. But, as Frances said Goodbye to him I heard the chink of gold. "You will say some masses, Father, won't you?" she said.'

'Well?'

'Well?'

'Did you expect him to—to—go home to his tent-making?'

'No, no! But so!'

'The Church of Rome is curiously artless in some ways, isn't she? And she has profound knowledge of human nature. She does not give our penitence and gratitude time to cool.'

'Oh, Dr. [?], do say it was abominable—tipping a man to pray!'

He would gladly have changed the subject, but she was so much in earnest that he dared not.

'The frankness of the method jars on our northern ideas certainly. And yet—' his face ran into furrows and his manner became less certain as he came down on the bed-rock of his conviction—'you must not forget that prayer is *hard work*. We have little time for it in our busy life. I can understand—can't you?—the temptation to say—when one comes across a very saintly man—"Take from me the means of livelihood with all my heart, and do for me what you can do so much better than I." I express myself very crudely—'

So he did, but to Judith's mind the crudity of the expression was nothing to the crudity of the thought. She had not suspected him of being so mediæval; but she admired his courage and she liked him.

So with all respect she gave him the best she had. 'Ah,' she said, 'I don't know about prayer.' She spoke quite simply and naturally, just as though she said 'I don't know about electricity' or 'spontaneous generation' or any other phenomenon, real or imaginary.

He did not pursue the subject, and it was she who took it up again.

'But I would not have you think that I place Roman Catholics in a pit by themselves. I believe there are dissenters—priding themselves on their protestant principles—as benighted as the blackest priest of them all.'

'Do you think so? Curiously enough, I have been rather led to a different view of dissenters. I have had some great talks lately with a young dissenting minister, Mr. Thatcher.'

Judith stopped short in her walk, and looked him in the face. '*Do you know Thatcher?*'

'Do you?'

'No. I hear a great deal about him. And do you know Dugald Dalglish?'

'Dugald Dalglish,' he repeated reflectively. 'The name has a familiar ring. What is he like?'

'Tall, fine dark eyes,—a brilliant hobbledehoy, if you can imagine the combination. A great chivalrous, receptive, sensitive creature—dashed with genius, as one of his professors would say.'

'I remember—I met him one night in Thatcher's rooms,—but I didn't see all that,' he added with a smile.

'You would if you knew him better. He is a neighbour of mine. His mother has the most beautiful face I ever saw. Full of lines, and lines of pain,—but they all work together to produce the noblest effect you can imagine. But do tell me about Thatcher. Why, he is the young man who "holds out the right hand of fellowship to James Martineau." Magnanimous, isn't it?'

Dr. Heriot did not answer. It seemed as if the meaning of her words only dawned on him slowly. 'If he does,' he said at last, 'he will have to pay for the privilege of his magnanimity. You may be very sure of that. It is a tragedy, that family history,—the sort of tragedy that recalls some of the pages of Lecky. The father is a man of the highest principle, but he cannot conceive of truth outside of his own rigid Calvinism. In the interests of that truth, I believe he would send his own child to the stake. They inherit his tenacity in one way or another. Oh, they walk with their heads high, that family; but I fancy they leave blood-prints on the stones.'

They were still standing face to face, and Judith had turned rather pale. 'And I pictured him a smug self-satis-

fied young prig,' she said. 'I am so glad you have told me. Oh, the tyranny of superstition!'

They had left the city well behind them now. It was one of those Italian days when the sunlight seems to throb like a living thing, and, as they mounted the hills, they came into a real Land of Promise. Away above them were the shimmering grey woods, relieved here and there by the rich bold note of the cypresses, but all around, the tender grass was springing up in the orchards, and on the fruit trees the first suggestion of green and white and pink seemed to throw an exquisite translucent veil over the hillsides that only the day before had been brown and lifeless. It was all so subtle, so young. One could scarcely say, 'Lo, here is colour!' or 'Lo, there!' Yet the spirit of colour brooded over all. The tension of it seemed so great that at any moment it might burst into vivid glory. It was as though the Earth Spirit was weaving the living garment of God before their eyes.

'I have loved the coming of spring every year,' said Judith gravely, 'but I never saw it come like this.'

'No,' said her companion with a sudden flash of conviction, 'and this is where Botticelli got the inspiration for those wonderful draperies—those gossamer veils of life.'

'I don't know them.'

'Of course not.' He smiled pleasantly. 'That must be for another day.'

And Judith smiled contentedly back without replying.

They walked on till they reached the woods, and now, except for a vivid clump of wild flowers here and there, they seemed to have left spring behind them. Dry papery leaves of the year before shivered on the trees, and the lichens still had a chance to reveal their beauty. Emerging on a promontory, the two companions looked down on the view that no one who has seen it can ever forget, the valley of the Arno with the matchless city clustered in its bosom. It was all just as Frances had described it in that letter months ago. Nay, was it not all very much as Giotto and Michael Angelo had seen it centuries before? Dr. Heriot pointed out the principal landmarks. 'That is the very dome under which Savonarola preached, and there, to the left of the Palazzo Vecchio, was the gibbet where they hanged him.'

'Oh, the tyranny of superstition!' said Judith again.

'The tyranny of sheer immorality rather in this case,' he responded grimly.

'Was it? I am afraid I am very ignorant; but it is delightful to have someone to tell one about it on the spot like this.'

He smiled whimsically. 'I have been reading it up in Hare and Baedeker since I came.'

She pulled off her hat in a reckless girlish fashion, and seated herself on the bole of an old tree. She looked very fresh and attractive with the flush of exercise in her face. 'How sunny it is and warm! It's incredible, isn't it, that they are still having mud and mist at home?'

He smiled ruefully; then his face set into its strongest lines.

'Well,' he said, 'there is something to be said for that too.'

She looked at him smiling, striving to recall some verses that she had learned by heart long ago.

"Now give us men from the sunless plain,"

Cried the South to the North,

"By need of work in the snow and rain,

"Made strong, and brave by familiar pain!"

Cried the South to the North.'

He turned at the words as the iron turns to the magnet. 'I wish you would say that again.'

She repeated the lines more securely this time, and then, looking beyond the smiling hills with their nestling homesteads, to the white summits rising into the boundless blue, she went on,

"Give lucid hills and intenser seas,"

Said the North to the South,

"Since ever by symbols and bright degrees,

"Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's knees,"

Said the North to the South.'

'I have read so little poetry,' he said regretfully. 'One seems to have no time, and every now and then one just gets a glimpse of all the help it might be in one's work. Can you remember any more?'

Her voice shook a little as she thought how much he would appreciate the one remaining verse that lingered in her memory.

"Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,"

Said the South to the North,

"That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,

"While affirming of God, 'He is certainly there,'"

Said the South to the North.'

THE DAWN OF SPRING 139

There was a long silence. He seemed to drink in all the wonderful beauty of the landscape once more. Then—

‘I am glad I belong to the north,’ he said simply.

‘And I. When shall I go back to it?’

‘Ah, that I can’t tell. You must be content to live a day at a time.’

‘And what about my work?’

He looked at her with kindly interest. ‘Tell me about your work.’

‘You would laugh’; but she did not seem much afraid of his laughter.

She told her story less clearly than was her wont, in broken sentences, with an omission here and a repetition there, and in this way perhaps she appealed to him more pleasantly than she had ever done before. She was so delightfully sane, so delightfully quixotic.

‘Why don’t you study medicine properly?’ he asked, though he was rather glad she didn’t. She looked such a delightful bit of pure womanhood as she sat on that old bole.

‘Because I am a born Jack of all Trades,’ she answered frankly. ‘The moment I tie myself up to one, I pine for all the rest. And besides I want to be free for emergencies. As a general rule when an odd job wants doing, only the fools are free to do it.’ She paused, and went on more earnestly, ‘You see I am so fond of *people*, just because they are people. In my own class they can get what they want. I like to live among those who in sickness or trouble will say, “Judith Lemaistre is there.” And if I can help them with my hands and my head and my money, it is the thing I would choose to do.’

‘It is an unusual combination,’ he said, ‘hands and head and money. I should think all three would find abundant scope. And I am afraid some day when the harvest looks unusually plentiful—I shall be tempted to remember—’

She looked up brightly. ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘if I could ever help anyone *you* were interested in—!’

CHAPTER XXI

MANY WATERS

WHEN Dagleish returned home after that strange visit to Thatcher's rooms—or to Fairy Land, he scarcely knew which—the sense of exaltation had given place to an overwhelming physical prostration. It was as if his whole bodily nature craved leave to lie down and die, while mind and will cried out, 'What, die?—with life just begun and its problems all unsolved? Never, never! Die *now*?—with your rudder out of gear and your compass thrown overboard? God forbid! On what fearsome shore might you not drift?'

He shivered nervously, and went into the kitchen for the sight of a human face.

'Get me a cup of tea,—there's a good soul!' he said. 'I have caught a beast of a chill.'

Miss Brown was shocked to see how ill he looked, and the alarm in her face added not a little to his own.

'Awa' to your bed!' she said reassuringly, 'an' I'll get ye a cup o' tea an' a hot bottle to your feet. Ye're just fair overdone.'

Fair overdone. He was grateful for an expression that described his condition so fitly. After all, many a man had been fair overdone before now, and no one had thought of death in connection with him.

He followed her advice and went to bed, feeling more homesick than he had done since the first evening in town, but he had no wish to see his mother just now. It was a rough piece of luck that Miss Lemaistre had gone away. She would not think harshly of anything he had done, and she was clever too. Her medicine had cured his cough in a day or two. 'Abroad—abroad'! He knew not what 'abroad' might mean as a question of space; as a question of time it seemed, in his present mood, to stretch out to infinity. He had other friends, no doubt. Thatcher? Oh, God, no! Not Thatcher. Never, never more.

Miss Brown sacrificed a week's supply of firewood in her anxiety to make an unwilling kettle boil, and the tea arrived, for once, in an amazingly short space of time. It was accompanied by a great slice of buttered toast, from which he turned with loathing. But the tea was good, and the grateful warmth against the soles of his feet seemed palpably to check the ebbing of his vitality.

'Thanks awfully,' he said humbly. 'Just put out the gas now. I think I'll sleep.'

But she fussed over him with clumsy tenderness, and placed a cup of milk by his side before she finally went away. With all his faults, she had never had a lodger the least like him.

Unquestionably Nature sometimes sends a 'brain fever,' but much, much more often a violent cold serves her turn. Anything will do that knocks a man down, that puts him on the shelf, out of harm's way, till his shattered forces get a chance to recuperate.

It seemed something more than a cold this time, for Dagleish was conscious of a sort of latent pain that suggested grim possibilities when he tried to stretch himself or turn in bed; but he succeeded in finding a position of ease, and he slept the sleep of exhaustion.

With the first streak of daylight Miss Brown reappeared, carrying another cup of tea. He drank it greedily, and curled himself up in bed again, his head resting on his hand, like a child's. He was relieved to find that the ominous pain was almost gone.

'Is there anybody ye'd like to see?' Miss Brown asked shyly.

'No.'

'The doctor?'

'No, no.'

'I'm sure the Pastor would be rael pleased to come.'

'Good Lord, no!'

'He's great at the sick bed,' she said regretfully, grieved at the waste of a good opportunity, 'but of course the like o' Mr. Dobbs is nearer your own age.'

This was the last straw. 'Look here,' he said piteously. 'I've got a bad cold, that's all, but my head is something fearful. I feel as if Jael had been at it in the night.' He raised his hand as if to make sure that the nail was not there. 'Don't make me talk, there's a good soul.'

All day he dozed, unconscious of life and its problems.

Miss Brown kept him warm, and allowed him to be as untidy as he liked, and plied him alternately with milk and mutton broth. It is possible that a trained nurse might have managed the case less well. When night came he looked very ill, but next morning it was clear that he had turned the corner.

'Eh, laddie, now the Lord be thankit!' cried poor Miss Brown. She lingered in the room longer than usual, and, before leaving, she dusted his Bible with scrupulous care, and placed it rather pointedly by his side.

His brain was clearer now: thinking had become a possibility once more. He was thankful he had not died: his puritan training made sure of that at least; but what a life it was that he had to face! Hitherto the sensitive plate of his mind had taken on a dainty scheme of light and shade that charmed him, and now, all at once, a brilliant ray of sunlight had fallen upon it, burning up the delicate surface, and obliterating everything that came in its way. He loved. And now that he had looked on the face of love, he realized that there was nothing else in the world worth having. Miss Brown, coming into the room, was rejoiced to find him turning over the leaves of his Bible. He was hunting for a half-forgotten text:—

'Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it:
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.'

He recalled the wonderful vision as he had seen her first, toying with the flower in the conservatory, and his memory went on step by step, till he quivered again to hear the cooing caressing notes of her voice as she sat in Thatcher's arm-chair.

It was characteristic of Dalglish that he scarcely asked himself how Thatcher came to love and be loved by an actress. He remembered some strange and winning women—denizens of another world—who had ranked themselves among his father's disciples; but Pastor Dalglish never had eyes for any woman on earth save one. Young Dalglish was much too clever not to have seen something and guessed more of the hidden life of some of his fellow-students; but his feeling for Ianthe Brooke was far as the poles apart from hateful knowledge of that kind. She was no actress for him; she was the one perfect woman; she was womanhood.

And she had fallen to Thatcher's share. God knew he had wished Thatcher well, and had grudged him nothing;

but this was too much. Would Thatcher—with his head in the clouds—in the least realize all that it meant? No; it was too much. Dalgleish felt that his respect and admiration for his hero were being turned into envy and bitterness.

In any case there was no hope for him,—not one glimmering ray. ‘Silly boy!’ she had said, touching his cheek as unconcernedly as if he had been a child. The remembrance of the touch thrilled through him again, and his heart beat madly till every nerve in his head seemed to jingle with pain. Child, indeed! If only he could die for her, just to let her see that at least he was no child! Thank God, thank God, that he had kissed her.

And now she belonged to Thatcher.

He wished them happiness, of course, but he could not look on and see it. He would go away, and he would love her all his life, and some day she should know that he had prized that touch of hers too highly to barter it for the possession of any other woman on earth.

‘My queen, my queen!’ he groaned, and great dry sobs shook his strong young frame as if he had been indeed a child.

CHAPTER XXII

A FLASH-LIGHT

THE large chapel was crowded to overflowing, and, in the pauses of the sermon, the silence was so great that a sudden creak among the rafters made one start. A harsh voice rang through the building, eager, passionate. It was not the voice of the Pastor, pleading with sinners to come to the Saviour he knew; or, with gentle irony, pressing home the inconsistencies of those who professed to be following in His steps. It was a defiant martial voice that stirred the pulses of the young, and struck with dismay old hearts that longed for peace.

The preacher was a man from the Midlands, that great home of the Nonconformists. All over the country he had a reputation for eloquence, for freshness and vigour of thought; and to this of late years had been added the subtle charm of heresy.

The subject was the difficulties of the Old Testament, and the sermon was one that might well take away the breath of any congregation. The preacher was not a scholar, but the range of his information and reading was very great, and he seemed to sweep his glance like a flash-light over the whole field of human life and thought.

'Coming north in the train yesterday,' he began casually, 'I was reading once again the story of the later days of that man of God, Oliver Cromwell. You remember, no doubt, the story of the siege of Drogheda,—' He paused as if for a reply, and then painted a picture of the massacre that made the blood of his hearers run cold. Yet this Cromwell, he said, was a holy Christian man, as Christians go. How were we to account for his brutality? What were his motives? From what source did he draw his inspiration, his precedents, his defence? On what literature had he been nurtured?

After that the work of destruction went on rapidly until, as Jones remarked, the young men began to feel that there was but a plank between them and infidelity.

Then began the work of reconstruction,—a little shaky, perhaps, in its foundations, but, seen by that swiftly passing light, beautiful and effective in the extreme. The preacher knew his Lessing well, and he had kept pace with more modern work in the pages of the reviews. He would not have made high marks in an examination on the subjects he chose, but, for a sermon of the flash-light kind, his equipment was admirable. There were references that might perhaps have been spared to the two Isaiahs, to the Frame Theory, and the date of the Pentateuch,—for in the cultured city of Edinburgh one always might be preaching to scholars unawares,—but all these fell into the shadow, unnoticed by the ordinary hearer. With gracious optimism the preacher re-educated the hum in race. In that heedful burning, with the thrill of excitement passing from man to man, the awful problems of life could be crumpily explained away. The eternal counsels of God became clear to the dullest. Finally the preacher quoted some noble passages of Scripture 'that must ever remain the precious heritage of our race,' and he closed with a free translation of Blessings,—

'Go thine inscrutable ways, O Eternal Providence! Ourselves let me not despair of Thee, because it is inscrutable.—I will not despair of Thee, even if Thy steps should seem to me to go backwards! It is not true that the shortest line is always the straight one.'

Slowly and unwillingly the congregation made its way to the street. A bitter north-east wind was blowing from the north, but no one seemed anxious to hurry home. The preacher was the guest of one of the wealthy members, and a carriage with two fine horses awaited him at the vestry door. Half unconsciously the people waited too, and indeed the enthusiasm was put to no very sharp test, for the preacher stayed only to don his Inverness cape, and to receive the congratulations of his host. He raised his hat gracefully as the spirited horses left the waiting throng behind. The silent interest and appreciation were not lost on him. He quite understood that a famous actor, a popular monarch, could scarcely have wished for a more gratifying send-off.

'You have made them sit up this time,' observed his host dryly.

Dalgleish stood in the crowd, his face shining with appreciation. After weeks of maddening depression, varied with brief raptures of renunciation, this sermon had set the current of life flowing once more. His was a maimed existence, no doubt, but he was free still to read and think and learn, to dash his mind joyously against the rocks of prejudice. His conscience, too, seemed eased of a burden. The Pastor had been kinder than ever since that strange meeting on the threshold of the theatre, but Dalgleish was always conscious of a sense of guilt in his presence: this stranger, too, was a minister of God, yet somehow he made a man feel how fine a fellow he was after all.

Dalgleish even found himself able to speak to Thatcher when chance threw them together in the throng.

'Ripping, wasn't it?' he said.

Thatcher turned with a pleasant smile of greeting, and proceeded to walk with Dalgleish up the hill, not realizing that he had in his companion a less sympathetic listener than formerly.

'Perhaps we had better not discuss it,' he said with a smile and a sigh. 'I felt rather as if I were in the palm house at the Botanic Garden. The fragrant tropical atmosphere was delicious at first, but I soon began to wish myself out in the great cool spaces of the opening sentences of the Lord's Prayer.'

Dalgleish smiled cynically. It was easy for Thatcher to be content, to pray only for the coming of the kingdom,—he to whom life had given all that she had to give.

'You prefer the old days at Muirside?' he said.

Apparently Thatcher had some difficulty in answering the question. Finally he passed it by. 'Where is it to end? That is what I keep asking myself. We were listening to-night to an able man who has left the exaggerations of youth behind. If these things be done in a green tree—'

There was a sudden pause. Not one of those characteristic pauses of Thatcher's which suggested that the current of his thought was flowing too deep for easy expression in words, but a sharp break, as though the current had dashed itself against some unexpected obstacle.

Dalgleish looked up for an explanation, and it struck him that his companion looked grey and old. In another moment

he had forgotten Thatcher, forgotten the sermon, forgotten everything on earth except a huge staring yellow placard:—

‘RETURN VISIT OF IANTHE BROOKE.’

He had just enough self-control to walk on as if nothing had happened. When the beating of his pulses settled down, a dozen questions trembled on his lips; but he interpreted his promise to Ianthe Brooke more strictly than he had ever interpreted a promise in his life before, and he knew that his only safety lay in holding his peace. What was Thatcher thinking? Dalgleish longed, yet dreaded, to hear him speak, imagined a dozen ‘revelations.’ As a matter of fact the two men walked on in silence till they came to the corner at which their roads diverged, and then, with a brief Good night, they parted.

Dalgleish was thankful to be alone, to think it all out. For weeks he had been looking on Thatcher as the most enviable man on earth, and now, at the very sight of her name, Thatcher looked as if he had been struck in the face, nay, as if the burden of life were more than he could bear. And—come to think of it—what a situation it was! What an outlook! Toleration or no toleration, a Christian minister must draw the line at marrying an actress; and what was the alternative? Did he expect that peerless woman to forego the worship of crowds for him? Did he think she could settle down in a country manse to iron white ties and copy out sermons in a neat feminine hand? Dalgleish pictured her ‘worshipping’ in the chapel at Muirside, and the thought made him laugh aloud. He recalled it all so distinctly—the smell of peppermint, the sprigs of southernwood, the Bibles wrapped up in coarse pocket handkerchiefs.

No doubt Thatcher might live to be famous, but that was looking far ahead. In the meantime—

Dalgleish drank in a great draught of hope—groundless irrational hope. Then he forgot Thatcher altogether. He should see her again. That surely was happiness enough for one night. ‘Return Visit of Ianthe Brooke,—Return Visit of Ianthe Brooke!’

Meanwhile the other hearers were discussing the sermon undisturbed. Judged by any standard, it was an audacious, perhaps an unpardonable, sermon, and the effect of it on that congregation was indescribable. Hitherto heresy had

lurked in corners; now it came forth and flaunted boldly in the streets. A passing reference to the two Isaiahs conveyed no very startling idea to people brought up to talk glibly of the two men in every one of us; but an unfortunate sentence about an omnipotent B. shi-Bazouk lent itself to quotation with disastrous ease by the dullest. Praise and censure were to be heard on every side, but beneath both praise and censure ran a deep undercurrent of interest and excitement. The Pastor came home to find the stranger's name in every mouth.

It is an experience that has fallen to the lot of most ministers, and perhaps very few have found it easy to bear. It is an experience trying to flesh and blood when the stranger sows wheat; it is both less and more trying when the stranger seems to have sown mainly tares. It would be easy, thought the Pastor, to lead the young men if one stooped to methods like that. It had been hard enough to win them before. Now they had tasted strong meat—nay, strong *drink*,—and it fell to him to tempt them back to the pure milk of the word.

A visit from good Mr. Blount did not tend to help matters. The senior deacon shook his head, no doubt, and deplored 'our brother's' rashness; but he had come determined to speak his mind, and he spoke it. Had not the chapel been one of his main interests in life when its present Pastor was a mere boy at school far away?

'I came to speak to you about the Discipline Case,' he said. 'The time of probation is slipping by, and I fear there is only one course open to us. Some of the brethren are very determined.'

The Pastor deliberately arranged some papers on his writing-table before replying. 'I have had a number of talks with our sister,' he said. 'She is certainly not without finer impulses. I believe she has made a brave effort.'

They discussed the case for some minutes, and then the senior deacon sighed.

'It is a heavy responsibility,' he said, 'to hold the helm of affairs at a time like this. Worldly amusements—inconsistent lives—on the one hand; and, on the other, the wild talk of our young men. And that sermon last Sunday—oil on the flames, oil on the flames!'

The Pastor smiled sadly. 'So few of one's hearers understand the virtue of a little self-restraint.'

'You see he is Mr. Carter's brother-in-law, and they were

set upon having him. There's a downgrade movement going on, and we must put a stop to it somehow. But we mustn't be in a hurry to take off the velvet glove. *Suaviter in modo*, as you college men say.

'Don't you think—' he puckered up his shrewd old face, and drew his chair closer to the pastor, '—don't you think we might sometimes have preaching a little more—suited to the times? No doubt the salvation of sinners, the sanctification of Christians, are the preacher's two great aims; but still——' He paused, unwilling to wound a man whom he genuinely respected.

'But still,' said the Pastor bitterly, pushing his chair back an inch or two as he spoke, 'we want something more exciting now-a-days than the mere Gospel of Christ.'

'But, my dear sir, you don't seem to realize that some of their difficulties are *real*?' Mr. Blount was a little annoyed. He knew by personal experience that the Bible was true, and it was the Pastor's business to prove it. What else, in the last resort, did he draw his salary for? 'There must be some answer to all this,' he said rather testily. 'Bless my soul, what makes Gladstone believe?'

The Pastor sighed, and his sensitive lips curled. He was a conscientious man and an earnest student of his Bible, but he was no more able to preach a controversial sermon adapted to present-day needs than an old-fashioned country doctor is able to perform the last brilliant feat in modern surgery. It is not the country doctor's business.

'Why should we waste time,' he said, 'in repelling the attacks of these so-called scientists and higher critics? Do they not confute each other—nay, themselves—if we give them time enough? The witness of the monuments——'

'Yes, the witness of the monuments, now,' said the senior deacon eagerly. 'Suppose you give us a sermon on that on Sunday evening?'

'Such methods were scarcely those of the Master.'

'Ah, my dear sir, times have changed even in my short life. Which of us shall say what the methods of the Master would be if he came to Edinburgh to-day?'

He waited for the Pastor to reply, and then, rising to his feet, he held out his hand in the old genial fashion. 'You'll think it over, you'll think it over,' he said, 'and I assure you many of us will be praying that your lips may be touched as with a live coal from the altar.'

He meant altogether well, and he did not see that there was anything in the words to wound his hearer. 'Just to let you see how the land lies,' he went on, dropping into a colloquial style once more. 'I have heard two or three of our young men say, "*Something for a man to think about in a sermon like that!*"'

It was a cold morning, and the Pastor wore a comfortable dark grey dressing-gown. As he rose to his feet the homely folds, loosely confined by a thick woollen cord, seemed to lend his tall figure a priestly dignity.

'I am afraid,' he said with stately kindness, 'you attach too much importance to the immediate effect of a sensational sermon. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a seed which a man planted, and it groweth up *he knoweth not how!*"'

The senior deacon took his leave with a sigh which he did not attempt to suppress. He felt that his well-meant words had achieved nothing; but he left the Pastor thinking the whole situation over as profoundly as even he could have wished. With all the self-control of a strong man, the Pastor refused to indulge in a mood of resentful bitterness; refused even in imagination to preach the scathing sermon that would have sprung so readily to his lips. He did not blame himself for not acting up to the senior deacon's requirements; he did blame himself profoundly for falling short of his own ideal. In his student days the lesson had been burnt into his mind by a saintly teacher that the need of every church is saintly pastors. And he, was he a saint? Ah, no, no, no! Let him forget that sensational windbag; let him forget good stupid Mr. Blount. To his own Master he must stand or fall.

CHAPTER XXIII

GROWTH

THE rumour went about in the course of the week that the Pastor would make some reply to the famous sermon, and Sunday evening found the chapel filled to the doors. 'It's not in him to do it,' some of the young men said, 'but we may as well hear what he'll make of it.'

The Pastor was always an effective figure in the pulpit. The lean muscular frame, the black hair just frosted with grey, the rugged, almost too expressive face, the fine restrained gestures, combined to make an impression one did not readily forget. To-night, even more than usual, the whole man was 'lit from the inner,' and a little thrill of expectation ran through the building.

The text fell flat on expectant spirits. '*Grow in grace.*' Mr. Blount could scarcely restrain a movement of impatience. This was all very well, but not the thing for to-night.

But the Pastor knew what he was doing. He knew his strength and had some glimmering of his weakness, and he did not mean the enemy to choose the ground. His subject was *Growth*.

He began slowly and with emphasis, with just sufficient trace of bitterness to give a stimulating flavour to his words.

'The wise young people of the present day,' he said, 'are in doubt about many things, but on one point their conviction stands firm as a rock. They *never doubt* that the process which is slowly separating them from the faith and customs of their fathers is a process of Growth. Nor are the young, unfortunately, alone in this view. There are those among their teachers who, as they lightly accept some unauthenticated scientific discovery, some fragment of speculative criticism, solemnly assure their more conservative brethren that what looks to the unsympathetic eye like a mere process of accre-

tion, or of disintegration, as the case may be, is in reality a process of growth.

'But I do not wish to press this point to-night. It may be more helpful to you as well as to me if we try for a little while to look at the whole subject of growth from a different point of view.

'There are still, among us Christian ministers, men who are at once effective preachers, earnest students, and accurate thinkers; and one of these has lately told us that "the power of any life lies in its expectancy." I would suggest that you young men who want something to think about should for this evening think about that. "*The power of any life lies in its expectancy.*"

'It is one of those ideas that can be expressed either in terms of natural fact or of religion. There is nothing new about it, though the words have a fresh ring. Religiously, perhaps, one can best express it thus,—“Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

'Ah, that bores you! There is nothing fresh about those words. We learned them at our Mother's knee, and we fancy we have exhausted their meaning,—we who ask and forget what we have asked, who seek without expecting to find, who knock and turn away without waiting to see whether the door is opened or not. That is the measure of our expectancy, the power of our lives.

'Yet—when I look round on this great congregation—I cannot but feel that expectancy of one kind or another—desire for growth—is one of the few things we all have in common. My brother, my sister, tell me—in what do you desire to grow? In wisdom—in knowledge of the world—in talent—in social position—in luxury—in popularity—in beauty?'

With that sure knowledge of the by-ways of human nature which is the fulcrum of the preacher's power, he laid his hand on the ambitions, the vanities, the pettiness of his hearers. Not one was allowed to escape. Time after time the unerring finger went home,

'—thou ailest here and here.'

Of course many felt that he did scant justice to the desirability of intellectual growth, though he began by paying it a fine tribute. 'And yet,' he continued, 'it is in connection

with growth of intellect that one most poignantly recalls the phrase, *the wilderness of this world*. Life-giving food and noxious poison growing side by side, the sturdy oak and the crawling parasite. Each for itself. Do you ever think what frail beautiful things may be crushed out of existence by your very growth? . . . And can growth in grace ever do harm in this way?

'I address the question to all alike, for I feel sure there was a period in the life of each member of this church when the main desire, the main aim, was to grow in grace. . . .'

He drew an eloquent picture of the enthusiasm, the single-heartedness, of that period, and then, pausing suddenly, he straightened the few pages of manuscript that lay before him.

'Well,' he said, looking up quietly, 'and how have we fulfilled the promise of that expectancy?

'You tell me, some of you clever young men, that you can no longer believe all you professed at that time. We will suppose that this is so. I do not wish to argue that point to-night. "It is the part of a Christian man," said one of the Reformers, "not to talk magnificently of doctrines, but always, with God, to do great and hard things." I would remind you that you did not only undertake to believe. You undertook implicitly and explicitly—"with God"—to grow in grace, to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

'We will suppose that you are unable to fulfil one part of your undertaking. Is that any reason for repudiating the whole of it? You are unable to pay twenty shillings in the pound. Is not that the greater reason for paying every shilling, every farthing, you can get together by the sweat of your brow? You did not fully realize, perhaps, what you were promising: you had not sufficiently weighed the charms of science, of ambition, of worldly amusements, of social life. My brothers, I do not wish to argue. We will say that the bargain was a bad bargain. Does that release you from having made it? What if it be a forlorn hope? What if there be no reward? I appeal to you as men.'

It was the argument he had used with himself in hours of solitary wrestling with the powers of darkness, and it went straight home from heart to heart with a mesmeric thrill that was indescribable.

'Sooner or later the test will come. I do not refer to the Last Great Day, though that too will come full surely. Sooner or later the test of growth will come; the occasion will call

for a strong man ; and you—what will you be? A dwarf?—a puny?—a child?

'You will do your best?' The speaker smiled with scornful sadness. 'No doubt you will do your best. But what will that best be? Will it not depend on every hour that has gone before? You do your best in the examination room ; but what is the agonized will of the moment there compared with the preparation, the concentration, the daily growth in knowledge, that have gone before it? And is the Christian life, think you, an easier thing than your Greek, your Anatomy, your Jurisprudence?'

From that point on the preacher became more dogmatic and doctrinal, and so alienated to some extent the sympathy of the extreme left ; but he had the whole microcosm to consider, and his own conscience above all. From first to last his words never lost the ring of intense personal conviction.

With an earnest peroration the sermon came to a close, the thrilling voice died into silence. The congregation seemed to draw a long sighing breath. It was as if a musician had just removed his hands from a finely responsive instrument. The Pastor felt the response in every fibre of his being. For a brief half hour he had held the young men in the hollow of his hand. Would it last?

'I would remind you,' he said, 'that I am always in the vestry for at least half an hour after service. I shall be glad—more than glad—to see anyone who may wish to speak to me.'

He felt that many would gladly have accepted his invitation, but would they have the courage? It was impossible to reach the vestry unobserved, and a stupid tradition prevailed that to seek an interview with the Pastor after service was to proclaim oneself a penitent backslider, if not an 'anxious enquirer.' Moreover, there were those among the congregation who would not scruple to say, 'I saw you go round to the vestry last night——?'

Thatcher had courage enough for anything, but he was a law unto himself. The Pastor did not even hope for him. Dalgleish with the eager face, the face that had changed so much of late, surely Dalgleish might come.

Wearily, but not without hope, the Pastor made his way to the cosy little room, with its luxurious crimson furniture and great glowing fire. Mr. Blount was awaiting him on the threshold. There was a suspicion of tears in the kind old

eyes, and for a moment the senior deacon could not trust himself to speak. He wrung the Pastor's hand. 'Ah, my dear sir,' he said, 'you were right; you were perfectly right. God bless you. That is the preaching we want.'

He was gone in a moment—up the private stair to the chapel, lest he should meet any timid souls who might be following in his steps.

The Pastor sank into the great easy chair, and covered his face with his hands. A moment passed, and then there was a timid knock at the door.

'Come in!' cried the Pastor genially.

The door opened slowly to admit the slight figure of Mr. Menzies. Slight though it was, he edged his way in as if afraid of taking up more room than his importance warranted.

If the Pastor's heart sank, he did not show it. His kindness was marvellous. Mr. Menzies' doubts and difficulties were easily met by the good old weapons, and the young man went on his way strengthened and comforted.

As he left the room, Miss Brown came in, full of apologies and well aware that she must be an acute disappointment. 'There's nobody waiting,' she hastened to say, 'or I wouldn't have made so bold as to come. But I just felt I must thank you for that wonderful discourse. I never heard the subject treated in just that way before. Oh, sir, I'm sure it's gone home to many a heart. It's us that lives among the young men as it were, that knows how much the like of that is needed. Things are not as they were when I was young. It's as if temptation of every kind was walking about naked and unashamed; and them as ought to be leaders in the paths of righteousness are the very ones to suggest doubts and to break down the old landmarks.'

The Pastor looked at her in silence. She did not seem to require any help from him. He always had been amazed by this woman's volubility.

'Was there anything special about which you wished to consult me?' he asked, suggestively but not unkindly.

'Deed, sir, an' there was. Who should know it if not you? It's Mr. Dalgleish.' She drew a touching picture of the lad as he was when he first came up, a picture which Dalgleish would have been the last to recognize; she described Thatcher's insidious influence, 'breaking down the old landmarks.' 'An' I aye set such store by Mr. Thatcher, but I couldna close my eyes to the effec' of his influence. As Mr. Dobbs says,

"Take one stick out o' the bundle, an' what becomes o' all the rest?"

She told of the visits to the theatre, the late home-comings, the subsequent illness. 'An' iver since, he's been that unsettled and restless you'd not credit it. A cousin of his father's came to see him, a gentleman from Australia, an' nae doubt he gave the lad money, for what must he do but take some of his college companions to the theayter!—an' bring them home to whisky an' soda! The money came to an end, but not the habit o' spending. What do you think I've seen in his room, but—a pawn-ticket! Oh, I ken the look o' that fine! An' there's worse behind, though I'll no credit it without farther proof. They do say he's been seen in the *Unitarian Church*. Oh, sir, pray God the truth went home to him to-night!

The Pastor looked into the fire without replying. Against the background of his own stainless youth, this simple story looked black enough.

'But I wouldn't have you suppose, sir, that I was thinking only of him and Mr. Thatcher in the chapel to-night. You made me feel that the one way to reach others is through ourselves like.'

His face brightened. 'That is the way to look at it,' he said appreciatively, little guessing that this commonplace elderly woman was having as hard a fight with temptation as any young man of them all. 'What we want is to show in ourselves the exceeding beauty of the Christian life. . . . Of course you will talk of this to no one else.'

Who knows what more she may have meant to say? But he rose from his chair to close the interview. He was thinking only of Dalgleish. He went with her to the door, and shook hands with old-fashioned courtesy, as if she had been the finest lady in the congregation. Then he drew a deep breath, and, before taking his coat from the peg, he buried his face for a moment in its heavy folds.

But another timid knock arrested him, and he opened the door. On the threshold stood Rosie Blount rather breathless and very pale with the heroic effort she was making.

'Come in, my dear girl,' he said kindly. 'Sit down by the fire and get warm, and then tell me all about it.'

'Oh, Mr. Atherley,' she said, not daring to pause a moment. 'It's not that I'm not a Christian: it's just that I do so want to be good!'

He had almost said, 'Ah, Rosie, my dear, so do I!' But he was too much of the priest for that, and she liked him better as he was.

He talked to her with the rare personal directness of which he was abundantly capable, recognizing in this frivolous girl the stuff of which a fine woman might be made; and she listened with a sweet receptiveness that would have turned cheaper words than his into gold.

'It's so easy to be good,' he said, 'while that mood lasts. Make the most of it. Pray, pray, pray. "Put God in your debt." The time will come soon enough when you don't much care whether you are good or not. The struggle then is just the hardest thing in the world. Hour after hour, day after day, and so often nothing to show for it. But there are those in the world now whose whole future may turn on whether you keep the resolutions you are making to-day.'

They made a pretty picture as they stood together at the door. Her cheeks were very flushed now, and her eyes bright with unshed tears.

He held her little gloved hand in both his own, looking down at her with apostolic tenderness.

'It wasn't so very terrible, was it?' he said. 'You won't be afraid to come back and tell me how you get on. And—come back all the more, dear, if you don't get on.'

And so they parted—a modern St. François de Sales and his Philothea.

CHAPTER XXIV

ST. FRANCIS

MRS. TRAQUAIR drew a long breath as she stepped from the confessional, and, moving slowly down the aisle, waited for the priest to join her.

The church was very cold, and at that early hour she was the only penitent. One or two Italian women were absorbed in their devotions before some favoured altar, but they did not even turn their heads as she passed. They seemed to remind her, however, of the existence of an outer world, and, raising her hand to her eyes, she made an effort to bring her features under control. Her face was flushed and rather weary with the arduous sacrament of penance. She had tried very hard to be sincere.

It was some minutes before the priest emerged, arranging his soft velvet cap, and holding out his hand in friendly greeting. It would have been impossible to tell from his manner that he had been her confessor a moment before; and, if she could not rise to the same fine unconsciousness, it was partly because the true Catholic is born, not made, because no woman born in the protestant church can ever regard the confessor quite as her catholic sister regards him.

'Yes, he is better,' she said joyously. 'Oh, Father, it has all been so providential. In a few weeks I believe he will be his old self again; and Judith—I feel sure Judith's heart is touched. If this trouble has been the means of bringing her into the true Church——'

Something in the priest's manner stopped her. He was older than she, and he had not watched life for nothing. He had often been struck by the persistence with which Mrs. Traquair strove to short-circuit the ways of Providence, but in justice to her he was forced to admit that when the divine energy failed to flow along the channels she had provided for it, she showed a wonderful readiness in accepting the inevitable, and preparing a fresh scheme.

'You see she is far too clever for me, but if you would talk to her——'

His brows contracted in something like a frown. 'You attach too much importance to talk,' he said with brotherly frankness. 'Don't argue with her. Pray, pray, pray! Let her see what the church has done for you.'

She made an impatient little *moue*, and then her face broke into a bewitching penitent smile. 'I know, I know. But you see, Father, she considers the whole thing beneath contempt. If she knew what the arguments are——'

He held out his hand again with a smile suggestive of nothing but frank amusement. 'I am so glad to leave you with an easier mind, he said. 'I will call tomorrow to enquire.'

For a moment or two Mrs. Traquair continued her walk, shadow and shine chasing each other across her mobile expressive face. 'He always is better than his word,' she said; and then she knelt down beside the poor Italian women. It seemed impossible to get low enough. Her heart was so full of gratitude to God.

The narrow streets were chill and gloomy as the inside of a well when she emerged from the church, but the chill and gloom were all their own, for the crisp morning sunshine was flooding the hills and fields, and calling out glorious notes of colour from roof and dome and campanile.

Judith was struck by her sister's glowing face. 'You are early astir,' she said, half enviously.

'I feel so well. I am not always a lie-a-bed, you know. But it is your turn now. Judith, dear——'

'Well?' said Judith dryly. She knew that coaxing tone of old. It had once meant, 'Share your doll.' It now meant, 'Share the best thing I have got—my religion.'

'If you do go out, would you mind leaving a note for Father Bernard?'

'Of course I don't mind. No answer, I suppose?'

'Oh, just ask if he is at leisure. It is only civil. He is apt to be at home about this time.'

'Won't he think it rather queer?'

'Why should he? And—Judith dear——'

'Yes.'

'If he should say anything about—about the faith, you will listen, won't you?'

Judith laughed light-heartedly. 'No, dear,' she said. 'I

will close my ears and invoke the aid of Beatus Martinus Lutherus.'

Frances joined in the laugh. 'You won't be narrow-minded I am sure.'

'Ah!' Judith grew grave. 'Now you go too far. I begin to think that if we weren't all narrow-minded, there wouldn't be any story.'

On the whole the prospect amused her. She knew Father Bernard was saying a novena of masses for her conversion, and the novelty of the experience was stimulating.

So Judith set out in quest of adventures, and Frances remained at home to pray.

The address was that of a quiet unassuming house in a narrow street. The iron bell-pull hung high, as if to say, 'Don't disturb us lightly. Think twice before you ring.'

Judith thought twice, rang twice, and then the door was opened by a plain little man in ordinary dress. By this time she felt sure of one of two things. Either she had mistaken the house, or the priest would not be at home.

'Father Bernard?' she asked, more uncertainly than was her wont.

The man seemed to take the enquiry as a matter of course. Evidently he was not unused to lady visitors. 'Step this way, please,' he said in excellent English.

She was shown into a large bare *parloir*, and her protestant eyes fell at once on the small pane of glass let into the door. There was nothing of value about, and the bit of carpet was threadbare. The room would have been absolutely commonplace if its very poverty had not lent it distinction.

She had not waited a minute when the priest entered. His complexion, fresh and clear as the morning, was thrown into strong relief by the full white choir habit that became him so well.

'I hope I am not guilty of an intrusion,' she said. 'My sister asked me to be her messenger.'

'And you were good enough to consent.' He just touched her hand, bowing in his courtly fashion. There was no suggestion now of the casual air which had characterized his greetings hitherto. Clearly for the moment he was giving her his whole attention.

They sat down and each took the measure of the other in silence.

'How interesting it would be,' thought Judith, 'if we two

human atoms, thrown together for one brief moment, could really cast aside conventionality and talk quite frankly! It did not even cross her mind that such a conversation was possible, but it may be that the priest read her thought, for he broke the silence conventionally enough.

'Mrs. Traquair is happier now.'

The remark might have been either a question or a statement. It conveyed no suggestion of the fact that he had seen his renitent that morning.

'She is radiant,' said Judith. 'My brother-in-law is much better.'

'It has been a great comfort to her to have you.' He smiled very kindly. 'I am glad your duties have not confined themselves to mourning with those that mourn. I hope you will stay now, and see something of the city we are so proud of?'

'I ought to go straight home,' said Judith. 'There is nothing now for me to do here, but Frances begs me to stay within reach a little longer in case I should be wanted; and—and I suppose your beautiful Italy has demoralized me. Easter falls so early this year that I think I must stay and spend it in Rome.'

'In Rome?' he said. 'Don't!'

She looked up enquiringly.

'Don't!' he went on with an eager dogmatism that was singularly absent from his manner when he spoke of the things which, presumably, he cared for most. 'Venice is worth while for an hour; Florence for a day; Rome—I had almost said Rome for not less than a year. You will see nothing in a week—least of all in Holy Week. It's all there, mind,—all you've read in the books; but you won't see it. You'll find the city choked up with vulgar tenements, the churches with American tourists. No, no. Go home to St. Paul's.'

'I shouldn't be in St. Paul's,' she said, 'if I did go home.'

'No?' His face broke into a frank mischievous smile.

'*Omne ignotum*—You are very learned, aren't you?'

'Very,' said Judith gravely, 'if it takes learning to understand that.'

His winning brotherly face claimed and assumed forgiveness in a flash.

'Take my advice,' he said, 'and stay where you are. But your mind is made up?'

'Quite,' said Judith smiling.

His whole attitude changed in a moment. 'You'll hear some good music,' he said. 'Go to St. John's Lateran for the *Tenebrae*, Good Friday matins. That's on Thursday afternoon, you know. And go early.' He produced two of his cards. 'I will give you introductions to one or two people who may be able to give you tribune seats. Where do you put up?'

'My sister advises me to go to a convent. She says they don't close their doors on heretics.'

If this was meant to be provocative, it failed of its mark. He raised his eyebrows in a delicious whimsical smile.

'*Faut vivre*,' he said. 'You want a fashionable one I suppose?'

'Indeed I don't.'

'Then I can recommend one that I think you will like.' He wrote down the address, and she rose to go.

He made no suggestion of an effort to detain her, but, as he bowed again over her hand, he said,

'I have a little free time this afternoon, and I have promised to show Dr. Heriot one or two of the churches. If you care to join us, will you be at Santa Croce about half past two?'

Her face brightened. 'That is a privilege.'

'Poor Frances!' she thought smiling, as she stepped lightly down the street. 'What's the use of being a magician if the things won't work? I should have been so interested, too, to hear how he set about it,—to see where he would get a foothold. Was it laziness or indifference—or consummate knowledge of human nature?'

She was first at the rendezvous in the afternoon, and she placed herself 'well on the windward side' of the *bénitier*, as she mentally phrased it. Frances had mentioned in the course of conversation that Father Bernard had directed her to make a special devotion of the holy water, but the priest when he came, left the sacramental untouched.

His face lighted with surprise when he saw her. 'He already?' he said in a low voice, 'and you Mrs. Traquair sister!'

Judith laughed softly. 'We make a tolerably complete human being between us.'

He raised hands and eyes in mute deprecation, and

rich brogue came out in his voice. 'Ah, be merciful now!' he said. 'The force of nature could no farther go.'

Dr. Heriot joined them, and the priest proved himself the most delightful cicerone in the world. Long familiarity had perfected his power of selection. He never forgot that he was talking to Protestants, never threw pearls before swine; but if it were incidentally necessary to relate a miracle or refer to an article of faith, he did it as composedly as if the subject in hand were as well established as the Law of Gravitation or the fact of the French Revolution.

Dr. Heriot had remained behind to decipher some inscription that interested him when the priest stopped with Judith before a small altar. 'When you see that veil,' he said, 'you know you are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It is customary to kneel.'

He suited the action to the word, and Judith was amazed to find herself meekly following his example. He had spoken as if to a catechumen.

'He cares not a rap for my soul,' she thought a little indignantly, 'but he will have no disrespect shown to his superstitions while he is there to prevent it.'

They lingered over the tombs of the mighty dead, but what Judith and Dr. Heriot both remembered most clearly in after years was Giotto's wonderful fresco in which St. Francis throws off even the raiment he owes to his father, and makes his final choice.

'Happy, happy St. Francis,' said Judith enviously, 'to make a clean sweep once for all! Of him at least no more could be asked. He took the plunge royally.'

'And never looked back,' said Dr. Heriot, glancing at the priest as if he spoke under correction. 'That to my mind is the grand thing. The inspiration lasted his life out.'

Father Bernard sighed. 'It is a whole study of life, he said, speaking as one who loved the picture too well to close his eyes to its deeper notes. 'One is so sorry for the father—with that hard forbidding face of his. You can hear him say, "I have done everything for you, everything. I have grudged you nothing—neither education, nor money, nor luxury, nor love—" You can hear his old voice break. Surely Rachel weeping for her children can't surpass the pathos of that. And all the time St. Francis stands there radiant,—his cup overflowing, the poor human light wholly quenched by the blaze of divine glory.'

Judith had never seen him so obviously in earnest. For the moment her expression was absolutely that of a disciple. 'It is a terrible tragedy,' she said.

'Ah, no!' pleaded the priest, smiling indulgently at St. Francis. Then his kind eyes returned to the father, and the mellow Irish tones died out of his voice. 'It looks like one sometimes,' he admitted, 'pending the great reconciliation.'

Dr. Heriot turned and looked at him gratefully. Life was so much the brighter for the presence in it of people who could put one's best thoughts into words.

The afternoon had sped more quickly than they knew. Without preamble the priest held out his hand and took his leave. There was never any atmosphere of leave-taking about him. His departures were swift and sudden, like a tropical sunset.

Dr. Heriot and Judith raised their eyes again to the fresco. 'I wonder how much we should have seen in it,' he said, 'if we had been left to ourselves.'

'We shouldn't have known how much to look,' said Judith.

They lingered a little longer, and then agreed that the light was going. He raised the heavy leathern *portière* as if it had been a silken veil, and they made their way through the inevitable motley crew of maimed and ulcerated humanity. Dr. Heriot looked at the beggars uneasily. 'Life is not so simple,' he said, 'as it was in the days of St. Francis.'

'No,' said Judith, 'He had no dismal science to reckon with.' A vivid picture rose before her of the lecture-room in Shandwick Place. It seemed as if she had known it in another existence. She wondered again how Dugald Dalgleish was getting on without her. It was very strange that he had not answered that delightful letter of hers.

They walked on in silence, amused now and then by the exclamations of surprise and admiration called forth by Dr. Heriot's great muscular figure. '*Inglese*,' said one and another.

'What was that expression Father Bernard used?' asked the doctor suddenly. 'I never can remember these things, though I think at the time I never can forget them.'

Judith knew in a moment to what he referred. "Pending the great reconciliation."

His face lighted up. 'Ah, thank you. "Pending the great reconciliation."'

She looked at him half enviously. Why should he care about the mere phrase when he seemed so sure there was a 'great reconciliation.' Her thoughts drifted back to the purple veil enshrouding the 'Blessed Sacrament.'

'No,' she said suddenly, 'Erasmus couldn't have done it.'

'Done what?' he asked, not without a glimmer of comprehension.

'Oh, you know! One thinks sometimes that it might have been accomplished in a more gentlemanly fashion. But when one is made actually to feel the attitude of the Church of Rome even now,—when one sees the colossal calmness, the brazen effrontery, with which she goes on like a car of Juggernaut, ignoring the flight of time, ignoring everything but herself,—one understands that only a brute like Martin Luther could have done it!'

Dr. Heriot smiled. He had not guessed that she had felt the priest's influence so strongly.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CONVENT

It was late in the evening when Judith drove up to the door of the convent in Rome. The street entrance was uninviting, and there was little local colour and no poetry about the big modern stone building. The cabman jangled the bell with as much unconcern as if the portals had led to nothing more imposing than Judith's own common stair at home. The ring was answered by the portress, an Italian sister in a rather picturesque habit of blue and black.

Judith stepped from the cab. A moment later the door clanged behind her, and the wheels rolled away down the cobbled street. She thought of the sensational stories of escaped nuns which had formed part of the mental pabulum of her childhood, and was pleasantly conscious of a shiver in the region of her spine. The atmosphere of the hall was vault-like, and the gloom was relieved only by a great oil-painting, of no special merit, which she vaguely supposed to represent 'the Immaculate Conception, or the Assumption, or something of that kind.'

The portress seemed genuinely pleased to see the visitor. She rang a bell which sounded upstairs, and then conducted Judith to the extreme limit of her own territory. 'The Signora has come just in time for supper,' she said hospitably. 'I will send for the gardener to carry up the box.'

Judith mounted the broad marble staircase, emerging into the evening sunlight and a pleasant view of the convent garden as she went. A second sister met her now, a French-woman this time, gentler in manner, but quite as hospitable as the first, and she was conducted to her room. It was only a degree less luxurious than her own bedroom at home, —spotless walls, spotless tiles, and a cheap strip of carpet in front of the comfortable little bed; clean coarse sheets, sufficient provision for washing, and a wardrobe more than large

enough to contain the simple things with which she was provided.

'How perfectly delightful,' she said, surprised. 'A writing-table too, and ink!'

The nun smiled, well pleased, and led the way to the window. This was her trump card. Judith followed and looked out. There was nothing imposing to be seen in the way of natural advantages,—waste land, half-made roads, cheap, modern buildings; but in the midst of this, set down, so to speak, without the smallest pretension, as if it had been a mere soap factory,—a structure as familiar to Judith as the Castle Rock.

She turned rather pale. 'You don't mean to say,' she said in a hushed voice, 'that that is the Colosseum?'

'*N'est-ce pas?*' cried the nun. 'Ah, we thought Mademoiselle would appreciate that. I will send some hot water. The supper bell will ring in a quarter of an hour.'

Judith stood gazing from the window. What a privilege to have pitched her tent by chance within such noble precincts! But, in spite of the nun's friendly words, she was painfully conscious of not appreciating it. She realized dimly what Father Bernard had meant when he said that Rome was 'all choked up.' Santa Croce, San Marco, Giotto's tower,—all these she had felt. The Colosseum seemed less real than a dream.

The friendly nun who had shown her upstairs was waiting to conduct her down to the supper room. It was large and bare, with a few devotional pictures on the whitewashed walls. A long table occupied the centre. It was laid for about a score, with dishes of fruit at intervals, and a small carafe of wine at each place. One or two smaller tables in corners were laid each for one.

Judith had a pleasant sensation of being back at school again, with a slight nervous fear of breaking some unknown rule, but the lay-sister who brought in the soup smiled on her kindly, and seemed only anxious that things should be to her taste.

In her ignorance Judith had hoped she would be allowed to sup with the nuns, but of course she was disappointed. She had caught a glimpse of them in an adjoining room, a room somewhat humbler than this in general aspect, and she heard now the subdued clatter of knives and forks. Otherwise the silence was broken only in this Holy Week by the

monotonous voice of the Reader. What was she saying? Judith wondered. This surely in one form or another,—
'Walk where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou wilt find no higher way above, no safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.'

Informally, by ones and twos, the little company assembled. They were of varied nationality and social class. The inevitable Russian countess sat at a small table by herself. Judith was glad to find herself the only Protestant.

There was much talk of services and indulgences and festivals and audiences, but on the whole the conversation was not confined to religious and ecclesiastical subjects. One lady had purchased some beautiful old lace in the course of the day, and everyone seemed interested to criticize and admire it. The episode seemed to Judith a pretty glimpse of feminine nature, or bonhomie, or Christian goodness, as the case might be.

'Have you just arrived in Rome?' asked a fragile young American who sat by Judith. 'Ah, then you haven't heard Father Llewellyn's sermon, and I am afraid it was the last of the course. It was very fine. He is a convert you know. I think that is best, in a way, don't you? For he knows *why* he has chosen the better part.'

Judith smiled,—her good honest English smile. She felt very happy and tolerant. 'That sounds reasonable certainly,' she said.

The American sighed. 'It is a great privilege, this Easter in Rome, but it is very hard work. There is so much to be gained, so much one doesn't want to miss. And these great spectacular services are a great honour to God, but they are apt to be a great distraction too. One has to get up very early in the morning to make sure of one's own devotions.'

When the meal was about half over, two nuns entered the room. '*Bon soir, mesdames,*' they said, and everyone responded with deference.

'That is the Mother Superior,' said the American, *sotto voce*, 'and the other is the Sister Housekeeper. They are both so nice.'

Certainly both faces seemed to radiate goodwill. With easy grace the Mother Superior made the circuit of the room, addressing an appropriate word of enquiry, or welcome, or advice, or sympathy, to each in turn. She did it so simply

that Judith did not realize till afterwards how much natural gift or social experience must have gone to the production of such a manner. The Mother too admired the lace with the air of one who knew. Her whole bearing seemed to say, 'You have not taken the vows, *mes enfants*, and I would not have you act as if you had.'

Informally, as it had assembled, the company broke up, and made its way through great dimly-lit corridors, chatting in parties of two and three. There was a general assumption that everyone was here more or less for her spiritual advantage, and the conversation was frank and natural. A bright little Irish lady undertook to conduct Judith back to her room. Apparently she was a very popular person, for they were stopped repeatedly on the way.

The first to speak was a vivacious Frenchwoman who greeted Judith's companion as an old acquaintance.

'How happy I am to meet you here again, mademoiselle!' she cried. 'I wish you a blessed Easter.'

'You also, madame,' was the response, followed in a low voice by the pathetic formula, 'Pray for my intentions.'

'With all my heart.' Then doubtfully, as if uncertain whether she were taking a liberty,—'I think I can guess what they are.'

The Irish lady seemed surprised. '*Eh, bien?*' she questioned.

'You desire to enter the religious life, *n'est-ce pas?*'

'Oh, now, God forbid!' cried the Irish lady cordially, dropping into the brogue in her alarm lest the other should really pray for that.

'Well, mademoiselle?' said the nun whom Judith knew as her friendly guide, 'I hope you begin to feel at home?'

'*Merci bien, ma sœur,*' Judith responded warmly. 'I don't think I ever felt more at home in my life.'

She was glad to find herself alone again after the fatigues and new experiences of the day. And now, with a great rush of feeling, her heart went out to her sister in Florence. 'Why can't I feel like this when I am with her?' she asked herself indignantly. Very seriously she wondered whether she had done right to come away. True, no one had urged the visit to Rome so eagerly as Frances; but that was because she thought Holy Week in Rome would clinch Judith's conversion. And to Judith herself, who never for one moment

looked upon such a conversion as within the limits of possibility, it seemed that she had acted on false pretences, or at least taken advantage of knowledge which another could not reasonably be supposed to possess.

She tried to reassure herself by recalling Mr. Traquair's improved appearance. She remembered with thankfulness the returning sensation in his right arm, the devotion of the nursing sister, the hopeful prognosis of the doctors. Dr. Heriot had been more guarded than the Italian, and although medicine was not his specialty,—solitude and fatigue and the evening hour all helped just now to magnify the importance which Judith habitually attached to his opinion.

She poured out her heart in a long affectionate letter to Frances. She was too merciful to raise her sister's hopes by telling her how much she liked the convent, but she expressed herself well pleased. 'Remember,' she said, 'I will come at a moment's notice if you want me. As you say letters in Italy arrive late, and telegrams practically never, you might, in case of need, send someone to fetch me; but I don't for a moment suppose the need will arise. Still, if I can be of any comfort even—'

She closed her letter, and wondered if she ought to write to anyone else. Dugald Dalgleish? But he had not answered her last.

'You are an ungrateful, inappreciative boy,' she said composedly, '—unless you are ill—or bullied to death by those chapel people. But that is just what should have induced you the more to write to me.'

She threw open her shutters, but the night was cloudy and moonless, and the street lights made only the sordid foreground visible,—the small shops, the vegetable refuse, the gossiping neighbours, the brawling dogs, the children who ought to have been in bed.

It was not till she turned away that the Colosseum rose before her,—mysterious, imposing, pregnant with associations, as she had seen it in her dreams, as it had existed, perhaps, in the days when Rome was really Rome.

CHAPTER XXVI

TENEBRAE

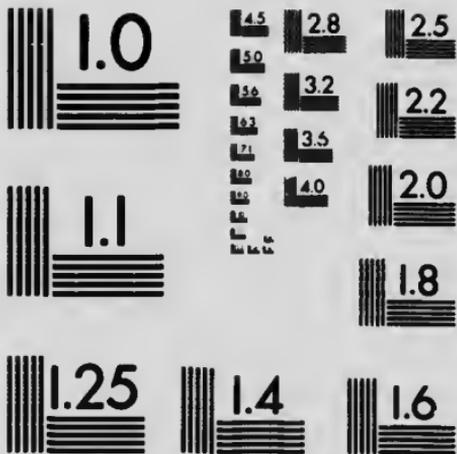
THE rain was falling in a chill steady drizzle on Thursday afternoon, when, in accordance with Father Bernard's advice, Judith left the convent and made her way to St. John's Lateran. The famous cathedral of Rome lay within a stone's throw, but she was amused to find herself resenting the rain; it was so out of character in Italy, and the cabmen and others seemed to look upon it as nothing short of an outrage.

Father Bernard's introduction had succeeded in procuring for her a tribune seat, and she cherished this as a magic *passé-partout*, though she had not the least idea what a tribune might be. Evidently the privilege was a considerable one, for the space in front of the church was occupied by many vendors of cheap camp-stools, who for once outnumbered the beggars and hawkers of inlaid trinkets.

Passing the leathern *portière*, Judith stood spellbound with amazement. The sheer massiveness of the great basilica, the barbaric grandeur of the marble pillars, overwhelmed her. She had come early, as she was told, and as yet the worshippers were few, so she took up her place for a moment in the great open space in front of the rude wooden tribunes. A number of tourists were strolling about with their Baedekers, poor natives knelt devoutly on the marble floor, barefooted children played quietly, but as frankly as if they were in the street, and one hard-featured, well-dressed woman was audibly telling her rosary with a dogged resolution that was almost comic.

Unconsciously Judith leaned against the single permanent pew in front of the spacious choir, and looked across the great expanse of crimson carpet to the altar in the background. The space was occupied only by the lecterns and a fine candelabrum.





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To her great surprise, someone touched her arm. 'Come in,' said her Irish friend of the evening before.

Judith showed her tribune ticket.

'No, no; this is far better. Come in.'

Thankfully Judith obeyed, and the Irish lady handed her the little volume, known to English residents in Rome as a Holy Week Book. 'I know it all,' she said.

Judith accepted the book with some curiosity, and glanced over the service for the afternoon. It seemed portentously long, and she was glad to find the Latin accompanied by an English translation. She did not feel in the least devotional; she had come to hear the music; but it was a satisfaction to have some idea what it was all about.

The church was cold, and the time of waiting seemed long. But at last the door on the left was opened, and the priests in their gorgeous vestments filed in. In face and bearing they formed a varied company. Every type seemed represented, from the English aristocrat to the Italian peasant. One thing only they had in common,—the fine unconsciousness that can wear purple and ermine as simply as if it were a shabby soutane.

The noble proportions of the choir and apse lent great dignity to the proceedings. There was no crowding nor hurry, no massing of effects. Each priest, each acolyte, stood out as distinctly as the fifteen candles of mystic symbolism.

The gloom of the cathedral deepened; the candles shone brighter, and the monotonous chanting of the psalms began. It was years since Judith had been in a church, years since she had read a psalm. In her ignorance she had come to St. John's expecting bowings and elevations and swaying of censers,—expecting such demands on her credulity as would reduce her to a mere spectator. And now, with a sense of incredible freshness, without a single jarring note, with every accompaniment of stately simplicity, she was brought face to face with the fine flower of the old Hebrew Psalter.

It was partly the Latin version, aided by a translation to which she was unaccustomed, that took off the old blunting familiarity; but the pious evangelical associations fell away. Fresh as when they were uttered, Judith heard the words of men who, down on the bedrock of life, had felt the utter vanity of human help, and had stretched out their hands in the darkness to God.

One needed no creed to appreciate this,—no initiation at all, save the sorrow that none wholly escape. Surprised out of her unconscious attitude of resistance, Judith laid down her arms, and threw open the gateway of her being.

Ah, they knew something, those men of old! They knew what it was to aim high, and fall low, to think they had found the solution and see it fail, to pass through the arid waste of humiliation in the eyes of their fellow-men to the fresh springs of humility in the presence of God. The spring lies right in the heart of the waste—so they said—for those who have eyes to find it. Judith knew but little of the waste, and she saw the spring as the traveller sees the mirage,—far away—a vision—yet the vision of something real.

Even now her critical faculty was not asleep. 'What does it amount to——?' she asked,

“—a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides——”?’

But it seemed to her more than this. It was as though a forgotten side of her nature had turned on her and claimed its revenge.

'*A—leph. . .*' She had come expecting fine music, but this was unlike any music she had ever heard. Was it music at all, or had the very spirit of sorrow and seeking invented a voice of its own? There was nothing in the trivial word to go so straight to the springs of emotion. With infinite pathos, with boundless reserves of strength, the voice swelled out among the vaults and arches of the great cathedral,—

'*Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?*

'*Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.*'

'*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, turn to the Lord thy God.*'

The cathedral grew darker and darker; the candles were solemnly extinguished one by one. Judith forgot the cold, forgot the flight of time. At the end of the long service she fell on her knees with the rest and joined in the *Miserere*.

'You are a Protestant,' said her Irish friend as they left the church. Judith inclined her head in assent.

'But *what* a Catholic you would make!'

CHAPTER XXVII

EASTERTIDE

IF Judith had been a wise woman she would have left Rome the next day, but perhaps such wisdom would have been almost superhuman. When afternoon came, she went to the *Tenebrae* once more. She had no ticket, but her experience of the day before had led her to think that a matter of little moment, and she started somewhat late. She had yet to learn that St. John's Lateran on Good Friday is a fashionable resort.

The rain was now falling heavily, but, far from bearing the deserted appearance of the day before, the Via Merulana was alive with conveyances of every kind, from the humble fiacre at eighty centimes the course to the C sprung carriage with high-stepping bays. The camp-stool vendors had extended their territory some considerable distance down the street, and were dismally striving to shelter themselves and their wares under huge cotton umbrellas. The steps were wet and slippery, and the inlaid-jewel men seemed unaware that to-day their importunities were more than usually out of place. The marble floor of the church was disfigured with muddy footprints and pools from dripping umbrellas; and Judith saw in a moment that her haven of the day before was not only occupied but quite inaccessible: a phalanx of people occupied the space between that and the well-filled tribunes. The worshippers who occupied a place near the choir, where there was some chance of following the service, were densely crowded; farther back there was room to move, and smartly dressed men and women were chatting and gossiping as frankly as if the function were a *conversazione*. Every marble step and pediment was utilized as a seat, and eager women carried their camp-stools hither and thither in search of a coign of vantage.

The body of the huge basilica stretched away behind into the distance, and here promenaders strolled up and down the aisles, and the ubiquitous children played unchecked. At intervals the rod of penitence could be seen jutting from the confessionals, and men and women—chiefly women—of every social grade knelt to receive its nominal chastisement. Judith might have been tempted to smile if other people had not given ample expression to any natural amusement the quaint proceeding called forth. Immediately in front of her a smartly-dressed girl knelt, with a pathetic air of self-consciousness, to do her easy penance, but the old priest was deep in his book,—or nodding, who knows?—and did not see her. An expression almost of terror filled the girl's eyes, as she saw herself involved in a public penance of indefinite duration, but the children came to her rescue.

'Padre!' they cried quite simply, standing in a pretty group and pointing with grimy fingers. '*Padre, la Signora!*'

So the old man woke and tapped, and the penitent went on her way, wondering, perhaps, how much additional indulgence she had gained by the unexpected severity of the chastisement.

Judith felt very tired after the emotions of the day before, and to sit down anywhere within hearing was to resign oneself to an atmosphere of wet umbrellas and Italian rags, to be aggravated by the senseless chatter of the tourists,—'the first baby and they've been married ten years!' somebody was saying in a high-pitched voice,—so, dreading lest the experience of yesterday should lose its lustre through friction with that of to-day, she slipped quietly out into the street.

A letter from Frances was awaiting her at the convent. Mr. Traquair continued to improve, though he had had one little turn that gave his wife a fright. A great London specialist in nervous diseases had arrived in Florence, and had undertaken to keep an eye on the case, so Dr. Heriot was going on at once to Rome and Naples. He had promised to stop again on his return journey, before there was any question of using the battery for the paralyzed limbs.

'I need not tell you how I feel about this,' Frances wrote. 'All the specialists in the world would not reconcile me to the departure of Dr. Heriot. I feel as if he were an old friend, and I think he feels the same of me. But one gets strength, and we Catholics are not so dependent as others on human

relationships. I wonder whether you will see him. I have given him the address of your convent.'

There was a letter from Dalgleish too, but, after she had read it, Judith told herself she would rather have had none. It was undeniably clever, and somewhat cynical; it kept persistently on the surface of things, and it might just as well have been addressed to anyone else.

On Saturday the sun shone forth, and Easter Sunday was a day of which even Italy might be proud. Judith rose early, donned her simple festal array, and made her way out into the streets. Already all was stir and motion.

She thought of the vivid doggerel lines in Faust,—

'Jeder sonnt sich heute so gern ;
Sie feiern die Auferstehung des Herrn ;
Denn sie sind selber auferstanden,—'

out of all the slums and cellars of the city.

She spent some little time in choosing a likely horse, and told the man to drive to St. Peter's. She meant to enjoy every step of the way, and she did,—prosaic and 'choked-up' though the early part of it was. But at length they came to regions of which one could appreciate the significance at a glance,—the Tiber, the Bridge of the Angels, the tomb of Hadrian, and so into ecclesiastical Rome.

Assuredly Judith's heart beat quicker as they came in view of St. Peter's. Is it not part of the heritage of all of us—the parish church of the world? There it lay in the bright Italian sunshine, stretching out giant arms to invite all humanity. Men and women looked like flies in the vast space enclosed by the great embracing colonnades. What chance—what chance—had one of those atoms against the mighty Mother? The fountains were playing gaily, recklessly, dashing their spray far to leeward of their basins; and already the great flights of steps were one buzzing swarm of humanity. Judith could have stood for hours just watching the men and women. She had never imagined anything on so large a scale; and to-day it was all so gay, so warm, so mellow, so sunny; folk were tempted to linger on the steps like lizards on a kindly south wall.

She saw hundreds of people enter before her, but when she went in, the great building seemed empty. The brilliant statuary stood out, more flamboyant than usual, against the

brave scarlet trappings, but the whole place seemed so big, so motherly, that she was not disposed to be critical. As she advanced slowly towards the apse, she could hear the priests intoning their office, and she had no difficulty in getting a good place from which she could see all that went on. So she fondly told herself, but, as the minutes passed, more and more people followed her example, till the closeness of the atmosphere, the pressure of the dense phalanx, the impossibility of getting out for long hours unless she made her escape at once, induced her regretfully to resign her advantage.

The church had filled up wonderfully during the time she had stood there. One began really to understand something of its size when one saw, as it were, all Europe assembling within its walls. Some tiny barefooted children in charge of a baby were trying to kiss the toe of St. Peter. The eldest could just manage it by standing on tiptoe, the others made pretty, kitten-like springs in the air; but Baby? He wanted—God bless him!—to kiss St. Peter too, and even the eldest sister's poor little ill-nourished muscles were only capable of lifting him within a few inches. Baby blew kisses into the air. Would St. Peter get them? The doubt was intolerable. Judith lifted the grimy atom in her strong arms, and, clasping the bronze foot with two chubby hands, he raised his lips as if to his mother's breast.

'Grazia, grazia, Signora!' cried the children. And Judith turned to find herself the centre of an amused little circle of onlookers,—among them a face and figure that might have been those of St. Peter himself.

'Dr. Heriot!' she said.

There is a charm about some meetings for which one can never wholly account. The friend may not be our dearest, and we were happy enough, God knows, before; but the surroundings, the time, the mood, the look we surprise on the familiar face, all combine in a chord as satisfying as any music we are likely to get here below.

Judith and Dr. Heriot looked in each other's eyes, and it was quite unnecessary for either of them to say how good a thing was this meeting.

They strolled down the aisle chatting softly, till a sound as of sudden wind through a forest made them turn. The congregation was making one crowning effort to see. The procession was coming in. Above the heads of the throng,

Judith could just trace the course of the red cardinal's hat as it made its way towards the altar.

'How selfish of me!' she said. 'Don't waste another moment. I can't stand that crowd, but there isn't a man or woman in it whose head you can't see over. *Au revoir!*'

'No, no,' he said, a little uncertainly, but her mind was quite made up.

'I'll meet you when it's all over, by--by the toe of St. Peter,' she said gaily. 'Don't be shocked. I didn't mean it for an oath.' And so she turned away.

He was more than half disappointed, but he accepted her decision. Was it only the becoming hat, he wondered, that made her look so pretty?

It is astonishing what a rendezvous St. Peter's proves on Easter Sunday. Moving about, hither and thither, Judith met several of her companions at the convent, travelling acquaintances too, and one or two friends of former days. The greatest surprise was to see Father Bernard. She had wandered out into the sunshine, and met him on the steps.

'You here?' she said.

His radiant face clouded. 'I have come to the deathbed of an old friend and fellow-student,' he said. 'He sent me one of the requests one cannot refuse.'

Judith looked at the great jubilant edifice in full *fête* behind her. 'So people go on dying,' she said gravely, 'even on Easter Sunday.'

He crossed himself quite simply. 'But not without hope. My friend lives close by here, so I looked in for half an hour. I thought it just possible that I might meet you.'

Judith wondered what Frances was doing without her director, but she contented herself with enquiring after the invalid. The report was a good one on the whole.

Like Dr. Heriot, Father Bernard was struck with the change in Judith's face; but not for one moment did he attribute it to the effect of a pretty hat. No one knows the change better than a catholic priest—that glow of emotional life that comes sometimes slowly, sometimes as swiftly as the lighting of a lamp.

'*Dic nobis, Maria,*' he said to himself, '*quid vidisti in via?*'

But if he had asked the question of her, he might have been disappointed in the answer. 'Well,' he said, 'it has all been a great disillusionment?'

'On the contrary. It has been the finest experience of my life.'

'I knew it,' he said fervently, 'I knew it.'

'But you said the very opposite?'

His blue Irish eyes bubbled over with humour. He tried to keep back the remark, but after all why should he? 'The pig didn't weigh as much as I expected,' he confessed, 'and I always thought it wouldn't.'

And with that he went back to the deathbed.

Judith re-entered the church, and wandered round the aisles once more. She saw one or two exhausted people coming down from the tribune, so she slipped a couple of lire into the hand of the attendant, and, ignoring his impassioned protest, made her way to the rickety steps. It was a relief to look down upon the magnificent spectacle, ablaze with white candles so luminous that they seemed to be reflected in the weary faces of the worshippers who still stood drawn up in a solid mass behind the rail. As she had foretold, Dr. Heriot's head rose easily above his neighbours, but he looked very weary too.

The service was well advanced. Before many minutes had passed the gorgeous procession filed out, and the great ceremonial was at an end.

Judith slipped down the steps, and took up her place by St. Peter.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANOTHER SUMMONS

THEIR eyes met, smiling, and without a word they made their way out into the sunshine. In that great courtyard the air seemed to thrill and quiver with the heat of the afternoon sun, but even here there was a breath of Easter freshness, and the splash of the fountains was delicious.

'I am so hungry,' said pagan Judith. She felt delightfully young and took no pains to conceal the fact,—she who had borne the world on her shoulders so long.

He looked at his watch. 'Why, how late it is! Suppose we try to get something to eat. I am as much at sea,' he added apologetically, 'as if we were wrecked on a desert island.'

'Let's pretend we are,' she cried with girlish glee, 'and be thankful for the first—cocoanut or plantain we come across. My convent is a long way off, and it is past dinner time now.'

So they seated themselves under the awning of a clean but picturesque looking trattoria, and partook of divers strange but highly palatable dishes, and drank chianti from a flask that a brigand might well have used, and sipped such black coffee as threw the efforts of the convent in that direction far into the shade. It was one of those simple impromptu experiences that life might contrive to bring about so much oftener than it does.

Certainly Judith looked five years younger than when he had met her in Florence, and her gay chatter was quite in keeping with the whole bright little episode. It seemed to double his own experience of Rome. She told him about the life at her convent, and he listened half enviously, conscious that his expensive cosmopolitan hotel was a very tame affair in comparison.

'I suppose they wouldn't admit me,' he said.

She looked into his face. It was bright and playful now, but there were lines in it which brought back to her mind the far-off cry of the voices in the *Tenebræ*,—strong lines too, yet not quite of victory as the world reckons victory. He seemed to be *seeking*,—more than most men sought. This Holy Week in Rome must be dazzling her, she thought, with a crowd of half-forgotten associations, for she fancied that so might a knight of old have looked when in search of the Holy Grail.

'They would restrict you to a dingy *parloir*,' she said, 'because they would fail to recognize you. If they guessed you were—St. Peter, for instance, or even St. Christopher, they would throw open every door.' And, without giving him time even to look bewildered, she went on to talk of something else.

He wondered whether Mrs. Traquair had ever seen Judith as he saw her now. The sisters reminded him of the two spheres in the electricity books,—the two spheres of which the more highly charged always draws towards itself the opposing element in the other. Who that had seen the sisters together would have guessed that Judith when alone was like this?

He walked with her to the convent, and each pointed out to the other things known or guessed or fancied on the way, and each of them thought, perhaps, that there were many things in Rome which could be better seen *quatu'occhi*.

'You do appreciate the pomps and pageantries,' he said, smiling.

Judith reflected. 'Yes, but I don't think I have appreciated anything so much as the Old Protestant Cemetery. I went there yesterday afternoon. It enters into no sort of competition with the glories of Rome. Just a stretch of sunny sward, like a bit of English meadow, with long quiet shadows from a few trees that seem to have planted themselves—fresh young green, and old pine and ilex. There was nobody there but myself,—and a great chorus of birds. I sat on the parapet of his grave—"whose name was writ in water," and looked across at a great blaze of pink blossom against a background of cypresses beyond the wall. If anything could "make one in love with death,——"'

The portress was in chapel when Judith rang the convent bell, and her place at the door was filled by the kind-faced *sœur qui sert*.

'Ah, mademoiselle,' she cried sympathetically, 'you have missed your Easter dinner!'

'I was at St. Peter's,' Judith said, 'and the service lasted so long. I dined with a friend.'

'*Dommage!*' Then in a consoling whisper,—'There was a beautiful cake and a *petit verre*, but mademoiselle shall have them for supper.'

Judith thanked her, smiling, and started up the long stair. It seemed more vaultlike than ever after the wonderful sunshine without. She thought again of the bit of English meadow with its 'light of laughing flowers.'

'It is enough to make one in love with death,' she repeated aloud.

'Mademoiselle!' It was the voice of the little sister, and quick steps were following her up the stair. 'Ah, *voilà* a telegram which I have just observed. It is for you, is it not?'

Yes, it was for Lemaistre, and, before she opened it, Judith guessed its contents. There was nothing theatrical, nothing imperious about it this time,—no mourning, nor appeal. In four words it went straight to the point. 'Alfred died this morning.'

'Nothing wrong at least, thank God!' thought the little portress as the Englishwoman quietly continued her way up the grim and silent staircase; but Judith's face was turned into stone.

'I knew it,' she said to herself, 'I knew it. *Why* did I come away?'

Her first human impulse was to follow Dr. Heriot to his hotel and tell him what had happened; but after all why should she darken his Easter Sunday too? He had been unspeakably kind, and, even from a professional point of view, he must be bitterly disappointed to hear the outcome of all the struggle. Judith turned almost sick when she reflected that Frances was all alone—even Father Bernard in Rome. She remembered how she had shivered in the Easter sunshine to hear of the *agonie* of a stranger, of a monk who had spent his life in preparing for death; and now Alfred—Alfred was dead, and Frances was all alone.

'Not without hope?'

'In love with death?'

What a mockery it all was!

With a shivering sigh, Judith took off her pretty hat, and opened the railway time-table.

To her great surprise Dr. Heriot was awaiting her at the station. He had heard the news from Father Bernard.

'I had not meant to return so soon,' he said hesitatingly. 'But if you think it would be any comfort to your sister to talk it over with me—'

'I think it would be quite absurd to cut your holiday short,' Judith replied frankly, 'when it is so nearly over, in any case.'

He seemed relieved, and yet a shade of disappointment crossed his face. 'I wonder how she is bearing up. I suppose she says very little?'

Judith showed him the telegram.

His face lighted with appreciation. 'Ah!' he said recalling the wild emotionalism of that night at the hotel, 'one would have thought—one might almost have guessed this.'

Judith nodded, but for the first time it struck her that the telegram was a little cruel after all, and a sudden weariness drifted over her.

'One feels—at such a time—that any message of condolence is too great a liberty; but if it should seem worth while—you will tell her how—how truly grieved I was.'

'Thank you. It will be very well worth while. I will write and tell you how I find her, and how—it came about.'

'That will be very kind. Of course you will stay with her for the present?'

'I will stay as long as ever she wants me.'

And so Judith's visit to Rome came to an end.

'I may as well give up my flat in Edinburgh,' she said as the train carried her northwards. 'Who knows when I shall be able to go back to it?'

She accepted the overthrow of her plans with a fierce joy in the sacrifice involved; it seemed as if the wonderful days in Rome had been leading up to this; but, as so often happens when we go out to meet life's demands, the effort proved quite uncalled for.

She found Mrs. Traquair very pale, very calm, very restrained. 'I am so glad to see you, dear,' she said. 'I want to have a long long talk.'

'If only I had never gone away!'

'It would have made no difference. We had no warning. He seemed so well, and I was full of hope—and then in ten minutes it was all over.' She made a great effort to steady

the quivering muscles of her face. 'Godfrey Carew came at once. He happened to be at Assisi, and he was so kind,— saw to everything—— Of course I am leaving the flat. I can't bear the place. Old Mrs. Traquair wanted me to go straight home to her, but that is out of the question. I have written to the sisters in Rome to ask if they can take me back. Not your convent. I would rather go to the Cenacolo, where they know and love me. They were so good to me before!' For the first time the tears welled up in her eyes.

'But, darling, don't go yet. I will do anything you like— go with you anywhere, anywhere.'

'Dear old Judy!' Mrs. Traquair rose to her feet and walked up and down the room, pressing her handkerchief against her eyes. 'You see, dear,' she said, her voice breaking pitifully, 'I have got to the end of things somehow, and I want to be with those who—who feel about it all as I do. I am not strong enough to argue. I need all the comfort I can get.'

'Oh, Frances!'

'I know, I know! You wouldn't say a word that could hurt me.' She left the remainder of her thought unexpressed. Pausing in her walk, with a sudden impulse she kissed her sister's warm brown hair.

'But you are a dear all the same,' she said.

CHAPTER XXIX

FROM THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES

It was long after midnight when, weary and travel-stained, Judith made her way up the long stair to her flat.

'It's all right, Jenkins,' she said with a cheerfulness she was far from feeling. 'There was an accident to the train in front of ours, and we had to wait till the line was cleared. I would have sent a telegram if I had known we should be so long. How cosy everything looks!'

She paid the cabman, wished him a kindly Good night, and was about to enter the door when a voice issued from the dark shadows of the stair above her.

'For God's sake, ma'am!'

Judith turned and waited. The voice sounded almost agonized. 'Well?' she said sharply.

'Would you—would you speak to me?'

Jenkins protested, but Judith put her quietly aside, and mounted a few steps of the stair. Huddled into the corner, as if she would fain sink into the solid stone, sat a woman only half-dressed and unable to lift her eyes,—just such a pathetic figure as we see ourselves sometimes in dreams from which it is an untold relief to waken.

'For the love of God take me in—or lend me a cloak! My husband has turned me out. Heaven alone knows how I got here.'

Prudence suggested the desirability of ascertaining whether the woman was sober, but every womanly instinct rose in rebellion against prudence.

'Come in,' said Judith hastily, glancing nervously up and down the stair, though at that hour they were little likely to be disturbed. 'Stay—wait one moment.' Hurriedly taking her travelling-rug from Jenkins' arm, she wrapped it round the shrinking figure. 'Now,' she said, 'come in and welcome.'

The poor creature seemed scarcely able to walk. She took Judith's proffered arm, and, with abject apology in every movement, she crept into the flat.

When she saw the bright fire, the cosy little supper laid for one, she turned to Judith with a mixture of hope and incredulity that was very pathetic. 'You're not alone?' she said. 'Not you two women alone?'

Judith smiled, but with an odd sense of choking in her throat. 'We were,' she said. 'I am happy to say we are three now.'

The woman raised her hands to her face and burst into tears. 'Oh, now the Lord is good after all,' she said. 'To think that He should have brought me here!'

Judith got her to bed without delay, and sent in a simple supper. As a matter of fact the tears were not very far from her own tired eyes. Her visit to Italy had opened up her whole nature, and she could scarcely believe even now that—just when no sacrifice seemed too great—Frances should really, selfishly, prefer to accept no sacrifice at all. It had been a sharp blow to her self-respect, and she was thankful that she could still be of use to someone, even if it were only to a poor waif from the highways and hedges.

'Returned empty,' she had said bitterly to herself, as the train carried her northwards, and yet she was conscious that her nature had never been so full of love and sympathy as it was now.

When she went to wish her guest Good night, she found her much more composed.

'There's no doubting *you*,' said the poor thing, looking searchingly into the eyes of her hostess, 'but can I trust that woman of yours?'

'My woman is safer than I am.'

'She'll not tell Miss Brown?'

'Miss Brown? No. Why should she tell Miss Brown?'

'If they hear of it at the chapel, it will just be the end of everything.'

Judith was completely puzzled. She began to think trouble had turned the poor creature's brain. Shyly and with obviously unwonted demonstrativeness, the woman took her rescuer's hand and pressed it to her lips. 'You're not married?' she said, looking at the ringless finger.

'No.'

'My dear, never marry, never marry! It's in no mood of

bitterness that I speak. Even in an hour like this I'll not deny that marriage has its joys and its compensations. But do you think they'll ever make up to you for freedom to do —*the like of this?*' The tears welled up in her eyes again and her voice broke. 'All my life,' she said weakly, 'I've wanted to be kind, and I've never been able.'

'Then I am sure you have been very kind. It's the kindness that will out that tells.'

But the consoling words served only for reproof. 'No, no,' said the woman hopelessly. 'I just let it all be stifled. I said to myself, "If I can't do it in my own way, I'll not do it at all."'

'You are very tired,' said Judith, 'and you must try to sleep. To-morrow we will have a good talk over your plans.'

She did not sleep much herself. All night she lay on the borderland, rehearsing telling scenes with this woman's husband, wondering what she should do if the case proved so bad that the outcast really could not go back.

But her visitor wanted no mediation. When Judith went in to see her next day, her mind was quite made up. She would slip home at the first opportunity, and no word should pass between her and her husband as to the events of the night before.

'Do you mean to say that after last night you will ring the bell and ask him to let you in?'

'It'll not be needful.'

'You haven't a key.'

'No; but I'll find the door on the latch.'

'Do you mean to say that this has happened before?'

'Not just this. But I know my man.'

'I don't see how you expect him to improve if you always save him from the consequences of his sins. It is no thanks to him that you are not locked up by the police.'

'That's true;—and maybe if my conscience was altogether clear, I would hold out. But—I did say something I had made up my mind I wouldn't say.'

'Won't you let me speak to him first?'

'Eh, my dear, it's easy seen you haven't a husband. It isn't as if he meant to do it. It's just the drink. And then you see—it's the chapel folk I'm thinking of.'

'So you said last night. What do you mean by the chapel folk?'

The woman's face burned. 'It's a Discipline Case,' she said. 'We're on probation. If they hear of this, they'll turn us off.'

Judith thought what a small item this was in the general misery; but clearly it was no small item in the stranger's eyes. Her parents had belonged to the chapel, and their parents before them. It was the Church Visible for her, and her whole social circle to boot.

'And, besides, no other church would take us on with a record like that.'

'Surely the Roman Catholics would,' said Judith, with a kindly memory of Mother Church's most lovable side, as she had seen it in Rome. 'How good it would be,' she thought, 'for people like this husband and wife to go regularly in confession to dear human Father Bernard!'

But the woman turned on her with a look of indescribable horror. 'The Roman Catholics! Oh, my God,' she cried, 'if it should come to that!'

Yet she could be bitter enough in her judgment of individual members of her own chapel. 'It's all a question of who is found out,' she said, unconsciously quoting *Tom Jones* and the senior deacon. 'Many a thing goes on that they shut their eyes to. That young man that lodges with Miss Brown now. *He's* going downhill fast enough. He came home last night while I waited on the stair, and, if he hadn't been drinking, his companions had.'

Judith's heart sank. Had it come to this in her absence? Indeed and indeed it was time she was back in her flat. But she had no wish to discuss Dagleish with this embittered soul. 'What a mercy they didn't see you!' she said.

The stranger's face made answer enough.

'What made you come here?'

'Well, you see, it was all so sudden. I was beside myself with terror. And I just thought of *the nearest woman I knew that hadn't a husband to reckon with*. I came to Miss Brown,—and then I was seized with a dread of that tongue of hers, and while I waited, the lad came home, and I gave myself up for lost. . . . Oh, my dear, do you know what I've been saying to myself all through the night?—"I've a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me."'

'Don't, don't!' cried Judith ashamed. 'No woman on earth could have done anything else.'

She opened her wardrobe in search of a few unobtrusive

garments with which to provide her *protégée*, and, while they were thus employed, Jenkins knocked at the door.

'If you please, ma'am, Miss Brown would like to see you.'

'Oh, Jenkins,' cried Judith in dismay, 'why didn't you say I was engaged?'

Jenkins seemed inclined to leave the room without replying, but for once she thought better of it. 'I thought maybe she was safer here than any other where,' she said dryly.

'Well, there's something in that. You put her in the sitting-room, I suppose?'

'And gave her the *Scotsman*, and shut the door.' Jenkins left the room as she spoke.

Ten minutes later the stranger slipped out of the house, and Judith went in to see Miss Brown. They had not met since the great discussion on theatre-going, and both had the recollection of it in their minds.

'I hope you are well?' said Judith, 'And Mr. Dalgleish?'

'He's fine, thank you.' The words were spoken without enthusiasm, and merely suggested that Miss Lemaistre was not to be taken into her visitor's confidence any farther.

'I suppose he will be doing great things in his examinations?'

Miss Brown looked uneasy. 'It's not always the best students that does best in the examinations.'

'That's very true.' Judith laughed ruefully. 'But I should think Mr. Dalgleish is one of the best students who do.' She had great difficulty in discovering what her neighbour had come for; but at length it transpired that Miss Brown found the evenings hang heavy on her hands, and if there was any sewing Miss Lemaistre wanted done——

Positively pathetic was the obvious effort it cost her to ask a favour of anyone of whom she disapproved. Indeed she did her best to make it clear that it was she who was conferring the favour. 'I know how handy it is,' she said sympathetically, 'to be able to get a thing done on the spot like.'

Judith promised to consult Miss Jenkins. 'Pity I don't belong to few missionary societies,' she said when Miss Brown was gone. 'Misfits must matter less, where garments are a superfluity altogether. But what can she mean, Jenkins? She never has time to get her own dress changed as it is.'

'She's been a deal more particular since you went away. I wonder——'

'Yes?'

'Nothing.—I know what it is myself to have these student lodgers that don't pay their rent.'

'Oh, Jenkins, Mr. Dalgleish is not that kind. I am sure he would rather starve than keep Miss Brown waiting for her money.'

'No doubt,' said Jenkins shortly. 'I daresay she'd not go altogether wrong with cheap flannel petticoats if I cut them out; and they'd come in useful next Christmas.'

'Then get the flannel, please, when next you go out, and don't let it be *too* cheap.' 'Diplomatic relations must be kept open for the present,' she added to herself, 'and, if flannel petticoats will do it,—flannel petticoats let it be!'

As it chanced, she met Dalgleish on the stair that very afternoon. 'So glad to see you,' she said in her cheerful, matter-of-fact way. 'Come in and have a cup of tea. It's just ready.'

He looked as if he would like to escape, but escape would not have been easy, and the sight of her new mourning shook him out of his own groove. It suggested that life had not stood altogether still for other people during the weeks that had been so eventful for him. It would have been a new link between the two friends if each had known that during the weeks of separation the other too had passed through a great initiation,—that for one as for the other a wave of emotion had rushed up on the shore, sweeping away the old landmarks, and making it necessary to begin the survey of life all over again.

Judith saw that her visitor was ill at ease, so she chatted away at random while she poured out the tea. When at length she really ventured to look at him, she thought his face had on the whole improved. It was older and weary and thoughtful. The boy had become a man. She had never seen the transition take place so sharply before, and it impressed her.

Now that the ice was broken, he was amazed to find what a pleasure it was to see her again. What a good sort she was, with that friendly face of hers, and didn't she just look perfectly ripping in black!

He was immensely interested to hear about her travels.

'And what did you think of the Scarlet Woman?' he burst out impetuously at last. 'Is she the hag they paint her?'

Judith laughed. 'Better not ask me about the Scarlet

Woman till my judgment has had time to cool. She took me by storm. She sat there on her seven hills—by the way our good old Lion here could make a meal of those seven hills, and not be a scrap the bigger! Anyhow she sat there with her grand calm forehead and dark brooding eyes; and when the children played about her feet, her face rippled into the sweetest, most motherly smiles. "What would you?" she said to the wise men behind her. "They are but children yet."

What a listener he was, with those great luminous eyes so full of eager questions. There was silence for a minute or two before he realized that she had finished speaking. His mind was so full of the pictures she had painted.

'Did they try to convert you?'

'Not a bit. Wouldn't have me at any price.'

'Now that just shows——!' He broke off. 'What an experience it must have been!' he said at last. 'No wonder you look so much——'

'Older?' she suggested tranquilly. 'No; it's no wonder.'

'What I would give to go!'

'So you will some day. Think how long I have waited for it.'

He frowned involuntarily, and she saw she had made a mistake. It was not as a delightful boy that he wished to impress women now.

'And now,' she said, 'it is your turn. What have you been about all these weeks?'

She had touched a spring and put the light out. 'Nothing,' he said, pretending to stifle a yawn, as he rose to put down his cup. 'The usual old grind.'

'How are your chapel friends?'

'Oh, going it hard and strong. The Pastor is really awfully fine. A number of new men have joined. It's extraordinary,' he added rather wistfully, as if he were looking back on a stage of experience long left behind.

Judith thought with sharp regret of the frank talks of former days. Had she failed him as well as Frances?

'Have the examinations begun?' she asked.

'Day after to-morrow,' he said shortly.

'And then you go home for a holiday. *How* glad your mother will be to see you!'

'Only for a week,' he said hastily. 'I've taken some teaching. Beastly ill-paid, but still it's something, and I couldn't sit twirling my thumbs all that time.'

'Oh,' she said regretfully, 'surely that is a mistake. You

wouldn't have twirled your thumbs. Wouldn't it have been wiser to read? You don't realize, my dear sir, that *time* is wealth to you now. It will turn into common money all too soon, and you'll wish you could turn it back again.'

'Not I,' he said. 'Money's precious uncommon in this quarter, I assure you. You see even you are rich compared to me.' He looked at the dainty cake, bought—as he probably guessed—mainly for his benefit. 'One is hampered at every turn by this hateful poverty.'

Judith smiled—a wistful little smile. She was back in Santa Croce with Dr. Heriot and Father Bernard. 'My Lady Poverty!' she said musing.

Dagleish looked puzzled. He was just at the age when brilliant youth surprises us alternately by its knowledge and by its ignorance.

So she told him about St. Francis with a quiet enthusiasm that was infectious.

'No,' he said at last, still puzzled, 'I can't understand it. Not in relation to poverty, I mean. All one can say is that he must have been very rich before. You see—' he drew down his brows in the effort to precipitate a general conclusion out of a fluid mass of experience, '—you must get *surprise* first—then attraction—'

He stopped short, blushing furiously. 'I defy any man to fall in love with his Siamese twin,' he said laughing.

There was an awkward pause. Judith felt that he was groping about for a fresh subject. 'By the way,' she said, 'how is that friend of yours—Mr. Thatcher?'

The ebbing blood flowed up into the boy's face again, and then receded definitely, leaving him almost ghastly. 'He's all right,' he stammered. 'I don't see so much of him now. Why do you ask?'

'I met a friend of his in Italy——'

'How queer!'

'—who admires him very much.'

'A—a man?'

'A man.'

'Oh, he's a fine fellow.' Dagleish seemed unconscious of the grudging tone in his voice. 'I confess I don't altogether understand him.'

'That makes him all the more interesting, doesn't it?' said Judith, sailing gaily on, as we all do sail on at times, over unsuspected deeps.

FROM HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES 193

'No doubt,' agreed Dalglish. He had self-control enough now to smile a little grimly as he spoke. Thatcher had proved rather too interesting for him.

A minute later he rose to go 'and swot,' as he expressed it.

'Good luck to you!' said Judith.

'I'm afraid that is past praying for.'

'Oh, nonsense! But in any case—let this examination go how it will, remember there is just no end to what we expect of you.'

On the threshold he turned. 'It's awfully jolly having you back,' he said honestly. 'You can't think what the stair has been without you.'

CHAPTER XXX

NEW LINKS

It must be confessed that, when the excitement of her somewhat sensational home-coming was over, Judith began to feel that life was hanging fire. She had got into the way of expecting something to happen, and behold, nothing happened. The woman she had rescued gave no sign. Dalglish had passed his first year's examinations without distinction of any kind, and had disappeared for the time from her horizon; her own classes were over; Miss Brown had taken the flannel, and had departed, shutting the door, so to speak, behind her. The dispensary patients were less interesting—morally as well as physically—than before she went away. Most of them seemed fairly satisfied with the husbands of their choice, and the monotony of their complaints was so great that Judith profanely fancied sometimes she could have run the dispensary herself on the strength of the two stock bottles commonly known as *Mist. Acid. Ton.* and *Mist. Pect. Sed.*

Her absence in Italy had brought her class-work into arrears, and she was working away doggedly in the laboratory of the Women's Medical School. A quaint and curious building was that old school,—only a stone's throw from Judith's flat, yet situated in a part of old Edinburgh that the ordinary resident seldom sees,—a roomy *cul-de-sac* where stray blades of grass grew leisurely between the cobbles. It was classic ground in every sense—a bit of the old city wall was built into the school yard—and Judith loved it dearly; but it seemed lonely and deserted in these holiday weeks. On the whole, she preferred her flat.

She was seated in her parlour one sunny afternoon, conscientiously copying from the notes of a fellow-student the Political Economy lectures she had missed, when Jenkins opened the door.

'Dr. Heriot,' said she.

Judith rose, smiling far more brightly than she knew. It would have been pleasure enough to see Dr. Heriot, but she saw so much besides,—blue skies and budding blossom, marble basilicas and gorgeous robes,—the Valley of the Shadow, and the shining heights,—the knights of the Holy Grail.

'How nice of you to find me out,' she said, selecting a chair that might be relied on to bear his weight.

'I think it would have been very strange if I hadn't found you out, especially as my work leads me more or less past your door every day.'

She smiled happily. 'But this is the first time you have had occasion to call on a lady friend by the way.'

'Well, yes,' he admitted, availing himself of the implied permission to look about him. Mrs. Traquair had told him, not without embroideries of her own, the pretty story about Jenkins and the incipient... melancholia. 'You certainly have secreted a very nice shell for yourself. Isn't it rather noisy?'

'When you hold it to your ear? You see you mustn't expect me to drop a pretty metaphor so soon. Oh, I think I like noise.'

'It isn't very often——' he began, and stopped.

'No?'

'I was going to say it isn't very often that one meets a woman who is free to secrete her own shell; but I suppose it would be truer, as well as more graceful, to say one seldom meets a woman who has originality enough to make a shell quite unlike other people's.'

'I am afraid I didn't think much about it.'

'That no doubt is just where the originality comes in—supposing money to be no special object.'

Instinctively she raised her finger to her lips. 'Take care,' she said. 'The very walls have ears when it is a question of money. My neighbours don't guess it. You can see how completely it would spoil our relations if they did. We assume that I have rich friends who come to the rescue sometimes.' She laughed softly. 'My poor little income! But I am longing to hear about your travels. I needn't ask whether they have been a success physically.'

He had looked strong enough before. To-day he seemed so well-knit, so *ready*--in speech as well as in bearing.

'No, indeed. My colleagues scarcely knew me when I came back to the Infirmary.'

'I am so glad. If it had been otherwise, Frances and I should have had great cause to reproach ourselves.'

'Do you know I was just thinking as I came along how different my visit to Italy would have been but for your party. I should have been the typical tourist with his Baedeker. As it was,' he smiled, 'you shook me right out of my signs and symptoms. And it was worth a great deal to make rather Bernard's acquaintance.'

'So I found.'

'It just shows how often the things we dread turn out to be a source of refreshment. I will confess that my heart sank when I arrived worn-out from Edinburgh to find my work awaiting me in the hall of the hotel. . . . Poor Mrs. Traquair, it is very sad that after all her hopes, the case should have ended so.'

Judith nodded with a sigh. 'Did you find time to look her up on the way home?'

'I saw her several times, and was charged with all sorts of affectionate messages.' He glanced round the room again as he spoke, and Judith guessed that he had been urged to give some account of her surroundings. It was so like Frances to expect a gossippy letter from a busy man on whom her only claim was the kindness he had shown her. 'She is wonderfully calm,—very pale, but well, I think. She seems determined to remain in Rome all summer. I hope you will use all your influence to prevent it.'

'Oh, I don't think she will need any persuading when the time comes. She has always gone to her husband's people in Perthshire, and I should think they will want her more than ever this year.'

'I thought I should find you still with her?'

Judith nodded again, blushing in spite of her desire to take the matter simply. 'I know,' she said, 'but Frances did not want me. It was my own fault. I had my chance. I was weighed in the balances and found wanting. I can't honestly say the experience is a pleasant one, but it serves one right.'

He passed the personal question. 'Mrs. Traquair was showing great kindness to a young girl—I never can do justice to a story—a young girl who had been overpersuaded to enter a convent. At the last moment the poor young thing struck.'

'And Frances encouraged her!'

'I was sure you would be pleased to hear it,' he said. Father Bernard took a leading part in the matter.'

'Ah!'

He was convinced that the girl had no vocation, and he said so quite frankly at the risk of giving offence in several quarters.'

'Good Father Bernard!'

'By the way he too sent his friendly greetings. Do you remember——?'

After that, of course, the difficulty was to stop. They both remembered so many things. Suddenly Dr. Heriot sprang to his feet. 'I am supposed to be at home from three to five,' he said, looking at his watch. 'May I bring my little girl to see you some day? I should like her to know you. She is confined to the house with mumps just now.'

'Poor mite! Then may I come and see her? I should like to make her acquaintance when there is space for me to make an impression.'

'Then perhaps you will walk back with me now?' he said tentatively, not unmindful of the quick light step that had mounted by his side the hill to Settignano.

'No, I should keep you waiting. I will come later in the afternoon. You will be engaged of course. I will ask for Miss Heriot.'

'Yes. Betty is her name.'

The doctor made his way home at a pace which Judith certainly could not have emulated. Fortunately there were fewer names than usual on the slate. He was surprised to see that the last on the list was 'Mr. Thatcher.'

'I am very glad to see you,' he said when Thatcher's turn came. 'I hope it isn't professional.'

He saw that his visitor was strongly tempted to say 'No,' and he made a mental note not to avail himself of that form of greeting again.

'Yes, it is professional,' said Thatcher reluctantly. 'I want you to take me on for a bit. I have gone off my sleep really rather badly. I know it isn't your specialty exactly, but we can't allow you to specialize too strictly yet. It is such a comfort to speak to anyone who sees all round a subject, and who knows something of the skeleton in one's cupboard; but if necessary I will inflict any injury that

strikes you as sufficient to bring me strictly within your province.'

The surgeon smiled slowly. 'Tell me about it,' he said.

'Do you remember,' said Thatcher, when they had discussed the question in its physical bearings,—'do you remember telling me long ago that your profession and mine were apt to encroach—each on the sphere of the other? That is a truth that has been horribly brought home to me in this matter. You know how I stand—between two fires. I suppose if I had been braver and straighter I never should have got into this hobble; but one commits oneself in a moment of heat,—and there it is! She has been splendid—resisting temptation for my sake. I can't desert her now.'

'No, no.'

'You remember Tennyson—

“— hard when love and duty clash”?

I always used to stickle at that in my mind, and say, "If that were all! It's when duty and duty clash!" But I've grown wiser. I don't profess that it's all principle. Nature will have her say. . . . As regards my father,—if I could say to myself, "He is a narrow-minded old tyrant," things would be so much easier. But I can't. I *know* how good he is. I *know* what he has suffered. I have felt the same myself. It's in my blood now.'

Dr. Heriot nodded slowly. 'It is cold comfort, I know,' he said, 'but don't you think that when we bear the sins of another from the inside like that, we just double the educative value of life? I went to see *Tannhäuser* last night, and it seemed to me there were two ways of looking at the story. On the one hand you may say Tannhäuser spoiled Elizabeth's life: on the other hand, would she ever have risen to such heights without him?'

'Oh, I don't bear my father's sins like that—if sins they be.'

'You wouldn't take the bull by the horns and—'

'Utterly impossible. It would kill him. I am all he has got now. The question is how far one is justified in deceiving him.'

Dr. Heriot looked unhappy. 'Don't you think, he said awkwardly, 'that when our one desire is to spare others pain—and we are not considering ourselves at all—a way is apt to open up that is not deceitful?'

Thatcher's face grew graver than ever. 'I have not found it so in this case.'

'Well, I confess that I have never been put to the test as you have. But you mustn't think the situation too exceptional. If I had your gift of utterance, I should like to tell you about an old fresco I saw in Florence.'

'Never mind about the gift of utterance. It is partly because you haven't the gift of utterance, as you call it, that one comes to you for advice. One feels that you are not reeling it off. In the last resort it is not what you say, but what you are. One looks at things in the light of you, as it were. Even you can't find a solution where there is none, but it is something to have one man to whom one can say, "The strain of life is driving me mad."'

'You don't say that,' said the doctor quietly. 'You never allow yourself to think it even for an instant. You strangle it on the threshold. You have your burden to bear and other men have theirs. Yours happens to take this shape and size for the moment. What would Hercules have been if he had said, "How shall I contrive that a great lion may not appear to me, or a big boar, or a savage man?"'

He smiled apologetically as he quoted the familiar words, and Thatcher smiled too rather ruefully. 'If only one's conscience were free from blame—'

The doctor looked grave for a moment, and then the slow characteristic smile broke over his face again. 'I am afraid you are not exceptional in that respect either. The fact that in great measure we incur our own burdens is surely the more reason for bearing them bravely. Odd that I should be saying all this to you who could say it so much better to me.'

Thatcher did not answer. 'There are other difficulties too,' he said, 'but we've had enough for one day.'

Dr. Heriot frowned. 'Hadn't we better get it over?'

'No. I must fight out the rest by myself. One doesn't live in an age of transition for nothing. I've absorbed enough of your vitality, and it is invigorating to hear the trumpet give so sure a sound.'

'On one point at least the trumpet gives a very certain sound. You must get off for a good long holiday. It is not only imaginary troubles that yield to the influence of air and exercise.'

'I'll do my best,—but tell me about the fresco.'

So somewhat haltingly, but with real rugged force, Dr.

Heriot described the picture of St. Francis in Santa Croce, and the priest's inability to decide whether it should be called a tragedy or no.

'It is the very essence of tragedy,' said Thatcher decisively, as a thinker speaks when the conversation touches subjects on which he is at home; 'Hegel's conception of tragedy,—the spiritual principle in conflict with itself, the war of good with good. But what seas of blood we may shed "pending the great reconciliation"!'

'I wish I could remember better what Father Bernard said. I am sure Miss Lemaistre could quote it word for word. Do you know Miss Lemaistre?'

Thatcher shook his head. 'Oh, yes, I know about her. She is Dugald Dalgleish's friend.'

'By the way, tell me about Dugald Dalgleish. I met him one night in your rooms.'

Thatcher paused before replying. 'Oh,—he is a brilliant young fellow. I am afraid he is going through a rather unsatisfactory phase just now. His friends are disappointed that he hasn't done better in his examinations.'

'Ah.' Dr. Heriot seemed to know that kind of brilliant young fellow.

'I am sorry to say he has avoided me lately. I can't think why, for I liked the lad. His father succeeded mine as pastor of a queer little chapel in the Border Country, so we started by being friends.' Thatcher sighed as he recalled Felix Holt's awful dictum to the effect that the greater part of our lives is spent in marring our own influence. 'He is a curious creature, receptive and perceptive beyond belief. I have an uneasy feeling that he may have got into mischief of some kind. Someone was saying yesterday that Miss Lemaistre is not the most suitable companion for him.'

Dr. Heriot's eyes flashed. 'If they are ill-matched, I can assure you the shortcoming is on his side. I met Miss Lemaistre in Italy. She is a fine woman—full of enthusiasm—quite highminded and quite fearless—not even afraid of making a big mistake. By the way—' he looked at his watch, '—I had quite forgotten. She was coming to see my little girl this afternoon. Wait one moment while I see if she is here. I should like you and her to meet.'

And so at last Judith made the acquaintance of 'the young man who held out the right hand of fellowship to—*James—Martineau.*'

CHAPTER XXXI

THE BLOW FALLS

WHEN Thatcher left Dr. Heriot's house, he was conscious of that sense of renewal which comes from meeting people whose interests and surroundings are totally different from one's own.

Miss Lemaistre attracted him very much. The air of frank camaraderie, which has since then become so common in women, was a piquant novelty to him, and he had been immensely interested in all she had told him about Rome. What struck him most was that, in talking of the Catholic Church, she spoke with an absence of partizanship about which there was no pose nor self-consciousness. Bitter censure he was used to; indignant defence he could understand; Miss Lemaistre clearly held no brief for either party, and when—in answer to his expressed intention to visit Rome himself some day—she offered him an introduction to her sister which should enable him to 'see the inside of things,' she did not seem in the remotest degree to realize that she was doing what his world would consider a most reprehensible thing.

And yet there was something very sympathetic about her talk. Dr. Heriot could have told him how strong was the resemblance between the two sisters now that they were separated by so many thousand miles. It might almost have been Frances whose face kindled with emotion when she spoke of the *Tenebrae*, and sparkled into girlish laughter at the recollection of the baby who clung to St. Peter's toe. Thatcher felt that he had drifted into quite a new moral latitude and longitude.

It was a lovely summer evening, and the streets were very full. As he made his way home, barely conscious of what was taking place around him, he suddenly drew up short. A group of small boys were tormenting an elderly man who stood rather stupidly with his back to the railings. At first Thatcher merely realized that the face was one he ought

to know; a moment later he recognized the brother whose case had been discussed at the Discipline Meeting. At the first glance, there was a curious dignity about his appearance, and this no doubt was what had appealed to the boys' sense of humour, for the air of dignity only threw into painful contrast a grotesque inability to walk straight. The man was not what a friendly witness would call drunk, but he had certainly been drinking considerably more than was good for him. As Thatcher came up, he made a dash at the boys with his umbrella, and so nearly lost his balance that a roar of laughter brought a fresh ring of spectators to the scene.

There was only one thing to be done. Thatcher made his way up to the unfortunate butt.

'I am going your way,' he said quietly. 'Shall we walk home together?' He held out his arm as he spoke, and, to his great relief, the man took it without ado.

'Don't want to go home,' he said in a thick voice, but he went. Of course they were followed by a crowd of shouting boys, and it was all Thatcher could do to keep his companion from turning to charge them. Fortunately the man walked steadily enough with the support of a strong young arm, and presently a kindly policeman dispersed the following, and allowed rescuer and rescued to continue their way in peace.

'Don't want to go home,' the man repeated doggedly, and, when Thatcher asked him why, he seemed to strive vainly to remember the reason, but finally he allowed himself to be swayed by the stronger will.

It was a dreary-looking house at which they finally stopped; many days must have passed since the brasses had been cleaned, and the small serving-girl who opened the door was not a cheerful object.

'Tell your mistress we are here,' said Thatcher.

'She's in the parlour, seeing company.'

'Then call her out—quietly.'

A minute later the mistress appeared, flushed and tear-stained, her cap awry. 'Oh, my God,' she said, 'and he went out on purpose to avoid them! They're in the parlour, David. Don't go in—don't go in!'

But her husband apparently had changed his mind. 'Come in,' he called to Thatcher with a rough laugh. 'Come in! Let's hear what they've got to say—the damned hypocrites!'

He put his hand again on the young man's arm and led the way. In the parlour stood Mr. Bount and another of the deacons, looking warm and ill-at-ease. Thatcher

guessed at once that, in choosing the deputation, the church members had meant Mr. Blount to represent mercy, his companion, judgment.

'This is a sad business, Mr. Thatcher, a sad business,' said Mr. Blount with genuine feeling. 'It was our painful duty to call and acquaint our brother and sister with the decision to which the members of the church were forced to come last Wednesday; and I am sure no stronger evidence is needed that we took the only course that was open to us.'

He seemed to look to the younger man for encouragement and support, but Thatcher could find no words. He had purposely stayed away from the Business Meeting, and now Fate had proved too strong for him.

'We have told our sister, however, that—although no doubt there have been faults on both sides—the brethren have decided to retain her name on the roll of membership. I am sure we will all pray that, by the constant manifestation of a meek and quiet spirit, she may be the means of winning our brother back.'

Strangely enough, the words carried little or no suggestion of cant to those who heard them. Mr. Blount was one of the very few who can use conventional formulas with real impressiveness and dignity.

Thatcher was expecting an indignant outburst from the man, but he had sunk into a chair, cowed and stupefied. The closeness of the room oppressed his already drugged brain, and perhaps he had not realized till now the weight of the tradition summed up in Mr. Blount's severe respectability. But his wife crossed the room and stood in front of him, like an animal at bay.

'I thank the brethren and gentlemen,' she said bitterly, 'but where there's no room for him, there's no room for me. I call God to witness that I shake off the dust of my feet.'

The second deacon was about to interpose a stern remark, but Mr. Blount saw the uselessness of that. 'Come, come,' he said kindly. 'Don't act in a hurry. Think it over. Think it over!'

'The time for thinking is past,' she said, in the strange level voice of one who has faced the worst, and stands in awe of nothing more. 'The time for thinking is past, and there is only one thing more to be said. *You can't stop here.* It isn't—' she turned to her husband, '—it isn't the faults that all the world can see that do the most harm,—and he'd never have been like this if it hadn't been for the thought of your

coming. There are things going on in the Church you haven't a notion of. There are those that question the existence of God Himself, and—' she looked full at Thatcher, '*—there are those who think it no shame to be seen with a play-actress.*'

It was a relief to be out in the open air again. 'There are few things more difficult to cope with,' said Mr. Blount, 'than the dignity of people who are quite in the wrong.'

Thatcher wondered vaguely, and not without sympathy, how many hierarchs had thought so before.

The senior deacon was a good deal shaken by the interview. He put his hand on Thatcher's arm rather touchingly, assuming that the young man had leisure to walk home with him. He was beginning to feel his age, and the future of the church looked dark.

'After all,' he said, 'the Lord's at the helm.'

'That's true,' said Thatcher, thinking as usual more of his own difficulties than of his companion's, 'but we are none the less to blame if we pull against the steering.'

Mr. Blount pressed his arm with appreciation. What a fine young fellow he was! Even if he did have ideas, he would come out all the better for them in the end.

They walked together to the deacon's door, the young man declining an invitation to come in, and they parted with a new sense of sympathy.

'Why, Dad, you're tired!' cried Rosie anxiously, noting the grey shadows in his face, as she took his hat and stick. 'There's a nice fire in the library. Come and sit in your big chair, and I'll bring you some whisky and water.'

'Life's difficult, Rosie,' he said, 'and the future often looks dark; but I always begin my prayers by thanking God for my daughter. She has grown very tender to the old man.'

His hand shook a little as he took the tumbler from her. 'And Thatcher's a fine fellow,' he said reflectively, 'a fine, earnest young man.'

It was only when he woke in the small hours out of a troubled sleep that he remembered how that poor distraught creature had looked at Thatcher when she spoke of those who think it no shame to be seen with a play-actress; and Thatcher himself—how pale and haggard he had been.

Ah, well, well, well! The whole episode was enough to make any man pale and haggard. How like Thatcher it was to bring that poor wretch home on his arm!

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PART III

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BORDER COUNTRY

It was one of those autumn days that seem to sum up and transcend all the charm of the months that are gone, as a choice wine recalls the sunshine and the grapes,—as a beautiful woman suggests a delightful girlhood for which we should yet be loath to exchange a still more delightful maturity.

The sting of the morning was gone, and now the sun shone down with the mellowness of motherhood itself. The pastures of the border landscape rose and fell in billowy hills and vales, and the river—sapphire blue—curved in and out, skirting here an overhanging tussock of grass, and there a perpendicular scarp of warm red earth.

The trees in that region are few. Here and there a clump of pines protects a lonely farmhouse from the prevailing winds; but there was no suggestion of bareness that Sabbath noon, for the hillsides wore their 'robes of praise,' a wealth of autumn-tinted bracken,—not dry and lifeless yet, but glowing with every shade of colour from richest bronze to palest primrose. In that translucent air the chord of colour was gorgeous, for, at a distance, as it seemed, of only a few hundred yards, the landscape softened into a wonderful blue that was neither light nor shadow.

Not a human being was in sight; the silence was so great that the air seemed full of sound,—the hum of insects, the twitter of birds, the slow movements of the sheep as they rose heavily to crop the grass, or let themselves lazily down to rest again.

Morning service was over, and Grizel Dalglish, clad in a fresh white frock, was making her way home. She was very like her brother, but her face was fairer and less striking than his. His expression was more eager, hers more thoughtful; he stood ready, as it were, for the attack: she, at most, for the defence. She had that broad smooth forehead which is

so restful to look upon, but to-day it was clouded, and showed a suggestion of the perpendicular line that already characterized her brother's face.

'I wish Dugald was here,' she said.

She turned in at the wooden gate of a cottage garden, and went smiling to the porch. 'So glad to see you out, Mother dear,' she said. 'I am sure the air must do you good.' She rubbed her fresh young cheek caressingly against the beautiful worn face. 'Did you miss the old girl?'

Mrs. Dalgleish smiled. 'Not more than usual, dear heart. Is the old girl very tired?'

'Oh, no! I was wishing Dugald was here—this lovely day. I sometimes want to ask him things.'

Mrs. Dalgleish's face grew tender. 'Poor Dugald, I wish he had not to work so hard. It was very brave of him to take that holiday engagement when he might have been fishing in the river here.'

'There is a *char-à-banc* at the inn,' said Grizel irrelevantly, 'just as we hoped the trippers were over for this year,—and a nice carriage and pair.'

She went into the house and helped the little handmaiden to put the simple cold dinner on the table, but she was very silent during the meal.

'You're looking pale, lassie,' said her mother kindly. 'Don't go to church this afternoon. Katie will represent the household. Go for a good climb up the hillside.'

Grizel scarcely seemed to hear. 'It was on Friday at the manse,' she said suddenly, as if she were answering a direct question. 'I was taking the children's Scripture lesson. You remember I told you they have a cousin from town staying with them. Well, it turned out that he had never heard the story of Jonah and the Whale. Think of it, Mother! In a Christian land, and his mother a minister's sister!'

Mrs. Dalgleish shook her head sympathetically.

'So of course I told them the story.' She hesitated. 'And he laughed . . . and then . . . *the others laughed too*. The minister's children!'

'Silly bairns!' said Mrs. Dalgleish quietly. '"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"' she added a moment later; 'but why did you choose the story of Jonah?'

'I didn't. It was where it comes in the Gospel narrative.'

Her mother nodded. 'I wouldn't fret about it,' she said kindly. 'What is a bairn's laugh?'

'But you see, Mother, I ought to have told the story in such a way that they wouldn't laugh. And I can't see now how I could have told it differently. That's one thing I want to see Dugald about. He'll have to preach to clever men. I'd like to ask him how he would tell the story.'

'I daresay he'll not begin with that. Put it on the shelf, my bairn, and occupy yourself with the things you do realize. When it has a message for you, it will come down sure enough. I wouldn't be wise above that which is written, but I think no soul was ever lost yet for want of the story of Jonah.'

An hour later Grizel was making her way up the hillside with her Bible under her arm. The air gave her fresh life, as it had given the birds fresh song, and here and there a lark bored its way up into the blue.

"'Type of the wise who soar but never roam,'"

quoted Grizel dutifully.

A movement among the bracken made her start, and she turned to find herself face to face with a stranger.

'One of the trippers,' she thought, and her figure stiffened into an involuntary expression of resentment.

But the woman whose eyes she met had a face that might well have disarmed the sternest soul. It was as if Nature for once had been allowed a free hand, and had said: 'This, just this, is what I meant a woman to be.'

'I—I beg your pardon,' stammered Grizel.

The soft smiling eyes were taking her in, the neat white frock, the knitted shawl, the well-worn Bible. 'I am afraid it is I who am intruding on your domain: you advanced with the step of a monarch by divine right.'

Grizel smiled shyly, accepting the compliment. 'One doesn't often meet anybody so high up.'

'Then we must have something in common, mustn't we? Sit down and let us talk about it. Do you know there is nothing in the world so restful to me as this country? I used to escape to it from my miseries long ago, and this morning when the sun blazed in at every chink I just felt a great thirst to see it all again.'

'So you came in a carriage and pair?'

The stranger laughed. 'To be accurate, I came by train and then in a carriage and pair. Was it very wrong of me?'

Grizel looked unhappy. 'If you hadn't—I shouldn't have seen you.'

'What a pretty thing to say! But I never thought the bracken would be like this. I remember it—all great green billows, and the hawthorn hedges like the crests—the white-caps—of the waves. I do love the way you let the hedges grow in your domain.'

"Hardly hedge-rows, little lines
"Of sportive wood run wild,""

corrected Grizel smiling.

'Who said that? Really? I had no idea Wordsworth had written anything so nice.'

The stranger turned her eyes away to the blue waters of the lake, that this well-brought-up little girl might feel free to look at her, and Grizel was not slow to avail herself of the opportunity. *How* beautiful she was!—quite, quite like an angel. The dark-brown gown and hat showed up every tint in the rose-like complexion, but it was the feeling of a gracious presence about her that was so wonderful. One scarcely noticed her dress at first, but—how exquisitely it was finished at the neck and wrists! It seemed to *grow* there like a dainty moss or lichen. And now, for the first time, Grizel noticed the dark pelisse half hidden away among the bracken. Were the collar and cuffs really made of ermine?

'Will you let me look at your book?' The stranger made the request very gravely and sweetly. If she had said, 'May I look at your inmost soul?' Grizel felt that she would have handed it over as simply.

And indeed it amounted to very much the same thing, for Grizel's Bible was of a kind one does not often see nowadays. It was the one expensive thing she possessed, and the wide margins were filled with pathetic references and annotations, in a copperplate handwriting that vied in regularity with the type itself.

The stranger opened the book with respect. 'Grizel Dalglish,' she read on the fly-leaf. 'What a pretty name!' Then, as she turned over the leaves, she added quite simply, 'You must have been converted very early, little Grizel.'

'Eleven and a half,' said Grizel. 'Dugald was only ten.'

'Dugald is——?'

'My brother.'

'Ah, tell me about your brother.'

So Grizel told how clever he was, and how handsome, and how brave, and what chums they had been before he went away to college.

'And you will be a joy and a comfort to him always—just what he expects you to be!' The stranger sighed.

She was still turning over the leaves of the Bible. 'This is a great treasure,' she went on.

'It is my mine of gold,' testified Grizel faithfully, 'where I dig. Did you ever notice,' she added shyly, 'the eight Overcomeths of Revelations?'

The stranger closed the book, and looked full across at her. 'No,' she said. 'Tell me about the eight Overcomeths.'

'I dug them out last week.' Grizel quoted the verses from memory.

A wistful weary look came into the beautiful eyes. '*To him that overcometh will I give to walk with Me in white.*' Unconsciously she had transposed the words, but even the conscientious Grizel raised no protest, for she repeated them in a voice that made the young girl blush to think of her own colourless rendering. 'Ah, little Grizel——!'

She stopped short. 'Do you read nothing but this?' she asked a moment later kindly, in a matter of fact way.

'Oh, yes. The schoolmaster lends me books. . . . Mother doesn't like me to read novels, and indeed I don't care for them.'

'*What a comfort you must be to your mother!*'

'So she says,' Grizel admitted frankly, 'but I am not half the comfort she is to me. Oh—how I wish you and my mother could meet! I suppose you are going back to-night?'

The stranger smiled. 'In the carriage and pair? Yes. I must be in Edinburgh to-morrow afternoon. I meant to spend the night at the inn, but they can't give me a room.'

There was a silence. The shadows of the hedgerows were growing long. '*To him that overcometh will I give to walk with Me in white,*' repeated the stranger broodingly.

'How beautifully you say it!'

'There's a wonderful ring about the words, isn't there? Tell me, Grizel, do you never grow tired of—white?'

Sure enough the red rushed up into the fair young face. Grizel's voice sank to a whisper. '*Not—with Him,*' she said.

'No, no; but—how do you express it?—when faith is dim?'

Grizel sprang to her feet as though she would answer this question, but not the one beyond it. 'Ah—*then!*—All sorts of thoughts come,' she said hurriedly, 'about all sorts of things;—but—there is always so much to do, and—the very sight of Mother drives them away.'

'What a lucky girl you are! I wish I knew your mother.'

Grizel's face burned. 'We're very poor,' she said, 'and everything is as plain as plain; but—if you would come and spend the night with us—I'd wait on you as if you were a princess—as perhaps you are.'

The stranger laughed. 'Poor little princess!' said she.

'You know,' continued Grizel, gathering courage, 'if I were a princess, I shouldn't only go to courts. I'd want to see all sort of queer places.' Her eyes shone and revealed quite a different Grizel from the little *dévoté* of five minutes before.

'Well said, little Haroun al-Raschid!—But in the meantime what would your mother say to your bringing home the first vagabond you meet?'

'Oh, *Mother!*' said Grizel, surprised that there should be any question on that score. 'Mother would be so pleased; but she's not strong, and she can't talk much. She always says we are so poor that if anyone cares to share *just that*,—they shall at least have a welcome thrown in.'

'What a wonderful mother! I thought it was only wicked people who were nice like that.'

Grizel looked at her—aghast.

'Well,' said the stranger quietly, 'publicans and sinners, if you prefer to word it so.'

'Ah—yes!' said Grizel slowly. 'But I don't think publicans and sinners are as nice as they used to be—at least—not in this part of the country. I suppose you won't come?'

'Indeed I will. We'll stop at the inn and tell them to send up my bag. And if your mother says No,—why we'll just tell them to take it down again, and you won't fret, will you?'

'Oh, *Mother!*' said Grizel with the same unbounded confidence. 'Mother is the Man at the Gate.'

“‘I am willing with all my heart,’ said he.”

She raised the wonderful pelisse from the ground, and shook it carefully. 'Will you put it on?' she said, 'or shall I carry it for you? Does that lovely silk really go inside?'

The stranger laughed as the wide sleeves slipped easily over her gown. 'Do you like it?'

'Like it?' Grizel noticed how coquettishly the ermine rolled back from the dainty neck and wrists. 'When I am a princess, I shall have one exactly like it. Hadn't you a book?'

'Oh, *Woodbine*, yes. Such a charming story. It must have got lost among the bracken. Thank you.'

They made their way down the hill and along the high-road. Then, striking across a stretch of pasture-land, they found themselves at the cottage gate.

Mrs. Dalgleish stood in the porch. She was beginning to wonder why her child did not return. It seemed to the visitor that the very sight of her face in the evening light was like a benediction.

'Mother,' said Grizel simply, and then to her own surprise she faltered. Now that she saw these two women together, there was something about the stranger that frightened her. The feeling passed as quickly as it came. 'This lady and I made friends on the hill,' she went on. 'She meant to spend the night at the inn, but they haven't a room, so I brought her here.'

Mrs. Dalgleish turned a pair of gentle searching eyes on her visitor's face as she held out her hand. 'It was kind of the lady to give us that pleasure,' she said.

All the way along the stranger had been wondering how she should introduce herself. 'My name is Miss Brooke,' she said now, her glance wavering a little as it met that of the older woman. 'I can't quite believe in my own audacity in taking your daughter so simply at her word.'

'I am sure you did well,' was the quiet response. 'You have come to very simple folk.'

'It sounds like a fairy-tale—such hospitality.'

'Nay, nay! It would be a strange tale if it were otherwise. We have little enough to offer in return for your *Peace to this House!*' She looked from the visitor to her daughter as she spoke, divining that here was a denizen of quite another world.

'Ah, that I can say with all my heart,' said the stranger, thankful that no more searching Shibboleth was required of her. 'Peace be to this house!'

She was just in the mood to enjoy it all to the utmost, and she said quite truly that no princess could have fared better.

A neighbouring farmer had brought in a basket of trout fresh from the river the night before, and Grizel's scones were light as air, and the honey from Grizel's bees recalled all the fragrance of the country-side.

'If you knew what it is to me,' said the stranger, '—the sweetness and the peace,—a little bit of sanctuary in the midst of the chase.'

Everything delighted her—the old spinnet, the dainty chintzes, the bowl of late roses—even family prayers.

She 'found her place' in the third epistle of St. John with a facility that surprised both herself and her hostess, and she wondered, with a deep inward smile, whether she would be expected to read her verse in turn; but Mrs. Dalgleish read the lesson herself with a sweet dignity that was refreshing.

The little party broke up very early. Mrs. Dalgleish encouraged her guest to sit up, but Miss Brooke assured her that it was one of the rare luxuries of her life to go to bed early. She was one of those refreshing guests whose wishes seem honestly to run in the groove of the household traditions.

Grizel went with her to her room. 'Can I do anything for you?' she asked shyly.

'Come in,' was the cordial response.

Miss Brooke threw off her pretty gown with a frankness that astonished puritan Grizel, and in very leisurely fashion slipped a blue gossamer negligée over the wonderful arms and dainty laces at which the young girl scarcely dared to peep. Then she drew a few large tortoiseshell pins from her hair and shook it about her shoulders with a great sigh of relief.

'Oh, do let me brush it for you!'

'Sweet of you. It is hard work, isn't it, doing it for oneself.'

Beautiful hair it was, faintly perfumed, chestnut in colour, and soft as silk: it twined about Grizel's fingers in an odd mesmeric way.

'Not quite so gently,—so!' Clearly this was no novel experience to Miss Brooke. 'It must be very nice, little girl, to be as good as you are.'

'J!'

'When I was your age, I wanted to live, live, live. I didn't see why all the young things should be happy and I—only good.'

Grizel's eyes were very eager. 'And you were happy?'

'Oh, I don't know. I sometimes think life just isn't built to give us what we want. The cup is brimming,—and something comes between. Or we drain it to the dregs—and loathe the recollection. Am I talking Greek?'

'I—don't—know.'

'I came out here to-day to get away from it all,—to think something out for myself.'

'And I came in the way?'

'Oh, no; you were part of all I came for.'

'And you got it thought out?'

'God knows! Good night, little girl, good night!'

When the young girl was gone, she drew a letter from her pocket, and read it once again. It was an attractive letter in every way,—the expensive club notepaper, the manly English handwriting, the contents.

'Oh, my dear,' she said, 'if I only could! If I only could! Why am I always and always to live a maimed life—I of all people! Can neither of us yield an inch?' She blew out her candle, and opening the latticed window, looked out on the great moors with the quiet stars overhead. The tears were raining unchecked down her beautiful face.

'To him that overcometh will I give to walk with Me in white.'

'*Christ!*—If it were true! If it were true!'

Far in the night, Mrs. Dalgleish, lying awake, heard the stifled sobs of her guest through the wall, and wondered who she was, and whether the hand of the Lord was heavy upon her. But in the morning Miss Brooke appeared fresh and radiant as ever.

'I can't begin to thank you in any ordinary words,' she said, as she took her leave. 'If anything should ever happen to make you sorry you gave me—sanctus, you won't forget that I was grateful, and that you did me good?'

Mrs. Dalgleish shook her head, smiling. 'Nothing could ever make me sorry for that,' she said.

'You didn't ask her to come back, Mother,' Grizel said reproachfully when the carriage had rolled away.

'No,' said her mother, deep in thought, 'I didn't ask her to come back.'

CHAPTER XXXIII

WOODBINE

'*Ivery night this week,*' said Miss Brown, 'has he been at the theayter—coming home the Lord knows when—rising late and bolting his breakfast to rush off to college. A nice beginning for a new session! It's that temptress—that Ianthe Brooke with her baby face and her winning ways.' (That very day Miss Brown had stood for a quarter of an hour in the street before a case of photographs.) He's in love with her, that's what he is. It's in me to wish she were dead!

It was long since Miss Brown had taken her neighbour into her confidence, but the temptation was overmastering. She had brought home some work, and Miss Lemaistre had been very kind.

'It's very unfortunate,' said Judith thoughtfully, adding on an unlucky inspiration, 'I will see what I can do.'

'Oh, *you'll* no can do onvthing,' said Miss Brown with more truth than civility. Already she was regretting the unlucky impulse that had prompted her to talk.

She would have regretted it doubly if she had known the means by which Miss Lemaistre essayed to mend matters. She had tried in vain to induce Dagleish to talk about the beautiful actress, so she took the bull by the horns.

'I have two stalls for the play to-morrow night,' she said in her matter-of-fact way. 'Do you care to come with me?'

The quick blush rose to his face. 'I am not quite sure—whether—I have an engagement,' he stammered. 'I'll let you know in an hour or two—if I may. Thanks awfully,' he added over his shoulder as an after-thought.

It seemed to him simply impossible that he should go with Miss Lemaistre to see Ianthe Brooke. Miss Brown had not exaggerated. It was true that he had been at the theatre every night during the engagement; and every night he had gone with the wild hope that some happy chance might enable him to speak to her. Other actresses seemed to be

accessible enough, but Ianthe Brooke was not of these. Still he had an instinctive conviction that the Fates would bring them together—sooner or later, for better or worse. If he accompanied a lady to the stalls, he relinquished his last hope for this time, and yet it would be something to sit so near her, to lose no glance, no play of feature; and surely, surely, if he sat so near, she could not fail to see *him*, perhaps to guess something of all he felt.

Once and again Dalglish had told himself that he had outgrown his ridiculous weakness, had attained a position of security; but, just as he began to breathe more freely, some little thing happened,—he saw a new portrait, or he read a paragraph in the paper,—and behold, his poor little dyke was demolished by the incoming tide.

He would have known quite well what to think of any other penniless student who allowed himself to cherish a passion for a successful actress, and he was not insanely conceited. It was the old story. Passion said, Here, here, is the exception. This one special case is different from every other, is governed by no known laws.

And the strange thing is that, some half dozen times in the history of the race, passion has told the truth.

Sometimes he had almost ceased to think of Thatcher in connection with the beautiful lady. There may have been some passing attachment, he had thought, and of course she was an impulsive creature, as all artists are. But only that week Jones had told him as a great secret that he had seen Thatcher and Miss Brooke together in Hawthornden.

'Thatcher of all people!' chuckled Jones. 'But don't you breathe a word.'

Well, well, well! Who could say what lay behind it all? The world was a very queer place. Dalglish still retained his fine idealistic view of life, but the edges of his faith were getting a little rubbed.

And now—was he going with Miss Lemaistre to the stalls, or was he not? Surely he had self-control enough for that. 'Till the last moment the balance seemed even, and then he said, 'Yes.'

Of course Judith was well aware that she was doing a very unconventional thing. It had even crossed her mind to ask some other woman to be of the party, but that would certainly prevent Dalglish from talking frankly, and she quite expected that he would talk frankly. She saw the absurdity of the

situation so clearly that, knowing the boy to be no fool, she anticipated no special difficulty in dealing with it. Were not half the students in Edinburgh 'in love' with some woman quite out of their reach, and were they not often much the better for it? The complications in Dalgleish's case were that he lived in a world where theatre-going was a sin, and that it was his nature to take things too sorely to heart. If only he would talk, the battle would be half won.

The two friends arrived at the theatre in good time, and through all the inward storm and stress, Dalgleish took a boyish pleasure in the atmosphere of luxury which prevails in that part of the house.

'Quite a new experience this for me,' he said frankly, looking at the far-off gallery. 'Feels as if I were regarding the Earth from Mars.'

It was Saturday night, and he knew he would be 'spotted,' and envied, by not a few of his fellow-students. So much the better! It pleased him to see how Judith held her own in the new surroundings. The little air of distinction was even more marked here than when one met her on the stair, and how stunning she looked in that pretty gown!

He talked more than was necessary while they waited for the orchestra to begin, and his cheeks were flushed like a girl's. He seemed anxious to keep the lead, to prove his self-possession.

'By the way,' he said with a sudden thought, 'I got a letter from my sister just as I was starting out. Do you mind my looking to see how my mother is? She has been ill.'

'Do, by all means. Does your sister write a good letter?'

'Sometimes—when she is not too busy. H'm. Short enough this time. House-cleaning. What's this? An adventure on Sunday—a wonderful visitor. No time to tell you about it this week.'

'Who was the wonderful visitor?' said Judith only half attending.

The conductor rapped with his baton.

'Oh, some missionary no doubt. She doesn't say.' He crammed the letter into his pocket and drew a long breath.

Yes, she really was more beautiful than ever,—more mature, and her face had gained new depths of expression. Judith turned to her companion with a glow of appreciation, but his eyes were fixed on the stage, he could not respond just then.

The play was not quite the good wholesome melodrama in which Dalglish had seen her first; the 'problem' note was beginning to make itself felt, and the actress availed herself freely of the new scope.

'She *is* a delightful woman,' said Judith when the drop fell for the first time.

Dalglish contented himself with a grunt of assent.

'Don't look round now,' she continued in a very low voice, 'but, judging from the pictures, I think the man behind you must be the author of *Woodbine*.'

Obediently Dalglish gazed straight in front of him and listened. The person Judith had referred to was talking eagerly.

'Looks the part to the life,' he said, '—that freshness and radiance. Do you remember the scene with the old artist at the water mill? The question is—but we'll wait and see. We'll wait and see.'

Some frank discussion followed about Miss Brooke's various points, and the speaker rose to go out with his companion.

Dalglish had grown red with indignation. 'I haven't read *Woodbine*,' he said. 'One sees it everywhere, of course. I hope it is more attractive than its author.'

'I don't see any harm in its author, but its heroine is bewitching; that is what has taken the public by storm; and some of the situations are excellent. The book is a real *succès fou*. I saw in some paper the other day that it is being dramatized. Perhaps they want Miss Brooke for the part.'

'That's no reason for discussing her as if she were a filly at a fair.'

'You can't adopt a professional career,' said Judith sagely, 'and expect only the affectionate appreciation of your own domestic circle.'

The play continued its course, and the two men behind became increasingly cryptic and elliptical in their remarks. Dalglish struggled to understand,—vainly for the most part; but he gathered that the author's companion was a person of vast importance in the theatrical world, and that the two had run down from Ballater for the sole purpose of seeing Ianthe Brooke.

The play came to an end; some happy man had the privilege of throwing a great bunch of red roses at the lady's feet; and then the curtain fell for the last time, leaving the ghost, the semblance, of Dalglish to help Miss Lemaistre with her

wraps, while all the man in him followed the two others out into the *foyer* and round to the room at the back.

'Refuse! Why, she'll jump at it,' said the great man genially. 'It's a provincial reputation, hers, so far. She's only done minor parts in town.'

'That accounts for my not knowing her name.'

'Of course I have had my eye on her for years as one of the women who were ready for their chance when it came.'

'She seems to me far and away the likeliest we have seen—so fresh!'

The other nodded reflectively. 'We won't call her a great actress. She is too circumspect for that, and greatness is rare. But there's a deal of charm about her in one way or another, and the tones of her voice are good and sympathetic. She's *individual*. Yes, I think she is the woman for us. It is folly to predict success when it means stepping over countless failures: even I am taken in again and again: but you have the elements, my dear sir, you have the elements.'

A minute later they were admitted to Miss Brooke's bare untidy little dressing-room. 'Ah,' she said, dropping a playful curtsy, 'I was wondering to what happy chance I owed so great an honour.'

'Let me introduce the author of *Woodbine*.'

Of course she guessed in a moment what had brought them, but her face gave little indication of the motley crowd of emotions that swept across her,—hope, triumph, hesitation, doubt, one on the heels of the other. So long as one's name was entered on the lists, one must play the game for all one was worth.

'You come at the right moment,' she said, 'while your book is fresh in my mind. I am so far behind the rest of the world that I only read it last Sunday—out on a sunny hillside with sheep grazing below, and larks in the sky above me.'

'That sounds a happy omen. I hope my heroine was at home among the larks.'

She nodded. 'Do you know what I said to myself?—"*Eine recht dankbare Rolle*."'

'Hear, hear!' agreed the great man, and that brought them to business.

The shabby brougham had to wait longer than usual that night, but at last it carried an excited and weary occupant to a quiet main-door house in the west end. Miss Brooke was not too tired to exchange a few playful remarks with the

coachman as she tipped him; then, opening the door with her latchkey, she entered the sitting-room on the right.

It was the ordinary lodging-house sitting-room, sober and conventional; but its inherent character, or want of character, was blotted out while Miss Brooke was in possession. Picturesque hats and cloaks had overflowed, so to speak, from the bedroom hard by; a great parcel of tartans, sent in on sight by a Princes Street firm, had been half unpacked on the sofa; photographs and knick-knacks were strewn about, and the room was sweet with flowers.

An elderly woman had been dozing over the fire. She sprang to her feet as her mistress entered the room, and a book slipped from her lap to the hearthrug.

'Ah, I knew you would not miss me if I gave you *Woodbine* to read,' said Miss Brooke with a pout that was only half playful. 'I might have stayed away all night.'

'My bairn!' The woman was busy unfastening the long cloak. She waited on her mistress hand and foot, and Miss Brooke accepted the service with the pretty waywardness of a spoilt child. Her eyes were roaming over the supper-table.

'I am half famished,' she said as she seated herself with a sigh. 'Give me a leg of the cold pheasant. No, I said a leg. And you might cut me some thin bread and butter— Now sit down and don't worry, there's a dear.'

She fell upon the simple supper like the healthy animal she was, and her maid anticipated her wants in silence, content to express her affection in brief appreciative response whenever Miss Brooke vouchsafed some remark about the evening's performance.

'It is quite a mild night, really,' she said, 'but I am sure it was better for you to nurse your cold by the fire. Don't you think so yourself now?—you dear old Nana!' Her eye fell on the book, which had been rescued from the floor. 'Well, how do you like it?'

The woman laid her hand affectionately on the cover. 'It garred me greet,' she said simply.

'That's a good omen, as the author would say,—especially as I left you laughing over it. Will there be tears enough to float it, do you think? Go back to your arm-chair, Nana. I want to talk to you. Yes, give me a cigarette first. I am dying for a smoke. And take the pins out of my hair, there's a dear. Don't fuss over the roses now. They can wait. Yes, lovely, aren't they?'

She threw two big soft cushions on the hearthrug, and curled herself up in front of the fire like a kitten.

'I am glad you like that book,' she said at last, 'for they have turned it into a play—and it is to be acted in one of the big west-end theatres, — and they want me to be Woodbine.'

'That 's wiselike of them.'

'I wonder. The bargain is not clinched yet. All the way home I was wishing they would write and say they had changed their minds; and, if they did—I should break my heart! If it fails—the failure would kill me; and if it succeeds, you know what that would mean. Paragraphs and pictures and interviews,—burrowings into my past. A shilling a line and the glories of print to anyone who can write and say, "I remember when she first had the measles"! What would John say? What would——?'

She did not finish her sentence. Her face was full of thought and perplexity as she watched the smoke of her cigarette float idly up the chimney. At last she tossed the end of it into the fire, and lighted another. 'I love success,' she said. 'You can't work at anything and not want to succeed. But I have had just enough success in the past to teach me that one must pay for every scrap of it—in one's heart's blood.'

'My poor bairn!'

There was another long silence, and then Miss Brooke stretched herself luxuriously. 'I am so tired, Nana! I want to sleep for a week. Bring me my tea when I ring, and then leave me in peace till lunch-time. I'll be ready for—— company——in the afternoon.'

'No more country jaunts!'

'Good heavens, no! Is it possible that was only last Sunday?'

'Yet you said you had been as happy as a lark?'

'So I was. But one can't always be a lark. I am a dormouse this week, or a hedgehog. Some nice grovelling little beast of whom not much is expected.'

Again she sat gazing into the fire. '*Eine recht dankbare Rolle,*' she repeated under her breath. 'Do you remember that scene in Paris, Nana?—in the studio?' With a sudden impulse, she sprang to her feet, the real Ianthe Brooke whom the public loved, and, posing before the mirror, repeated one of the telling speeches in the new part.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AFTER THE PLAY

THE two friends walked home together through the lamplit streets. Judith was very enthusiastic about the performance, but she failed to draw from her companion anything more than monosyllabic replies. On the whole she was compelled to admit that her experiment had not been a shining success.

'I am not going to the flat,' she said at last, pausing at a familiar corner. 'I am spending a few days at the Women's Medical School. The Warden has been called away, and I am taking her place—as far as I can.'

It was a minute or two before her words gained access to his mind. 'Well, you are a person of surprises,' he said at last.

'Call them adventures,' she pleaded. 'As a matter of fact, it fitted in quite simply. I really have no ties, and I have to come for my lecture every day in any case. You must come some day and see the place by daylight. It is just what you would like,—real classic ground in every sense. There is a bit of the old Flodden wall built into our yard.'

'How jolly!' He turned to walk with her, thankful that she should talk on any subject save the one that occupied his own thoughts. 'I don't believe I have ever been down here before. Queer place to build a school.'

She laughed. 'It wasn't queer two centuries ago—when the teaching of Anatomy and Surgery really began in Scotland. I told you it was classic ground. Only yesterday, as you may say, Robert Knox lectured here—on subjects provided by Burke and Hare.'

'Is it a safe neighbourhood for you to be in?' he asked, surprised for a moment almost into forgetfulness of the very different world they had left behind.

'So far as Burke and Hare are concerned—quite safe,' she replied demurely.

'No doubt. But apart from Burke and Hare?'

She laughed light-heartedly. 'Safe? I should think so. I have a porter and his wife to look after me, and the whole place belongs to a nice dog who takes care of us all. I don't go out at night as a rule. My neighbours are delightful—the real thing! And there are heaps of children.'

'That I can well believe!' he said, looking up at the crowded old 'lands' in Blackfriars Wynd, as they turned into High School Yards. 'What's this barn here on the right?'

'The Public Mortuary,' she said simply. 'And the Fever Hospital would close the vista if there were one. It is quite a professional part of the town.'

'Like Charlotte Square,' he agreed grimly. 'If good doctors go there when they die, I suppose bad doctors come here. But what *you* have done to deserve such a fate, I can't imagine.'

'If you could only guess,' she said earnestly, '*how* much better I like it than Charlotte Square. But I suppose you have no sympathy with that nice little girl who wanted sometimes as a great treat to go down and play in hell for an afternoon?'

'Oh, haven't I?'

They were talking on different planes, as is so often the case with young men and women,—as was constantly the case with Judith and Dalgleish, if she had but known it.

Dalgleish waited to hear the bark of the dog, to see the muscular form of the porter, and then, swift as a hare, he sped back to the theatre. He was too late, of course; the place was dark and deserted; but, greatly to his own surprise, he bore Judith no great grudge. Unconsciously to himself, he had come to look upon her of late as a type of the prosaic and steady-going. A mere temporary change of residence had altered that. In this strange new setting her fearlessness and independence struck him afresh as forcibly as on the first night of their acquaintance. 'You must get *surprise* first,—then attraction,' he had said to her months before; and now, as he made his way home, he was astonished to find that the faerie vision of Ianthe Brooke gave place sometimes in his mind to that of the woman who elected so calmly to include in her outlook the grimmer side of things. Contrary to all his expectations, his walk and talk with her had drawn some of his vitality into another channel. He felt calmer, better balanced; the sense of strain and oppression was gone.

'I'd give sixpence,' he thought, 'to know what her working philosophy is. She's not pious.'

To his great delight, he had started Logic and Metaphysics this winter. His mind no longer needed 'stirring up to its foundations and turning inside out.' Day after day he drank in the lectures as a thirsty soil drinks in the rain. After the comparative failure of his first year's work, it gave him a refreshing sense of superiority to compare himself with the students who regarded the new subject as unmitigated grind. To be given the forms of thought combined with such freedom to think was a privilege he had ceased to expect from his pastors and masters, and it was beneficial as much from a moral, as from an intellectual, point of view. Little as he suspected the fact, freedom of thought had come of late to mean for him something perilously like lawlessness. The new studies had pricked that little bubble at least for ever. By degrees he had to learn that intellectually as well as spiritually, there is 'no higher way above, no safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross.'

But at present he was full of contradictory impulses, and one never knew which might come uppermost in any emergency.

Edinburgh teemed with attractions for him at this stage. There were lectures to be heard on all sorts of subjects, sermons by preachers far more advanced and intellectual than his own Pastor. There were walks and talks with the students who, for better or worse, had ideas out of the ruck, and the book of the moment could be borrowed and discussed, late in the night-watches, over a brew of tea or of toddy according to the taste of his companions. Dalgleish lived in a state of exaltation that was delightful, though of course it involved days of profound reaction. The whole universe throbbed with a mystery that seemed ever on the eve of bursting into words, as the slopes above Florence had burst into colour and flower.

'Unquestionably she's not pious,' he repeated as he made his way home. 'I'd give sixpence to know what her working philosophy is.'

He opened the door with his latchkey, and was surprised to find the gas in his room burning as brightly as a half-worn burner would allow. Supper was not laid, but a bottle of whisky stood on the table, and in his arm-chair sat Miss Brown—fast asleep.

He stood still for a moment, reflecting that his gallery of

female types was nothing if not comprehensive. Then he laid his hand on her shoulder rather roughly.

'I'd sleep in bed if I were you,' he said. 'Good night.'

She had risen to her feet, half-dazed. He opened the door suggestively, and she took the hint. He waited to see her lie down on her bed, then, throwing an old plaid over her, he returned to his room, locked the door, and opened the window wide.

'Upon my word, I had begun to think she was a reformed character,' he said cynically.

There were biscuits in the cupboard, and a soot-begrimed kettle droned on the hob. Dagleish mixed himself a glass of toddy, made alarming inroads on the biscuit box, and—with all the sanguineness of youth—took his *Metaphysics* from the shelf.

Miss Brown was about in the morning betimes, but her depression was positively pathetic. Her very volubility was gone.

'I'm rael vexed,' she said humbly, as she cleared away his breakfast things, 'I was feeling that ill.'

'Ill, were you?' he said good-naturedly, recalling a significant remark she had once made to him. 'I was afraid you had gone downhill.'

She looked him full in the face, and he turned away, whistling.

'There is so much glass about in this establishment,' he said, 'perhaps we had better both refrain from throwing stones'

Miss Brown returned to the kitchen, and leaned against the mantelpiece, a very picture of woe.

'My God, my God,' she said drearily. 'An' I so near resistin'!'

Five minutes later she was roused by Dagleish's voice in the lobby. 'I am going out for a turn,' he called gaily. 'I promised to lend a fellow my Logic notes. I'll be in very soon. I'm not going to church to-day.'

'If she gets drunk on Saturday night,' he had reflected, 'she can't find fault with me for not going to church on Sunday.'

He had promised to lend his notes to a fellow-student who had spent the hour of lecture over the closing chapters of *Woodbine*. It was not part of the undertaking that the

precious manuscript should be handed over on Sunday, but it now occurred to Dalglish that one good turn deserved another. A novel was just the thing to help him through the depression and malaise of the day. He had smiled on Friday at his companion's preoccupation, but now his attitude was changed. *Woodbine* then was a story,—a name. *Woodbine* now had taken on flesh and blood: she was calling, calling.

From the point of view of the novelist, Dalglish might still be called virgin soil. He read every word, pictured every scene, laughing aloud sometimes, and even, safe in his solitude, shedding a furtive tear. To think that a brute like that should be able to depict so perfect a woman! For of course Dalglish read Ianthe Brooke into every telling situation. Stolen waters are sweet. Such a Sabbath as this was a new experience in his puritan life, and he kept assuring himself as he went to bed that never before had he spent a day so refreshing.

CHAPTER XXXV

SURGEON SQUARE

Dusk was falling, and the wind blew in great fitful gusts when Dagleish turned down Infirmary Street to the old Medical School. A lean and ragged little boy was trying to peep through the keyhole of the mortuary. Dagleish shivered involuntarily, and resisted an impulse to kick the young enquirer. Notwithstanding the neighbourhood of the tenements, the place had a grim deserted look that depressed him. He and the morbid little boy had the old cobbled street to themselves.

He strode on briskly to the School and rang the bell rather noisily.

The door was opened by a middle-aged woman who admitted him into a long passage, unevenly paved, and bounded on either side by a high stone wall. As he entered, a quick gust of wind slammed the door heavily to, and he felt somewhat as Judith had felt when first she found herself within the gates of the convent. He wondered whether it was down this very passage that Burke and Hare had smuggled their gruesome cargo.

'Miss Lemaistre is at home?' he asked quickly.

The woman nodded and turned to lead the way.

'I hear you have a bit of the old city wall here. This can't be it surely.'

'That was no just built yesterday, as you see; but the real old wall is down at the bottom here. I daursay it would puzzle ye to say where it begins and ends. We're on the crest o' the hill, an' that's the Pleasaunce down below.'

Dagleish nodded, trying mentally to 'place' the neighbourhood in a quaint old chart of Edinburgh which he had picked up at a book-stall.

His guide opened a door on the left, and conducted him along a low undulating passage to a room at the end. Miss

Lemaistre was not there. 'She'll be down in a minute,' said the woman casually. 'Take a seat.'

The room was small but comfortably furnished. The window looked out on the chimneys and roofs of the Pleasaunce, dark against a stormy sky. The uncertain fire-light fell on pictures that seemed to invite a nearer acquaintance. Opposite the window, the door of a closet stood open, revealing nothing but blackness unrelieved. Dalglish waited patiently for some minutes, but Miss Lemaistre did not come. The open door mesmerized him, and, his eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, he began dimly to discern within it a flight of wooden steps leading upwards. Crossing the room, he looked up to see a faint gleam of light through an open trap-door at the top.

'She must have gone up,' he said. 'I had better follow.'

Groping his way, he emerged in what seemed to be a small lobby, and, following the direction of the light, he pushed open a door to find himself in a spacious room that looked even larger than in contrast with the dark little by-ways through which he had come.

All the day-gleams were streamed down through two great rows of windows in the roof, one of which Miss Lemaistre was closing by means of a very modern rope and pulley.

She did not see her visitor, and he availed himself of the opportunity to take a quick look at her surroundings. The walls were lined with anatomical drawings and preparations; a skeleton hung from a bracket; and, on the great zinc tables were things ill-defined, swathed in wrappings, ghastly to his over-stimulated imagination.

Miss Lemaistre turned, startled to see that she was not alone. 'Oh,' she said, 'you should not be here. It is quite against the rules. Who brought you?'

'Nobody. I was left in a sitting-room downstairs till I grew tired, so I set out in search of adventures.'

She led the way from the room, locking the doors as they went out. 'We are very proud of our Anatomy room, but it isn't meant for casual visitors, and least of all are casual visitors expected to enter by a trap-door.'

'You will admit the temptation,' he pleaded. 'Think of the stories of my boyhood—a dark cave with steps hewn in the rock—'

'I will admit that I shouldn't have left the door open,' she said brusquely.

She led the way round by the gusty outside passage to her sitting-room below. A fairy's wand seemed to have touched it in his absence. Crimson curtains were drawn over door and window, and a pretty lamp called into prominence bright notes of colour here and there, suggestive-looking books, a deeper meaning in the pictures.

Miss Lemaitre took up some woman's work, and put her feet on the fender with a sigh of relief.

'Cosy, isn't it?' she said.

'Jolly,' he replied a little doubtfully, 'but how the wind does howl!'

'Yes.'

'And if I weren't here, you would be alone?'

'One from two leaves one,' she said demurely.

She looked very dainty and provocative in the evening light. The fine lines of thought,—'so different,' as the Frenchman says, 'from the lines of age—' were blotted out, but the distinction they conferred on her face remained. He wondered again what her 'philosophy' was. A dozen questions hovered on his lips. In surroundings like these surely one might be pardoned for broaching subjects which, as a rule, are better sealed.

Apparently such subjects did not suggest themselves to her.

'You must remember,' she said, 'that for half the day the place is full of young life.'

'That makes the contrast all the worse.'

'You see I like contrasts. I mean—they are sure to come, and it is better not to be unprepared. Besides you can't really watch the story if you shut your eyes to the Great Presences.'

'What are the Great Presences?'

'Death,' she said simply, feeling her way, 'and Suffering, and the Poverty one doesn't seem able to relieve.'

'What's the good of looking on at what you can't relieve?'

'Because one wants to see the s.o.y. Besides—there are two kinds of lookers-on,—those who are sitting comfortably beyond the footlights, and those who stand in the side-scenes, waiting for their cue.'

'Well, you are in the wings anyhow,' he said consolingly. He leaned forward and looked at her eagerly. 'You are not afraid? You can go quietly to sleep with that *thing* creaking

and rattling in the wind overhead, and all the ghosts of old Edinburgh built into that wall of yours?’

‘It isn’t rattling in the wind,’ she protested indignantly. ‘You must remember that I have been coming and going about the place for a year or more. I didn’t make my first entrance through a trap-door on a stormy night. But in any case why should I be afraid? On your own showing, why should I be afraid?’

“There is nothing in heaven or earth beneath
Save God and man.”

There was a moment’s silence, during which it crossed his mind that God might be about enough to daunt a man, and man a woman. Then he took his courage in both hands.

‘*Is there God?*’

‘*Ah!*’ An inscrutable smile played about her lips. ‘That’s why we are watching the story.’

Dalglish shrugged his shoulders. ‘You’ll watch long enough before you find the answer *there*,’ he observed cynically.

‘Perhaps. I didn’t say there wasn’t a better way—for those who can find it.’

‘Dugald was only ten,’ Grizel had said half enviously to the beautiful stranger, and now Dugald, the man, looking back on the once vivid experience of his conversion, wondered how much it amounted to after all.

‘Blest if I know,’ he said aloud, answering her and himself at the same time. ‘Do you remember saying to me the first night we met, “I trusted God that far”? What did you mean?’

‘Nothing,’ she said shortly. ‘I shouldn’t dare to say it now.’

He failed to grasp the point of view. ‘We change, don’t we? I smile to think what a tissue of touching credulities I was a year ago. My landlady—a devout Christian woman; my friend and hero—a man after God’s own heart. And now—’

‘And now?’

‘When I got home from the theatre the other night,’ he said casually, ‘I found the Christian landlady drunk in my arm-chair.’

‘Oh, I am so sorry! I knew that some time ago she was taking—occasionally—more than she should, but she seemed to have improved.’

'Shows how little you can ever tell.'

'One doesn't see what is to save her now. She has nobody to love her.'

Dalglish nodded sagely. 'She'll go down, down, down——'

'No, no; I never say that. I like to think there are hundreds of people going downhill to-day, who a year hence will be "toiling upwards in the night."'

"Toiling upwards in the night," he repeated. 'That is one of your quotations too, is it?'

'I like it. By the way, talking of that evening at the theatre, did you see in to-day's paper that our conjecture was correct?—that Miss Brooke is to play the part of *Woodbine*?'

'I did,' he said, trying to speak as if the matter were of small importance.

'You haven't read the book?'

'Yes, I have—more or less.'

'Pretty, isn't it?'

'Not bad.'

She gave the subject up after that, and returned to the one he had chosen.

'But your Christian hero—if you mean Mr. Thatcher—I can't think that he has disappointed you. I met him at Dr. Heriot's, and I liked him. My German master would have said, *Wieder einmal ein Mensch*.'

'Yes, I quite feel that,' he said when she had endeavoured to translate. 'But he's awfully queer in a lot of ways. One thing I can tell you—it was what made me late to-night. I was passing the door of a Roman Catholic church, and, after what you had told me about Rome, I thought I would just look in. It was awfully dark and impressive, with a gleaming light, and a strange heavy smell——'

'Stale incense,' she suggested, 'and old clothes.'

'Was that it? Well, at first I could see nobody, and then the figure of a man loomed out. He was kneeling, and—well he seemed fairly keen, so to speak. There was something familiar in the look of his shoulders, and I confess I tried to make sure. *It was Thatcher*.'

She did not seem deeply impressed.

'If some of the old deacons had seen him,—or Dobbs—which isn't likely!—and he so near being ordained, they'd have a Discipline Case as sure as knives.'

'But you were there too.'

'Oh, that was quite different. I just looked in out of curiosity. If questioned, I could truly say I only went to convince myself I had been wisely instructed by my grandmother Lois'—his lip curled—'concerning the follies and superstitions, etc.'

'I think you were a great deal the worse of the two,' she said warmly.

'May be. But that wouldn't be the view of the chapel. They would say to me, "Not Guilty; but don't do it again."'

"Nothing for nought in the world, they say,
And little they get who have little to pay,
But the chapel stood open all the day,"

she quoted. 'The Catholic Church is the heritage of us all. I don't suppose he has the least idea of going over. It isn't always convenient to pray at home, if one wants to pray, and I have no doubt his own chapel was bolted and barred.'

Dagleish nodded. 'Of course I shan't breathe it to anyone but you. If they made a "case" of Thatcher, there just would be a storm, and no mistake.'

'Do tell me,' she said, 'what you mean by a Discipline Case.'

He told her in general terms. He quite felt the temptation to wax merry over it, but his loyalty was involved here at least. 'You see,' he concluded, 'it's the Reformation theory of the priesthood of every believer.'

'It does sound a bit suggestive of Geneva in the sixteenth century. You haven't had any recent case have you?' She was rather ashamed of herself for asking the question, but the opportunity was too good to be lost. She had often wondered what had become of the woman she had sheltered.

He nodded. 'One since I came,—a husband and wife. Husband expelled: wife retained.'

'I should think that was very fair,' she said impulsively.

He looked at her, surprised. 'Granted. But why should you think so?'

She felt doubly ashamed of herself now, and thankful that one could blush unnoticed in the rosy lamp-light. 'Other things being equal, it is always a good principle for a woman to stand by her own sex,' she explained calmly.

'Unfortunately in this case the woman declined to be retained, and she is dead-set on revenge. Doesn't care who she incriminates. The Pastor and Mr. Blount and one or two more are really awfully sane and moderate, but some of the fogeys are just jolly old inquisitors, and they don't in the least see how much they are out of drawing with the tendencies of the age.'

'How very strange,' she said wondering. 'In theory, of course, it is beautiful that—experts—should take the trouble to look at our lives as an Art critic would look at our paintings. But when it comes to the common people we meet every day—the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker—who may have their little personal grudge against us, and whom we know to have little pet sins of their own—'

'Oh, it's an abominable tyranny, of course,' he said impulsively. 'But think of changing it for *Rome*! I can understand chucking the whole thing like a man.'

She did not answer. She was wondering what his mother would think—the mother with the wonderful face—if he 'chucked the whole thing like a man.'

'Abominable tyranny,' he repeated, anxious to force her hand. 'Why on earth should we steer by their blessed chart? What were our powers and tastes given us for, if not to live a full free life? I believe a man was born to develop on his own lines, don't you?'

Still she did not answer immediately. It must have been the wailing of the wind that brought back to her ears the weird music of the *Tenebræ* :—

*'Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?
Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.'*

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem—'

'Yes,' she said thoughtfully at last, feeling her way as she spoke. 'But don't forget that other people haven't given up serving God, if you have.'

It was so sudden, so unexpected, and withal so incidental, that it took his breath away—coming from Miss Lemaistre of all people! For months he had been expecting to be pulled up by somebody, but never by her.

'Well,' he said, 'that was pretty straight.'

She smiled apologetically, realizing for the first time the full force of her words. 'I think you have been pretty straight

yourself once or twice this evening. Perhaps we had better not trust ourselves any farther. I am sure we both have our work to do. Good night.' With a very cordial smile, she held out her hand.

As he turned into High School Yards, she called him back. 'I don't know how far you trust me, Mr. Dalglish,' she said shyly, and he wondered what might be coming. 'I want to know the name and address of that woman—the Discipline Case, you know. I fancy I may have met her, and—she must be rather at loose ends, don't you think?'

'You are a brick,' he said warmly. 'Of course I'll tell you. Munro is the name. You know I'm on honour, that's enough.'

'Thank you.' She took down the name and address in her note-book.

'I am sure the Pastor will keep his eye on her. He is that kind of man.'

'Yes,' she said doubtfully, 'the Pastor.'

They looked at each other, smiling with mutual comprehension.

'Oh, I assure you he is not half a bad sort,' said Dalglish, 'for people like that.' And, clutching his hat with his hand, he made his way home through the storm.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

MISS LEMAISTRE was quite sorry when the time came for her to leave the old Medical School, and return to ordinary life in her flat. She had made friends with all the children in the adjoining wynds, her human sympathy being wide enough to include even the small boy of enquiring mind whom Dalgleish had felt inclined to kick.

The flat was shut up for the night, and she and Jenkins were sleeping soundly when Judith was startled to hear a ring at the bell. Realizing that it might be only the practical joke of a passing student, she waited to hear it repeated, and then, springing out of bed, she threw on a dressing-gown, and opened the door on the chain.

'It's me, ma'am,' cried Miss Brown, 'an' I'm feared the lad's dyin'.'

The door was open wide before she had finished speaking.

'Come into my room,' said Judith quickly, 'and tell me about it while I put on a few clothes. Don't waste words.'

'He'd an awfu' spell o' pain an' sickness afore breakfast. It fair doubled him up like, but a college freen' o' his ain—a medical—happened in, an' gied him a bottle. He seemed a lot easier—just lay sort o' dozin'. At bedtime he was worse again, an' he said I could send for a doctor the morn. But ten minutes syne he called me, an' I saw an awfu' change. I got him a drap whisky. "No, no!" says he, "Give me laudanum!" Did ye iver hear the like? "Give me laudanum!" An' he's that fevered, an' his breathin's that quick—' Miss Brown burst into tears. 'I doot he'll no live till the morn.'

'Nonsense,' said Judith kindly. 'I saw him only a few days ago. Did you give him the laudanum? No? Then he had better have it in this form.' She was preparing her hypodermic needle. 'Come.'

They crossed the landing, and entered the lad's room. Miss Lemaistre was prepared with an apology for intruding, but she saw in a moment that the emergency was too great to require it. Dalglish was very ill. His flushed face wore an expression of painful anxiety, the significance of which her experience as a nurse had taught her to appreciate.

'You should have seen the doctor sooner,' she said cheerfully, 'but we'll lose no time now. He'll soon put you right.'

She concealed her anxiety from Miss Brown as well as she could, and, hastily summoning Jenkins, she gave the two women simple directions about applying hot fomentations. 'I will go for the doctor,' she said.

'Could you no bide, an' let one of us go?' suggested the landlady, sorely afraid of responsibility.

Judith shook her head. 'I have done all that can be done for the moment. I shall be quicker than either of you, and, besides, I am better able to answer questions.'

Swiftly as a boy, she sped through the streets till good luck sent a belated cab to her aid. She gave Dr. Heriot's address, and leaned back, thankful for the opportunity to regain her breath.

Clearly Dr. Heriot was not unaccustomed to night-calls. In a surprisingly short space of time he appeared, ready for action. The bigness and calmness of the man gave Judith fresh life. There was no hesitation about him now. His questions went straight to the point without the waste of a word.

'I don't suppose it is a surgical case at all,' Judith said rather blankly, when she had told him as much as she could, 'but, from the moment I saw how ill he was, my one thought was of you.'

'It sounds rather as if it might be a surgical case,' he said thoughtfully, making sure that his kit was ready for instant use. 'We'll see him first, but we'll go prepared. And I'll put the boy on the box to run errands if necessary. What is his pulse like?'

'I am not good at pulses. It seemed to me a mere running thread.'

Seated in the cab, he asked a few more questions. Then—

'Has young Dalglish friends in town?' he said.

'I only know of Mr. Thatcher.'

'Thatcher,' he mused. 'I don't see the object in putting the responsibility on Thatcher. Perhaps his landlady may

know of some one. . . . It may be the best thing to remove him to the Infirmary.'

'He looks dreadfully ill; but I suppose you couldn't operate where he is?'

'I don't know. It is more a question of *light* than anything. I think we surgeons attach too much importance to the locality. If a man is careful of his dressings, and above all of his hands, my belief is that he can operate almost anywhere.'

She sighed. 'I am afraid Miss Brown's flat will try your faith.'

And so it did—from the moment they entered the door. The vision of the kitchen-table, still bearing its burden of unwashed dishes, was typical of the whole.

Dr. Heriot was shut in with the patient for some minutes, and he came out looking very grave, yet with a curious gleam in his eyes, as if the warrior in him were rising to the sound of the trumpet.

'I want you to understand the situation,' he said to Judith, speaking rapidly for once, as if time were precious. 'You did quite right to administer morphia. The patient is very ill: in fact, I have never seen so acute—so fulminating—a case. If we trust to medical treatment, he *may* recover: my impression is that he will die. Operation has been tried with success in a number of cases recently, chiefly in America, but of course it may fail. It is a hundred times more likely to fail if we wait. It should have been done hours ago. If he were my son, it should be tried, but the question is one that is being much discussed just now, and many sound men would disagree with me.'

'Then you will operate to-night?' Judith spoke quite quietly, but her face was very pale.

He looked round the room with a troubled expression. 'If we move him to the Infirmary,' he said, 'the operation will *not* be done to-night.'

'How would my flat do?'

Oddly enough, the idea had not occurred to him. As he recalled the clean, stained floors, the fresh wall-papers, the absence of trappings, the eyes of the surgeon fairly shone.

'Do you realize what it means?' he said quickly, 'even if things go well? Giving up your home to this for weeks?'

'If that were all!'

He drew down his brow. 'And you mustn't forget that he is a young man and you are a young woman.'

THE TERROR BY NIGHT 139

She smiled miserably. 'We can't alter that at this stage. *Aiant!*'

'Then nothing could possibly be better. I will send the boy for my assistants, and a good nurse whom I know to be disengaged.' He disappeared for a few minutes, and returned, looking eager and pre-occupied. 'We'll get on with our preparations in the meantime.' He looked round the poor little room again. 'The nurse and the dressings will be the only expense that will fall on his people.'

'Oh, we'll manage the dressings,' said Judith. 'I notice it seldom occurs to patients and their friends that a few old rags won't serve the purpose. And I am willing to do as much nursing as you will let me.'

'You can help me most as mistress of the house, but there will be plenty for you to do, never fear! Now there is one thing more. Apparently no one has even seen the light out of health. I should like to speak to some responsible friend for a few moments. We will see if his landlady can suggest anyone.'

Miss Brown was overcome with sorrow, and trembling with nervousness. 'There's the Pastor' she said, with chattering teeth. 'He's great at the sick-bed.'

'I implore you,' said Judith in a low voice, 'not to send for any of those chapel people. It will be the Florence Street corner again, without the cabineer, or that old-world routine.'

She turned to Miss Brown. 'What is the Pastor's name? Atherley? Let me see. I have met Mr. Atherley. I don't think—' he turned to Judith again, '—I don't think I should direct you to Atherley.'

"(Send for the sick-bed," she repeated significantly. "What means." Imagination conjured up a sordid caricature version of the strange ceremony in Florence. "Send me to join in singing *Shall we gather at the* The bitterness of her voice robbed the words of all semblance of flippancy.

"I don't send for him because he is a minister, though incidentally I am not sorry for that. I send for him because he is a friend of the patient in a responsible position.'

'You don't understand the situation,' she said desperately. 'Whoever you send for, the minister will come. The truth is, the boy has been having his fling a little—no great harm. But, even if he were the sinner they think him, what can it matter? On any theory what can it matter? This side the

veil or that? He is fearfully impressionable. A great repentance scene will simply kill him.'

He was looking at her quietly. 'I think,' he said, 'you must leave the risk of that to me.'

Her face softened in a moment. 'I do,' she said, 'now that I have told you.'

It seemed long before the assistants came, though they had made all speed. Judith put the flat at their disposal. She had long since instructed Jenkins to put on as many kettles as the kitchen fire could be persuaded to hold. She was sitting with Dalgleish when Dr. Heriot and the Pastor entered together.

'This is Mr. Atherley,' said the former in a low voice. 'I have explained the matter to him.'

Judith was surprised. She had expected something very different. The Pastor had brought nothing with him apparently—not even a book; but there was an inherent priestliness in the tall, slightly drooping figure; and the grave suffering face, quick with expression at the moment, almost seemed to enshrine the meaning of the altar and the cross.

She vacated the chair, and the Pastor sat down. He was almost as much accustomed to sick-beds as Dr. Heriot himself, and he saw at a glance that the lad was dangerously ill; yet his whole bearing showed that absence of shock and surprise which characterizes those who, as Judith had said, live in the shadow of the Great Presences. One saw that his habitual attitude was one of reserve; one felt instinctively that here was a man to whom speech did not come glibly, a man who would have been thankful at times for a form of words—a spiritual coinage—which would have saved him the effort of minting thoughts afresh from the fire of his own heart.

But to-night the flame needed no fanning. He leaned over the lad very kindly, taking the fevered hand in both his own, and calling him for the first time by his Christian name.

'Do you know me, Dugald?' he said; and his voice seemed to say, 'I have known you so well.'

There was a murmured reply, a gesture of assent, a moan of something like despair. Clearly the room for words was small. Dr. Heriot had explained that the expression of anxiety was a physical symptom, but of course the Pastor could not view it quite in that light. The tenderness of his voice grew deeper as he realized that the whole wealth of his

will to save must be condensed into a word. 'It is all right, my boy,' he said slowly and clearly, speaking as one who had authority. 'If you can't come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner. Don't explain or excuse yourself. Just come.'

For a moment he waited to see if Dagleish would speak. Then, with a brief intense word of prayer and benediction, he rose to go.

Judith felt a lump in her throat. This was a strange contrast to the invocation of Archangels, Apostles, Virgin, yet who could say it was less effective? '*Volo : mundare.*' With such tremendous force thrown upon the first word, surely the veriest sceptic must believe for the moment in the cleansing power of the second.

'But the river of Death is wide,' she thought, 'and the mist hangs heavy and dark; and who shall say how far it extends, that brave little pontoon bridge of faith and prayer?'

With a sudden lightening of expression, the Pastor turned to Dr. Heriot. 'I wish you Godspeed,' he said, smiling bravely. 'I am sure it would be a comfort to the lad's mother to know he had fallen into hands like yours.'

He remained in Miss Brown's house while the patient was carried over to the other. He lay down on her broken-sprung sofa, and allowed her to make him a cup of tea. It was an honour she never forgot till her dying day.

Meanwhile in Judith's flat the task of the night went forward. The operation was a daring one in those days, and, if it failed, there would be many experts to say it should never have been attempted; but there was no faltering, no uncertainty, no obvious anxiety. As always, the temper of the surgeon communicated itself to the humblest of his helpers, and Dr. Heriot went about his work with a massive calmness that was inspiring and steadying to all. His great physical strength, the perfect equipoise and training of his muscles, gave a fine certainty to his most delicate manipulations. Each hand was lever and fulcrum and force in one. As he went on, a deepening calmness, a restrained and cautious triumph, lent fresh nerve to his arm, for it became abundantly clear that the delay of a few more hours must have been fatal, that Nature alone could never have won the victory. Dr. Heriot allowed himself one moment to make sure that the patient's breathing was steady and deep, and then

he forgot even the patient. But through all his keenness and concentration one felt the mesmeric thrill of delight in a beautiful piece of work. The master is the master whatever his craft. As Stradivarius bent over the violin he was creating, so the surgeon bent over his work.

Judith never forgot the Pastor's look when, at Dr. Heriot's request, she went over to tell him that so far all had gone well, and that the patient had fallen into a natural sleep. A swift little wave of emotion passed over his face, and for a moment he could not trust himself to speak. The boy might have been his own son.

'Dr. Heriot is coming to speak to you himself,' said Judith, 'if you don't mind waiting five minutes more.' She wished she could tell him without impertinence how different he was from all she had expected.

As for poor Miss Brown, she threw her arms round Judith's neck and kissed her. 'Now may God bless you,' she said, 'for all you have done this night.'

The mood was too good to last, and indeed before daylight it had given place to a torment of jealousy, but it was very touching and genuine at the time.

Dr. Heriot looked radiant, though the lines in his face had grown deeper, and the damp stood on his brow. A man must always be more of a man for each brave deed left behind him, and it had required some courage to embrace this sudden opportunity.

He remained in the house all night. The patient slept very brokenly, but the morning record was very satisfactory.

'I am so glad,' Judith said warmly, when she and the surgeon met at breakfast. 'It is a splendid thing to have done.'

Strangely enough, he was touched by her generosity. His reward for the night's work—if all went well—would be an increase of confidence in his own powers, a fundamental readjustment of his professional position. But what of her? What is the woman's share,—the share of the faithful helpmeet?

'One drinks life's rue and one its wine,—'

But Judith's face did not look as if she were tasting rue.

'We are by no means out of the wood yet,' he said guardedly, 'but so far I am very thankful. It makes an immense difference when one feels oneself well supported.' A

half sad but very pleasant smile broke over his face. 'You and I have come through some strange happenings together.' He was thinking, as he looked at her fresh vigorous figure, how desirable a comrade she made; but Judith was in one of her impersonal moods.

'Very strange,' she echoed, her thoughts drifting away to the first night in Florence. Then, 'You were quite right,' she said, 'about Mr. Atherley.'

'Oh.' He seemed half unwilling to accept the change of subject. 'I had met him, you see, and he struck me as having a sense—a sense of the fitting. But now I will try your faith no more. I give you my strictest orders that no human being is to be admitted to see the patient till I give leave.'

'Thank you. You will find it difficult to touch the bottom of my capacity for obeying orders.' She spoke with an almost colourless simplicity, as if the matter were a purely professional one; but the quiet faith in her eyes would have strengthened the hands of any man.

Before he found the answer he sought, she had passed on. 'I was wondering—what about Mr. Dalgleish's mother?'

'I spoke to Mr. Atherley about that. It seems she has been very ill lately. Mr. Atherley says she cannot possibly come at present, so he is going to travel down to-day and tell her about it.'

'How kind of him!'

'It seems to me,' he said, with the shadow of a smile, 'that young Dalgleish is very lucky in his friends altogether.'

'Oh,' she said, 'it is a life so full of promise.' She smiled, as if recalling pleasant memories. 'Such a *human* life. But the Pastor is very kind, and he is just the messenger one would choose—for her. Wait one moment. I am sure Mr. Dalgleish would not mind. I want to show you her portrait.'

She hastened across to the other flat, sure of a welcome, but Miss Brown's greeting was somewhat curt. Judith carried off the photograph, and put it in Dr. Heriot's hands.

A faint colour rose into his face as he looked at it.

'And he is her only son?'

Judith nodded. 'And she is a widow.'

He drew a long quick breath, as a man may who recognizes at the same moment his danger and his escape.

'I will have another look at the patient before I go,' he said quietly, 'and I will be in again before lunch.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

QUESTIONINGS

THUS Judith entered upon another phase of her adventures.

It was a very pleasant phase when the first acute anxiety was past. Her heart had often ached to think of Dalgleish in his depressing surroundings,—sleeping in an old box-bed, and eating ill-cooked food. All the mother in her rejoiced to have him in her own care.

He did not seem greatly surprised when first he realized where he was.

‘How’s the skeleton?’ he asked, ‘and the old wall?’

The nurse thought he was wandering, but Judith reassured her.

‘I have left them behind,’ she said. ‘There are no ghosts here.’

If there had been, Dr. Heriot’s visits must surely have exorcised them. He came in often, and his presence was like hill air and sunshine. Manlike, he had been afraid there might be a little friction between Judith and the nurse, but they promptly set his mind at rest on that score. Each had in reserve a fund of concession considerably in excess of any claim that was made upon it in this case.

Nothing could make the street and the stair really quiet, but the patient was not very sensitive to noise, and, apart from that, his conditions were ideal. Within the four walls of the little flat there arose one of those spells of harmony that occur so unexpectedly in life, and occur often at times when we look only for discords.

The door bell was muffled, and Dr. Heriot explained to Miss Brown that in the first instance there was no necessity to tell visitors where Dalgleish was. ‘Just say he was removed from here to have an operation done, and that he is not allowed to see anyone at present.’

It seemed so simple to the masculine mind, but of course

there were difficulties in the working that he had not foreseen. Jenkins could have managed it beautifully, but Jenkins' personality was surrounded by a forbidding stone wall, Miss Brown's by a tumble-down paling. With the best will in the world how could she prevent people from peeping through? She looked mysterious, she refused to speak, and finally she told the truth under an awe-inspiring seal of secrecy. Surely those men and women are the wisest who seek to put no restraint on the tongues of their fellow-creatures.

What with the opportunities of conversation afforded by the Sunday services, the Band of Hope, the Young Men's Debating Society, the Young Women's Bible Class, the Mother's Meeting and other gatherings, the news of Dalglish's illness spread with extraordinary rapidity. Within a week everybody knew his life had been saved by an operation that had set the whole Infirmary talking.

Judith had rejoiced that it lay in her power for a few short weeks to give the patient every luxury the doctor allowed, but her plans for the most part were checked in the bud. Offerings of every sort poured in, from the humble package of old linen (presumably intended for surgical purposes) to the lovely basket of grapes and hot-house flowers carried upstairs by a long-suffering footman, while admiring children stared at the carriage and pair below. Tracts arrived too, of course, some brutally by post in a halfpenny wrapper, others apologetically concealed among early chrysanthemums or late autumn roses. But Judith was constrained to admit that tracts were not nearly so abundant as her study of fiction would have led her to expect. She put them ruthlessly in the fire, though the literary skill displayed in the choice of titles might well have stayed her hand. She was almost tempted to read one entitled *What if thy Father answer thee roughly?* and probably she might have been all the better for it if she had.

And then, while Dalglish was the centre of a radiant glow of genuine human sympathy, the question arose, Who is Miss Lemaistre?

Not a chapel member, of course. Where *was* she in the habit of worshipping? And why did she live alone like this?

It was unfortunate that Miss Brown was the main available channel of information, and it was no fault of hers if she could not honestly testify that Miss Lemaistre was her ideal

of a Christian young woman. Miss Brown knew of Judith's attendance at the theatre, and did not know of her attendance at church. The one thing she could say quite definitely was that Miss Lemaistre had been 'awfu' ta'en up wi' Mr. Dalgleish this year back.' 'Onybody can see that she is older than what he is, but—' with a stern sense of justice and vivid recollections of Ianthe Brooke, '—I'll no deny that he might do waur. She's rael cliver.'

Unfortunately 'rael cliverness' under the circumstances was not the most disarming virtue. Life is a lottery, of course, but Dalgleish quite might be one of the prize-winners. The nonconformist pulpit affords unique opportunities to a brilliant young man, whose weak points, moral or intellectual, might bring him to grief in walks of life less adaptable to his personal idiosyncracies; and the chapel could quote more than one tragic instance to prove how undesirable it is that brilliant young men should 'entangle' themselves too early.

'Ridiculous nonsense,' Thatcher said when the talk reached his ears. 'Miss Lemaistre is a very kind woman. She would have done the same for anybody. It just happens to be Dalgleish who owes her his life.'

'H'm,' said the senior deacon. 'Owes her his life!' His long business training naturally led him to think of a debt as something that must be paid.

'Dr. Heriot—'

'I know what Dr. Heriot thinks,' said Mr. Blount. 'He is a good man, a sterling man. But what man's opinion can you trust when it's a question of a woman? What with their little ways and their innocent eyes—! I don't mind saying between ourselves that I've made mistakes myself in my day.'

Thatcher laughed. 'Don't ask me to believe that, sir!' he said. 'But, as a matter of fact, Miss Lemaistre is singularly devoid of "little ways." She is as frank as a boy.'

Mr. Blount groaned, but there was a very human twinkle in the kindly eyes. 'The most dangerous kind of all!' he said. 'They catch a man at the rebound.'

The two men walked on in silence for a few minutes. 'I confess I hope great things of young Dalgleish,' said Mr. Blount. 'His father was a wonderful preacher until his tragic break-down; and our young friend is a fine fellow, though very susceptible to his surroundings. One would like to see him yoked to a true Christian helpmeet.'

'What sort of helpmeet had his father?'

'A saint of God,' said Mr. Blount fervently.

'Then perhaps it might be wiser for Dalgleish to try something a little more earthly. I have been reading the lives of some—some good men lately.' Thatcher had almost said, 'some of the Tractarians'; but he checked himself in time. 'And I have been struck by the way in which they had to invent mortifications for themselves. It might have been better for mind and soul if they had been yoked to a good old shrew like Joan Hooker, whose tempers would have kept them from brooding too much on their own inward processes.' Acting on Dr. Heriot's advice, Thatcher had been on a walking tour in the Highlands, and the mountain air had entered, for a time at least, into his views of life. 'I don't think it is very wholesome to live with people who reflect one's moods as a quiet tarn reflects the hills. We are not grateful enough to the people who keep our eyes outwards.'

Mr. Blount did not reply. He was not an introspective man, and he was aware that he only preserved his balance by a persistent effort to turn his eyes inwards.

'Well, well,' he said. 'It doesn't do to interfere. I'll tell you what. I'll run down and see Mrs. Dalgleish, and invite her and her daughter to spend a week or two with me. They will look after the boy. I have business in that part of the country anyhow.' It was not the first time by hundreds that Mr. Blount had glossed over a charitable action with the plea that he had 'business in that part of the country.'

'In any case it will do Dalgleish no harm to be laid aside for a little,' said Thatcher.

Scrymgeour had expressed himself even more strongly. 'It will be interesting to see the effect of a visit to the hither side of the silent land on that tongue of his. That last effusion about "the crash of creeds and the downfall of superstitions" was more than even I could stand. And I gather he has been going the pace in other ways too. But he seems to have fallen on his feet now as always. Knows a thing or two, that young man.'

Meanwhile Judith went about her work, happily unconscious of any talk there might be about her and her doings. As Dalgleish grew stronger, a number of his friends began to call at the flat, and she made a point of interviewing them herself. She wished them to understand that there was no mystery at all about the matter, and she had a naïve trust in the dis-

arming effect of her own personality. As a matter of fact, she quite enjoyed meeting the people of whom she had heard so much,—Dobbs and Menzies and Scrymgeour and the rest. It was amusing to see how Dalgleish's descriptions had been coloured by his sympathy or antipathy as the case might be.

Mr. Dobbs brought with him a book entitled *The Young Man in the Battle of Life*, with which he suggested that Dalgleish might occupy his hours of convalescence. Judith liked Mr. Dobbs nevertheless. There was a ring of genuine goodness in his words, and he certainly had the courage of his opinions.

Even Mr. Jones was not so terrible as she had pictured him. Menzies disarmed criticism by bringing a picture paper.

'Sensible of you!' said Judith; but she decided to postpone even that mild excitement when she found that the frontispiece was a full-length portrait of Ianthe Brooke, 'who is to play the part of Woodbine in the forthcoming four-act drama, etc., etc.' On the whole *The Young Man in the Battle of Life* should retain the precedence it had fairly earned.

She looked forward rather eagerly to Thatcher's visit, and, when at last he came, he stayed a long time. He was so cultured, so thoughtful, so unlike her first mental picture of him, that she felt instinctively as if she owed him some amends. They talked about Rome and Newman and Father Bernard, and he asked a great many questions which she found herself quite unable to answer.

When the Pastor called, Judith told Dalgleish who it was, before she went in to greet the visitor. Dr. Heriot had given the patient permission now to see an occasional friend.

'Oh, Good Lord!' groaned Dalgleish. 'Show him in. "The sooner it's over the sooner to sleep."'

He never told her exactly what passed at the interview, but it left him very quiet and subdued. 'He was really very decent. Avoided vexed questions. Said he hoped this illness would be a new beginning, and I said I hoped it would. And then he engaged in prayer. Curious expression that—"engaged in prayer"!'

And Judith quite realized that the curtain was drawn.

One day she opened the door to see a radiant vision on the landing, such a vision as seldom gladdened that grimy stair. A tall girl in a pale blue tailor-made gown was in the act of ringing the bell.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' said the visitor very unnecessarily, and a bright blush deepened the attractiveness of her face. Then to Judith's surprise she smiled with a flash of recognition.

'*You,*' she said, astonished, 'are Miss Lemaistre!'

Judith smiled too, as any normally constituted man or woman must have done. 'That is perfectly true, but, when you have said it, we have come to the end of our mutual information.'

'I am Miss Blount—Rosie Blount. Father thought I might call to ask for Mr. Dalgleish, and to bring him this chicken jelly. Our cook is rather good at it.'

'Come in, won't you? and I'll tell you about Mr. Dalgleish. He is going on very well. I haven't met you before, have I?'

'No,' said Rosie, nervous and confused. 'Mr. Dalgleish pointed you out to me one day on Duddingston. That is to say, he lifted his hat, and I asked who you were.'

'What a memory you have!'

'Well, you see—you were talking to some quite common men, and—I've always wished I knew what to say to—those sort of people.'

'It's not a bad idea to listen to them.'

'No,' said Rosie doubtfully. Then—'You can't begin by listening,' she added.

Judith laughed. 'That is perfectly true. But, you see, they weren't strangers. Their wives were friends of mine, and I guessed from the fact of their being on Duddingston at that time of day that they were on strike.'

'I remember that strike,' said Rosie eagerly. 'Some of father's men went out. Did you persuade them to go back?'

'I don't know that I tried, but they did go back. The whole question is dreadfully difficult.'

To her surprise Rosie agreed cordially. 'I often wonder what I shall do if I am ever a rich woman.'

'Very much what you do as a rich girl,' thought Judith, but she did not say so.

Rosie was trying very hard to 'place' Miss Lemaistre socially. Her home, her dress, her 'friends,' her 'English accent,' her manner and bearing were difficult to harmonize. On the whole Rosie was forced to admit that she admired her new acquaintance, but surely, surely, Dalgleish would never think of marrying anyone years older than himself.

'But you did not come to talk about strikes,' said Judith, as if reading her thought. 'Tell me what you want to hear about Mr. Dalgleish. The doctor is very pleased with him, and, if all goes well, he is to sit up for an hour one day next week.'

'It was awfully kind of you to take him in,' said Rosie suggestively.

'I had no option about it. He was my neighbour.'

And, to Rosie's honest mind, the quiet words simply knocked the bottom out of all the unkind talk.

'Besides I am sure you will agree with me that the best thing life gives us is the chance to be kind to our friends.'

'Oh, yes!' cried Rosie; and then, to her horror, the tell-tale blood rushed over her face. What would she not have given if this chance had come to her! Surely Miss Lemaistre was a highly favoured person.

Judith looked at the blushing face with her frank kind eyes. Poor little Rosie, she must learn to keep her secret better than that.

'Do you know that picture?' she said mercifully. 'My sister has just sent it to me from Rome.'

Rosie sprang up thankfully, and gazed at a fine reproduction of 'The Creation of Man' with unseeing eyes. 'He is tremendously clever, isn't he?' she said, adjusting her feathered hat.

'Michael Angelo? Oh,—Mr. Dalgleish. Yes, I think he is clever. More than clever sometimes. When we unpacked this picture I remarked how painters in all ages have failed to depict the Almighty. "Yes," he said; "but you see God in Adam's eyes; and not a merely immanent God either."'

'You must have so much in common,' said Rosie, trying to speak in an offhand way. 'Well, Good-bye, and thank you.'

Something in her voice suggested that tears were not far off. But on the threshold she turned impulsively, a great pleading in her blue eyes.

'Miss Lemaistre,' she said, 'you won't try to unsettle his faith?'

More than one cutting reply rose to Judith's lips, but, with a wiser impulse she repressed them. 'That is what you came to say,' she remarked quietly. 'Come in again, and get it off your mind.'

Rosie's embarrassment increased painfully. She clasped her hands in fine forgetfulness of her expensive gloves.

'They say you never go to church,' she said, 'and you encourage him to go to the theatre. And he respects you so much, and I can see that in lots of ways you are a good woman——' She seemed unable to go on.

'You may be sure I shall do nothing I think wrong,' said Judith. 'Whether I shall do anything you think wrong is another question. But I suppose you believe that God made me as well as you?'

Rosie made a little gesture of indignant assent.

'Of course you can't believe that He takes as much interest in me as He does in you,' mused Judith. 'It wouldn't be human nature if you did. I am afraid you must just have faith.'

'Faith!' exclaimed Rosie. She longed to say, 'If you had faith, you would understand,' but her courage failed.

'You are kind enough to describe me—roughly—as a good woman. Why then should I make him a bad man?'

But Rosie was not her father's daughter for nothing. 'That is not the point,' she said. 'Some people seem able to do without helps. I don't profess to explain it—but it isn't the worst people who aren't able. It's as if a bird said to a squirrel, "Don't make use of that branch. Just let yourself go like me!"'

Judith laughed with real intellectual pleasure. 'And the squirrel falls and breaks all its poor little legs?'

'No, no,' Rosie sighed. 'The squirrel isn't fool enough to try.'

'Do you know that is the argument the Catholics have used against us Protestants through all the centuries. The Church with her sacraments, they say, is the branch.'

'H'm,' said Rosie scornfully. 'I don't think much of a rotten branch like that.'

'Again you think the squirrel knows better? But if neither the sparrow nor the squirrel falls to the ground "without your Father"—you can draw the moral better than I.'

Rosie got up to go. 'That's true enough,' she said. 'On the other hand "it needs must be that offences come, but——"'

"'Woe unto him?'" Yes, that's true too. And now we have exchanged sermons without quarrelling, haven't we?—a thing our betters have often failed to do. Good-bye.'

And so the strange interview came to an end.

'Poor little soul!' said Judith as she returned to the sick-room.

And Rosie's gay feathers were all adroop as she went slowly down the long stair, patting her hot face with a perfumed wisp of handkerchief. 'She does look dreadfully young,' said Rosie, 'after all. A man might think she was scarcely older than me! If only she were a Christian, I shouldn't mind!'

Miss Brown, craning her neck at the window, followed the elegant figure down the poor street. 'And that's what he's lost!' quoth she.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A TEMPERATURE

So far Dagleish's visitors were welcome and entertaining as an interlude in life, but unfortunately there were enquirers of another kind.

'I don't know about this illness of the young gentleman's,' a rough voice at the door said audibly one day. 'All I know is my orders are not to leave till I get the money for this bill.'

Jenkins took the open envelope to her mistress. 'I've sent him away twice already,' she said severely.

Judith went to the door herself. She apprehended no difficulty in dealing with so trifling a matter. 'Mr. Dagleish is seriously ill,' she said. 'It will be a week or two before he is able to attend to business.'

'Then his friends'd better attend to it for him,' said the man rudely, 'and save our taking any farther steps in the matter.'

She drew herself up. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean that we can't afford to supply young gents with clothes for nothing.'

'Of course you won't supply them for nothing,' she said indignantly. 'As soon as he is well enough to be asked about it, the bill shall be paid.'

But the man was resolute. 'We've had some experience of illness. The next time I call he'll have gone down to the country for his health, and that will be the end of him.'

Judith hesitated. She had considerable natural aptitude for the acquisition of wisdom; but the process is a lengthy one, and she had no previous experience of affairs of this kind.

'Receipt the bill then,' she said severely. 'I will pay it for the moment, but I consider that you are acting in a most unwarrantable way.'

The man put the paper against the wall, and slowly dipped a microbious-looking pencil into his mouth, watching Judith all the time from the corner of his eye. When he actually saw the money, he receipted the bill.

'That's wiselike,' he said approvingly, as he slipped the money into a shabby leathern pouch.

'It is a good thing one man thinks so,' Judith said to herself. A moment later it occurred to her that she might at least have asked Miss Brown's advice. With her former unsatisfactory lodgers she must have had experience of business of this kind. After a moment's hesitation she rang her neighbour's bell. 'I have just done a foolish thing,' she said. 'I have paid this bill because the man was disagreeable. Do you know anything about it?'

Miss Brown had just had a long gossip over 'the situation' with one of the chapel people, so she was prepared to be amiable. 'Eh, lassie, it's easy seen you're new to the business.' She glanced cursorily at the paper Judith held out. 'That one? Ay. It's right enough.'

'Wasn't it abominable of him to come dunning like that?'

'I'm thinking you or me'd do the same in his place. They've no hold, you see. The lads is here to-day and gone to-morrow, and minors at that.'

'Then why do the shops give credit at all?'

'They canna vera well refuse.' Miss Brown picked up the bill again. 'You see he had paid one pound on account.'

'Are there other bills?'

There was a long silence before Miss Brown turned on her with asperity. 'What do you think?'

Judith's heart sank. 'And yourself? Has he paid you regularly?'

For answer Miss Brown burst into an impetuous fit of anger. 'What do you suppose he has to spend on board and lodging? Twelve shillings a week! A nice sum that for to go squiring the ladies! At first he made it do, an' he'd make it do yet if it wasna for folk aye tempting him to stretch out his airm farther than the sleeve'll cover it. Weel, they've had their wull, an' a nice muddle the lad's in noo. I'd counsel him to make a clean breast o' it to Mr. Blount.'

'No, no!' cried Judith. 'Don't destroy his credit in the chapel. Keep the matter between ourselves. You know I have friends who have money they are glad to give. We'll settle it somehow.'

Miss Brown declined to be staggered by such munificence. 'It's easy paying the bills,' she said. 'It's another job to put the lad back where he was afore.'

'Yes,' said Judith absently. A more pressing, if less important, question was occupying her mind. The patient must be worrying sorely about these bills. How was she to set his mind at rest?

It was always her natural instinct to go straight to the point if possible, and Dalgleish, as she thought, gave her sufficient opening that very evening. The look of childlike content that had characterized the early days of his convalescence had gone from his face, and now he looked positively careworn, and sighed repeatedly.

'What's on your mind?' said Judith at last with a frank smile.

'Nothing,' he replied, with a pathetic effort to be cheerful.

'What should be on my mind?'

'Am I to answer that?'

'If you like.'

'Well, I have known people to be worried in sudden illness because their affairs are necessarily left at loose ends, not to say tangled. You are not strong enough yet to talk business, but I just want to say that you mustn't let anything of that kind trouble you. If you are in any difficulty, we'll find a way out. You and I are friends, you know.'

His face had flushed to a deep crimson.

'Thanks,' he said very slowly. 'I don't quite know *how* things will turn out.'

'Well, if the subject has been on your mind, take a wet sponge to the slate, that's all. And now we'll make the whole matter taboo for a few weeks to come.'

'Thanks,' he said awkwardly again.

But the flush did not die out of his face, and that night he scarcely slept at all. In the morning the nurse reported a 'temperature.'

Judith looked worried. 'And Dr. Heriot said he might not call to-day.' She looked at her watch. 'I'll just step round to the Infirmary presently and tell him how matters stand, and then he can do as he pleases.'

Most of the officials knew her as a former nurse, and she had no difficulty in making her way to Dr. Heriot's ward.

'He is in the theatre,' said an under-nurse with whom Judith had some slight acquaintance. As she spoke she

turned her face from the patients and looked out on the autumnal trees in the Meadows. 'I hope nothing is wrong,' she said in a low voice. 'The child should have been out long ago. It was only a simple case. Somebody came out for brandy and hot bottles.'

Judith answered only by a look. She too had turned to study the mournful-looking trees. She had a sudden feeling of personal responsibility in the case, and longed to go in and offer her puny help; but that, of course, was the one thing which she must not do.

For a quarter of an hour she waited, and then the door opened, but only to admit a pale-faced student. 'Kid's been dead an hour,' he said in a low voice. 'Heriot knows it quite well, but he'll go on with that blessed artificial respiration till he drops. It's an awfully rough bit of luck. He's so absurdly careful, and the operation had barely begun.' 'Who was giving chloroform?'

The young man mentioned the name of a fourth year's student. 'He's done it fifty times before, and of course the resident was superintending as usual. It was nobody's fault.'

'Pretty little thing,' said the nurse, 'and perfectly well, as you may say.'

Judith sat down on a bench. The sleepless night of her patient had shrunk into very small proportions, but she could not go. She hoped against hope for better news. Bad enough, she thought, to fight that losing fight alone with a few trusted assistants; but with all those boys looking on!

It seemed long before another student came out, looking strangely moved. 'Don't ask me,' he said, reading Judith's eager question in her eyes. But there was more than question there, and he went on, biting his lip as if to steady himself. 'Heriot's grand. He's—he's going straight round to tell the mother himself. Everything else is postponed. He is washing his hands now. You should see his face.'

Judith dreaded the sight of his face, yet, for some reason she could not have explained, she waited. In a minute or two he came out. He was very pale, but he had never seemed to her more completely master of himself.

'Ah,' he said, catching sight of her, 'you wanted me.'

She had a foolish impulse to say the matter was of no consequence, but she crushed it in time. 'If you could look in for a few minutes in the course of the day,' she said composedly, 'nurse and I would be very grateful.'

'I am walking your way. You can tell me about it as we go.'

But she was much touched and honoured to find that—after her first brief word of explanation—it seemed to be a relief to him to talk to her. He had never made a secret of his mistakes and misfortunes; they took their place in line with his successes for the encouragement of any 'forlorn and shipwrecked brother' who might be following in his steps.

It did seem too hard. Once and again when he had chanced to be present in the operating theatre of other men, his resourcefulness, his great physical strength, had saved the life of a patient; and now, for no assignable reason, in spite of all due care, by one of the strange, rare accidents that medical knowledge and skill can reduce to a minimum, but cannot wholly prevent, the terrible thing had happened to himself.

'This is the house,' he said at last very quietly. 'Thank you. I will come straight on to you.'

It seemed long before he came, and Judith wondered what might be passing between those homely walls. 'If the mother has lost a child,' she thought, 'she has gained a friend—and such a friend!' What would he say when his reserve was broken down, and he was forced to speak of the things that lay so deep? Judith realized as she had never done before that it is not the great evil we are always dreading that matters most—though that, God knows, is bad enough!—but the way in which we face that evil. For herself, for all those students and nurses, even for the mother, the event of to-day must always be something more than a ghastly misadventure.

When at last he came, he seemed ready to give his whole mind to the case in hand, and Judith was careful not to suggest by word or look that he should talk of the things behind.

'Was there anything special to cause the sleeplessness?' he asked when she had told him about it.

'My stupidity, I am afraid. I had better tell you just what happened.' She had no more scruple about trusting him now than if he had been Almighty God. 'I mean,' she concluded, 'to ask my "rich friends" to allow him ten shillings a week for the rest of his student life. He is to pay it back when he can. You see'—she faltered a little as she read the disapproval in his face—'he could not live on his

present allowance. It is a case of "two into one, you can't," as the children say.'

His smile seemed to come from farther off than usual, and it emphasized strangely the great weariness of his face. 'The child goes on to prove that "two into one—you can."'

'And is a lad like that to be content with a *fraction* of comfort, a *fraction* of health, a *fraction* of the success that might be his?'

'A fraction of independence and self-control?'

'But he had come to an *impasse*.'

'That I admit. The question is—are you the right person to help him?'

'If I had been Frances,' she said with something of that lady's charming pout, 'I should have trebled his income at the least.'

'That is true, but you are not—Mrs. Traquair.'

'I don't see why I should be deprived of the pleasure.'

'No more, perhaps, in the future, will he. I admired you for ignoring the conventionalities to the extent of bringing the lad here, and saving his life. But that is the more reason why you should not put yourself in a false position now.'

'It is a true position.'

He looked at her quickly, wondering how much she meant by that.

'In any case I have done it now.'

He rose. 'Shall we have a look at his chart?'

She remained sitting for a moment. 'And you don't approve?'

He looked at her quietly, and paused before he spoke again.

'No,' he said quite definitely.

Reluctantly she rose and led the way into the sick-room. Surely half the misunderstandings in life arise from this, that the people who are not entitled to ask questions persist in asking them, and that those to whom our hearts would fain lie open hold their peace.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A PHOTOGRAPH

'Do tell me about your life in the country,' said Rosie; 'when you were little, I mean. I do think you and your brother were the most wonderful people.'

The two girls were sitting together in the window-seat of Mr. Blount's comfortable library, Rosie in a dainty gown fashioned by clever fingers, Grizel severely plain in her home-made serge.

'I don't think we were wonderful at all. You see in the country one has to think, and—and do things. There are so few people.'

'I can't think how you got hold of so many books. It makes me feel quite grand to think I know somebody who has really read *The Decline and Fall*. I have heard of it ever since I was two.'

'Since I came to you, I feel that I have read so little. What is this *Woodbine* your friends were talking about last night?'

'*Woodbine*? Oh, you must read that. It is just perfectly lovely. Quite different from *The Decline and Fall*!'

The sound of a passing cab drew Grizel's attention to the street. Can that be mother back?'

'No, no. She hasn't had anything like time. I wonder——'

'Yes?'

'—what she will think of Miss Lemaistre.'

The same question had occupied Mrs. Dangleish's mind as she drove to Judith's home. Miss Brown had written her a strange, ambiguous letter on the subject of Dugald's good angel, and Mr. Blount, when questioned, had spoken with manifest reserve. All sorts of vague forebodings came and went; but the sight of the respectable Jenkins, the clean,

airy flat, the well-appointed sick-room, the neat and smiling nurse, overwhelmed her.

'Why, Dugald!' she said, 'the lines have fallen to you in pleasant places.' And then she took Judith's firm, honest hand in both her own. 'How can I ever thank you,' she said, 'for your goodness to my boy?'

She said much more than that to Dr. Heriot when Judith left them alone for a quiet talk, although between him and her there was little need for words. Each grasped the essentials of the other in a moment.

From that day forward, Dugald's mother and sister came and went as they chose. It was a serious matter for Mrs. Dalgleish to mount the long stair, and she sometimes stayed half the day. For some time she and Judith stood on rather conventional terms with each other, but of course they had to come to closer quarters by degrees. Judith's admiration for the elder woman increased every day, but, in spite of a strong temptation to adapt herself to Mrs. Dalgleish's expectations, she went on her way with characteristic honesty and simplicity.

'No doubt Dugald has told you we are very poor,' Mrs. Dalgleish said one day, 'and no money can repay your kindness; but you must let me know—'

'*Please don't!*' said Judith, flushing. 'Dugald is my friend. No—listen for a moment—' The poor little fiction about her 'rich friends' died on her lips. 'People spend their money in different ways. I elect to leave a margin for—for doing things that come along. This happens to be one of the things, that's all.'

There was a long silence.

'I am very glad,' Mrs. Dalgleish said at last, 'that my son should have the friendship of so good a woman.'

Judith laughed, but there were tears behind the laugh. We are what other people make us, and she had never before been quite what she was with Mrs. Dalgleish. 'I am afraid she is not all that you could wish.'

Mrs. Dalgleish took her hand affectionately. 'No,' she said with an honesty worthy of Judith's own, 'she is not all that I could wish; but in many ways she is more than I should have thought of looking for—more than I am clever enough to understand.'

Judith's eyes grew brighter, then brimmed over, but she still smiled valiantly. 'And there's no saying what she may become.'

'No,' was the grave answer, 'there's no saying what she may become. I am not afraid, my dear. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." I have far less fear for you than for my boy.'

Her face fell into the old lines of brave suffering. It was more than Judith could bear when she recalled the story Dugald had told her. *Non dolet, Pæte*. She wondered if the mother had any guess how far her son had really drifted.

'You mustn't fret,' she said. 'We all have wild ideas in these days. Even Mr. Thatcher——'

'Ah,' said Mrs. Dalgleish, 'if Dugald were in a state of grace like Mr. Thatcher!'

'How can you tell?'

'Very oiten one can't, but now and then there's just a glint there's no mistaking. Poor Dugald, one must just leave him in the midst of all these influences—to win his way through. . . . God bless you, my dear, whatever happens.'

The pain faded from her face when Dr. Heriot was announced. By degrees he had come to spend more time with the mother than he did with the son. 'Dr. Heriot is kindly reading a manuscript in which I am interested,' Mrs. Dalgleish said one day, but she did not enter into particulars, and Judith asked no questions. She was careful to leave the two friends alone together, and, if at times she felt very lonely, she despised herself for the feeling. It was something quite new in her busy life. There was a sting too in the thought that she had sacrificed a measure of Dr. Heriot's good opinion. She longed to ask him whether he really seriously disapproved of the help she was giving Dalgleish, but what was the use of asking when she already stood committed? In the watches of the night she could even imagine herself saying, 'The facts being as they are, tell me what to do, and I will do it.' But that weakness she crushed as a real temptation of the evil one. Was she not a human being with a judgment and a conscience of her own? Meanwhile Dr. Heriot was always kind and genial, but the vital spark seemed to have gone out of their pleasant camaraderie.

Another transfer of allegiance affected Judith very differently. She had carried out her intention of visiting Mrs. Munro, the woman who had sought refuge in her house; but, notwithstanding a reception that raised her hopes, she had found herself utterly unable to cope with the poor creature's

increasing bitterness. They did not speak the same language. It occurred to Judith now that if any one could reach a spirit in prison it was Mrs. Dalgleish, and she brought the two together with a result that surprised her.

The poor soul simply fell down and worshipped Dugald's mother. 'If the like of her was to tax us with our sins now! But she doesn't. The very sight of her is enough. I thought *you* were a Christian; but think of her, so white and spotless, with that look on her face!'

Certainly Judith might with some excuse have felt herself out in the cold had it not been for Grizel. There was no doubt at all that these two had taken to each other. Grizel possessed that fine gift, rare then and rarer now, a great capacity for veneration. She enjoyed nothing so much as working with Judith, following her about, and treasuring up her *obiter dicta* as if they had been inspired utterances. But the work in the sick-room grew less from day to day, and at length, from sheer want of occupation, Grizel went over to Miss Brown's flat to make a sisterly inspection of Dugald's wardrobe.

Dugald's den was neater and cleaner than it had been for many a day, though that is not saying much, and Grizel paused to look round before beginning her work.

There had been a time when her brother had read nothing she had not read also,—a later time when she at least knew everything he had read; but now—! Here indeed was a home of strange gods. How in the world had Dugald in his poverty come by so many books?

As a matter of fact they came from divers sources. There was the regulation brace from the University library; some belonged to Miss Lemaistre; some had been bought, chiefly at second-hand bookstalls and penny tubs; and a few were borrowed from the Advocates' Library, the librarian of that institution being an honoured office-bearer in the chapel.

Dugald's Bible was there with the rest, but little aged since Grizel had seen it last. Whatever had he done without it all this time at the other flat?

It was hard to settle to work with so much temptation about. One book in particular exercised a positively mesmeric influence. Grizel read a few pages, and then, with beating heart, returned to her mending.

But the book called her back, and she read on till the

shirts and socks were forgotten. Was she doing wrong? she wondered. Surely, surely not; but who could tell? With an instinctive appeal for help, she took Dugald's Bible from the shelf.

It was a fine Bible like her own, and it opened very naturally at the *Song of Songs*,—opened to reveal a photograph, to reveal the wonderful face that had haunted Grizel for weeks, the face of the beautiful stranger.

The photograph was signed in a fine bold hand,—Ianthe Brooke. Grizel knew that handwriting. Two days after the wonderful visitant had gone, she had received by way of letter, without date, address or signature, a sheet of subtly-scented note-paper bearing a few verses. They were so simple, those verses, so akin to Grizel herself, that she had failed to appreciate their beauty; but guessing from whom they came, she had treasured them as a pearl of price. She took them now from her pocket—not alas from her 'bosom,' she belonged to a decadent age—and read them once again:—

'She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
She guards them from the steep.
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.

She roams maternal hills and bright,
Dark valleys safe and deep.
Her dreams are innocent at night;
The chastest stars may peep.
She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.
She is so circumspect and right;
She has her soul to keep.
She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.'¹

Grizel put the poem and the signature side by side. The handwriting of the verses was clearer, smaller, almost reverent, an older critic might have said, but beyond all doubt they

¹ Readers will recognize Mrs. Meynell's exquisite poem, 'The Lady of the Lambs.'

were the same. She must have signed the photograph. Dugald must know her.

Who then was Ianthe Brooke?

Judith arrived at that moment to call Grizel over to tea—a pleasant little festival in Dugald's room.

'Where have you been?' he asked genially.

'Over in your den,' she said, 'sorting things, and dipping into your books.'

'Humph!' He looked at her with the fine trust of old comradeship. 'Well, if you come upon my immortal soul, just put it aside and don't tell me you saw it.'

'All right.'

Dugald was looking brighter than he had done since his illness. As a matter of fact, he and Judith had been having a great talk, and he realized for the first time how little there remained for him to confess, how royally she was prepared to lighten his burden.

'Of course you must have a good holiday first of all,' she had said, 'and in the meantime we will find you more habitable quarters than poor Miss Brown's.'

'Oh, I can't leave Miss Brown,' he said quickly.

'Nonsense. Why not?'

He flushed. 'Because she has been no end decent to me all round. I meant to tell you I had been a mean cuss to talk about finding her drunk. As a matter of fact I believe she has been fighting the devil and his hosts a deal more gallantly than I am ever likely to do, and if she went under that time—it may have been partly my fault.'

'She is very proud of you, of course, but that is no reason why you should be sacrificed.'

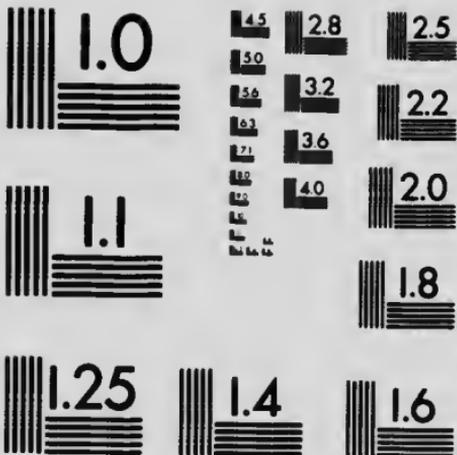
'Proud of *me!*' he repeated bitterly. 'I shan't be sacrificed. I will get my dinner at a chop-house, if you like, thanks to your munificence; but she has improved more than anyone would believe. If I go, she'll get some young rip, and she'll go down hill, and the chapel people will sit on her, the people "with little pet sins of their own." I was speaking to Dr. Heriot about it, without mentioning names, and he says it is the most difficult thing in the world for a woman to pull herself up at that age. No, by Jove! I should be a graceless brute.'

He fell into a reverie. 'It has been in my mind a great deal,' he said, 'while I have been lying here. Seems as if Providence didn't mean to give us too much in any one

individual. Some people with a real stamp of spiritual nobility stumble over a perfectly elementary bit of morality ; and here is poor old Miss Brown, with no stamp of nobility at all, fighting away like a Trojan. We flatter ourselves that we fight like the saints who have conquered. Have we even fought like the sinners who have failed ?'

On the whole it was little wonder that his sister thought him so bright.





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CHAPTER XL

CRACKING THE EGG-SHELL

GRIZEL spent many hours after that in Dugald's room. The mending progressed steadily, and so did the mesmeric book.

The book was the work of a remarkable man, a strenuous worker and a clear thinker. It was the outcome of years of patient toil—his own toil and that of others—and it was expressed with such limpid clearness that a child could understand. The personality of the author, as one felt it through the book, was fine, brave, unselfish; it conveyed a charm that to the receptive reader was irresistible. To say this is to say that the book did good service in its day and generation, cleared away the cobwebs and let in the life-giving air.

When the word of God went forth from Sinai, the legend tells us, each man heard it in the tongue in which he was born; but how the new message will sound when translated into the old heart language is more than any human being can ever foretell. The process is a vital one, and the result can never be mechanically reckoned out.

Grizel Dalglish brought to the book a receptive mind in its most receptive stage. For months she had half divined something wider than the truth she had known. It was her ingrained habit to sit humbly at the feet of her author; she had never learned to be on her guard; and this was the message the book had for her.

Hitherto, said the book, in all your thoughts and meditations on life, you have begun with the conception of *Our Father*. That has been your background; on that you have pencilled in everything you saw and heard and felt. But is it not strange that a person of your intelligence should begin at the wrong end? However sure you may be of your God, you cannot prove Him. Begin with the life you can prove; don't be afraid; truth cannot really hurt. Begin at its lowest

CRACKING THE EGG-SHELL 267

stage. Work up, link by link, noting how subtly the links are intertwined, till you come to man. If, when you reach him, you are able to go farther, pass on. Here I must remain. As Virgil took leave of the great poet and seer, so must I take leave of you.

Dutifully Grizel did as she was told. She began with the *amaba*, and, holding the hand of her guide, she passed on, noting how subtly the links were intertwined. It was so fascinating, that living chain, that she scarcely stopped to take breath until she came to man.

And then—behold a great gulf, across which there came neither sight nor sound. She strained her eyes in vain, she called, she prayed, but there was no voice neither any that answered.

Fearful and wonderful was the road by which she had travelled; worthy of a lifetime's study were the sights she had passed on the way. But the whole scheme was changed. The horizon seemed to have come so near that her hand could touch it. The long-sighted eyes seemed to ache for the range of the old conceptions.

Never in her life before had she so longed for a talk with Dugald. He must have travelled over this bit of road, but since then he had been down in the valley, and she would not by so much as a word break in on the strange sights and sounds that may have met him there. If there was to be any speaking, he must be the one to begin.

Meanwhile the patient progressed every day, and at last Dr. Heriot agreed that he could be moved to Mr. Blount's roomy and comfortable house for a week or two before going home.

'I'd far rather stay where I am,' he said to Judith, 'but it will be a blessed riddance for you.'

'I have looked as if you were a burden, haven't I?'

'You're awfully good,' he said, flushing scarlet. 'You and I will have a lot to say to each other when I come back.'

'Shan't we?'

With a sudden movement he raised her hand, and then, with an honest brotherly grip, let it go again. Judith guessed that he had meant to kiss it, and, smiling, wondered why he had refrained.

Grizel was superintending the fitting. When they were ready to go, she turned to Judith with speaking face.

'Good-bye,' said Judith cheerfully.

'Oh, don't say Good-bye. Mayn't I come and see you again?'

'Why, surely, if you want to.'

'May I come on Sunday evening when they are all at church?'

'Don't you want to go to church too?'

'I had much rather come here.'

So Judith planned a festive little supper, and the two had the flat to themselves, and Grizel grew more confidential every moment.

'I wish,' she said, producing a well-worn little note-book, 'you would tell me what to read.'

Judith laughed and took refuge in a quotation: 'Read the book you want to read. That is the book for you. . . . Don't you think there should be something organic about our reading? It should grow, one book suggesting another. I sometimes plan to make a sort of spiritual genealogical tree of the books I read. It would contain some odd sports and surprises.'

'Yes,' said Grizel doubtfully. 'I have always made a list of the books I read and meant to read, but now——'

'May I see your list?' Judith glanced at the tiny book.

The young girl coloured painfully. This meant almost more than showing her Bible to the wonderful stranger.

'I beg your pardon,' said Judith hastily. 'Never mind if you had rather not.'

'But I would like to show it to you. I have no right to ask your advice, and not trust you that far.'

Judith studied the neatly-written pages.

'I see,' she said slowly. 'And you think you would like a change?'

And then she came upon the last entry in the list. 'Where did you read this?'

Grizel was sitting on a low stool by the fire. She clasped her hands round her knee, and spoke with an intensity that was almost painful.

'In Dugald's rooms. Do you know—I should have expected to find nothing in common with a book like that. I should have expected to hate it. And now—I feel as if I had been thinking those things all my life. Every difficulty I have ever had, every question I have never dared to ask, is crystallized in that book: and it is all as clear as daylight. I

feel as if I had known it always, and now I know that I know it.'

It was a minute or two before Judith spoke. 'You have travelled fast.'

'Do you think I could afford to travel slow, on a road like that? But I didn't travel at all. It came upon me like a lightning flash,—Jonah and the whale—Balaam's ass—the whole thing! It was like,—' her lips trembled, '—it was like a *conversion*.'

And this was the little sister who would 'never crack the egg-shell in which she was born'! Judith was conscious of an unwonted sense of personal responsibility.

'I don't know whether you know,' she said rather diffidently, 'that thinkers have always approached the problems of life from one of two ends. Some have looked *in* to their own consciousness, or conscience perhaps, where they said they found God. Others have looked *out*—'

'But if,' said Grizel, interrupting in her eagerness, 'if conscience is just the highest development of all, surely it is folly to begin with that. We ought to begin with the simplest thing.'

Judith hesitated again, appalled by the certainty of this young thinker. She was as positive as a youthful revivalist in the presence of old divines. 'Ought we?' she said, as if asking for information. 'It is the modern view, of course, but there are good names even now on the other side too. And the difference it makes is stupendous. When I begin with the *amæba*, I think what a creditable creature I am, but I find that I have cut myself off from the great roll of people throughout the ages who have said, *Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*.'

Grizel turned very pale. 'I know,' she said, 'I know, but if the other be true!'

Then Judith threw aside philosophy and steered by good common sense. 'My dear child,' she said, 'don't be in such a hurry. Study the *amæba* by all means, but you can't settle your philosophy as if it were the *menu* of one day's dinner.'

'Oh, please, don't think me so silly as that. It is the question of a lifetime, of course.' But Grizel sighed. Clearly it seemed to her then as if the answer were a foregone conclusion.

'Has Dugald been writing to you about these things?'

Grizel shook her head. 'Not a word. I heard him say something one day to a fellow-student who came down to us about "not being afraid to throw in his lot with Huxley and Darwin," but I didn't understand him at the time.'

'I wish I saw the smallest sign of Dugald doing anything so sensible,' said Judith fiercely. 'To throw in your lot with a person does not mean to accept his conclusions ready-made. It is to adopt his spirit, his method. What does your brother know of the single-hearted devotion of Huxley and Darwin? Is he able to drink of the cup they drink of, and be baptized with the baptism they are baptized with?'

Grizel looked up, appalled, and then remembered that there was no need to be appalled at anything of that sort any more.

Judith took her commonplace-book from the shelf. 'I should like to read you an extract from a private letter of Huxley's which a friend once sent to me:—

"Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly, wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all costs to do this."

There was a long silence. 'Thank you,' said Grizel quietly. 'That is what I want to do. Will you tell me how to begin?'

It was late when she rose to go, but she lingered as she stood at the door.

'Miss Lemaistre,' she said suddenly, taking her courage in both hands, 'Who is Ianthe Brooke?'

'Ianthe Brooke?' said Judith surprised. 'She is a woman of genius, I think; an actress. They say she is a good woman too.'

CHAPTER XLI

MUIRSIDE

WHEN the first acute nostalgia was over, convalescence at Mr. Blount's proved a very pleasant experience. The senior deacon had no love for glitter or show. Every appearance in his house represented a solid reality. He disliked the idea of men-servants, and the domestic wheels moved restfully in the hands of well-trained women. There was an air of substantial comfort wherever one turned, but beneath all this one felt the old puritan note of austerity, even of rigour. Mr. Blount's rules were not talked about; they were kept.

Dugald, as an invalid, escaped most of the austerity, and he keenly enjoyed the atmosphere of solid wealth. Everyone made much of him, visitors as well as members of the household. The younger girls hailed him gleefully as a brother, and in his presence Rosie manifested a bewitching shyness that was very attractive.

It was not till he went down with his mother and sister to the quiet home in the country, that he began to realize how much Judith had been to him. He certainly would not have said with the poet

'I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart away.'

But he missed the steadying influence of her personality every hour of the day. He had met Death full in the high-road so suddenly that he had scarcely had time to realize his danger until it was over,—until the grim figure had moved aside; but now the figure stood motionless behind him, and its shadow grew and lengthened till it darkened the whole stretch of road ahead. Some day it would have to be met in

good earnest; some day it would refuse to move aside; and how was he to meet it?

He knew the answer the chapel people would give, and he knew the answer of the flippant. Miss Lemaistre belonged to a class distinct from both of these.

'What are the Great Presences?' he had asked her that wild night in the old Medical School, and she had answered so calmly,

'Death——'

Ah, but she had not faced it; she did not know what it was to feel that horrible shadow behind her.

Still, if she had not faced Death, she had faced Life honestly. On her slate at least the problem was stated fairly, with no imaginary figures scribbled in to make the answer easy. Poor little Grizel now—

It was late in the evening. Dugald lay on the hard little sofa, and Grizel sat over her darning. The mist from the moors seemed to enter at every chink of door and window, and the lamp burned dimly. From the kitchen behind came the voice of the little handmaiden singing at her work,

'Safe in the arms of Jesus!'

It was all unspeakably dreary.

'Grizel,' said Dugald at last, 'what would you say if you were told you must die to-morrow?'

There was an old tradition of honesty between brother and sister, and the tardy answer came with unexpected force.

'*I don't think the Fates could be so cruel!*'

'The Fates! And what do you know of the Fates, little girl?'

'What indeed! What do the wisest know?'

And then, of course, it came,—the great talk that was bound to come. As Dugald listened—amazed—the flickering gleam of faith in his own heart died out among the ashes.

'I do pray for this at least,' said Grizel, 'that Mother may never know. You know, Dugald,' her voice shook, 'there is no doubt she is growing weaker.'

'Nonsense!' he exclaimed anxiously, but he knew she had only voiced the conviction in his own mind.

She brushed away a tear. 'It is such an odd trick of the mind,' she said smiling, 'but I always find myself thinking that her heaven is still secure.'

'So it is to all practical purposes. She'll never know.'

'Oh, but it is more than that. I feel as if the Gates had stood open till—till——'

'Till Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species*?'

She nodded, laughing through her tears. 'And by that time Mother had entered in. It requires a distinct effort of the mind to brush the fancy away.'

'And you feel bound to brush it away?'

'Oh, yes,' said Grizel gravely.

There was a long silence. 'Well,' he said at last, 'considering all you've come through, you've stood it wonderfully.'

'I don't know that I could have stood it if it hadn't been for the maistre.'

'Why?' He raised himself on his elbow.

As if she were walking with us, a step in front, and with a great look of hope on her face.'

'By Jove, it's perfectly true,' he said, 'and it's saying a great deal.'

After that, brother and sister had many long walks and talks. As a rule, of course, a great seriousness was the dominant note in these conversations; but humour has a way of running deep, and, more and more often as time went on, Grizel's merry laugh rang out on the quiet hillsides.

They talked without reserve of so many things that at length Grizel waxed bold.

'Dugald,' she said one day, 'did you ever hear of Ianthe Brooke?'

But her brother was deep in his book, and did not seem to hear.

'Dugald,' she repeated.

He sprang to his feet, and walked across to the window. 'One *hears* of all these people,' he said severely. 'I believe the rain has stopped. I am off for a walk.'

He did not ask her to accompany him, and for a moment she felt snubbed. But after all it was no dream that she had seen that lovely face enshrined in the *Song of Songs*. By what strange accident had it come there?—or had she indeed chanced unawares upon his 'immortal soul?'

CHAPTER XLII

A FALSE START

It was a raw January evening when Dugald once more made his way up the long stair to Miss Brown's flat. It struck him that his landlady had *shrunk* during his absence, but she received him with beaming face, and led the way into his room.

'*Bless my soul!*' he exclaimed, for the transformation was complete. The walls were freshly papered, a comfortable arm-chair stood by the fire, and a faintly-shaded reading-lamp threw a glamour over the whole room.

Miss Brown strove to repress her pride and satisfaction. 'It'll look very poorlike after all the grandeur you've been used to.'

'Poorlike! It's a bit out of the Arabian Nights. Will it vanish away, do you think, as mysteriously as it came?'

'Hoots, laddie!' Actually the tears were in her eyes. 'Miss Lemaistre helped me to choose the paper. I won't say it's just to my taste.'

'It's grand!'

Miss Brown sighed. 'She's made an awfu' wark wi' you, first and last.'

'She's been a brick.'

'Weel, I'll no say but what ye might have looked higher, if ye'd been content to wait, but I doubt ye'll no can pass her by noo.'

The remark was prompted partly by curiosity, partly by a spice of malice, partly by a good Scottish sense of justice; and the landlady watched him keenly as she spoke. Of course he flushed very red. 'Ridiculous nonsense!' he said. 'You don't suppose she would look at me.'

He fell upon his supper with a will, and before he had finished, Mr. Jones was announced.

'Good!' said Dalgleish. 'Show him in.' He had long ceased to look upon Jones from a lofty mountain height, and he knew there was no one in Edinburgh better fitted to put him *au courant* with all that had happened during his absence from town.

Jones accepted the arm-chair, and put his feet on the trivet. 'I made sure you'd be ready to start work to-morrow. By Jove! you do look fit!'

'Oh, I'm firstrate. Haven't felt so well for ages. How's yourself?'

'H'm, so, so.' Jones put his finger on his own pulse with a whimsical grimace. 'Considering I've had an interview with old Blount this afternoon, my strength is better maintained than might have been anticipated.'

'Bless me! Where did the interview take place?'

'In the street mainly.'

'Not very conducive—'

'Oh, admirably conducive, I assure you. Whenever things got uncomfortably warm, I led him under a horse's nose by way of digression.'

'But what did he want?'

'Want? He wanted me to open my whole heart to him, as the young men do in the story books; tell him all about myself and everybody else, and ask his paternal guidance. Fact is, he's awfully upset 'bout Thatcher.'

'What has Thatcher done?' Dalgleish felt his face burning in the mellow light.

'Refused two churches on the ground that he wants more time for study.'

'Is that all?'

'All? What if he funks the ministry altogether?—our burning and shining light?'

'He must earn his living like other people. What else could he do?'

'*Literature!*' Jones extended his arms with a magnificent sweep, and then his right hand ascended in a giddy spiral. '*Fame!*'

'H'm,' said Dalgleish, thinking hard. 'Fame might indeed be a way out of Thatcher's difficulties. 'Do you suppose he could write a play?'

Jones laughed uproariously. 'Poor Thatcher!' he said. 'That's all off—if it ever was on. Have you been hearing about her?'

Dalgleish shook his head and turned down the lamp.

'... at'll smell,' said Jones.

'No, it won't.'

'Oh, very well. No doubt you understand your own property best.'

'You were saying——?'

'Oh, yes. She's the most popular woman in London. You see her picture simply everywhere. I ran up for my Christmas holiday.'

'Did you really?' There was positive hunger in Dugald's eyes.

'I'm not much of a theatre-goer, you know, but I must say I was awfully fetched. Place crammed from floor to ceiling. Ladies all in their war-paint—flowers and diamonds—and sometimes nothing else worth mentioning.'

'Yes?'

'And then the curtain went up on an awfully pretty scene, honeysuckle over the porch, you know, and all that. And when Woodbine appeared it seemed as if the whole house rose in one great shout. You never heard anything like it. And that was in London—the hub of the universe!'

Dalgleish drove the poker into the fire. 'What did she look like?'

'Oh, just awfully innocent and fetching; but later on one saw the great depths in her eyes. It's a ripping play. I only went twice, but I quite felt it in me to be as great a fool as anybody. . . . Then I saw her in the Park one day, in a sealskin coat and cap, and upon my word, she looked prettier than ever.'

'Who was she with?'

'Nobody. But everybody was pointing her out and talking about her as if she had been a princess of the blood. A lady and gentleman behind me really seemed to know her. They said some great swell—the Hon. Somebody Something—is over head and ears in love with her, and she with him; but she has no notion of "cheapening Paradise."'

'*I should think not.*'

'But if they can hold out till his father dies, it's on the cards'—the speaker's voice sank to an awestruck whisper—'it's on the cards she may live to be Lady Glenluce.'

'H'm.'

'So you see poor old Thatcher hasn't much of a look-in. But it was a rum experience seeing them together in Hawthornden. I told you, didn't I?'

'Yes.' Assuredly Thatcher had not much of a look-in, but Dalgleish was wondering whether any other man would hear that voice just as he had heard it,—'Come in—you dear boy!'

'If I hadn't seen them with my own eyes—!' continued Jones. 'Thatcher of all people! By the way, did you hear that he and Miss Lemaistre have struck up quite a friendship while you've been away?'

'No.'

'Oh, you bet! I saw them together at a conversazione in the Museum, and they were chumming up like—like old boots. By-bye, old chap. Awfully pleased to see you on your feet again. I'd open the window if I were you. That lamp's a caution. Your illness seems to have deadened your olfactory nerves a bit; but don't worry. They'll come all right in the end.'

Dalgleish went with his friend to the door, and, as they exchanged a last word on the threshold, Miss Lemaistre came lightly upstairs. She wore no hat, and the face that peeped from the fluffy collar of her evening cloak looked very bright and girlish.

'You've been at a party,' said Dalgleish half jealously, when they had exchanged greetings.

'I have been dining at Dr. Heriot's. His sister, Mrs. Marshall, asked me. Yes, it was a very nice party. Your friend, Mr. Thatcher, was there.'

When Dalgleish was left alone that night, he told himself that Ianthe Brooke had passed wholly and for ever out of his life. True, he had said this more than once before, but never with the air of finality that characterized the pronouncement now. He would never regret the past, he told himself, but there was no denying that his life had been well-nigh wrecked. His college career, his position in the chapel, his friendships and social ties,—everything he had deliberately planned to live for,—seemed to have been scorched and shrivelled by the radiance of one glorious personality.

Well, it was not too late. He would bury the memory deep, deep down, and begin life afresh. Feverish raptures were all very well in their way; but the man who chose them must renounce everything else. Better, far better, to have a comrade who would nerve one's arm for the fight, who would walk sturdily by one's side, and be content to sink her own individuality wholly when the trumpet sounded for battle.

Clearer and clearer before him rose the vision of Judith Lemaistre. What a comrade she had been! What a stand-by! Of course she was kind to every one, but to no one so kind as to him. A dozen flattering words of hers rose to his memory with new meaning. Why had he taken them so lightly at the time?

'Walking with us—a step in front,' he heard Grizel saying. 'A great look of hope on her face.'

'She's made an awfu' wark wi' you, first and last,' chimed in Miss Brown. 'I doobt ye'll no can pass her by now.'

Then Jones took up the strain. 'Did you hear that Thatcher and Miss Lemaistre have struck up quite a friendship while you have been away?'

And lastly Judith herself, in the unaccustomed charm of her evening attire. 'A very nice party,' quoth she. 'Your friend, Mr. Thatcher, was there.'

Judith always told herself in after life that it was the evening cloak that did it. 'And a very becoming cloak it was,' she admitted with rueful satisfaction.

She expected a 'duty call' from Dalgleish the next afternoon, and he did not fail her. He came in with a few crisp snowflakes on his shoulders, and on his handsome face the glow of healthy reaction to wind and cold.

'Welcome,' she said smiling, as she held out her hand. 'No need to ask how you are. It is written in large letters all over you that you are going to conquer life this time.'

'I mean to,' he said shortly. 'I have had plenty of time to think how many kinds of fool I have been.'

'It's on folly that wisdom is built, is it not?'

He seemed to have reached the end of his Confiteor, and she would not tempt him to prolong it.

'I was trying as I came along Princes Street to-day,' she said, 'to put everyone I met into one of three classes,—those who are sheltered from life, those who are buffeted by life, and those who are reacting healthily to life. You belong to the third class.'

'You always did.'

She laughed. 'Unfortunately there is no fixity of tenure. Circumstances have been kind—so far. I just get a glimpse sometimes of what they might do if they tried.'

'You certainly have done your best to make circumstances kind to other people.' He looked round the room with some-

thing like affection for its very walls. 'Jolly hours I have spent here!' He fell into silence for a few minutes. 'Queer to think I should be dead if it weren't for you.'

She looked at him, wondering where and what he would be now if he had died, and her mind swept across the whole gamut of guesses and gropings:

'Ashes to ashes; dust to dust.'

'Now he knows what Rhamses knows.'

She quoted aloud the final word on the subject, '*Whether it be better to die or to live is known to the gods and to them only.*'

'No, no,' he said. 'In the darkest hour of convalescence I never said that; my depression never took that form. It would have been a regular calamity—for me—if I had died.'

'It would have been most unsatisfactory for all of us,' she admitted frankly,—'a regular muddle. None of the usual platitudes would have met the case. Under the circumstances you were simply bound to get well and justify our expectations.—And now we'll have some tea, and talk about life, not death. Tell me about your mother and sister.'

His report of his mother was brief and reserved, but he waxed eloquent over the change in his sister. 'I always heard that women leapt at conclusions—'

'Do you know,' interrupted Judith, 'I think Grizel quite a wonderful girl? I hope she really will study and make something of her life. If she carries that puritan training, that beautiful simplicity, into the wider world of thought and work, I see no limit to what she may do. Let me help her if I can.'

'She simply worships the ground you walk on.'

Judith laughed.

'I believe we all do—more or less—even my mother. As for me who have most cause—*Judith!*' He had turned very white and his voice shook.

She rose to her feet and walked to the fireplace, with a vague idea of throwing a physical barrier across the current of his words. Never for a moment had she dreamed of a catastrophe like this, but there was no mistaking his meaning now. And there was no time to be lost. If she could not find the right words, she must be content with the wrong.

'We are friends, are we not?' she said. 'I like to think so, and yet I find myself wondering sometimes how much your friendship would stand.'

'Try it!'

'I mean to,' she said composedly. 'You know, Mr. Dalgleish, you have a great deal of the poet in you, and, as for me, I am all prose. But I want you to listen for a moment to what Prose has to say. It seems to me you are taking life rather in the wrong order.' She paused, realizing for the first time the full difficulty of the task she had undertaken. She was not supposed even to know of his infatuation for Ianthe Brooke, and, after all, she was a young woman herself. 'Of course we can only guess at what is going on in the minds even of our friends, but last year your thoughts seemed taken up with things that surely should not enter into a college man's life at all. What have you to do with women except as comrades and chums?' She paused again, and, forgetful of her self-assumed character of Prose, plunged deep into figures of speech. 'You seem to me like a plant that is putting forth blossoms when it ought to be building up stem and branch and good honest root underground. It is delightful to see a crocus opening out the moment it gets above ground, but a crocus is not much to lippen to in a storm. There are times when one has more use for forest trees.'

There was a horrible silence.

Judith took a book from the shelf and returned to her seat. 'If you realized your own promise, my dear sir,' she said lightly, striving to better matters, 'you would not fritter it away.—Have you seen this book of Pater's?'

She had meant to say much more, but she never got beyond that, and in truth she had gone far enough. For figures of speech are dangerous things. They open up a way of escape that may lead us far beyond the goal we had in view. If Judith had stuck to her *rôle* of Prose, she never could have used so cruel a word as crocus.

Dalgleish took the book and turned the pages mechanically,—obviously without seeing a word. His face was ghastly. He was cut to the quick, of course, but she had laid her account for that. If only he would give some indication of his thoughts! He might be congratulating himself on his escape, nursing his wounded vanity, or meditating suicide. It was impossible to tell. Judith talked on about the book with as little restraint as might be, but all the time she was

saying to herself, 'He hates me : I have spoiled it all.' And of course the thing she had spoiled seemed far more beautiful than it had ever done before. She longed to ask, 'Well, did your friendship stand it?' But she did not dare. After all she was a young woman herself.

It was an immense relief when at last he rose to go. He said Good-bye cordially as usual, but his handsome face looked old.

As chance would have it, Miss Brown in the kindness of her heart had placed a wineglass containing a few early crocuses in the centre of his new chenille table cover. The flowers looked half starved, and somehow the wineglass seemed to accentuate the triviality of the whole conception.

Dagleish took the pitiful little decoration in his hand and looked in the direction of the fire. Then he shrugged his shoulders, set his lips hard, and replaced things as he had found them. 'Let 'em stand,' he said grimly. 'Serves me right for a—*damned—fool!*'

And with that he buckled to his work.

Judith expressed the matter differently, if her conclusion was much the same. 'I suppose I should have talked some nonsense about the honour he has done me,' she reflected ruefully. 'But no ; it would have been too ridiculous. At best, it was a *quid pro quo*, and, for the matter of that, it never happened. He is no more in love with me than I am with—Miss Brown : but between us we have contrived to wreck a very pretty friendship.'



PART IV

D

CHAPTER XLIII

MOTHER CHURCH

MRS. TRAQUAIR'S flat in the Piazza di Spagna was one of the pleasantest corners in Rome. Not without a keen sense of self-sacrifice, the young widow had forsaken her convent for a time in order to chaperon a pretty young niece who had come to Italy to study Art. Neither of the ladies had any taste for social life—so they said—but the kind of social life that is best worth having budded round them as naturally as flowers in sunshine. Mrs. Traquair was one of the women whose charm increases as the years go on.

The situation of her home in itself was attraction enough, with its gay look-out on Bernini's fountain in the sunlit square. From morning till night one could watch the constant coming and going, the leisurely jostling and bustling, the strange kaleidoscope of life, in which the mediæval and the modern played an almost equal part. Tourists with their guide-books; lounging soldiers in groups of two or three; picturesque friars, nuns, and scarlet-robed seminarists; flower-sellers gladdening with their wares the grey steps of the Scala; models gaily clad or posing effectively in rags; cabmen chaffering and touting, and washing down a frugal meal with draughts from wicker-covered bottles.

It is a scene that has inspired many a picture, many a description; but neither pen nor palette can give an adequate idea of that ever-changing panorama, that unending carnival.

To-day, however, the scene without was forgotten by most of those fortunate enough to be numbered among the guests within. Godfrey Carew, the historian and man of letters, was spending a few days at his cousin's house, and his presence in Rome was something of an event. His lecture the day before on *The Church as an Organism* had excited great interest among Catholics and Protestants alike. English

residents, and not a few foreigners, were eager to make his acquaintance, and the company—indicative though it was of Mrs. Traquair's original and wayward tastes—included 'something of what was best' in Rome.

Godfrey Carew was a man of brilliant gifts and wide culture, a man whom the Church in high quarters regarded with mingled pride and uneasiness. He carried real weight; he talked a dialect that the ordinary Protestant could understand; and a sturdy Scottish professor had been heard to declare that Mr. Carew represented the position of the Church of Rome in a fashion that would 'wile the bird from the bough.' If any man could make converts in England, it was he. On the other hand—alas, that there should always be an other hand!—he had the defects of his qualities. His methods were nothing if not modern; and it was an interesting question whether his converts would be of the good old ultramontane type that the Curia knows how to value.

Mrs. Traquair herself did not quite know what to make of her distinguished guest. Personally she had rejoiced to lay down mind and will before the Church, as the Hindu was long supposed to lay his body before the car of Juggernaut; and she did not see the necessity for any subtler form of appeal. She never could understand why Godfrey Carew did not state so clear a case quite uncompromisingly, and a word of caution from Father Bernard had put her doubly on her guard. But the logic of facts is strong, and she could not deny that Mr. Carew produced an impression on people who were quite unmoved by her arguments.

'I met the Danvers' this morning,' she had announced at lunch, her eyes bright with enthusiasm. 'They are wildly excited about your lecture. Young Danvers said you made it conceivable to him for the first time that an educated man might conscientiously join the Church of Rome; and even the old Colonel was impressed, as you will hear this afternoon. Father Bernard will be here too. He is delivering a weekly course of lectures to young men, and will come here first. And—oh, Godfrey! There is a young man I want you to be extra good to—a Mr. Thatcher. He is a Protestant now, but, unless I am greatly mistaken, he is a second Newman.'

Mr. Carew smiled rather wearily. He had a wise, kind face. 'Another Newman? I have met so many. They are almost as plentiful as "second Shakespeares."'

'Oh, but wait till you see him! He has a noble forehead, and such a flexible, sensitive mouth. And that wonderful look of burning the midnight oil. He made me feel that he was "on his death-bed,"¹ as Newman said. His hair is rather long——'

'My dear Frances, I decline to let his hair weigh with me, however long it may be. Where did you pick him up?'

'My sister gave him an introduction.'

'The social reformer?'

'Poor Judith—yes! She *will* attack problems at the wrong end. But I don't despair even of her. Do you know—she is *just the person* who should have heard your lecture.'

'H'm. She thinks highly of J. H. N. the second, does she?'

'Oh, very. Of course she has no idea of his coming over to us.'

Thatcher was a little staggered when he entered the flower-decked salon. It was a singular contrast to Judith's flat, and indeed he had never seen anything quite like it before. Some of the people might have come straight from an Edinburgh drawing-room; but the types were a little exaggerated or even burlesqued, as is the way in an English colony abroad; and about the gathering as a whole there was an indefinable cosmopolitan air, an air enhanced, of course, for him by the presence of the clerical element,—here and there a white habit under a black soutane, and, more striking still, the picturesque attire of a couple of monsignori, one tall and well-groomed, the other short and oleaginous. It had been no small surprise to find Miss Lemaistre's sister in a world like this. Strange, how a wealthy marriage drifted sisters apart.

Mrs. Traquair was looking very young and stately in a beautiful crape gown. She made an admirable hostess, radiantly happy and at ease in the presence of her guests, greeting almost every one with a little air that seemed to say, 'If I could but devote the afternoon to a chat with you!' And behind it all there was a suggestion of 'perpetual widowhood' that lent a curious distinction to her manner and bearing. She took an early opportunity of introducing Thatcher to her famous guest.

¹ 'From the end of 1841 I was on my death-bed, as regards my membership with the Anglican Church, though at the time I only became aware of it by degrees.'—*Apologia pro Vita Sua*, chap. iv. 1.

'I am so glad,' the young man said impulsively, 'to have an opportunity of thanking you for your lecture yesterday. It was one of the few that make a sort of epoch in one's life. The very first sentences about the contrast between an organization and an organism gave me a new point of view.'

Mr. Carew looked with interest at the eager face. 'Death-bed,' or no, there was in it a suggestion of great possibilities. More than that one can say of no young face.

'I remember you quite well among my audience,' he said; and he might have added that he had used Thatcher's face as a sort of touchstone on which to try his thoughts. 'This age in which we live has brought its own way of looking at things, has it not?—and it is very instructive to apply the new method to one sphere of life after another.'

'Immensely instructive. I am a Protestant myself—a Nonconformist,—but I was greatly struck by what you said about the influence of environment on the Church,—action and reaction. It explained a great deal. The organism assimilating all it can make use of on the one hand, hardening itself against attack on the other. So that the very existence of blemishes and excrescences may be a proof of life and healthy reaction in the past.'

Mr. Carew nodded. 'The tendency of you Nonconformists, if you will allow me to say so, is to reject a dogma as soon as there is sufficient popular outcry against it. I confess there is no conviction for me in a church like that. Rome has made mistakes, no doubt, but the "mistakes" may have been at the time the nearest approach to truth of which humanity was capable,—in any case something far better than the alternative mistake. And isn't it something inspiring to see the thing growing in spite of mistakes,—developing through them?'

The two men had secured a quiet corner, but the shabby little monsignor hung about within an uncomfortably narrow radius. He looked as if he were trying to pick up fragments of an unknown language.

Colonel Danvers, a handsome, elderly man, was listening frankly with some impatience. 'What I want to know is this,' he said suddenly. 'Was the Church of Rome ever known to admit that she had made a mistake?'

Mr. Carew paused before replying. 'I am not sure that a readiness to own one's mistakes is not an over-rated virtue. What is a mistake, and what is truth, in matters of this kind?'

Don't you Protestants rather tend to think of both as something you can take up between your finger and thumb, label definitely, put under a glass-case, and leave to posterity on the shelves of a museum? We are not gods. We can but grope after eternal realities and represent them under such symbols as our minds can grasp. *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem.* Surely there is some intellectual arrogance in saying constantly, "That was a mistake." It implies that one has reached a platform of perfection, has grasped the whole truth; and the truth we have grasped might, in the circumstances that are gone, have been the greatest of all mistakes. Surely it is more scientific to say, "I was growing then, and I hope I am growing now." If we have indeed reached a fuller truth, that truth will prove quite capable of dealing with the mistake. The current of life centres in a different part of the organism, and the "mistake" dies away for want of a sufficient blood supply.'

Colonel Danvers pulled his grey moustache. 'Dies away, does it?'

A timid little lady joined in fiercely. 'It would,' she said, 'if the Protestants would let it.'

But the Colonel confined his attention to the protagonist. 'I am not much good at argument,' he confessed frankly, 'but it seems to me that, carried a little farther, your method would undermine the very foundations of intellectual honesty.'

'Does intellectual honesty imply a disregard of the limitations of human growth? But there is another reason for hesitation before applying the label, "Mistake." How often in life do we come back humbly to an old truth that we had forgotten or discarded! To take a definite example——'

'Yes, yes,' cried the Colonel, 'it is an old name take a definite example.'

'Well, don't you think many a young evangelical minister in these days has been conscious of a strong feeling of reaction against—say—the doctrine of Justification by Faith—a mere bit of dangerous emotionalism, subversive of true moral discipline. But, as he goes on, wider experience has brought out a deep and new significance in the doctrine. What if it had been labelled "Mistake," and put under a glass-case in the museum?'

The Colonel grew very red. 'Mistake,' he said, 'mistake! I should label your young man "lunatic," and put him in another glass-case beside it.'

He laughed at his own retort, which at least had the merit of silencing his opponent.

Mr. Carew's fine face looked a degree more weary than before, but naturally he was not unused to this variety of protestant argument. For the fraction of a second his eyes met Thatcher's, reading their intelligent sympathy in a flash, and then he crossed the room to join another group. Thatcher longed to follow, but, while he hesitated, the little monsignor came up to him. 'You have not been long in Rome, *hein?*' he said, speaking good English, but with a strong foreign accent.

'Only a few days.'

'You have friends here, no doubt.'

'I had an introduction to Mrs. Traquair.'

The little man nodded several times, looking at his companion with a curious smile that seemed to say, 'I have no difficulty in placing you. I have met your type several times before.'

'I can put you in the way of seeing a number of things the ordinary tourist has no idea of,' he said kindly. 'That is my card. If you like to call, I am almost always at home in the afternoon.'

Thatcher thanked him with real gratitude. He felt an instinctive dislike to the man, but the offer was too good to be refused. At that moment Mrs. Traquair made him a little sign. She had been talking to the tall monsignor, and now she begged his leave to present young Thatcher. The great man exchanged a few conventional remarks with delightful urbanity, and took his leave, bowing over his hostess' hand with the air of a courtier.

Mrs. Traquair and her *protégé* watched the stately and benignant presence till it reached the door, and then they exchanged a smile. 'Interested?' she said.

The expression of his face made better answer than his words.

'I have so many questions still to ask about friends at home. When did you last see my sister?'

'The day before I left home. She was good enough to let me call for some final hints.' He paused and added with emphasis, 'I don't think I ever knew anyone so wholeheartedly kind as your sister. She is a great refreshment.'

'Splendid, isn't she? Do tell me about her flat. Is it very funny?'

He seemed puzzled. 'Funny? It is delightful—a great lesson to her neighbours in the art of making poverty beautiful.'

Mrs. Traquair laughed. 'I can imagine that. Voluntary poverty lends itself to artistic treatment better than the sterner variety. It has fewer angles.'

Thatcher looked up quickly. 'Voluntary? was it? Then surely the gossip about Judith and Dalgleish was more absurd even than he had supposed.'

But, while he hesitated about asking a question, Mrs. Traquair went on. 'I am hoping to see a great deal of Judith this summer. I am going to spend a few months with my husband's mother in Perthshire. She has a delightful unpretentious old house—just the place in which to gather one's friends—and the dear old lady spoils me to the top of my bent. Perhaps you will be able to spare me a few days. I mean to secure Dr. Heriot too if I can. Do you know him?'

'I am happy to say I do. But I don't see much of him now-a-days, he is so busy. He is one of the world's best.'

'Ah,' she said impulsively, 'I see we have more than one point in common. We must make the most of your short visit to Rome. Father Bernard is going to take some of us down into the catacomb of St. Callixtus to-morrow morning. Would you like to be of the party?'

'I can imagine nothing I should like better.'

'I want you to know Father Bernard. Beautiful face, hasn't he? He hurried away because he has to deliver a lecture—one of a course to young men.'

'Oh, I wish I had known.'

'Would you have gone? Stop a moment. I think Father Smith said he meant to be there. Let me introduce you.'

Father Smith was an English priest with a strong Anglo-Saxon type of face. 'Delightful woman, Mrs. Traquair, isn't she?' he said, as the two men left the house together.

'She is indeed, but I confess I have been thinking more of Mr. Carew. What a way he has of putting things!'

'He is a layman, you see,' said the priest half enviously. 'They give him a good deal of tether.'

'Tether?' repeated Thatcher vaguely.

'You were talking of Newman this afternoon. Did you ever think what the inner history of Newman's life must be now-a-days? "The rest is silence."'

Thatcher was puzzled. 'You mean——?'

The priest laughed and shook his head significantly. "The rest is silence," he repeated.

Thatcher accepted the hint, and the two men talked of everyday matters till they reached their destination. The address had already begun, and they slipped into a seat near the door. If Thatcher had expected anything at all on the lines of Mr. Carew's lecture, he was doomed to disappointment. Father Bernard was not a great scholar, and he had been touched only by such a ripple of the modern spirit as none wholly escape. The address was straight and simple, absolutely uncompromising in its moral demand, but never had the Irish brogue lent a more fatherly tenderness to the speaker's voice.

'There are two elements in the case,' he said. 'The road is rough and steep, and you—are very weak. Did ye think the means of grace would turn the road into a garden of roses? Not so, not so. The Blessed Sacrament has no effect at all upon the road. That will be rough and steep to the end. The effect of the sacraments is on yourselves, and there is no magic even there. What use is a tonic to the sluggard who spends his days abed? Receive in faith, and *lay hold* on the strength that is within your reach.'

Assuredly that day Thatcher had seen the Church of Rome at her best.

CHAPTER XLIV

PROS AND CONS

At the sleepest hour of a Roman afternoon, Thatcher found himself in a sun-baked street, gazing at Monsignor's card, to make sure he had made no mistake. It was a dreary neighbourhood, neither old or new, and anyone but an expert might have been puzzled to give a date to the barrack-like tenements. A couple of cabmen dozed in their *vetture*, and the horses slept on their feet, stamping occasionally in useless protest against the flies that disturbed their dreams; a dog lay limp and apparently lifeless in the middle of the road; the rest of the inhabitants seemed to be enjoying their siesta indoors.

Thatcher looked again at the card, and knocked at a sun-blistered door. A minute later he repeated the knock more loudly. A cabman opened one eye to look at him and went to sleep again. And a profound silence settled over the whole neighbourhood.

At the third knock, the cabman rose to his feet with a good-natured growl. It was no use wasting words at this time of day—least of all on a *forestiere*—but the shrug of his shoulders said plainly enough, 'It is easily seen *you* are no habitué here!' Taking Thatcher's stick from his hand, he knocked as though he meant to wake up the city, then nodded patronizingly, 'That's done the trick, but don't be in a hurry'; and, without waiting to see the effect of his onslaught, he curled himself up in the bottom of his cab and went to sleep again.

In the course of a minute or two the door opened slowly, and Thatcher entered the stuffy tenement. There was nothing to be seen except an unwashed stair, so he went up and up, wondering how it was possible to exclude the air of heaven so completely.

At the top a door stood ajar, and through it peeped the

little mensignor. He looked more unwashed than ever, his shoes were more down at heel, and the crimson socks fell into deeper folds about the ankles. Thatcher wondered whether he ever took off that soutane. Assuredly he belonged to the class of whom Judith said they appeared in the morning looking as if it was still yesterday.

But the rubicund face beamed welcome, and the hot hand was extended with genuine pleasure. 'Come in, come in,' said the little man, leading the way into a comfortable, old-fashioned parlour. There were no open windows, of course, — never had been apparently—but the furniture of the room was good, and there were quaint old pictures on the walls.

And, in his way, Monsignor was a man well worth talking to. When he had performed to his satisfaction the lengthy and elaborate process of taking snuff, he chatted away in fluent English, displayed old books and coins, and arranged to let Thatcher join a party of favoured folk whom he was going to conduct through purlieus untrod by the ordinary tourist. Clearly he possessed a great fund of kindness.

'You call yourself a Protestant,' he said at last, nodding sagely, 'but I can see you are considering the claims of Holy Church, *hein?*'

'She interests me,' Thatcher said shortly. 'I can say no more.'

'You can say no more? H'm—h'm!' The old head went on nodding, and the shrewd eyes were fixed on the young man in a way that made him uncomfortable. 'Are you availing yourself of the means that are open to you?' The directness of the question was embarrassing, uttered, as it was, in a tone of authority that was almost patriarchal.

'If you mean the sacraments,' said Thatcher, 'I don't suppose I am eligible.'

Monsignor did not reply directly. 'How do you spend your time?' he asked. 'Where did you go this morning?'

Thatcher told him of the visit to the catacombs. He spoke as dryly as he could, but it was difficult to conceal the keenness of his interest.

'Marvellous, isn't it?' said the old man, 'to find oneself in the very place where such wonders were done, such miracles wrought,—to be in actual touch with the remains of saints and martyrs. You remember how the dead man came to life when his body touched the bones of Eliscus? One is scarcely surprised to hear that the weakness of human nature

tempted people in the past to commit the sacrilege of carrying off some fragment . . .'

Thatcher was looking eagerly at the speaker. He would find out now what the less cultured of the priests really believed on this vexed subject.

'You are a scholar, I can see,' went on Monsignor, 'and no doubt you know all about the Council of Trent. Do you remember what was said there about instruments "through which God bestows benefits on men?" Wonderful things have been wrought by the relics of the saints—' the shrewd eyes gleamed now with an almost crafty light, and the rubicund face came uncomfortably near, 'cures of body and soul—'

'Of soul?' queried Thatcher.

'Ah, but yes, yes! Has not the Church always taught that the physical and the spiritual go hand in hand? Who shall put a limit to the virtue of such relics? And for you who stand on the threshold of the true Church—you to whom God has given so great a gift of appreciation—it might be possible to procure something more sacred still. A bit of the true cross—?'

Thatcher never remembered how he got out of the house and down the stair. All his protestant instincts were in fierce rebellion, and it was hours before he could look back on the episode calmly. 'After all,' he said, 'are there no scandals among ourselves? Are we willing to stand or fall by the sayings of a revival preacher?'

It seemed to him the very providence of God that led him straight from there to San Clemente. The street door was opened by a gentle young sacristan who made the guest welcome, and took Father Bernard's note of introduction up to the Prior. The very aspect of the place acted on mind and soul like a cleansing fountain,—the purity, the classic calm, the antique simplicity of the choir with its marble screen and ambones.

While Thatcher waited, a door high in the wall opened, and the Prior came down a simple staircase in view of the church. He seemed the very spirit of the place, moving noiselessly in the white habit of his order. His bearing was as simple as Father Bernard's, but the brow and eyes were those of a scholar. Thatcher felt it a wonderful privilege to occupy for a time the foreground of a mind so richly stored. He seemed to himself a mere dark speck against that

luminous background. From what learned or saintly presence had the scholar come? In any case there was but one Presence for him now. As he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, forgetful of all else, an outsider might have guessed these moments of communion to be a rare privilege for which he had travelled far.

Presently he rose, and came forward with simple graciousness to put the whole wealth of his learning and insight at the disposal of a guest whom he had never seen before. Truly he was the spirit of the place: in him it found voice.

And so they entered upon that weird journey through the ages, beginning with the days of the Republic, deep down in the damp dark crypt, and mounting slowly to sunlight and modern times. The whole archæological world was talking still of those excavations, and as yet there was only an uneasy suspicion that the light of day was proving more than the wonderful old frescoes could endure.

The Prior's enthusiasm was matched by Thatcher's keen interest in the journey, and, before they had reached their goal, the leader was called away to his students. So the young sacristan took up the tale, and showed himself a worthy disciple of his master. Impossible to imagine anything more unlike the ordinary mechanical cicerone. When at length Thatcher stood on the threshold, he held out a piece of silver.

'No, no,' said the young fellow shamefacedly, as though he disliked hurting the visitor's feelings almost more than he disliked being paid for a labour of love.

It was late in the evening when Thatcher reached his modest hostelry, worn out with all the new impressions of the day. As he entered the hall, a familiar figure sprang up to greet him, and his heart sank in deepest dismay. 'Scrymgeour!' he said.

It was a reception that might have struck chill to any heart, but Scrymgeour stood it without a shiver. He was prepared for more than this. 'Hang it all,' he had said, 'I am not going to see the old fellow go on the rocks if I can prevent it. He'll hate the sight of me, but at least he shall hear the brutal truth once more. There is a cheap Easter trip, and I may as well spend my holiday in Rome as anywhere else.'

So he had made all his arrangements, including the purchase of a new travelling-rug, and of Newman's *Apologia*. Finally, with the view of patching up any weak spots in his armour, he had gone to the Religious Tract Society's rooms in search of a book that dealt with the errors of Rome. A tastefully-bound work in its fiftieth thousand completed his outfit.

'Awfully glad to see you again,' he went on cheerfully. 'I'm as hungry as a hunter, and you look as if you could sit up and pick a morsel yourself. They say dinner is going on now. Come along.'

The two men had always formed a curious contrast, but never more so than now,—Scrymgeour fresh-complexioned, wholesome, and robust; Thatcher keen, worn, 'all eyes,' as a Scottish lady remarked to her friend. Scrymgeour's experiences of the journey formed a pleasantly neutral topic of conversation during the early part of the meal, and his frankness quite won the heart of two American ladies who sat opposite. They had just returned from an expedition to Hadrian's Villa, and were somewhat disillusioned.

'So now we've seen the Campagna,' said the elder, speaking with a marked accent,—'the Campagna that we've been hearing about all our lives. Wal—I can only say that in our country we should call that the p-rairie!'

'I can't believe I'm in Rome at all,' confessed the other with an aggrieved air. 'It seems like a dream. I can assure you—the one realistic thing for me has been the sea-sickness.'

The elder sighed sympathetically. 'And this is Rome! I reckon we must build our hopes on Heaven now.'

Scrymgeour laughed heartily. 'Is that your view too?' he asked, trying to draw his friend into the conversation.

Thatcher made some conventional reply. He was feeling acutely unhappy. Almost every moment of his time in Rome was disposed of. A private audience, a visit to the Pope's villa, a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Traquezir, a long interview with the Prior,—which of these could he ask Scrymgeour to share?

'You'll think me no end of a fraud,' he said rather awkwardly when the two men were alone in his room, 'but I have a lot of engagements for the next few days—things that would not appeal to you in the least.'

'Oh, I'm all right,' said Scrymgeour good-humouredly. 'I saw at once that you were "in it." I'll do all the orthodox things, and wind up by being photographed in a gondola at

Venice.' Unfortunately the irony of this was lost on Thatcher. 'Give me an hour or two in the evening, that's all.'

'How did you find out my address?'

'Landlady. Oh, it wasn't her fault. I brought pressure to bear. I say, old man, I know I'm no end of a wet blanket. Just tell me there is nothing in it, and I'll trot back to-morrow, if you like.'

'Nothing in what?'

'Oh, you know—this ridiculous report that you are going to join the Church of Rome.'

Thatcher walked up and down the room before replying. 'Many men would consider themselves justified in lying under the circumstances,' he said. 'As it happens, I am not one of them. The chances are that I shall live and die a staid nonconformist minister, but—I mean to get to the bottom of the question while I am at it. I won't deny that I am open to conviction—who am I that I should be disobedient to a heavenly vision?—but you can see for yourself how undesirable it is that this should be talked about in Edinburgh.'

'Talked about in Edinburgh!' repeated Scrymgeour.

'My dear man, what else do you suppose we are talking about? Mr. Blount says he has asked you for an interview again and again—'

Thatcher stopped short in his walk. 'Is it likely that a talk with Mr. Blount would do any good?'

'I suppose not,' said his friend dejectedly. 'And yet I have thought sometimes lately that when we are Blount's age, we'll think he steered his course fairly straight after all.' He sat for a long time with his eyes on the floor. 'Hang it all, man,' he burst out impetuously at last, 'I am as much in favour of toleration and fair-play as any man living, but, when all is said, she is the Mother of Harlots!'

Thatcher smiled wearily. He was used to the robust methods of the Debating Society. 'She is despised and rejected certainly,' he said.

'If she is despised and rejected, it is not because of her saintliness. You remember how Dalgleish nearly perverted us all with his Blessed Edmund Campion. She is despised and rejected, *firstly*,'—Scrymgeour proceeded to mark off the various points on his fingers—'*firstly*, because she doesn't wash. I mean her representatives don't.'

A cheering vision of Father Bernard and the Prior rose before Thatcher's fastidious mind.

'*Secondly*, because she doesn't speak the language of modern educated men. Newman's doctrine of Development is for the few.'

'So is all philosophy.'

'Still you are bound to look at life from the standpoint of your own generation,—and what Catholic priest does? They are like beasts brought up in the Zoo—a remarkable place in its way, but not the least like the real thing. *Thirdly*, she isn't honest. When Kingsley said "Roman priests are liars," Newman replied, "I am not," which naturally was only a very partial answer to the charge. Excellent, so far as it went; but the question was whether the remainder of the goods were up to sample. I happen to have been reading the *Apologia* again lately, and my opinion is that Newman simply allowed himself to be mesmerized by the Church of Rome. He kept his eyes fixed on it as the medium does on the brass knob or whatever it may be. When the hypnotism was complete he drew up his arguments to account for it.—Don't you think there is something to be said for that view?'

'No. Unless you mean this,—Thatcher strove for a moment in vain to put into words the longing for 'more life and fuller' which lay, perhaps, at the bottom of all his unrest;—'unless you mean this—that all verbal arguments are a rough approximation at the best. The reason a man goes over to Rome is that he *becomes a Catholic*, and feels bound in honour to say so.'

'Humph! I wonder how many of 'em *become Protestants* again, and do not feel bound in honour to say so? "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*" It is all very well to become a fool for Christ's sake, but it doesn't do to become too many different kinds of fool. You say your mind is open. Would you mind just *looking* at a book I have got on the subject?'

'My dear fellow, I drank in all that stuff with my mother's milk. No, I don't mean to say Protestants deliberately lie, but they have no more sense of proportion than a beetle. It's as if they set out to describe Lincoln Cathedral, and began with the Imp, treating all the noble columns and aisles and groinings as the merest details. If you could only see the thing from the platform of the finer minds! It is as distant as the poles'—he looked at the gaily bound book—'from that travesty. I know the blemishes of the Catholic Church better than you can; but, unless you want to drive me over, don't tempt me with literature like that. You can't even

conceive how different the thing looks from the inside. Down in the catacombs this morning—it was all so real. The old days seemed to be with us still. One *felt* the continuity with the Church of to-day. Wickedness in high places, no doubt; crimes and hypocrisy; but an unbroken line of saints, an unbroken strain of tradition. Think that St. Paul wrote an epistle to the Romans—to the people here.'

'Acknowledging the claims of the first and greatest bishop?'

It was a minute or two before Thatcher replied. 'The organism must have a head. I have always disliked the idea of a national church—that each nation should have its little clan god. Besides—do you remember what Hegel said at the time of the battle of Jena?—what folly it was to think the fate of empires depended on a hill being, or not being, occupied by soldiery? The Bishop of Rome stands in a position of supremacy. How has he gained it? Surely history in the long run is the record of the Divine Purpose.'

'Might is Right in fact?'

Again Thatcher hesitated. 'I rather think Might is Right, until Right makes itself Might.'

'I think Right has made a fairly good show for the last two or three centuries.'

'And what is it doing now? Where is our organic life—our solidarity? What one thing do we Protestants hold in common?'

'A deal more than we succeed in living up to.'

'Do not steal. Do not kill. Do not commit adultery.' That is what we are whittling it down to. We knew all that before. Christ came to found a Church.'

'Did He?'

'It is the whole point, I admit,—the parting of the ways.'

'You may well say the parting of the ways. It is no argument, of course, but have you realized what an awful to-do this would make?'

A bitter little smile played about Thatcher's lips, and faded away again. 'As you say, it is no argument.'

'You have such an influence.'

'Influence!'

'I am not afraid of their following you.'

'No.'

'But they'll think you have brought religion to a *reductio ad absurdum*.'

There was a long silence. When Thatcher spoke again he

was looking very old. 'I don't need to tell you that this is no cheap amusement for me. For one thing—it would be my father's deathblow.'

'I don't know how you can face it. But I suppose that is no argument either.'

Thatcher had lost a little of his careful composure when he replied, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Why do we assume in our Church that one great function of religion is to endear us to our loved ones, and so make life easy for us?

'But, good Lord, man, what do you make of the saints outside the Church of Rome? You were as keen about Martineau in the old days as you were about Newman. I thought between them they'd have kept you on the rails.'

'No educated Catholics would deny that Martineau belongs to the soul of the Church. They might, perhaps, go on to say, "How much greater he might be——!" I don't. But what I do say is this,—Who are we to think we may stand on that level? For one genius who wisely says, "I will not burden my spirit with a cramping weight of Classics and Mathematics,"—how many say it to whom the routine discipline was the one chance of intellectual salvation? How can we know that we are the exception? Surely at worst there is no harm in taking the lower place, and leaving it to the Master of the feast to say, "Friend, come up higher!"'

Scrymgeour drew a deep breath of despair, and Thatcher laid a brotherly hand on his shoulder. 'It is hard on both of us,' he said, 'but life is built that way. I see just how it strikes you—and it was awfully good of you to come. That is why I have havered all round and about in the effort to explain. I should have stopped short at what I said about being disobedient to a heavenly vision.'

'If it were a heavenly vision!' protested Scrymgeour petulantly. 'I am firmly convinced that it is a beastly brass knob. I don't profess that our church is perfect; but don't you see that you make yourself responsible for the errors of a church you adopt in a way you never can be for those of the church in which you were born?'

Thatcher looked across at him and nodded very kindly. It seemed to Scrymgeour as if some magic ship were bearing his friend out of sight. He drew a deep breath. 'Well, I can only say, "God be with you!"' he said. 'It's an awful blow, and it goes to the very root of things. I have been a great

humbug, Thatcher, and a bundle of inconsistencies, but I've always been meaning to be more like you. Serves me right upon my soul!

Thatcher's voice shook, but he steadied it with an effort. 'Do you remember the man in *The Epicurean* who felt the steps crumbling beneath him in the darkness, and caught sight of a great brazen ring above his head? That has always seemed to me a very pretty allegory. But we are wasting our emotions over a contingency that may never arise. As I said before, I may probably live and die a staid nonconformist minister.'

'If you'd give yourself a chance! If you'd take your eyes off that infernal brass knob!'

'So I will,' said Thatcher, smiling bravely. 'Tell me the last news from home. I saw nobody latterly.'

But Scrymgeour was too sorely wounded to accept the change of subject.

Thatcher pressed the point. 'How is Dalglish?'

Scrymgeour's face brightened in spite of himself. 'I have hopes of Dalglish. He is holding his tongue and working hard. By the way, his mother is very ill. Mr. Blount has had her brought up to his house in an invalid carriage so that she may have the benefit of expert advice. You know, Thatcher, you don't do Blount justice. He's no end of a decent sort.'

CHAPTER XLV

THE DEACONS

THE deacons were assembled in the comfortable little vestry below the chapel. The evening was warm, and most of them looked flushed and uncomfortable.

'We cannot shut our eyes,' a hard-featured brother was saying—'we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a growing spirit of unrest among our young men. Mr. Thatcher—for one reason or another—has great influence with the others. If he doesn't realize his responsibilities, all I can say is—we are bound as Christian men to bring them home to him.'

'It really is most distressing,' said Mr. Blount, wiping his honest forehead with a large silk handkerchief. 'Mr. Thatcher is a fine fellow—a first-rate preacher; but he is high-spirited and independent. If he severs his connection with our body, he will be a great loss—and the defection won't stop with him.'

'He won't sever his connection—not in his father's lifetime anyhow.'

'And even if he did,' asserted the first speaker, 'of course there are always excellent reasons for shirking a painful duty. Let us bear in mind that the cause we fight is not ours, but the Lord's. Our business is to stick to principles and leave the result in His hands. Our case does not look as black as—Daniel's did, I warrant you!'

Mr. Blount sighed. Even to his orthodox mind—in the stress of present day exigencies—the case of Daniel seemed a long way off. 'But, my dear Mr. Dewar,' he said, 'the charges against our young friend are so vague. It seems to me they might be dispelled by a frank conversation. It is hardly a case for church discipline. I confess I have tried to induce him to open his heart to me in private—without much success so far.'

'All I can say is,' pursued Brother Dewar relentlessly, 'that

I saw Mr. Thatcher in the streets of Glasgow in company with a foreign-looking priest—or friar, for aught I know. I am not versed in their distinctions. When they had occasion to lift their hats, I saw—the mark of the beast—the *tonsure!*'

'Not on Mr. Thatcher?' enquired some one anxiously. Like the preceding speaker, he presumably did not profess to be versed in 'distinctions.'

'No, no, no!' was the somewhat testy reply. 'Of course not on Mr. Thatcher!'

'You are sure it was not a case of natural baldness?' suggested a merciful brother.

When this important question had been settled, Brother Dewar was allowed to proceed.

'Naturally I took no notice at the time, but when I saw Mr. Thatcher next, I felt it my duty to mention the matter; and he admitted that he had been walking with a Roman cleric—Father Bernard, he called him, "Father," forsooth!—who had shown him great kindness in Italy. Now I put it to you as men of the world—if also servants of Christ—what is likely to be the nature of the kindness shown to a clever young man by a Roman cleric in Rome?'

'Oh, come now!' interposed Mr. Blount. "'When you're in Rome"—we all know the proverb. Which of us would refuse to see the show if we got the chance?'

'How else are we to expose the follies and superstitions——?'

'And whatever the kindness was, Mr. Thatcher seems to have been doing his best to return it. No doubt they were on their way to St. Mungo's.'

'That is all very well,' pursued Brother Dewar, 'but these rumours about Mr. Thatcher were going the round long before he went to Rome. If it wasn't Romanism, it was Unitarianism, or Agnos—Agnos—Agnos—ticism. And there's other rumours too—rumours of another nature altogether. Our sister—our late sister——' The speaker looked unhappy, but finally resolved to let the context explain his meaning—'our late sister Munro assures us that Mr. Thatcher has more than once been seen in the company—of an actress.'

'Sister Munro can scarcely be considered an unbiassed witness.'

Brother Dewar made an impatient movement with his shoulders. 'I never heard any doubt cast on her *veracity*,' he said, 'and Mr. Jones is understood to have said the same thing.'

'Mr. Jones denies that he made the remark at all. If he did, he says he was probably mistaken. In any case he made it in private conversation, and declines to repeat it.'

The suggestion of a smile passed over several faces, and then profound gravity reigned once more.

The smile was not reflected for an instant on the stern face of Brother Dewar. 'Then,' he said, 'let Mr. Thatcher deny Sister Munro's assertion. I ask no more.'

'We all seem agreed,' said a shy little man, the youngest member of the diaconate, 'that Mr. Thatcher is a good man. May he not have been aiming at the—the *conversion* of the actress?'

Brother Dewar turned on him with bitter irony.

'And of the priest?'

'Why not? The Lord works by human means. Why should His arm be shortened in the case of a priest—or of an actress?'

'Priest *or* actress,' said a silent-looking man, 'might be explained away. It is unfortunate that the problem we have to consider is priest *and* actress. To my mind such a state of things argues at the best a singular want of stability—an absence of that moderation that ought to be known of all men.'

Mr. Blount looked at his watch. 'I told Mr. Thatcher,' he said, 'that we should be considering his case—informally—this evening; and that he might save pain and inconvenience by making a frank statement.'

'The Pastor will think we are trespassing on his preserves.'

'The Pastor——' began Mr. Blount.

'The Pastor is away for his holiday,' interrupted Brother Dewar sternly, 'a longer holiday than usual, as it happens, and this matter is much too serious to be postponed.'

At that moment the door opened and Thatcher came in. He looked indescribably weary and spent, and the heart of almost every man in the room went out to him.

'Very glad to see you, my dear young friend,' said Mr. Blount cordially. He held out his hand, and his example was followed by all the others. 'Sit down.' He puckered up his brows and weighed his gold-rimmed eyeglass rather nervously. 'Now what we want to make clear at the outset is that this is not a formal procedure. We office-bearers are in a position of great perplexity, and we want your help and advice.'

Brother Dewar coughed significantly, but Mr. Blount went on unperturbed.

'I think we may say there is no young man in the church for whom we office-bearers have a greater regard than we have for you. We are proud of your intellectual gifts, and those of us who know what a son you have been to your father are moved by a warmer feeling than pride. Some of us can honestly say you have won your way into our affections, (Hear, hear!) and we have looked forward to your future in the church with the greatest hope. You have been the hero of the young men—'

Thatcher uttered a faint groan of protest.

'—the hero of the young men,' repeated Mr. Blount relentlessly. 'In fact half our difficulty lies in the fact that you are a city set on a hill. To whom much is given, of him much shall be required.'

'Now of course we allow great latitude to the speakers in the Debating Society. Some of the remarks quoted as yours startled us older men at times, when they reached our ears, but no one thought of interfering with you there. Latterly, however, we have had graver grounds for uneasiness. You went through your course in Arts and Theology with great distinction, and perhaps it was a disappointment to some of us when you refused the pastorate of several churches on the ground that you wanted more time for study. No doubt you were following the dictates of your conscience,—and in any case we had no right to interfere. But it happens, unfortunately, that other young men are following your example, and that one at least has definitely given up all idea of the ministry,—taking up Medicine instead. Unrest of all kinds—rumours of all kinds—are in the air, and we appeal to you as one who has the good of the church at heart, to exert yourself in the cause of peace. Let me put the matter in a nutshell,—What we ask is your simple assurance that you are not dallying with the claims of the Church of Rome?'

Thatcher smiled rather bitterly. 'Dallying? I never dallied with a religious question in my life.'

But at this point Brother Dewar interposed. 'There is no good in putting too fine a point on it,' he said. 'After all that has come and gone, I think we have a right to ask that Mr. Thatcher should have no more *parleyings* with the Church of Rome. We are willing to forget the past on condition that

he makes his choice here and now between Christ and Antichrist.'

Thatcher looked up. 'I made my choice long ago between Christ and Antichrist, and—however far short my life may have fallen—I have never gone back on the choice for a moment.'

There was an awkward silence. 'We are getting into a fog,' said Brother Dewar, 'for want of a little plain speaking. Will Mr. Thatcher promise to have no more *dealings* with the Church of Rome?'

'It is impossible to live in a Christian land, and have no dealings with the Church of Rome. There is a Roman Catholic member on the School Board——'

'It was not a member of the School Board who was with you in Glasgow.'

'True. Father Bernard was on his way to Ireland, and I spent a few hours with him.'

'Suppose you explain to us then,' said Mr. Blount kindly, 'what your position in the matter really is.'

'I have explained my position before. I feel the need of thought and study, and I consider that I am justified in pursuing that thought and study wherever and however my conscience permits.'

Impossible to keep that ring of pride out of his voice. No wonder Brother Dewar was incensed. 'It is quite clear,' said the old man sternly, 'that Mr. Thatcher cannot give us the assurance we want. It remains for the church to consider formally what her duty is in the matter. But that is not all. It has come to our ears more than once that Mr. Thatcher has been seen in the company of—of a woman who exhibits herself on the boards of the theatre,—whose picture is to be seen on the hoardings of the public streets.'

Thatcher's pale face turned grey. 'Where are my accusers?'

'Do you force us to produce them?'

'Come, come, my dear boy!' interposed Mr. Blount kindly. 'We are all brethren in Christ. There are some kinds of work that are better left to older men, but, if your aim was to do the—the young woman *good*——'

There was a short silence. Thatcher's face was inscrutable. 'I shall not make that my defence,' he said coldly.

'We are all brethren in Christ,' repeated Mr. Blount

'Try to realize that what we want is to understand, and, if possible, to help you.'

It is so hard, so hard, for the young and the old to meet! As someone has finely said, the help each might bring the other 'wastes away like water that sinks into the desert sand, while but a few yards off the traveller lies down despairingly to die of thirst.' But Thatcher was very honest, and, now, for one brief moment, he saw things as Mr. Blount saw them.

'I believe it, upon my soul!' he said.

'You cannot fail to see our point of view. However your own position may have changed, we know in how excellent a school you were brought up. Think of your father!'

'Do you suppose,' said Thatcher slowly, 'that in all this talk, I have been thinking of anything else. The thought of what it means to him—makes me old.'

'I am sure we would fain spare him suffering, but how can we do so better than by seeking by every means in our power to bring his son back to the simplicity of the Gospel?'

There was a long silence. Every eye in the room was fixed on Thatcher, but he seemed lost in his own train of thought.

'Of course you understand,' he said at last, 'that I should withdraw my name from the chapel books at once if it were not for my desire to save my father suffering. If my mind were made up to conclusions inconsistent with my loyalty as a member, I should be bound to inflict that suffering. My mind is not so made up. Do I understand that you are forcing me to a premature decision?'

Mr. Blount's face clouded. After one fleeting moment of contact, the young and the old seemed drifting farther apart than ever. 'Surely,' he said, 'the duty of a man in doubt is to talk over the questions at issue frankly with those who are placed over him in Christ. The Pastor is always willing——' He saw that he was wasting breath, and paused.

Thatcher rose to his feet with a curious dignity. 'I must ask your forbearance,' he said simply. 'I cannot see eye to eye with you in the matter of my duty, and I am sure you have no wish to drive me to extremes. I ask for a few months more—say three months—in which to consider the question. On my part, I will undertake to go right away from England

—after spending a few promised days with friends in Perthshire. If, as you assert, I have an influence, I can only say it came unsought, and will die out very quickly when I am gone.'

There was a chorus of protest and advice, but Thatcher carried his point. He had the advantage of being the one man present—with the exception of Brother Dewar—who knew what he wanted. As he emerged into the street, he looked back on the familiar building with the air of one who bids a long farewell.

'Not from the Church *Militant!*' he said exultingly.

CHAPTER XLVI

IN THE GLEN

It was late in the afternoon when Thatcher stepped out of the train at Aberfeldy. The fresh, life-giving air seemed to blow away the cobwebs from his brain, and the mellow westerling sun warmed his heart like a cordial.

And there, on the platform, stood sweet Betty Heriot, scanning the long line of carriages with eager eyes. 'Come away, come away!' she cried. 'We're so tired of waiting. That silly old train is later than ever.'

'Who is "we"?' he asked, stooping to kiss her.

'Miss Lemaistre and me. We came in with Charles and the grouse. Look—that's our bag! Did you ever see such a lot?—and of course we didn't bring them all. But now that Colonel Danvers is gone, there won't be so many. Father says he is a very poor shot. What are you?'

'No shot at all, I am afraid.'

'I am so glad. It is quite time the poor grouse had a rest. Here's Miss Lemaistre, and the horse is called Milly.'

Having thus introduced the whole party to her satisfaction, she relapsed into momentary silence.

Judith was looking her best in severe Scotch tweed.

'How nice of you to be here!' said Thatcher with a little sigh of relief.

'Betty and I have been shopping and despatching grouse. We've had a glorious drive, and we are so glad to see you. It is a long way. Do you care to go and have tea at the inn before we start?'

'Oh, dear no! This is much more refreshing than tea.' He sprang into the trap. 'Why, Betty, you have grown. You'll be a young lady before we know where we are.'

'I shan't be a young lady for ages and ages. I am not even thinking of being a flapper yet.'

Thatcher looked puzzled. Modern slang was not his strong point. 'What is a flapper?'

Judith laughed. 'A flapper is a maiden whose hair is down with a tendency to go up, and whose dress is up with a tendency to come down,' she quoted.

Betty, mounted in state beside the coachman, patted the hem of her skirt as it lay on her knees, and shook out her mane defiantly. Clearly both were above—or below—suspicion.

Milly was stepping out gaily, and the fine park-like landscape locked its best in the evening light. Thatcher could not resist the infection of the prevailing good spirits.

'Le' me confess,' he said, 'that as I came up in the train I was rather dreading the unknown that lay before me. I have had a trying time and am very tired. It is good to see the face of a friend. You will give me some idea what is expected of me.'

'We expect you to be your most comfortable self,' said Judith. 'That's all. My sister, Mrs. Alfred Traquair, is only a guest in the house, but I needn't tell you that she gets everything her own way. Old Mrs. Traquair is over eighty. She spends a good deal of time in her own rooms, but she likes to know that things are spinning—in a very modest way—and to hear of good bags. Her son, Henry, is very quiet—singularly so; but they say he is a very fair sportsman. Dr. Heriot and Betty are with us, as you know, and a Mrs. Watson, an old family friend. Colonel and Mrs. Danvers left yesterday, and Mr. Godfrey Carew comes on Monday with his wife. That's all—if you add the chaplain. You may have heard of Mr. Carew.'

Thatcher nodded. 'I met him—at Mrs. Traquair's flat in Rome.'

'Oh—dear—me!' said Judith regretfully, as if fresh light had broken on the subject. 'How like Frances! I do hope he won't talk to you about the Monophysites!'

And now at last Thatcher's laugh rang out as gaily as a schoolboy's. 'The Monophysites are not his special line. He was good enough to talk to me a good deal in Rome. I promise you I shan't bore him here.'

'I wasn't considering him in the least,' said Judith composedly.

'*Did you know,*' asked Betty suddenly, looking round, 'that the female of black cock is grey hen?'

Each stage of the drive was more restful than the last,—the wooded road skirting the fine expanse of the loch with its mountains beyond; the open stretch of moorland with tiny homesteads dotted here and there, and fairy flags of cotton-grass flying in the wind; and, last of all, the glen, all aglow with warm western sunshine that threw into relief the huge moss-grown boulders and lighted up even the dainty glades beneath the arches of bracken.

Thatcher's thoughts fell back on the previous evening in the airless little vestry, and he drew a long breath. 'What a change!' he said aloud.

One could not look at his face and fail to guess something of all he meant.

'If only Mr. Carew were not coming,' Judith said regretfully. 'I am so afraid he will drive away the pixies.'

Thatcher smiled. 'I should think a visit from Colonel Danvers must have rendered that unnecessary.'

Frances Traquair stood on the threshold, radiant with welcome. 'It is so good of you to spare us a few days,' she said, looking at Thatcher with a smile that seemed to imply a wealth of admiration for clever men.

She led the way into the house. Even in the first few minutes one could see how her presence lighted up the old place. She had taken the heart of the servants by storm, and even the stately old mistress could make little stand against her coaxing ways. Her personality threw every other somewhat into the shade, and the moment one saw the two sisters together, Judith seemed just a little too astere. Frances presented Thatcher formally to old Mrs. Traquair. 'He has come to a very quiet home, hasn't he, Mother?' she said, 'but we think he will find it a happy one.'

And indeed when dinner was over, the evening passed very quietly. Frances Traquair never willingly made use of the severe early Victorian drawing-room. She had seen in a moment the artistic possibilities of the great bare entrance-hall, with its ingle-neuk and simple oak-wainscotting, adorned with imposing antlers. A morning's work had been sufficient to effect a transformation,—the addition of a few arm-chairs, half a dozen skin rugs from the obscurity of rooms upstairs, and some rosy shades to temper and blend the glaring light of the old-fashioned lamps.

Dr. Heriot nodded quietly behind his *Scotsman*, tired out with a day on the moors; Frances and Thatcher chatted gaily

in a corner, recalling brave doings in Rome; Henry Traquair buried himself in *Punch*, from which he seemed able to derive a whole evening's entertainment, and Judith was left to listen to Mrs. Watson.

'She tells me he is a second Newman,' said that lady in a low voice, nodding her head mysteriously in the direction of the pair in the corner.

'Oh, nonsense!' said Judith laughing. 'I do wish she would let him alone.'

'Well, my dear, I am a Protestant myself, as you know; but when you are my age you will begin to see that God fulfils Himself in many ways.'

Judith smiled. 'One seems to have glimmerings even now.'

'Of course celibacy is a terrible mistake; but'—her face brightened—'even if he goes over, he doesn't need to enter the priesthood.'

'He will,' said Judith. 'The species may be doubtful: the genus is unmistakable—Priest.'

Mrs. Watson looked at the fine ascetic face in the lamplight. 'Well,' she said, 'it won't be for want of meeting the woman who could have made him happy.'

'Who is she?' Judith spoke without much interest. She and Frances had known Mrs. Watson from their girlhood as an incorrigible matchmaker.

'Oh, my dear, don't pretend not to know. He is young, of course, but if there is a great future before him——? Frances gave me a hint, but one had only to watch his face at dinner while you were talking about your poor folk.'

'It is a great mistake,' said Judith, regarding the matter as usual quite impersonally. 'Woman has no place in the scheme of things for Mr. Thatcher.'

'No? What has?'

Judith did not answer. "'Two, and two only, absolute and luminously self-evident beings,'" she thought to herself. To that extent he might perhaps be a second Newman. 'I do wish,' she went on, after a pause, 'that Frances would stop inventing husbands for me. How would she like it if I began to reflect that widowhood is not necessarily the final stage in a woman's career, and took to hunting up eligible men for her?'

'If it weren't for the difference in creed,' said Mrs. Watson slowly, 'you wouldn't have far to look.'

Judith followed the direction of her eyes. Frances was in her most bewitching, irresponsible mood,—daintily-shod feet extended, mutinous chin in the air. Dr. Heriot was awake, very wide awake now, and, although he took little share in the conversation, his eyes rested on his young hostess with an expression that made his rugged face very pleasant. There was nothing in that, of course, but many other things came back to Judith's mind as she looked,—the readiness with which he had sacrificed his plans in Italy, the generosity of his offer to return to Florence on Easter Sunday, his admiration for Mrs. Traquair's religious fervour and for the restraint of the final telegram. She remembered that he had seen Frances repeatedly after that.

'Do you know,' she said coldly, 'I seem to be wanting in a sixth sense that other people possess. I see lots of delightful friendships between men and women, but the idea of marriage never seems to cross my mind in connection with them.'

"Custom or not, it happens."

'Occasionally it does, not often,—relatively. But *when* it happens, it always comes upon me with a sense of surprise as something quite novel and unexpected. Do you think I am abnormal?'

'You are a very superior woman, of course.'

'Oh, spare me that!' laughed Judith. She was conscious of a sudden restlessness. 'Shall we go and join the others?'

The next day was Sunday. When Mass was over, they all strolled out into the sunshine.

'You would like to look round the place, I am sure,' Frances said to Thatcher. 'The modern building is not remarkable, but there is a fine bit of old ruin round here at the back,—no one seems to know quite how old. Good massive masonry, is it not?'

'Personally I have lived in my boxes for the last half-dozen years,' said Mrs. Watson, 'but if I *had* a tame ruin, I should treat it with more respect. It is a shame that all those stones and things should have been allowed to accumulate about the foot of the wall.'

'The æsthetic sense of the Traquairs developed late,' said Frances tranquilly. 'I suppose a previous generation looked upon this as a convenient rubbish shoot; but I will speak to Henry and have it shovelled away.'

Dr. Heriot was probing a heap of stones and earth with his stick. 'It will require something more persuasive than shovelling,' he said. 'It makes a regular solid buttress.'

'Whatever it is,' said Frances lightly, 'we'll have it removed.'

Judith laughed. "'*Si c'est possible, c'est déjà fait; si c'est impossible, ça se fera.*"'

She looked round instinctively, in childlike fashion, to see if Dr. Heriot appreciated the quotation. The little company was stooping to pass under an ivy-grown doorway, and he had fallen a few steps behind; but his eyes had singled Judith out of the party, and there was something in their expression that made her turn quite simply and join him. The air was very still, and the happy buzz of the insects seemed to give the sunshine a voice.

'It must be very warm in the piazza of St. Peter's to-day,' he said.

Judith's grave face broke into a smile. 'I was there too in the spirit,' she said. 'Nearly eighteen months——'

'Since you and I spent a Sunday together. Are you going to follow the others, or shall we find a quiet nook among the bracken?'

All the sunshine of that wonderful morning seemed focussed in Judith's face. She had seen but little of Dr. Heriot during the summer, and now, in a moment, his tone seemed to renew the old happy relations. Then her brow clouded. 'I feel as if we all ought to conspire in Mr. Thatcher's defence for the few days that he is here, and indeed *I all but promised*—to show him the pixies this morning.'

Dr. Heriot's face fell. He had not called her back to talk about Thatcher. He found it difficult enough at all times to be personal, and here was a woman who gave him no help at all. Did she really not know how her glance had responded to his a moment before? It seemed to him that Frances the wayward, the elusive, was simplicity itself when compared with her straightforward sister.

'Ah,' he said coldly. 'I forgot you had seen so little of him.'

'It isn't that.' She turned to walk towards the glen. 'But Frances is full of dark designs, and he is worn out with theological controversy as it is.'

Very well, if she would have it so, Thatcher let it be. Had they not hours and days of this sunny life before them?

'A strange little episode, wasn't it?' he said more warmly. 'I am very sorry for Mr. Thatcher.'

'I don't know of any episode. One sees it in his face. I know nothing else. I am not in his confidence.'

'Oh, I thought he must have told you. Then—if you don't mind—I won't say anything more about it.'

'Of course not,' said Judith, smiling at his disarming simplicity. 'Where is Betty?'

'Really, the lessons to old Mrs. Traquair. I don't know how they have settled the question of versions. Betty has very definite views.'

'She has indeed. She confided to me last night that, with the sole exception of her father, Mr. Thatcher is the only man she ever loved.'

'Dear Betty!' His face grew tender. 'May she never love a worse!'

'Amen. He is a very fine fellow. There is no harm in my talking about him, as I am not in his confidence. Do you remember telling me that the family history recalled some of the grimmest pages in Lecky? I can well believe it, if they are all made of the same stuff.'

'I suppose you hear something of him from young Dagleish?'

'Very little. Mr. Dagleish is very loyal to his—particular form of schism. But, for the matter of that, I see much less of Mr. Dagleish than I did. I seem to know his sister now better than I know him. I meant to tell you when opportunity offered that my scheme came to grief. He got the offer of some evening teaching, and preferred that to taking a weekly allowance from me.'

'I am glad to hear it.'

Judith smiled ruefully. 'Of course.'

'No,' he said gravely. 'It is not of course. You would get the thing you wanted, if I could give it you,—unless it brought too big a heartache in its train.'

His tone was very kind, but Judith went on her way with characteristic stupidity. 'It is so bad for him to be burning the candle at both ends!' she protested indignantly. 'He does seem so unlucky. Nature gave him everything, and it seems as if circumstances would give him nothing.'

'If nature gave him so much, he ought surely to be master of circumstances.'

'I know. It is easily said. But to return to Mr. Thatcher——'

A step on the pine-needles made her pause. 'I am afraid,' said an unmistakable voice, 'Mr. Thatcher has anticipated the return. Sorry.'

Judith's blush gave piquancy to her smile. 'Sit down,' she said; 'we wanted you.'

Thatcher turned to Dr. Heriot. 'Did you?'

'Not—pressingly. But I should like you to hear what Miss Lemaistre has to say.'

Judith's blush deepened. 'Ah, now you put me to shame. I was only wishing Mr. Thatcher would close his ears to oecumenical councils, and open his eyes to the pixies.'

'Ah!' Thatcher threw himself on the ground, and clasped his hands under his head. 'I fear I was born too late—or too soon.' There was a long silence, and then he turned on his elbow and looked at her. 'Perhaps after all you may be the one to change, not I.'

She shook her head. 'I can't breathe in musty crypts, nor decipher cobwebby palimpsests. I will confess that in the last—eighteen months'—she looked up at Dr. Heriot with a smile, 'I have honestly tried. It won't do. At best they seem to me so small a part of—the manifestation. I at least must be content to see——'

"Heaven closest in this world we tread upon,
God plainest in the brother whom we pass,
Best solitude 'mid busy multitudes,
Passions o'ercome where master passion springs
To love and help and succour."

Another silence. 'Vague sentiment,' said Thatcher slowly, 'on the lips of most people.' He thought of Judith's 'voluntary poverty,' and of the numberless acts of neighbourly kindness that had come to his ears. 'On your lips, Miss Lemaistre, I confess, it is very fine—a noble platform.' He paused, and ended abruptly as if to close the subject, 'but some of us have to travel a long way round before we have the right to adopt it.'

'Fools rush in, in fact,' said Judith with a sigh.

'But perhaps you may be glad to know that, when this happy little visit is over, I am going right away from England and from books and from preachers.'

'Not to Italy?'

'No,' he said, 'not to Italy.'

They went in search of the pixies after that, and the hours passed as lightheartedly as even Judith could wish. She was not given to analyzing her own emotions, and she scarcely asked herself why life seemed so full of promise. She was only too happy to live in the passing hour. What need to claim for the day all the meaning it could be forced to yield, when it was but the earnest of better days to come? *Carpe diem!* Yes, but treat it in the spirit of an epicure. Hold it at arm's length as in some stately minuet, and let to-morrow bring what dance it would.

'Letter for you, Judith,' said her sister late in the evening. 'One of the servants has been in to Aberfeldy and has brought out the bag.'

The letter bore the Edinburgh postmark. Judith opened it and read,—

'DEAR MISS LEMAISTRE,—It is a shame to intrude on your holiday with my sorrow, but to whom else can I go? Mother is dying—they say it is a matter of days—and I am alone in a Christian household. Dugald and I have kept hoping that she might be moved back to our own little home, but the doctor won't allow it. Every word they speak here seems a mockery. She is dying,—what else can I know?—and my fear is that she may ask some assurance from me before she passes out into the shadows. What am I to say?—Break her heart?—or tell the lie she may see to be a lie the moment she has passed through the veil?—

'I am full of perplexity, and my heart is as dark as the grave.— Your affectionate
GRIZEL.'

Judith sat for a long time with the letter open before her. The sun had passed over to the west again, making ready for the morrow of which she had hoped so much. She thought of all the morrow meant,—the luncheon on the moor, the meeting with Godfrey Carew, the companionship of all these nice people,—Mr. Thatcher, Dr. Heriot, Betty,—and the pixies—

'Frances,' she said hesitatingly, 'can you let me have the dog-cart for the early train?'

Mrs. Traquair's face fell. 'Why?'

'My friend, Mrs. Dalgleish, is dying, and her daughter is lonely and broken-hearted.'

'Oh, Judith, *must* you break up our little party?'

Judith nodded.

Frances sat for a long time, looking at her sister in silence. Many questions passed through her mind, but the religious question came uppermost.

'What will you say to comfort her?' she asked suggestively at last.

'Nothing,' said Judith desperately, with a break in her voice, 'but I have got a pair of human arms.'

CHAPTER XLVII

OPEN SESAME

MR. BLOUNT'S parlour-maid looked at Dalglish very kindly as she opened the door. 'Just step into the dining-room if you please, sir, and I'll tell Miss Dalglish you are here. They say there is no change this morning.'

He drew a breath of relief. He had brought a few things in a handbag in case the doctor should think it desirable for him to remain in the house. As he entered the familiar room, a girlish figure sprang from a big arm-chair. It was Rosie, her hair somewhat dishevelled, her face wet with tears.

'I did not hear you ring,' she said nervously. 'Forgive me. To think that I should be the one to give way! You see—' her lips quivered and she turned away her head, '—I have been learning in these months what we girls have missed in not having a mother.'

He pressed her hand gratefully. He too had been learning much in these months, and it seemed as if his very heart strings were bound up in that frail life upstairs.

Rosie left the room, and a few minutes later Grizel came in. There was no disorder in her appearance, but the restraint in her young face brought home to Dugald, far more relentlessly than Rosie's tears, the reality of the sorrow in store.

'She is dozing just now,' said Grizel, 'but it won't be for long. Sit down.'

He obeyed her mechanically, and the clock ticked through the dreary silence. A strange inertia took possession of him. When the door behind him opened, he did not even turn his head, but a moment later he saw Grizel spring to her feet, a warm colour rushing into her face. Who could it be that moved her so at a time like this?—the doctor?—Miss Lemaistre?—possibly—in some such final flicker of energy as one read about in books—the patient herself?

It was none of these. It was the last person on earth

whom Dagleish expected to see in that sober, conventional room. When at length he turned half listlessly towards the door, his heart stood still, and then resumed its course with a bound, for his eyes had fallen on the radiant figure of Ianthe Brooke!

'Give Mr. Blount my note,' she was saying very quietly to the maid, 'and tell him I am waiting.'

'Tell him I am waiting.' The senior deacon was not accustomed to be addressed in that queenly fashion. In the midst of a whirl of emotion, Dagleish found himself wondering how the old man would take it.

But there was farther surprise in store. Miss Brooke was moving forwards with outstretched hands,—not towards him. She had eyes only for Grizel.

'Why, it is the Lady of the Lambs!' she said. 'To think that I should meet you here!'

For a full minute the two women stood with clasped hands, remembering, wondering. Miss Brooke was the first to speak.

'How is your mother?'

'She is very ill,' said Grizel quietly, 'upstairs.' But her eyes said, 'She is dying.'

'*I am so grieved.*' With a gentle movement of her hands, Miss Brooke pressed the young girl back into the chair from which she had risen, and then seated herself,—as only Miss Brooke could seat herself, so easily, so beautifully, her draperies rippling about the chair and rug like summer foam on the rocks. She asked one or two sympathetic questions. Then, 'Did she find out—about—?'

'I don't think so,' said Grizel. 'She never said.'

'But you—?'

'Yes. *I know.*' With a sudden thought, Grizel turned towards Dugald. Were these two strangers after all? 'This,' she said shyly, 'is my brother.'

And that was how it came about,—the introduction for which Dugald would have gone well nigh to the gates of Hades—in Mr. Blount's comfortable dining-room, with Grizel—little Grizel—to pronounce the magic words.

His heart was beating as it had not beat since that night in Thatcher's room. Miss Brooke turned to him very kindly. 'I remember,' she said lightly, 'your chum.' Suddenly she paused. *Did she remember?* If so, she did not show it by so much as the quiver of a muscle. 'I seem to have seen

your face before,' she resumed tranquilly. Then with a rush of kindness, 'How I wish I could help you both!'

Grizel smiled bravely. 'You are thinking only of us,' she said, 'and you—you are thinner.'

'Oh, that's nothing. I have been worked to death. You may have heard something of it?'

Grizel nodded.

'Nearly a year without a break. How sick I am of it all! But now I am going off for the best holiday in my life—right off the tourist track—to a wonderful old forest in Portugal—'

She had been carried away by the pleasure of the prospect. Now she pulled herself up in sudden self-reproach. 'In fact this is one of *my* good times,' she said with a touching little air of apology—'and I am leaving you both in such trouble!'

If she had known them all her life, she could not have spoken more tenderly. Was she a great actress after all?—or did she only reveal on the stage the grace of a perfect woman?

At that moment the maid came to summon her, but, notwithstanding her message to him, she seemed to have no scruple at all about keeping Mr. Blount waiting.

'It isn't really Goodbye,' she said leisurely, as she held out her hands to them both at once, and looked from one to the other. 'If you see me in the street, hold up your hand; or, if you chance to be in the theatre, come round after the play and have a chat. We are friends, are we not?'

It was Open Sesame indeed. And for years Dugald had stood, as it were, before the solid rock. And Grizel, little Grizel, had worked the charm.

But now Miss Brooke was really going. Dugald sprang to the door and held it open, every fibre of his being instinct with chivalry.

When she was gone, he turned back very slowly. 'Why didn't you tell me?' he said in a low voice.

Grizel answered quite simply, pausing to think as she went along, as if she were reciting a lesson. 'It was just before your illness. . . . I met her on the hills, and took her home to Mother. When I was over in your den, I saw her photograph in your Bible. And you told me if I came upon your immortal soul, to put it aside and not tell you I had seen it. . . . And I didn't know whether that was your immortal soul or not. . . . But I did try to speak to you about her when you got well—and you wouldn't let me.'

There was a brief silence. 'The photograph was signed,' she said.

He nodded. 'One can manage that much.'

Mr. Blount was sitting in his library chair, reading the *Scotsman*, when the maid brought in the note. 'The lady is waiting, sir,' she said.

'The lady?' He puckered up his brows in a frown of perplexity, scrutinized the bold handwriting, and slowly opened the note.

'Ilanthe Brooke would be glad to see Mr. Blount for a few minutes on urgent business which concerns him nearly.'

The blood rushed up to the roots of his curly white hair. Should he see her? Certainly not. A woman who exhibited herself on the public boards!

'On urgent business.' He thought of Thatcher. But what could she say of Thatcher that would not make matters worse? The trouble was that she knew Thatcher at all.

'Tell her I can't see her,' he said severely.

'Yes, sir.' The well-trained maid turned to leave the room.

'Stop a minute!' he called; then, dropping his voice to a more confidential tone, 'What like is she?'

'Oh, sir,' said the maid, responding instantly to the change in him, 'she's lovely!'

Again the blood rushed up to his face. A lovely woman was not a thing to be lightly passed by. 'Most annoying of her' he said irritably, 'to come to my house like this—in a time of trouble too. Is she—is she—like other folk?'

'Quite, sir,' said the maid indignantly, 'but I never saw anybody the least like her.'

'Tut, tut, tut,' he said frowning. 'I can't possibly see her. Tell her I can't possibly see her!'

'Yes, sir.' Again the maid turned to go.

'Tell her to write,' he called out. 'I suppose her business can be put on paper like other people's?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Here!—Sarah!—Show her in,—and don't talk of this in the house.'

He rose from his chair, and mopped his forehead nervously. Then, on second thoughts, he sat down again. After all, the interview was not of his seeking, and one did not know what her business might be. It would have been taking a great risk to send her away.

It seemed long before she came in, and he had time to picture her entrance in divers ways. Would she come flaunting in rouge and feathers, or would her bold eye sink before his honest gaze? When she actually entered the room, he was deep in his *Scotsman* again, and seemed unaware of her approach.

'Good-morning,' she said quietly.

There was a perceptible pause, and then he laid the paper down.

'There is nothing more difficult to deal with,' he had said to Thatcher on a memorable occasion, 'than the dignity of people who are quite in the wrong.' Now a still graver problem confronted him—what attitude to adopt towards the apparent innocence of the wicked. Truly temptation appeared to young men in a subtler guise than even he had supposed. When Mr. Blount really looked at Ianthe Brooke, he felt himself for a moment rudderless on an unknown sea.

In any case now that she was here, there could be no reasonable doubt as to the next step. He rose to his feet.

'Be seated, ma'am,' he said with old-fashioned courtesy.

He would have liked to sit and look at her, as one looks at a picture, but she made that impossible. Apparently she was not greatly concerned to win his good opinion. It mattered comparatively little what he thought of her: the important point was what she thought of him. So she regarded him quite frankly for a minute before she spoke again.

'You have changed very little,' she said reflectively. 'I have always remembered your face as kind and honest. That is why I am here.'

'Remembered—my—face!'

She nodded. 'That is why I am here,' she repeated. 'The fact is I want to trust you, Mr. Blount, as I have never trusted any man in my life before.'

A deacon seven times dyed could have made little stand against this. 'My dear young lady,' said good Ralph Blount, 'I am afraid you are making a great mistake.'

'Perhaps I am,' she said, 'but not the mistake you mean. I have come to speak to you about my brother, John Thatcher.'

Slowly Mr. Blount rose to his feet, gazing now to his heart's content. 'You are not—'

'I am Naomi Thatcher.'

He raised his hand to his head, struggling to revive the memory of the past. He had seen so little of the Thatchers in former days. 'I remember,' he said at last, 'there was a girl. Didn't she—didn't she die in Germany?'

Miss Brooke laughed. 'She first knew what it was to live in Germany: but you are quite right. She died to her father, and God knows he died to her.' She rose impulsively to her feet. 'Oh, Mr. Blount, forget that you are a pillar of the church, and think what my life was—losing an adorable mother just when I needed her most, and falling into the hands of a severe narrow-minded Calvinistic old aunt.'

Mr. Blount still gazed at her, striving to put the pieces of the puzzle together. 'I remember,' he said vaguely again, 'it was a most unsuitable match. Your father had bitter cause to regret that he had married one who was not of the household of faith.'

Miss Brooke's lip curled as she seated herself once more. 'Well, he lost no time in getting rid of her,' she said bitterly. 'She was hard to kill, but she couldn't stand up against his treatment of her. Don't talk to me of my mother. I can't think of her sanely yet.'

'Your father is a good man,' said Mr. Blount severely.

'So John says; and that reminds me that I came to talk about John.'

'All in good time, all in good time,' said the senior deacon almost testily. 'I want to hear about you first.'

'There is so little to tell. From the moment my mother died, I was always in disgrace, my hand against every man's—you know. And I wore my aunt's gowns made over.' She paused. 'When I am dreadfully overworked, I dream of those gowns still.'

'Overworked?' he said, puzzled.

She nodded. 'You thought it was play? I wish you would try it!'

'My dear young lady!'

She smiled, thinking what a picturesque figure he would make in the proper *rôle*, and then she recollected herself.

'The one comfort in my life was little John, and they would try to keep us apart. Finally a member of my father's congregation took pity on me. She had a friend in the Midlands who wanted a nice bright girl to educate along with her own, and after a great deal of hesitation on my father's part, I was allowed to go. From the moment I got among

strangers I began to find my level. The world smiled at me, and I had nothing to do but to smile back. They were chapel folk, but oh, such nice inconsistent chapel folk! We danced, and acted charades, and wore pretty frocks.—You don't understand the weakness for pretty frocks?'

He thought of Rosie and looked judicial. 'It is a weakness good women have been known to share.'

'Ah,' she said, 'it is so disinterested of good women to stretch out a hand across the gulf here and there.'

The irony seemed to escape him. 'And then—?' he said suggestively.

'After a time the girls went to Germany, and I went too. I believe my father only consented because he knew it must come to bloodshed between my aunt and me, and he could not face the prospect of an inquest.'

'My dear young lady!'

'When the others returned to England I stayed on. I earned a little money by teaching English, and I just managed to escape starvation.'

'Poor child!'

She smiled, 'Ah, I knew you were kind.—Well in one of my times of comparative prosperity, an English theatrical company came to Berlin. They made a great hit, and I lost my heart to the leading lady,—as so many girls have since lost their hearts to me! I found out where she lived—very quietly, in rooms,—and I found out that she went for a drive every day at the same hour. So every day found me standing—poor little devotee!—on the pavement outside her rooms. I expected nothing, but I never did things by halves.'

'Poor child!' he said again.

'The third day she smiled. The fourth day she said, 'Jump in!' and I jumped in and drove off to fairyland.—Well, you can imagine the rest. I poured out my tale of woe. She was very kind, (the one fault I ever saw in her was that she was too kind!) and she helped me.'

Mr. Blount uttered a groan of dismay. It was as if he had seen the pit yawn at her feet.

'I did not tell my father till it was all settled, and I gave him no clue to my whereabouts. I told him I had changed my name, and would never tell a soul who I was. I have kept that promise—till to-day.' She sighed. 'His letter—written on receipt of mine—did not reach me till long after. I keep that letter still,—in case I should ever reproach myself

for my treatment of him. The conscience would be sick indeed which that letter could not cure.'

'But you kept in touch with your brother?'

She shook her head. 'Before writing to my father, I had let John know the name under which I meant to pass. But it was no use. Poor John! He was all Father had left, and the grim stern man turned to him a side of his nature he had never shown to any human being before. John saw him, as he thought, struck down, aged, and suffering through my fault. He had been taught to look on the stage and all belonging to it as Anathema. How could he judge the question on its merits? In a sort of tempest of loyalty to his father, he, too, solemnly cast me off, and promised to count me among the dead. As it happened, Mr. Thatcher was changing his pastorate at the time, and that made everything easy.'

Mr. Blount drew his chair a few inches nearer to her, as was his way when very much in earnest. 'My dear young lady,' he said, 'it is not too late. You must leave the stage and come back to us all. Your father is a good man. He will forgive——'

Miss Brooke did not draw away her chair as the Pastor had done. She made no indignant protest. She laughed,—a quiet little laugh of genuine amusement. The mood in which she had sought sanctuary with Mrs. Dalgleish was very far from her now. '*Forgive!*' she said. She laughed again. 'I see. You are like my father. When I tell you I went on the stage, my story has ended for you as completely as if I had given an account of my own funeral. There is nothing to look forward to but the resurrection. I wish you saw the letters I get. I think sometimes that half the women in England would give twenty years of their life for a success like mine.'

'But the price you have paid!'

'Well,' she said, 'and what price have I paid? I have worked hard and honestly, and so—I suppose—have you?'

'Tut, tut, tut!' This was really going too far. 'The surroundings—the temptations!'

Her face hardened. 'Yes,' she said, 'the temptations. Shall I tell you about them?'

Once more the colour rose to his honest face.

'Of course I was very poor and insignificant at first. It would have been nice to live in comfort instead of hardship;

but I don't call that temptation. It didn't come near enough. It was no more real than the temptation you sometimes feel perhaps to—to oversell—or whatever the Stock Exchange equivalent of stage temptations may be.'

He put on his eyeglass and looked at her sharply.

'But my time was bound to come,' she went on innocently. 'I got on. I had never been ugly, and by degrees, I suppose, I improved. I got parts that gave me a chance, and then at last it came—the one real temptation of a woman's life,—a temptation to which even "good women" on the safe side of the gulf, might well have succumbed.'

Mr. Blount was leaning forward eagerly.

'What do you suppose kept me "straight," as the pleasing expression goes? Not filial affection, certainly,—nor religion, for I had none. Not respect for the conventionalities, nor prudence,—for honestly I think it was the greatest folly of my life. Most of the talk about the marriage institution is balderdash. No. The one thing that held me back was the thought of the pain I should give to a pure and good man who loved me,—John Thatcher.'

'You had met him again?'

She nodded. 'I had stopped one day in the Park, to listen to an atheist tub-thumper. I had no susceptibilities; what he said seemed eminently reasonable; but he was a terrible specimen in himself,—hard as nails, rabbit-faced—an appalling combination of congenital defects.

'When he finished, he threw down the glove, so to speak, and it was taken up in a moment by a very young man,—such a contrast!—thoughtful, eager, nervous,—all fire and flame. It would have gone to one's heart to see a stranger fling himself against such rocks, and—it was John!'

The tears came into her eyes even now at the recollection, and Mr. Blount's old face was strangely moved.

Presently she went on. 'It wasn't a hopeful congregation. Nobody but myself seemed to see the tragedy of it. I know I cried, and, when at last he stepped down, I—I held out my hand. From that time John and I have been friends.'

'How long ago was it?'

'Four or five years.'

'And he came to see you act?'

She looked at him coldly. 'Never. How I wish he had! I think he saw the hand of God in our meeting, and he has been trying to settle matters with his conscience ever since.'

It was almost always I who sought him out. I was still comparatively obscure, and it was easy for us to meet; but every step I have gained has made this more difficult,—and now——

‘And now?’

The sound of his voice brought back to her the object for which she had come. ‘And now,’ she said with unexpected bitterness, ‘you are fulfilling the old prophecy. You are casting him out of the synagogue because he is too great and good for you to understand.’

Mr. Blount looked confused. In the interest of the sister’s story, he had practically overlooked the bearing of it all on the brother.

He coughed. ‘But he has only to explain.’

‘How can he explain? He considers himself bound by that insane promise to his father. And you must know enough of old Mr. Thatcher’s reputation in the denomination to know that he *never* gives in. It seems that his health is broken, and he has periods of fearful irritability and depression. John is his one stay and comfort. John sees him as no one else sees him—sees something grand in him and tender.’ She rose to her feet as if to gain control of her emotion. ‘All his life long,’ she said, ‘John’s faith in—in what I suppose you would call the spiritual world—has been almost terrible. It seems more obvious to him—’ she looked round the handsome room, ‘—than our solid comforts do to us. And now you are casting him out!’

‘But, my dear lady, how could we know?’

‘Know! Why should you know? Could you not have faith?’ The manifest intensity of her feeling went some way to excuse the directness of her speech. ‘You saw that he was more earnest, more devoted, more single-hearted, than you all. How could *he* know that *you* were not grasping and worldly—you with your wealth!’

His brow grew sterner. ‘If you wish me to put things right with the diaconate——?’

She smiled. ‘I! What is the diaconate to me?’ Then her tone softened. ‘My blood boiled,’ she said simply, ‘and I had to come. I *could not bear it*. I knew you were honest and kind, and—I trusted you. You see now all that is involved.’

She rose to go, and held out her hand.

‘But, my dear Miss—Miss Thatcher,’ he said, ‘I have listened to you. I must ask you before you go to allow me

a word. In the first place, there is no question of casting your brother out.'

'You don't word it so, I am sure.'

'We don't word it so, and we don't mean it so. In the second place—it is true he was compromised by his—his friendship with an actress; but there was something more. You may not know that he is reported to have—dealings—with the Church of Rome.'

She looked genuinely surprised and interested. 'No,' she said, 'I had not heard.' Her face grew thoughtful. 'Well, *he might do a great deal worse!* . . . I should love to see John a Cardinal.' Suddenly her eyes lighted up. 'Mr. Blount,' she cried, 'if John becomes a Catholic, the problem is solved. His father would never speak to him again, and I—what is it to me if John is heresy incarnate?'

'And what would become of your father?'

'The situation would be of his creating.'

'Has it ever occurred to you to ask why the Almighty put us together in families?'

She shook her head in uttermost perplexity. 'It has indeed!'

'You are a very merciless daughter!'

'Yes,' she said quietly. 'I confess I leave the Christian charity to John. He has enough for both.'

'Will you plead that at the Great Day?'

She longed to say flippantly, 'If I am there,' but she stopped just short of that. Instead, she laughed rather sadly. 'Such an old recollection comes back of how Father used to read *The Pilgrim's Progress* aloud on Sunday afternoons. Hard on him if one of his children were devoured by Giant Pope, and one by Giant Pagan!'

Shortly after she was gone, Rosie came into the room. To Mr. Blount's relief, she seemed to know nothing of his visitor. 'You look tired, Dad,' she said.

'I am tired to-day. Rosie, my dear, if you please, we won't have any more charades. I don't like them.'

She looked alarmed. Was his mind wandering? No, he seemed quite himself. So she sighed, and answered with all the finality of youth, 'If Mrs. Dagleish dies, Dad, I shall have done with amusements.'

He had positively forgotten that Mrs. Dagleish and her daughter were in the house.

CHAPTER XLVIII

GOING HOME

THE moment one entered the sick-room, one well-nigh forgot that she was dying. It seemed essentially the home of life, not death. It is true she had attacks of syncope at times, any one of which the doctor said might be the last; but, between the attacks, she seemed to hold the worn-out instrument together by sheer spiritual vitality, and to make it respond as of old. If she suffered, the suffering was as nought compared to what she had come through in the little country chapel long ago, when the glory had departed from Israel. *Non dolet, Pate.* There were about her none of the paraphernalia of dying. There was not any special reading, even of Psalms. Those about her were conscious only of a great growing sweetness, in which patience and sympathy seemed mere elements. So the talk in her room was natural, sometimes merry. They all felt instinctively that she wished things to go on just as if she were not on the eve of a great journey.

Dugald sat by the bedside, chatting of this and that.

'It is nice,' she said, 'to think you will so soon be a Master of Arts. You know all about our little income, dear, and you will be able to rub along. . . . I should like Grizel to study. I see that is what her heart is set on now.'

Dugald was amazed. He knew it too, but both brother and sister thought it had been kept such a secret from the Mother.

Her face brightened as if she were going to tell him something pleasant. 'I have been wondering how it was to be managed, and now I hope the way has opened up. I had a little windfall last week.'

'A windfall?'

'I have been wanting to tell you, and to-day I seem better

able to talk.' She spoke carefully, husbanding her breath. 'In your father's best days, he wrote a book. I thought it very beautiful, but it was a weird, uncanny thing, and I doubted the wisdom of giving it to the public. He sent it to two or three publishers, but they sent it back, and there it lay. Well, at last I took it out and read it again. I suppose I've gained wisdom myself, for it struck me very differently. When you were ill a year ago, I showed it to Dr. Heriot, and he was greatly taken with it.'

'Dr. Heriot!'

'Yes; I knew he would understand the responsibility I felt. He offered to show it to his uncle, the publisher. At the time I couldn't quite make up my mind. Publication is a great step! But at last I consented, and, just before he went away for his holiday, he brought me fifty pounds.'

'Fifty pounds!' In the traditions of the Dalgleish family, this was a windfall worth picking up.

'Yes.' She laid her hand caressingly on a shabby portfolio by her side. 'So, if you can manage to spare it out of the common fund, I should like Grizel to have it for her education.'

'How jolly!' he said. 'Classes are dearer for women than for us, but fifty pounds is a lot. And she's worth it, Mother. Miss Lemaistre thinks no end of Grizel. I don't know when I have known her take such a fancy to any one.'

'Miss Lemaistre is a good woman,—a good woman.'

'But, Mother, I am longing to see the book.'

'So you shall, dear. It is all in your hands now. You should have seen it before, but you're young, Dugald. I feared you would over persuade me, and the trust was mine.'

'Don't talk any more, dear,' he said, alarmed by the color of her face. 'Shall I read to you?'

'No, I think I'll sleep.' A wealth of love stole into eyes. 'Good night, my boy—my first-born!'

He did not go at once, and presently she laid her head on his shoulder. He lay very still lest he should rouse her, and very now and then he held his breath, to make sure that hers was going and coming.

The end came a few days later—very quiet. God's best saints might wish it to come to them. The children and Judith were with her in the room. Suddenly she asked them to raise her on the pillows. It was very quiet, but no

glowing sunset was visible, nothing to account for the kindling light in her face. She stretched out her arms.

'Dugald!' she said.

Dugald caught his breath. He knew he was not speaking to him. The wonder of her face grew and deepened, as if veil after veil were falling away from the sight before her. Then—with a name dearer than Dugald's on her lips—she fell back dead.

Half blind with tears, Judith closed the unseeing eyes; but there were no tears yet for the motherless boy and girl.

'Mother, mother!' cried Grizel, falling on her knees. 'They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.'

CHAPTER XLIX

TEMPTATION

It was the doctor who persuaded Mr. Blount to let Miss Lemaistre take Grizel home with her. He was a man of quick perceptions, and he interpreted his duties very liberally, as doctors are apt to do. The arrangement went sorely against the grain, for Rosie and her father had both grown warmly attached to their young visitor, and they naturally thought their own home the most suitable place for her under the circumstances. It was trying to flesh and blood to see how she clung to Miss Lemaistre.

But Grizel had made a brave fight for many months, and now the complex strain began to tell. When the first exaltation was over, her physical strength fell suddenly away, and no one ventured to dispute the medical decree.

Her radiant assurance at the moment of her mother's death had been an inspiration to Dugald, and her subsequent depression was more than he could bear.

'Did you mean what you said yesterday?' he asked her gravely.

'At the moment, yes. I seemed to see heaven opened. It was just as if all the events of the last year had been swept away.'

'And now?'

'Now,' said Grizel dully, 'I have remembered.'

Dugald's heart sank. Ianthe Brooke had spoken of her brother's spiritual insight as 'almost terrible.' Still more terrible to Dalgleish was the relentless intellectual honesty of his little sister.

It was well that Miss Lemaistre had that pair of human arms, for Grizel needed them sorely. When Dugald had seen the two friends into a cab, he felt that his sister, at least, was provided for.

‘Won’t you come with us?’ Judith said.

He shook his head. He felt rather jealous of their friendship, and bitterly, bitterly lonely.

He knew it was no fault of Judith’s that their delightful camaraderie had never quite fallen back on to the old lines. She had been only too willing, but he had felt himself estranged from her by his own folly. Of course he only made matters worse by keeping aloof, but—there is no reasoning about such things. The wind blows where it will.

When the funeral was over, his depression reached a climax. It was September still, but the day was cold, and the ground sodden with rain. Rosie was in tears, Mr. Blount talked unbearable platitudes, Grizel was too ill even to come to the house. Miss Brown was very kind, but she seemed ill and depressed. How the poor soul had aged!

Never in his life had Dugald been so helpless and alone. He was appalled that he did not feel as he ought to feel on such a day. He had ceased to realize his sorrow, though he tried hard to drive it into his mind. Even sorrow was joy when compared with this awful sense of life’s emptiness. Look where he might, he could see nothing to encourage, nothing to incite. His mother, Judith, Thatcher, Grizel,—all were lost to him. The session would not begin for another month. Heriot, Brothers, did not propose to bring out his father’s book till the spring. There was nothing now to keep him in Edinburgh, but neither was there anything to take him away. He lay on the floor of his room, and groaned in unspeakable desolation of spirit,—“Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.”

He thought of going over to the other flat and throwing himself on Judith’s mercy, but what was the good? Judith was thinking of Grizel, and Grizel was prostrate with grief. He wanted something to happen that would take him right out of himself, that would give life sufficient savour to enable a man to go on.

For a time the feeling was vague, but little by little it took the form of the old longing for Ianthe Brooke. That meeting at Mr. Blount’s had brought her so near to him again. He felt her gracious presence, the pressure of her hand, the tenderness of her voice. ‘How I wish I could help you both! We are friends; are we not?’ He was not in love any longer, oh, no! He knew full well she was out of his reach.

But her presence was so full of life and comfort. If only he could lie down at her feet and tell her all about it, he would ask nothing more, nothing ever any more!

'Right off the tourist track—a wonderful old forest in Portugal.' Pregnant words indeed for a lad whose whole experience of the world was confined to a tiny tract of Scotland. The sea he knew, mountains and moorland he knew, but forest was a word to conjure with. A clump of trees in the sunshine had often been enough to make his heart leap. He felt a sudden resentment against the inexorable laws of space. What was it, this space, after all? A real existence or a mere mode of subjective perception? Even philosophers were not agreed. Why should a man be bound by a paltry Here and There? . . . Well, Time at least was his in full measure—a calendar month. Pity one could not effect an exchange between Space and Time. . . And so one could! And so one could:—but for this hateful question of money. His lips quivered as he said to himself that no one had a right to question his actions any more. He was free, free as air, save for the weary restrictions of poverty. 'My Lady Poverty.' What nonsense it was! But at least St. Francis had his pilgrim's staff. Happy St. Francis!

Money. With the utmost economy, they had just enough, he and Grizel, to rub along. And this rubbing along, this daily jog-trot, the streets and the stairs and the class-rooms,—how sick he was of it all! And the end of it?— The ministry. Good Lord, the ministry!

After all, why the ministry? Assuredly Grizel would not urge it now, and his Mother— Ah, me, his Mother!

Money. He had little enough. Why should he spend that little on the things he valued less than nought? Why not take it in hand, and live one brief bright day, leaving the future to take care of itself? He could support himself by teaching even now, and what if he could not? Surely the muscles of a man could earn the day's wage.

He trembled with excitement. Why had he not thought of this before? It all seemed so simple now. A wonderful old forest in Portugal,—right off the tourist track. 'We are friends, are we not?'

But the money was all tied up. It came dribbling in at intervals that only served to punctuate his poverty. He had a pound or two in hand, nothing more. Miss Lemaistre would advance what he wanted,—but no, he could not go to

Miss Lemaistre. Suddenly he bethought himself of a money-lender's circular that had come into his hands a day or two before. His face burned with shame as he recalled a sentence it contained about anticipating legacies, or words to that effect. With feverish eagerness he searched through all his papers, but the circular was not there.

And then came the thought of Grizel's fifty pounds. It was hers, of course, but she was too ill to think of study now. She was not even strong enough to look over her mother's things. They lay at Mr. Blount's, those poor little possessions, waiting till some one should go and take them away. And among them was the shabby portfolio containing the fifty pounds.

Grizel would lend him the money, he felt sure, if she were told of its existence, but, poor child, she was sadly unnerved. She would not miss him if he went away, surrounded as she was by Miss Lemaistre's sisterly care; but the talk about it would be more than she could stand.

In the meantime she did not even know that the money was there. Of that he felt sure. And Mr. Blount did not know; his talk of the last few days had made that sufficiently clear. And Dr. Heriot was away for his autumn holiday—a busy man, Dr. Heriot. They would not see much of him now.

The servants at Mr. Blount's would never question his right to go up to the room in which he had spent so much of his time during the last few months. Had he not been almost an inmate of the house?

It would be so easy to refund what he borrowed. If necessary he could postpone his third year's work, and devote himself altogether to teaching,—if indeed it seemed worth while now to take his degree at all. And he would not spend the whole of the fifty pounds. Enough should remain in hand to pay Grizel's first year's fees.

If a sudden demand for the money arose? Well, what then? Had not his mother in a sense confided it to him? And would not the greater part of it remain in his hands? And, if the worst came to the worst, was not the money-lender always there?

The desire to get away was growing every moment: it was like a raging thirst. The great world was waiting—the wonderful old forest—and he cooped up in a dreary common stair!

Mr. Blount's front door was open. A woman in a dark veil stood on the threshold. Thankful to get in unobserved, Dugald slipped past her, and up the well-carpeted stair.

The sight of the familiar room unnerved him. The old dressing-gown still hung on the door, the sleeve in easy folds at the elbow, as if the dear arm were in it still. Dalgleish pressed it to his eyes and struggled to stem his tears.

'*You* would understand, wouldn't you, dear?' he said. For the dead are very tender in our recollection of them, and strangely, strangely ready to say the thing we want.

He knew just where to look for the keys,—in the little box on the dressing-table,—and he knew with which key to open the modest trunk. There it lay, the portfolio, right on the top. But it in its turn was locked, and no key on the ring was small enough to fit it. Was it really locked? With nervous fingers, he pushed the cheap fastening this way and that. Perhaps he exercised more force than he knew, for all at once the lock broke, and the well-filled case sprang open. He dared not trust himself to look at the letters and papers. His eye fell at once on a large clean white envelope faintly marked 'For Grizel,' and in it was the bundle of notes.

Strange, how like a thief he felt now that it had come to the point. It took all his self-possession to replace the portfolio, lock the trunk, and return the keys to the box. Then he watched his opportunity to go. The front door was closed, but he opened it noiselessly, and, with a great breath of relief, stepped out into the street.

To think of the wisdom, the experience, the sensation, bound up in that fifty pounds! For a few glorious weeks the world lay at his bidding. After that, the deluge!

For the first time it occurred to him that Portugal was a vague address, and that 'a wonderful old forest' was more suggestive than definite. What a fool he had been! 'Gilbert, London,' was voluminous detail in comparison. Suddenly the travel for which he had longed became as empty of meaning as everything else life could offer. But he did not mean to give in. He stood before a shop-window, thinking hard. Students came to Edinburgh University from all parts of the world, and he remembered there was a man lodging in the next street whose father was understood to have dealings with Oporto. He had met the man,—no great star in the matter of intellect; in fact he was coaching in Edinburgh at

this moment because he had failed in classics; but it might be possible to learn something from him now.

By good iuck he found the student at home, and of course the third year's man received a warm welcome. Dagleish related his experience of classes, examinations, and professors, wondering how much 'shop' decency required of him before he came to the point.

'I hear you have been in Portugal?' he ventured at last.

The young man smiled. 'Portugal is my home.'

'Fine country, I suppose?'

'Of course, I think so. Yes, a beautiful country.'

'Wooded?'

'A great deal of it is. Travelling down by train, one is tremendously struck by the contrast after the barren-looking stretches of Spain.'

'Any great forests?'

'Oh, yes. I suppose in some ways Bussaco is the most famous forest in the world.'

Bussaco! Dagleish felt solid ground beneath his feet. He had not forgotten his Peninsular War. 'Bussaco! Tell me about Bussaco. Why, it was there that the luck turned against Napoleon.'

The more the man talked, the more Dagleish became convinced that he had discovered what he wanted. It seemed quite too good to be true. It was all he could do to sit quietly, and round his visit decently off at the end.

He sped home like the wind. He had never crossed the Channel, nor even the Scottish Border, and his notions of foreign travel were more or less peculiar to himself. A large atlas was one of his assets in life; it was old-fashioned, but,—perhaps for that very reason,—it treated Bussaco with respect. Dagleish looked for an important town in the vicinity. Coimbra! That would do. What lover of history could fail to feel at home in Coimbra?

The next step was to scribble a note to his sister.

'MY DEAR GRIZEL,—I am feeling awfully done up, and must get a few days out of Edinburgh. I am glad to leave you in such good hands. Take care of yourself, and expect me when you see me.—Your affect. brother, D. D.'

That should be delivered after he was gone.

And now for the packing. His Gladstone bag would be

enough,—he pulled it from under the bed,—and his best grey suit would be the thing to travel in. Eagerly he opened his drawers, and threw on the floor the things he would require. Just when the confusion was at its height, the door opened and Mr. Blount was ushered in.

'I was passing the house,' said the senior deacon kindly, 'and I thought I would just look in to see how you and your sister were. She is very prostrate, poor thing,—quite natural, I am sure, quite natural. Pity she shouldn't be in a healthier part of the town. And you?' He looked round the room and his face fell. 'You are not going away?'

Dagleish retained sufficient presence of mind to offer his visitor a chair.

'I am going home,' he said. 'I have papers to look over, and a tramp across the moors will do me good.'

The lie came with appalling readiness. And, after all, *was* it a lie? Somehow the sight of Mr. Blount made the wonderful old forest seem like a fairy-tale. What if he gave up the whole mad scheme, and went down to the cottage after all?

Mr. Blount frowned. He had meant to be a father to these poor young things, but their behaviour to him, though becoming and respectful in the extreme, could not strictly be called filial. He had expected them to consult him at every step, and here they were calmly taking their lives into their own hands! Still—as a Christian man, he could not fail to appreciate the desire for solitude in times of great trouble. He was conscious that he could not have faced the cottage himself under the circumstances,—silence within, and the waste of moor without. His respect for young Dagleish grew.

'You have not stayed in the house all day, I hope?' he asked kindly.

Dagleish hesitated. Confound the old fellow and his questions! 'N—no,' he said. 'I went out for a turn.' It did not seem necessary to specify that he had 'turned' into Mr. Blount's house.

'That's right. Never stick indoors, whatever happens.' The senior deacon moved uneasily in his chair. 'You have a little money in hand?' he asked, almost nervously. It would have been a real pleasure to make things easy for the young folks, but would it have been the right thing to do? To Mr. Blount, Miss Lemaistre's open-handedness would

have seemed little short of a crime. He was thankful that young Dagleish took no advantage of the opening.

'A little,' said the young man quickly, as if he were more than willing to drop the subject.

'It will be a bit of a struggle—a bit of a struggle—for you and your sister, but there are worse schools than that of poverty. I think you can manage.'

'Oh, yes, we can manage.'

'When I was your age——'

Dagleish knew that he was in for it now. He sat with an air of respectful attention, waiting for the visitation to pass by.

'Shall we have a word of prayer?' said Mr. Blount.

And that was the last straw.

CHAPTER L

ENQUIRIES

DUGALD's note was delivered to his sister next morning at breakfast.

'I hope he is all right,' she said anxiously, passing the missive over to Judith.

'Oh, dear, yes! A little change will do him good.'

But Judith could not help wishing he had been less mysterious about it. As soon as breakfast was over, she went to the other flat to enquire.

Miss Brown was shivering over the fire. 'I'm no that weel,' she said in answer to Judith's enquiry. There were lines of pain in her face, but it was impossible to persuade her to be more explicit. 'Ay, the lad's awa. He was nayther to haud nor to bind! Ye canna wunner. For the last three months his spare time has been spent by dyin' bed, and I'm no ill-pleased to hae the house to mysel' for a day or two.'

She shivered again.

'I believe you are in pain,' said Judith. 'Let me get you a hot drink. You have whisky, I suppose?'

Miss Brown's voice broke into something between a laugh and a sob. 'Eh, lassie, dinna tempt me!' She hesitated and then went on, 'Ye'll no mind a nicht I came to see you when Mr. Dalgleish first went to the theayter?'

'I do indeed. We had a long talk.'

'I've never signed the pledge, but I made a vow at that time that I'd touch the stuff no more.' She paused.

'You don't mean to say you've kept it?'

'Barring ae nicht—a twelmonth syne—I've kept it.'

Judith thought ruefully of sundry minor vows of her own.

'Well,' she said lightly, 'all I can say is that you are quite too good to live,—particularly on this stair; and I won't have you slipping away while I am here to prevent it. You shall

go straight back to bed, and I'll make you a cup of tea, and Miss Jenkins shall bring you some of our dinner. No, don't argue,—there's a dear good woman. My mind is made up. While Mr. Dagleish is away, you are going to be taken care of.'

Of course she got her way. Miss Brown broke down pitifully when she gave in, and Judith was left to infer how long she must have been struggling on in silence. When she had made the patient comfortable in bed, she asked one question more.

'It can't have been easy—to hold out. How did you manage it?'

Miss Brown hesitated. 'There was aye the lad, ye ken, wi' his wild thochts and ways,—an' sae little I could do to help him! An' the Pastor had a sermon at the time——' she sighed and nestled wearily into the pillows, '—eh, I canna mind, but it was rael upliftin'.'

'Grizel, my child,' said Judith when she got back to her own home, 'did it ever occur to you that your righteousness was filthy rags?'

Grizel looked up amazed. Was Saul also among the prophets? 'Until the last year,' she said, 'it never occurred to me to think anything else.'

'Well, all I can say is that I have come round to your starting-point. It isn't the things that show that count. It's the work under-ground.'

Late that evening, when the two friends were comfortably ensconced by the fireside, Jenkins called Miss Lemaistre out of the room. 'Mrs. Munro wants to see you, ma'am,' she said, 'but I am not to let Miss Dagleish know she's here.'

Judith sighed with a little air of resignation. Contrary to all her hopes, Mrs. Munro was growing harder and rougher. Rumour said her husband was drinking himself to death, and—with all the detail of that sordid descent into Avernus constantly before her eyes—it was small wonder if the wife was failing to respond to more gracious influences. To-night she was in a state of great excitement.

'Such a to-do as there is in Mr. Blount's house!' she said. 'The housekeeper has just been to see me, and I thought I'd come straight and tell you.'

Judith wondered how a to-do at Mr. Blount's could possibly concern her, but she seated herself gravely to listen.

'The fact of the matter is there's been a robbery, and Mr. Blount is determined to get to the bottom of it. He has questioned every soul in the house, so the whole story—as you may say—is out.'

Judith drew down her brows in perplexity.

'It's like this,' said Mrs. Munro. 'It has come to Mr. Blount's ears that somebody handed Mrs. Dalgleish fifty pounds a few days before the dear lady's death, and that she locked it up in her portfolio, meaning it to be spent on the education of her daughter.—They say she's clever, Miss Grizel, for all she's so quiet?'

'Very,' said Judith, though 'clever' was not the adjective she would have chosen.

'Well, Mr. Blount wasn't best pleased that he hadn't heard of it sooner. He was sure the brother and sister would have mentioned it if they had known, for there had been a deal of talk, back and forward, about their future. He was executor, but he had taken for granted that the poor lady had no possessions in his house worth mentioning, so everything had been left just as it happened to be, till Miss Grizel could come and look over it. He's very particular, as you know, is Mr. Blount, and it worried him to think all that money might be left lying about. So he called Miss Rosie, and they went to the poor lady's room together. They looked in the wardrobe and the drawers, but the portfolio wasn't there. Then they turned to the trunk. It was locked, but lo and behold, a white ribbon was hanging out of it, and Miss Rosie was prepared to swear that no ribbon had been there when Miss Grizel left the house.

'What made Mr. Blount so keen about the matter was this. One of the servants was a silly Highland thing, and between the death and the funeral, she had worked on the feelings of the others with her superstitious fancies. 'The body didn't stiffen, she said, and when the body doesn't stiffen, there's aye another death in the house within the year. She knew a case where some one in perfect health had died the next day. They seem to have worked themselves into a state, and the kitchen-maid had fits of hysterics, and insisted on leaving the house at once.

'So Mr. Blount was thinking, What if she shammed the hysterics, and made off with the fifty pounds? He was outraged—as of course he would be—that the like of that could happen in his house,—and he so exact about money!

'Mr. Dalgleish was in the country, and his sister was ill, so they opened the trunk, and there on the top lay the portfolio open—with a broken lock—and no fifty pounds!'

'Well?' said Judith.

Her visitor's aspect changed. 'The rest, so far, is between you and me. I thought at one time that, after what has come and gone, no power on earth should take me to Mr. Blount's. But I'd have gone to a worse place than that to see Mrs. Dalgleish, bless her! The housekeeper is a friend of mine, and I wouldn't break with her though she is a member of the chapel, but I aye wore a thick veil, in case any of the family should speak.' She hesitated. 'You know—things have gone against us lately, and it was the dear lady's wish that I should have her warm cloak and one or two things of the kind. I was to call for them the day after the funeral. I didn't know the maid that opened the door. She said she had no orders, and asked me to wait. While I stood in the hall, who should come up the steps but Mr. Dalgleish. I wondered if he had been drinking, he looked so excited and queer. He kind of hesitated, and then he ran up the stair.'

'Yes,' said Judith quietly. 'He has almost lived in the house of late. It has been a second home.'

'After a few minutes,' went on her visitor, unheeding, 'the maid came back, and said Miss Dalgleish had been too ill to look over the things: the parcel should be sent to me. So I started for home, thinking nothing more about it. Before I got to the end of the street Mr. Dalgleish brushed past me, running like the wind!'

'Poor boy!' said Judith. 'This has been a great sorrow. I suppose he was quite unstrung.'

'That's all very well,' exclaimed Mrs. Munro harshly, 'but, if you had seen the lad as I did, you'd feel sure he'd been up to no good. I told you long ago he was going downhill, living in a fast set. Where does the money come from,—that's what I'd like to know? Oh, there's things going on in the chapel that no one would believe!'

'There may have been truth in your words at the time,' Judith said earnestly, 'but I assure you Mr. Dalgleish has been working gallantly since his illness. I have admired him often.' She paused to reflect. 'What I simply can't understand,' she broke out indignantly, 'is, how a man of the world like Mr. Blount could make such a fuss.'

'You can't let the grass grow under your feet when you're after stolen money. It's like seeking last year's snow.'

'But Mrs. Dalgleish may have put it elsewhere. There are a dozen ways in which she may have disposed of it within the last few days. Miss Dalgleish may know all about it.'

But she and Grizel had been making great plans, and she felt very sure that the young girl knew nothing about it.

'You've still to account for the ribbon and the broken lock.'

'I never have much faith in that kind of evidence.'

Mrs. Munro rose to her feet. 'I'm glad you take it like that,' she said. 'I never forget your kindness, and I thought I'd speak to you first. But of course a young woman's character is at stake, and I'm bound to tell what I know.'

Judith's heart beat faster. 'You don't mean to say that you are going to volunteer the information you have given me?'

'Why not? I'm sure you'll see it's my safest course, if only in self-defence. I was left alone in the hall. Who knows but what suspicion may fall on me? And there's little justice for a dog with a bad name.'

'Just wait a moment,' said Judith. 'I'll find out whether Miss Dalgleish knows anything about it.'

As a matter of fact she wanted to gain time. Taking the story in conjunction with the fact of Dugald's sudden departure, she could not but realize that the woman's suspicion might possibly be true. If so, she, Judith Lemaistre, was in great measure to blame. She ought to have insisted on seeing more of the boy. With a senseless sort of pride, she had left him to his moods, left him to 'come round,' and this was the result! Lonely and distraught, he had taken some wild, reckless step, of which it was impossible to foresee the consequences. Really at her time of life she might have had more sense. She ought to have brushed aside the flimsy barrier long ago.

What she wanted to think out now was this,—supposing the worst, supposing he had taken the money,—had Dalgleish done anything so very bad? He was his mother's heir, her next-of-kin. In the absence of special information, might he not be justified in considering that the money was his? The pity was that he had chosen such an unconventional way of taking it,—if he had taken it; and—greater pity by far!—that it should all have happened in Mr. Blount's house.

Judith had long since learned something of the senior deacon's kindness. The '*défaut de sa qualité*' seemed to be that he liked to taste every bit of it, so to speak,—to follow his action all the way, and to jot down so much profit and loss at the end of each transaction. She was just enough to admit that the very defect might seem a human and lovable one, if it did not happen to chafe against a sore spot.

But men of Mr. Blount's age ought not to be so impulsive. He had made the matter town talk, he had depicted the incident as a crime, and now if Dalgleish should prove to be involved—however excusably—he would find it difficult to live the scandal down.

At this stage of her reflections, she rejoined Mrs. Munro.

'Miss Dalgleish seems to be asleep,' she said with doubtful veracity, 'and I don't want to wake her. In the meantime—until we hear farther details—I do beg you to hold your peace. Probably there is some quite simple explanation, and the whole mystery is a mare's nest. In any case it seems to me so natural that Mr. Dalgleish should have felt himself drawn to the house, and then that he should have felt unable to stay. It is too cruel to make that a matter for suspicion. If you tell the story as you told it to me, you may do him an irreparable injury. And I am sure you can wish no harm to his mother's son.'

Mrs. Munro's face had clouded. 'If you ask it, that's enough,' she said. 'I won't breathe a word, unless I am driven to it in self-defence. All I can say is some folks have better luck than they deserve!'

Judith drew a great breath of relief, but her troubles were not yet at an end. Mrs. Munro had not been gone five minutes when a telegram was handed in. 'Dalgleish, c/o Brown.' After a minute's hesitation, Judith opened it. 'Please return immediately. Important business. Blount.' The message had been returned to Edinburgh from the telegraph office at Muirside. Clearly Mr. Blount was under the impression that Dalgleish had gone down to the old home, and clearly Mr. Blount was mistaken.

Where in the world was the boy? It was too tiresome of him to keep them in the dark like this. If he failed to appear, of course Mr. Blount would begin to think of him in connection with the missing money. Judith did not sleep much that night, and immediately after breakfast she made her way to Mr. Blount's.

The senior deacon received her with considerable dignity, but, little by little, he thawed, and told her much the same story as she had heard from Mrs. Munro. 'Most annoying,' he said. 'I can't believe that in my household—a Christian household—the servants should really put any faith in that superstitious nonsense. I spoke about it most seriously at family worship this morning. On the other hand, I can't put the police on the track of the girl without more proof than I've got. And here is Dr. Heriot's house shut up, and Dalgleish nowhere to be found!'

'Dr. Heriot!' said Judith bewildered.

'Yes. It is a strange story. It seems Dr. Heriot called on Mrs. Dalgleish just before he left Edinburgh, and handed her fifty pounds,—apparently on behalf of Heriot, Brothers.'

'Oh,' said Judith, 'I gathered some time ago that they were discussing a manuscript.'

'You did?' he said eagerly. 'Then you corroborate the story.'

She was annoyed with herself for volunteering information.

'Did Mrs. Dalgleish tell you about it?' she asked.

'No: she was very weak towards the end. The story really comes from Sarah, the parlour-maid, a most reliable woman. She was taking her turn to sit with Mrs. Dalgleish when Dr. Heriot called, and she went into the dressing-room in case she should be wanted. She left the door frankly ajar, and she heard all that passed. When she went back, she saw Mrs. Dalgleish put some bank-notes into her portfolio and lock them up. "Put that in the trunk, Sarah, please," she said. "There's money in it."

'Sarah did what she was asked, and thought no more about it. But when that silly girl went off in such a hurry, they all began to wonder whether she had gone empty-handed.'

'There are so many possible explanations,' said Judith. 'After hearing the conversation, don't you think your maid may have imagined that she saw the notes? There's great power in suggestion. Probably Dr. Heriot took the money away to bank or invest. You can do nothing until you have seen him.'

Mr. Blount frowned. 'It is most annoying that he and Dalgleish should both be out of reach.'

'Yes,' she said quietly, 'September's an awkward month in that respect.'

'Dugald said a tramp across the moors would do him

good, but I quite understood that he meant to sleep at home. You've no notion where he is?'

'None. I expect he simply tramped farther than he intended. He may be back at home again now.' She was glad it did not occur to Mr. Blount to ask if she knew Dr. Heriot's whereabouts. He would find out in time, no doubt. In the meantime, she had the start——

Always supposing that Dr. Heriot was still at Mrs. Traquair's. In any case it seemed to Judith that only one course was open to her. She must commit Grizel and Miss Brown to the care of the admirable Jenkins, and take the first train to Aberfeldy.

CHAPTER LI

FOLLOWING FEARLESSLY

'WHAT I want you to tell me,' said Dr. Heriot gently, 'is—just what you would like me to do?'

It was the hour for old Mrs. Traquair's siesta. Everyone else was on the moors, and these two had the house to themselves. They were sitting in the comfortable hall,—Dr. Heriot in a big arm-chair, Judith opposite him on a three legged stool. She was very much in earnest, leaning forward in an attitude characteristic of her, and it seemed to him that she had never before looked so attractive.

She was conscious of a certain impatience with his bigness and slowness.

'I want you to understand the position,' she said, forcing herself to speak quietly. 'Here is a private matter that concerns no one outside the family. Mrs. Dalgleish had not even mentioned the sum in her poor little will. Her son was her next-of-kin. But Mr. Blount comes blundering in, crying, "A theft, a theft!" and the idea is firmly impressed on everyone's mind that the person who took the notes must necessarily have been a thief.'

Dr. Heriot was looking at her very kindly.

'You are assuming that it was Mr. Dalgleish who took the money.'

She coloured. 'I haven't the smallest reason to think so,' she said hastily. 'I am supposing the worst. If he did, what he took was his own.'

Dr. Heriot hesitated before he replied. 'When Mrs. Dalgleish told me what she would like to do with the money, she wrote on the envelope, "For Grizel."'

Judith's face fell. 'Even so,' she said,—'the boy was distraught. He was devoted to his mother—I have never known any man speak of his mother as Mr. Dalgleish did.—He may

have had some perfectly good reason for taking the money, and he may come back with it any day—intact.'

'In that case—surely—there will be no great harm done.'

'Oh, yes, there will,—with this nonsense about the broken lock!' Her face was more bitter than her words, for she had a horrible conviction that the money would not be intact. 'It is so difficult for you to understand a creature like Mr. Dagleish,' she said impulsively. 'Perhaps you think with Mr. Blount that nothing can possibly excuse inexactness about money. But we are not all alike, and our temptations are different. Perhaps he has virtues that you and Mr. Blount have not.'

How slowly the smile came! but it was very bright before the doctor spoke.

'That seems to me more than probable.'

'I told you at the time of his illness that the boy had been having his fling; but that is a thing of the past. If he were going downhill, I should not mind so much, but he is struggling up gallantly.'

'Then are you sure you are right in trying to save him from the consequences of his actions?'

'If it had been a deliberate action——'

'Ah!' The doctor hesitated and went on almost apologetically. 'I have heard a wise man say that half the skill of the game lies in dealing with the actions that are not deliberate. The impulsive emotional nature is part of the Ego for which we are answerable.'

Judith was deep in thought. 'I believe as a rule in leaving people to the consequences of their actions. If we do it invariably, we lose all the good of human brotherhood. We might as well be alone on a desert island.'

'That's true,' he said, with obvious pleasure in the point she had scored.

'And I believe in the wholesome discipline of life as it happens to come; but on occasion the discipline may be so brutal that it crushes, instead of developing one's powers. If a man is climbing a cliff, every roughness, every obstacle, every precipitous rock, may serve to call forth his powers, but suppose an avalanche of stones comes sweeping down from above——?'

He did not answer for a minute or two.

'And you think in this special case that we are dealing, not with the superable obstacle, but with the avalanche?'

'I do,' she said quickly. 'You don't know what that chapel world is. The humiliation would kill him,—or, worse,—would rob him of all self-respect. And he is the sort of man to whom faith in himself is all-important.'

'Faith in *himself*?' said the doctor slowly.

Of course she understood, and there was a suggestion of defiance in her nod. It was so easy to throw all the responsibility on God.

'Faith in himself,' she repeated.

He shifted his position, and looked no longer at her, but across the hall to the sunny world outside, framed in the darkness of the doorway.

'Tell me what you want me to do,' he said again.

She felt that she had lost ground. If he was going to be unsympathetic, it would be very difficult to frame her request. She saw no merit in making a fetish of absolute veracity when some poor human being had to suffer for it. But his face did not look encouraging,—and she had fancied that he in his kindness would be so much easier to deal with than poor embittered Mrs. Munro!

There was a long silence.

'When do you go back to Edinburgh?' she said coldly at last.

'To-morrow.'

She started. 'To-morrow? Not really? Is that necessary?'

'Absolutely. I have an important operation the day after.'

'And shall you see Mr. Blount?'

'Not unless he looks me up.'

'And, if he does, what will you say?'

'That will depend on what he says.'

'You will answer his questions?'

Her unhappiness was reflected on his face. 'I don't see what else I can do, unless you show me good reason to the contrary.'

She rose from her seat and stood in front of him.

'Dr. Heriot,' she said with a frankness that did more for her cause than many arguments, 'I want to gain time. It is so dreadful to be in the dark like this. I don't know where the boy is, nor why he has gone. He may have gone mad, or committed suicide, for all I know.'

Dr. Heriot's face was very sympathetic, but it seemed to indicate that neither contingency struck him as likely.

'I just want to see him, and hear what he has got to say,

before greater mischief is done. Till I have seen him, I want to keep you and Mr. Blount apart.'

Dr. Heriot smiled in spite of himself. 'And when the young man has returned, sane and well, with the money spent,—I am only supposing a case,—he might possibly find a sympathetic friend to make good the deficiency, and explain to him what the charges are he will have to meet?'

'I don't know that at all,' said Judith flushing. 'In any case the burden would be on my conscience.'

He nodded. 'And my share in the matter would be on mine.'

She made an impatient movement. 'What is the good of our growing older, if we don't lend a hand to those younger than ourselves? It isn't as if he were not trying. He may have tried harder than some of you who succeed. God knows.'

'Yes,' he said, 'God knows.' The words seemed to bring him to an anchorage in his own view of the case.

'Oh,' she cried impulsively, 'what is the good of His knowing, if no one will express His knowledge? How can His knowing affect the world except through you and me? Do you expect a great hand to pierce the clouds?—a voice to speak?'

His face was very earnest. 'I am not clever enough to argue with you,' he said, 'but—I know what I have got to do—or not to do.' He stopped to think. 'No one of us can be called upon to work out the whole design. Our business is to abide by the laws we know.'

She knew the look on his face, and her heart sank. She had seen that look a year before, when he made up his mind to an operation that the great majority of his profession would think unwarrantable; she had seen it, more clearly by far, when he set out to tell a poor mother that her child had died in his hands. It was more than determination, that look, much more than resignation. It seemed to her rather an expression of response, as though one said,—'And may I follow fearlessly!'

'And all so mistaken!' she reflected. 'But no angel will speak, and no ram will be caught in the thicket. The poor boy will be offered up—'

'Yet not if I can prevent it! If only Dr. Heriot were not returning to Edinburgh so soon! . . . Can nothing be done to put a stop to that?'

She did not know that the big doctor was looking at her now very kindly. Even she, with all her preoccupation, could scarcely have misread the hunger in his eyes. 'She loves that boy,' he was thinking, 'though she may not know it. I have been a fool to imagine anything else.'

'Don't forget,' he said, with an effort to be cheerful, 'that we have been supposing the worst. Things may turn out better than even you have wished.'

She nodded, feeling it difficult to respond to his increased friendliness. 'In any case,' she said rather coldly, 'it was kind of you to give up your day on the moors.' She looked at her watch. 'I expect Frances may be home any minute.'

She turned to go upstairs, and he rose from his big chair. 'I am sorry,' he said simply.

She nodded again, unable to find suitable words. She did not wish to be ungracious, but what was the use of being sorry?

She shut herself into her room, and paced up and down. Clearly she must get back to Edinburgh as quickly as possible, and simply be on the look-out for any opportunity that might arise. This worry was beginning to assume giant proportions. Were matters really so bad?—or was she losing her sense of perspective? Could this be what Frances meant by a *crise nerveuse*? From girlhood Judith had held herself well in hand, but now there was mutiny in the camp, and all the riotous nerves were claiming their revenge.

'I will try to get an hour's sleep,' she thought with characteristic common sense. 'The last two nights have been enough to upset anybody.'

She threw herself on the bed, but sleep would not come. She was definitely conscious now of a dread of impending disaster far greater than the circumstances warranted. Her senses were alive to every impression. A far-off knocking, scarcely audible at first, grew louder and louder, till it seemed to impinge on a naked nerve. She was thankful when the bell summoned her downstairs.

Frances had exchanged her shooting tweeds for a black lace gown. She looked very fresh and dainty,—quite a taking picture, with the big doctor by her side and Betty on a low stool at her feet. The other ladies of the party were warming themselves by the log fire.

Judith took her cup of tea in silence. 'What is all that knocking, Frances?' she asked almost fretfully after a minute or two. 'It seems to have been going on for hours.'

FOLLOWING FEARLESSLY 355

Frances looked puzzled. 'Oh, that!' she said. 'The men are clearing away that rubbish. I was determined not to have the business put off any longer.'

Dr. Heriot looked up quickly. 'As I said before, I think you ought to have expert advice before you proceed. The wall is very old.'

Frances laughed. 'It is a great deal stronger than the modern building,' she said. 'It will stand till the crack of doom. Seriously, I am sure it is all right. I spoke to Henry about it, and he told me to give any order I chose.'

Dr. Heriot said no more, but a few minutes later he took his cap and went out. He was gone a long time, and at length Judith followed to see what was going on.

Two men were working away with their picks at a heap of stones and earth. Already they had cleared away a great deal, and they toiled on now with a dogged rhythmical motion as if they were machines. For a moment Judith looked in vain for Dr. Heriot, but presently he came in sight. The wall had long been broken away at one end, forming a sort of rude staircase. He sprang up this like a chamois, and made his way along the coping, looking carefully down as he went, as if to assure himself that the wall was plumb. What a figure he was, as he stood against the sky,—alert, muscular, well-poised, a picture of strength and energy.

Judith heard him call out a few directions, but she was too far off to hear the words. Suddenly the whole expression of his figure changed. 'Run! Run!' he shouted, and he laid himself face downward on the wall; but the men did not look up, and the steady rhythm went on.

'Run!' he called again, and Judith hastened forward, shouting as she went. A moment later, with a rush of horror, she saw what had happened. One of the great copestones had become dislodged, and, with the utmost power of his great muscles, he was keeping it from falling on the men below.

It can scarcely have been half a minute before the men heard and stood back, but the half minute was like an eternity. It changed all the values of Judith's life as completely as if she had been born again into another world. She remembered afterwards how she had sobbed, 'Let go! Let go!'—she remembered how all her trouble about Dalgleish shrank into less than nothingness; she remembered how the whole heart of her cried out that this thing must not be, and

how she seemed to see that it already *was*, in the very nature of things, life and this man being what they were.

'Let go!' she cried, but she knew he would not let go. She knew the look that was hidden beneath the physical anguish of his face. She knew he was 'following fearlessly.'

The men were safe, and she saw his muscles relax. He tried to raise himself, but the strain had been too great. A moment later he and the great copestone fell together to the ground.

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PART V



CHAPTER LII

THE JOURNEY

DALGLEISH had never seen such sunshine as that in which he stepped from the train at Coimbra. It saturated the woods, blazed back from the surface of the Mondego, and lent a mellow charm to the fresh October air. No wonder the works of man looked a trifle scorched and squalid. Wise folk were bound for the forest.

Travelling was a novelty to the young man, and the journey had been one long series of bewildering experiences. The constant change of scene, the Babel of strange tongues, the Custom House delays and formalities, the unexpected exigencies which had apparently never suggested themselves to the compilers of phrase-book and time-table, the prevailing uncertainty in the traveller's mind as to whether the people who spoke to him were railway officials, soldiers, or robbers, — all combined to form a phantasmagoria of sensation which left little room in his mind for thought. Through it all he never lost hold of the lust of freedom and adventure. 'Just bide your time,' he said when Conscience raised her voice. 'I am in for this now, and I mean to see it through. You and I can square accounts by and bye.'

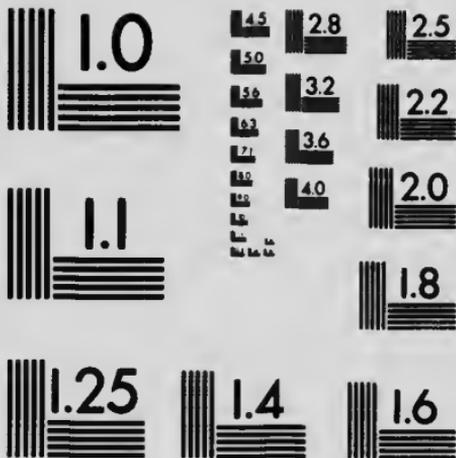
'Bussaco?' he said enquiringly to a bored-looking official in the dusty railway station.

The man shrugged his shoulders, and poured forth a flood of Portuguese to the effect that Dalglish had come too far, or travelled on the wrong line, or made some other unpardonable mistake.

Dalglish thought he had failed to make himself understood. 'Bussaco, Bussaco,' he repeated.

The official flung out his hands as if to indicate to the most rudimentary intelligence that it was a far cry to Loch Awe, and then turned in weary appeal to the loungers who





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were already beginning to gather round. They were keenly interested, of course, and it seemed to Dagleish that they all began to speak at once, jerking their fingers hither and thither in would-be explanatory fashion, and even poking him in the arm as if they thought that might be the mode of access to the intricacies of the foreign mind. From time to time they seized hold of one of their number who was reputed to have skill in languages, and placed him forcibly in the foreground to act as interpreter. One person so distinguished attempted a word or two in French; the others slunk to the background of the group in an access of profound humility.

At last a man in charge of passengers' luggage was brought in from outside. Notwithstanding the absence of any insignia of office, he appeared to be porter at one of the inns. He was somewhat bleary about the eyes, but, having known better days at an hotel in Oporto, he was fairly expert in the treatment of foreigners. This man contrived to explain that a party from his hotel were going to drive to Bussaco in the afternoon, and that the stranger had better come and arrange to go with them.

There was a voluble attempt on the part of the others to explain to Dagleish that it would be cheaper to go by train, but his dazed '*Não vos comprehendo*' baffled them. After all a man so ignorant as that might be thankful if he got to his destination at all. It was only right that he should pay for his inability to avail himself of any known tongue.

In the distance the historic old town on its wooded height had made a strong appeal to the imagination. Now that one actually walked the narrow, uneven streets, the effect was very different. Still there was enchantment in the strangeness of it, in the unlikeness of this particular form of squalor to any form of squalor one knew,—in the lounging groups, the picturesque rags, the weird monosyllables hurled at the plodding mules.

The inn was an unpretentious place, not over clean, but Dagleish was too hungry to be particular. He had lived on odds and ends ever since he left Edinburgh, and he fell to now with voracious appetite on the midday meal of stewed eel, pork chop, and lean chicken. He refused wine till he saw two young men in a corner pay for theirs in coppers, and then he cheerfully reconsidered his decision. The wine was

very rough—a light crude port, but it sent the blood tingling through his veins, as the blood of an adventurer should.

Picturesque—those two young men in the corner. They wore long black coats buttoned to the throat, and, on the table beside them, were small portfolios, hand-painted, or embroidered, with broad markers of brilliant ribbon,—one poppy-red, one dandelion-yellow,—ribbons rather suggestive of an honoured Family Bible to a Scotsman's mind. When the men rose to go out, Dalgleish saw that they wore no hats: their heads were protected only by a dense crop of short black hair.

'Students?' he said to the landlord.

The man nodded, and Dalgleish smiled rather patronizingly. What, he wondered, must a student be made of who carried his papers about in a case like that? Were the notes in those fancy needle-books worth anything at all? What did one learn anyhow at a Portuguese university?

'There is a great Festa to-day,' continued mine host in very broken English. 'A deputation comes from the Spanish Universities. If Monsieur goes up, he may see the procession.'

Dalgleish needed no second bidding. Even the landlord's rough indication of the route was superfluous, for groups of students from all directions were making their way up the cobble-paved hill to the University. They were all exactly alike,—black coats, black gowns, black hair, gorgeous ribbons: it seemed to Dalgleish that they were differentiated only by the gay designs on their portfolios. They passed by the Mercado, and he paused for a moment to look at the vegetables and other queer wares displayed. It was difficult to tell in what category some of the goods should be placed: they were unappetising as viands, yet too appetising to be mere drysaltery.

He pursued his way, thinking now of his own grey dignified University, with its sober quadrangle, among the northern streets. There was a quadrangle here too, but, among all the universities in Europe, it might have been difficult to find a greater contrast to the one he had in mind. This lay, broad and spacious, spreading out its palm-gardens to the southern sun; and, wherever one turned, there were students, chatting and laughing, strolling up and down, lounging against the parapets, or stretched half asleep on the warm white steps.

Passing the sunny enclosure, Dalgleish entered an open door on the left, and found himself in the University library with its quaint ormolu book-cases. He was so young, so keen, so obviously a student, that the librarian received him kindly, showed him a treasure or two, and even went with him through the corridors, allowing him to peep into the 'capping hall,' and the great room which contains the portraits of all the rectors from 1537. Finally he opened a door commanding a noble flight of steps that led into the quadrangle, and there he bade his visitor farewell.

The steps were black with assembled students, awaiting the arrival of the procession. Dalgleish wondered whether they would allow him to pass, but took good care that his face should express no hesitation. With gay determination he proceeded to make his way. He was greeted with a volley of jokes which he failed to understand, and some mild horse-play which needed no translating. Fortunately he had lived through the amenities of a rectorial election in Edinburgh, and he passed through the ordeal with a philosophic free-masonry which went far to win the hearts of his playful assailants.

In the narrow street there was a crowd of people, and the sound of fiddles and guitars drawing near. Women with flowers in their hands leaned from every window of the high houses, and every head was turned in the direction of the advancing procession.

On they came, with an almost dancing step, a gay band of students, full of the joy of life, their black gowns fastened on the shoulder with streaming ribbons, their cocked hats bright with coloured rosettes or flowers.

With amazing skill the women threw posies from the windows to the lads that pleased them best, and these in their turn would stop for a moment their scraping or twanging, and doff their picturesque hats to affix the *gage d'amour*.

'Arrant tomfoolery!' said Dalgleish, smiling in spite of himself.

As he spoke, he caught the eye of a dark-eyed girl at a window high above him. A moment later a scarlet flower shot over the heads of the procession into his very hands. And his straw hat was in the air and the flower at his lips before he well knew what he was about. 'Arrant tomfoolery' no, youth is very like youth, let a man seek it where he will.

It was late in the afternoon when the carriage actually started—a ramshackle old vehicle drawn by a pair of bony mules. Dalglish looked at the turn-out somewhat doubtfully, and was pleasantly surprised when the mules set off at a brisk, level trot. His fellow-travellers had been glad to give him the box seat. They were from Lisbon, and conversation was not attempted.

Away they sped on a fine broad road, among the swelling uplands that looked so rich and prosperous in the evening light,—through great stretches of olive wood, shimmering in grey and gold, and brightened here and there by a gorgeous patch of orange trees.

Orange grove—garden of olives,—a familiar combination enough to the child of the south; to Dalglish, the son of the north, it was a combination that seemed to span the whole gamut of life's mystery—the wreath of roses, and the crown of thorns.

Dusk was falling when they came in sight of the 'iron ridge' against the sky,—bold, rugged, uncompromising,—and, on its height, faintly discernible at first, then visible from far and near, a great stone cross.

'What is that?' said Dalglish.

'*Cruz Alta*,' said the driver curtly, as one might say 'The Eddystone Lighthouse,' but centuries before the lighthouse was even dreamed of, that cross had stood on its height.

Night came on quickly, but the moon had risen, and the gates gleamed white as the mules turned into the Sacred Forest and slowly breasted the hill. Great trees met in an arch high overhead. The moonlight fell on their trunks, and between these gaped a black gulf, as though the carriage were creeping up along the edge of a precipice. As they neared their destination, the avenue widened, but the cedars still towered above them, and round the base of the giant trunks, huge rough-hewn blocks gleamed eerily, like a row of tombstones.

Dalglish was very tired, and a sense of dread and horror came upon him. Were there not countless forests in Portugal? Ianthe Brooke was not here. He had come to a land of the dead.

Then, all in a moment, the mules were urged to a trot; there was a gleam of light, a wide-flung door, a voice that spoke a known tongue.

CHAPTER LIII

THE VALLEY OF TREE FERN

WITHIN doors, all was so bright and homelike that the terrors of the forest seemed like a dream. The wooden floors had the cheerful, sunshiny look that betokens constant scrubbing, and the rooms, though plain and bare, were in all essentials eminently comfortable. In the little *salle-à-manger* the table was ready laid,—a festive-looking board, with its decoration of fruit and flowers,—and the dinner that made its appearance was quite imposing in the variety of its courses, supported as these were by an apparently inexhaustible supply of that same light wine.

It was amazing to Dalgleish that, at this crisis of his life he should care for such things, should be able to eat and drink and sleep like other men; yet so it was, and he could not but be thankful. Did he not know all too well what it meant to eat his bread with tears, to sit the whole night through—?

What tormented him most was an occasional raging sense of his own insanity. By what right was he here? What if she should fail to recognize him?

His fellow-travellers were apparently men of some local importance, but the landlord belonged to that delightful class which has a weak corner in its heart for an Englishman. A wonderful man, that landlord, a tower of strength to the young and inexperienced, a man polyglot in tongue, encyclo-pædic in information.

'Ah, yes!' he said, 'it is no wonder you were impressed by those trees. Some of them are unrivalled in Europe. You see, in the days of yore, the navigators brought back rare seeds and plants, and many of them were planted out here. It is a great nursery which has been tended for over a thousand years by one religious order after another. At the Coimbra Gate there is a Papal Bull threatening with excommunication anyone who injures a tree.'

THE VALLEY OF TREE FERN 365

'How does it come about that we are admitted at all?'

'Oh, there are no religious orders in Portugal now. This is state property. The building was begun as a royal palace which is now being finished as an hotel.'

'Do you have many English people?' The question was natural enough, but, in putting it, Dalglish felt that he was staking his all.

'A good many officers come to see the battlefield and the monument. We have an English lady and gentleman here now.'

'*Damn the gentleman!*' Naturally Dalglish kept the imprecation to himself.

'And the lady has an English maid.'

Then they might not be together, the lady and the gentleman. But Dalglish could ask no more. Not for the world would he, or could he, have enquired the lady's name.

Worn out with fatigue, and drowsy with wine, he went to bed the moment dinner was over, and he slept as even youth is not often privileged to sleep.

When he woke the sun was high. It must be nearing noon. A cheerful sound of talk and laughter, of chipping, and chiselling, fell on his ear. Springing from bed, he went to the window and looked out.

The giant Portuguese cedars towered above the house, higher even than he had pictured them; but the daylight had robbed them of their terrors. They seemed now to stretch out great boughs, like protecting wings, and the foliage, that last night had been black as ink, was a tender golden green. Dalglish had never imagined trees so full of character and beauty; but at first he saw them only as a background, a screen. In front—the feature of the picture—surmounting a few worn steps, was a stone cross some fifteen feet high. It was clearly very old,—woven over with lichens,—and a dainty forest of ferns and grasses sprang from the crevices in its steps.

Could it be the *Cruz Alta*? No; that must be higher far; and the trees enclosed this like a shrine. It was as though one had said,—'*Seek where thou wilt, walk where thou wilt*—'

And the sunshine, the sunshine was in and over all, cresting each tuft of the cedars and forming a path of light up to the feet of the cross.

'But yes, yes. It stands at the entrance of the old monas-

tery,' said the landlord, as Dagleish drank his coffee standing. (It was not worth while to breakfast with the luncheon hour so near.) 'I will show you by and bye. The building is very old, but we have far more ancient remains than that. Bussaco has been sacred ground from the very dawn of the Christian era. And that is not the beginning,—we have a Roman camp—'

Dagleish was a listener in a thousand. 'I had no idea I was coming to a place like this,' he said with sparkling eyes. 'No? Then what induced you to come?'

The young man shrugged his shoulders, and extended the palms of his hands, as he had seen so many people do since he left home. It was a convenient and pregnant gesture of which his vocabulary had long stood in need.

A minute later they were out in the sunshine, Dagleish starting with hope and fear at every sound and shadow, inventing a dozen stories to account for his presence there.

The hotel stood in a clearing, surrounded on three sides by the forest. The fourth side lay open to the Atlantic, with miles of fertile country between. At this noonday hour the natives were returning from their work. Women, straight as a pine, carried huge earthen jars of water on their heads, and a rough prehistoric-looking cart, drawn by a pair of great gentle oxen, had paused to rest near the door.

'I feel as if I had stepped back into the middle ages,' said Dagleish.

'That's it,' said the landlord, 'that's it. At Bussaco we are of the thirteenth century still.'

He led the way into the cloisters as he spoke. They were clearly very old, adorned with crude mosaics, and paintings of no artistic value. With pride the landlord pointed out the cell in which Wellington had slept the night before the battle.

'Ah, yes,' he said, 'the Portuguese and the English are bound by a common cause—by no common cause.' He smiled at his little joke. 'Precisely at Bussaco began that series of reverses which five years later had its epilogue at St. Helena.'

What a gift of utterance the man had! Dagleish could almost have fancied himself back at the Debating Society. 'Who lives there now?' he asked, regarding, with something of a shudder, the dirt and confusion in the tiny room that must once have been so spotless.

THE VALLEY OF TREE FERN 367

'One of the workpeople. We have a great staff employed on the new hotel.' And then indeed the landlord waxed eloquent, for the new hotel raised its head like a palace from fairy-land,—a bewildering tissue of arches and groins and lovely audacious carving, as if the golden-white stone had blossomed into flower at the touch of a magician's wand.

Dalgleish was intoxicated with the beauty of it all. 'If I had sought the wide world over' he thought, 'I could have found no fitter place to meet her.'

'And now,' said mine host, 'lunch is ready.'

Dalgleish felt his heart leap into his throat.

'The English gentleman has gone off for the day. The lady may be here or not—this is—a little—uncertain—in her hours.' But the smile on the landlady's face was very kindly and indulgent. So, surely, she would smile—a man of middle age—who was thinking of the lady Brooke! Dalgleish drank in another great draught of hope.

Yet he dreaded meeting her now, among all the gaping strangers. Surely God in His goodness would grant that he might see her first alone.

And he did see her first alone,—late in the afternoon. For hours he had wandered through the forest, seeking, seeking. He had come upon numberless chapels and hermitages,—quaint little buildings of stone, with rough mosaics and carved inscriptions. They had no inherent beauty, these homely shrines, but the forest had taken them into her motherly arms, and had claimed them as children of her own. She had woven them round with festoons and draperies of dainty-leaved ivy and ferns and moss, as though she were trying to make of each a fairer picture than the last.

But it was not among those that he found Ianthe Brooke.

It was down at the foot of the hill in the more modern part of the domain. He had crossed a brawling torrent on a rustic bridge, and all at once he found himself in the Valley of Tree Fern.

Tall oaks made a golden dome high overhead, and through it the sunshine filtered down on the brilliant feathery green of the ferns, the soft pink and blue of the hydrangeas, the pale yellow leaves of the tulip tree. Truly an enchanted palace, and there on a rough wooden bench sat the lady of his dreams.

Dalgleish forgot that there was any need for speech, forgot

even his besetting fear that she might not recognize him. He took his hat from his head, and walked up to her.

She turned very slowly, and looked at the intruder with challenge in her eyes; but the challenge gave way gradually to a look of recognition in which there was no suggestion of welcome.

His lip trembled like a child's. 'You said we were friends.'

She was not the woman to withstand a greeting like that.

'And so we are,' she said kindly. 'Sit down.'

She made a little motion with her hand, and he looked at it with hungry eyes, as he dropped on the warm red path at her feet. Was it not the one hand in the world that bore the print of his kiss?

But she drew it from him quietly, and touched the crease on his sleeve. 'Poor boy,' she said, 'I'm afraid your mother is dead.'

He nodded.

'Is your sister here?'

'No.'

'And what brought you?'

'I followed you,' he said breathlessly. 'I'd have gone to the world's end. Oh, I know I can be nothing to you. Does not the sun shine on the poorest weed? Just give me an hour—I have waited so long!—one little hour out of your life. I am famished for want of it.'

She was used to expressions of love, but scarcely to love like this. The boy was ashy pale, and his whole frame seemed to thrill like a reed in the hands of a musician. It was too painfully real.

'I am afraid you are very foolish,' she said sadly, 'but you shall have your hour. Tell me all about it.' She held out her hand quite frankly this time, and, clasping it as one might clasp a sacred thing, he pressed it to his face in a mute passion of caress. Of course he could not speak. There was no need for words any more. If only he might die, lying there at her feet, with her hand pressed to his lips!

She was very patient, but by degrees she made him speak, and he stammered out the whole poor little story,—from the moment when she toyed with the flower in the sham conservatory to this hour of consummation among the live tree ferns. She was very kind, very tender, with flashes of raillery that did not hurt.

'From that hour to this,' he said, 'you have been my

THE VALLEY OF TREE FERN 369

world. You have made all poetry real. I have never seen a lovely thing,—a sunset, a flower, a beautiful thought,—that has not meant you.'

There was a long silence. 'Poor boy!' she said again. . . . 'Do you think you are the only one? Have not the rest of us to suffer too?'

'You think I have not tried? If you knew——!'

'Oh yes,' she said simply, 'you have tried. We have to keep sane somehow.'

And then, in her generosity, she told him something of her own life,—just enough to put that audacious, recurrent spirit of hope at rest for ever. Poor, beautiful Ianthe Brooke! Was it possible that anything she deigned to want, should be hung too high for those dainty hands to reach?

She broke off abruptly. 'It must have cost you a lot of money to come,' she suggested.

'God knows how I got it,—stole it, I believe. It doesn't matter now. I haven't murdered anybody to get here, but I shouldn't greatly care if I had.'

The silence was very long after that. Miss Brooke was back in the porch of that quaint little cottage in the Border Country. She felt again the almost angelic presence of this boy's mother. 'We have little enough to give in exchange for your "Peace to this house!"' Peace!—and what had she brought but confusion?

'When I was touring in America,' she began prosaically, 'some one took me to hear a famous Swami, who was lecturing on Hindu religion in a way that drew all fashionable New York to sit at his feet. I don't think he did me much good—I am wanting in the religious instinct: my forbears exhausted the supply—but one story he told I have never forgotten. It was about a man who loved a Hindu girl. One night when he set out to see her, the stars in their courses fought against him. He swam floods, he moved mountains, he braved beasts and robbers. When he reached her home, the window was high and no ladder to be found. Suddenly he saw a stout rope hanging from the casement, placed there as if by magic to assist him. He seized it roughly, and not till he reached the sill did he see that the rope was a ghastly snake.'

'But he reached her?'

'He reached her, and told her of his journey, but what do you think she said? "I dare not accept a love like that.'

It frightens me. No woman on earth is worth it. You ought to be seeking God."

Miss Brooke laughed apologetically. 'There,' she said, 'that is the first religious tale I ever told in my life. You may take it for what it is worth. The man became a great saint.'

She paused. 'What I like about the story is that he remained a benighted heathen to the end.'

'Yes,' said Dalgleish quite gravely.

There was another silence. The shadows of the trees had grown very long. Dalgleish lay half concealed, but his lady was all in the light.

Suddenly there was a step on the path behind him, and the sound of a familiar voice.

'I have just had a letter from our father, Naomi. I fear he is very unhappy.'

Dalgleish turned slowly, and found himself face to face with his one-time hero, Thatcher.

CHAPTER LIV

THE SACRED FOREST

OF course the woman was the first to find voice. She read the quick succession of surprise, indignation, scorn, on her brother's face.

'I suppose you don't know, John,' she said quietly, 'that Mr. Dalgleish and I are old friends. We met by accident one day in your rooms, and—quite independently of that—his mother and sister were very kind to me once when I was in deep waters.'

Thatcher's face was stern. 'Why didn't you tell me?'

She had risen to her feet, and now she took hold of the lapels of his coat with a pretty, caressing gesture.

'You had forbidden me to come to your rooms,' she said simply, 'and you were so dreadfully, dreadfully stern, John. I believe I told Mr. Dalgleish not to speak of it either, and no doubt that made matters a great deal worse. Well!' Her face grew hard. 'It is not I who am responsible for all this miserable tangle.'

She turned to Dalgleish. 'You had better tell him all about it,' she said. 'I am going back to the house for my afternoon rest.' Again she touched the crape on his sleeve, and looked at her brother appealingly, as she left the two men together.

Thatcher's face showed little sign of softening, but at that moment Dalgleish fortunately did not realize that he was called upon for an explanation.

'Thatcher, Thatcher,' he cried. 'If I had but known you were brother and sister! What I have lost! What I have lost!'

Thatcher cut him short. Did the boy suppose that he—Naomi's brother—would have encouraged this ridiculous 'friendship'? 'What have you lost?' he said curtly.

But there was no mistaking the return of the old boyish

loyalty and devotion. As Dalglish read again with unbiassed eyes the fine strong lines in Thatcher's face, his sense of deprivation seemed more than he could bear. For the moment he forgot even Thatcher's sister. 'You!' he cried bitterly.

And then he told the story again from another point of view. When he had finished, Thatcher sat with eyes fixed on the ground, fitting together the pieces of the puzzle.

'You mean to say you thought——'

'No, no!' cried Dalglish, 'I did not think, but I just seemed to be thrown out of gear with all my previous world.' Thatcher nodded slowly. The pity of it, the pity of it!

It was disarming to hear in what the 'old friendship' consisted. For the rest, Thatcher had learned to 'deal not roughly with him that is tempted.' He was very kind, and the hour that followed went some way to make amends for all the previous waste.

'How did you come by the money for all this?' he asked at last.

Dalglish recoiled. 'Don't ask me,' he pleaded. 'No doubt I shall end by telling you, but I must keep my mind off it now.' The subject seemed to him like a red-hot point that he had learned to avoid. 'I have so much to think of!' he added pathetically.

Ianthe Brooke, watching from the window, saw the two men approach the house in friendly chat, her brother's hand on Dalglish's shoulder.

'*Gott sei Dan!*' she said to herself. 'But he's a brute all the same to break in on my honeymoon with John!'

Who does not know that a party of three can be one of the happiest combinations in the world? Dalglish, at least, was destined to discover the fact in the course of the days that followed. It was good to feel so humble, so ashamed of his suspicions, so free from the sting of bitterness that had poisoned years of his life. He must suffer indeed, and renounce, but that was the lot of all. The suffering lay in the nature of things, and his friends understood.

He had always been lucky in his friends, but never more so than now, though he seemed to see little of either, so absorbed were they in a vivid life of their own. Ianthe Brooke had been sacred to him from the first. As Naomi Thatcher she acquired a new sacredness altogether. The

brother and sister between them made a strange appeal to all that was finest and most idealistic in his nature.

Every meeting with one or both was a fresh delight and surprise. There were talks never-to-be-forgotten—on philosophy, art, human life—and sometimes in the evening Naomi would recite or read aloud, while Dalglish listened adoring, and Thatcher listened amazed. Could this be his own flesh and blood? He had scarcely asked himself before what qualities went to make the success of an actress. Beauty, grace, charm of person and voice, of course; but this artistic insight, this grip of all the philosophies that could express themselves in poetic form—took him wholly by surprise. Sentiment, Naomi kept at arm's length. If the eyes of her boy-worshipper became too eloquent, she would reverse the position, make them read aloud while she criticized their elocution, and contrasted scathingly the methods of Church and Stage. Her brother, like herself, had a fine natural voice production. Dalglish picked up more wisdom than he knew. At the moment he was conscious of nothing but the bliss of sitting at her feet.

It was Naomi who told him something of the strange relations between her and her brother.

'Strictly speaking, he is breaking his precious vow by being here with me now,' she said. 'It was not his fault in the first instance. He told me where he was going, and I simply came too. I hadn't even the comfort of his escort on the journey. Not that John shines in the capacity of escort! And travelling third-class is one of his incidental penances. Personally I should prefer a hair-shirt. At least you get that to yourself. —I believe in this place of all places, he would have preferred to be alone, but I am very glad that those ghostly old monks are not getting things all their own way. Living here, you would never guess that the Roman Church had ever produced anything so nice and wicked as a Cardinal!—At all events, here we are together. Incredible, but true. I fancy John must have taken the direction of some wise and good man,—whom the saints reward! But he hasn't had much practice in submission yet, and I go to bed every night with a horrible fear that the morning may find him gone, and a neatly-penned note left behind him to say, "Conscience, my dear Naomi!"

'Poor John! He is between two fires. You see our father is in a fearfully precarious state—mentally; and I am

in a fearfully precarious state—morally! And we have both contrived to convince poor John that our salvation depends on him. It is like being torn by wild horses.'

Dagleish listened, with heart afame, and felt that he would give his right hand never to have failed in loyalty to his leader. What a course Thatcher's had been when one read it aright! Straight and simple, high on the heights. Yet he too must have been tempted like other men. He said something of the kind to his friend one day, but Thatcher refused to accept any credit.

'I don't know that I have been tempted like other men,' he said dryly. 'My fight seems mainly to have been on another field.'

'I suppose it comes to much the same thing,' Dagleish replied moodily. 'Old Blount would say, "If you fill a sack full of peas, you may defy Satan to fill it full of beans."''

For the rest, Dagleish's whole nature leapt out in response to the stimulus of the place. Elsewhere the old exists as a lovely fossil in the new. At Bussaco the old was alive; nothing had been touched; the names of the monks who officiated at the last mass still hung—inscribed on little bone slabs—in the quaint wooden rack on the chapel wall.

There were wider interests, too, to appeal to his love of history. Had not the Roman, the Goth, the Moor, all left their mark upon the place? He made great excursions on foot, and returned worn-out with fatigue; he explored the caves that in stormy days had been the refuge of the persecuted and pursued.

Thatcher could seldom be persuaded to join in these excursions. His one desire was to steep his mind in the atmosphere of the Sacred Forest. Already he knew and loved every inch of it. He saw and heard the labour and the prayers that had gone to make the place what it was. He pictured the silent monks building the chapels and shrines, paving a *Via Dolorosa* more impressive and beautiful than any other in the world. And he loved to think of them when the work of the day was done, sitting at rest in the great space outside the Coimbra gate, watching the sun go down on that stretch of noble landscape.

'It amuses me to see you young men absorbed in your visions and dreams,' his sister would say, with motherly contempt and admiration. 'One would think there was no

practical side to life at all. *Some* of us have serious business on hand, and mine is the recovery of my lost complexion.'

So she lay in bed till noon, with windows open wide, and indulged herself to the full in the unaccustomed luxury of retiring early.

On Sunday morning, with a great sense of adventure, Dagleish went to Mass. He had never—to quote the words of the old deacon—'assisted at this—this function,' before; and his heart beat with anticipation. The chapel was a bare little building of no architecture at all, the end opposite the altar being quaintly labelled, *Hic est Chorus*. A number of peasants had come in from the sparsely-peopled country,—the women decked with gay shawls and kerchiefs in honour of the day,—and one saw from their whole bearing how real to them still was the traditional sanctity of the place.

They brought no books, and it was incredible that they should understand much of the service. It seemed to Dagleish that for them the whole elaborate ceremony resolved itself into just this,—

'Sursum corda.'

'Habemus ad Dominum.'

And what more after all could one ask? Accustomed as he was to the luxury of a prosperous nonconformist church, he was amazed to see how long these people were able to kneel on the bare wood or stone. The doors into the cloisters stood open, and those who came late were content to remain there in the shadow.

As Dagleish's eyes roamed about, they fell at last upon Thatcher. He had seen his friend once before in a Roman Catholic church, and had thought him 'fairly keen,' but those were not the words he would have chosen to describe Thatcher's attitude now. It was ridiculous to talk any more of probabilities,—of 'joining the Church of Rome,' 'becoming a Catholic.' No one who watched him to-day, as he took part in the Mass, could fail to see that Thatcher *was* a Catholic.

And a great sense of envy came upon Dagleish as he realized the fact. He must go back to the old life, and beat his music out as best he could. It seemed to him in his ignorance as if Thatcher were cutting his bonds with one sweep, and stepping, a free man, into another world. No

chapel for him any more, no enquiries, no discipline, no explanations. Happy Thatcher!

Truly the heart knoweth its own bitterness.

One evening, after a heavy shower, the two men strolled out of the house together. Thatcher led the way, as if at random, and the path soon became so narrow that it was impossible to walk abreast. Each was deep in his own thoughts.

Suddenly they came upon the Hermitage of St. John. It had become so completely a part of the forest that Dalglish did not even see it at first. The steep flight of steps cut in the rock was concealed in an unimaginable wealth of moss and fern. Dalglish had seen the maidenhair before; he had even discovered stray tufts of it as a 'find' in unpromising dykes at home; but he had never dreamed of maidenhair like this. It tossed out a wealth of luxuriant sprays, brilliantly green, dripping with rain, clothing the precipitous ascent from top to bottom,—a very cataract of verdure.

Thatcher led the way with the certainty of one who is at home in his surroundings, and they emerged in the wonderful eyrie at the top of the cliff, with its chapel and living-room, and tiny courtyard all overrun with spendthrift vegetation.

Dalglish seated himself on the parapet of the well. 'Happy man!' he said.

Thatcher vouchsafed no reply.

'If life were as simple as that now-a-days!'

Still the older man declined to commit himself.

'For Heaven's sake, Thatcher, talk to me. Tell me by what chain of thought it is possible for an educated man in these days to join the Church of Rome.'

It was impossible to refuse such an appeal.

'In everything else,' said Thatcher half reluctantly, 'you admit the debt we owe to the past. In science you would not so much as dream of beginning anew for yourself, and yet in religion you have not the smallest scruple about starting afresh with your own foggy lens. "The moral and social world is not an open country; it is already mapped and marked out; it has its roads. . . . Forms of religion are facts; they have each their history. They existed before you were born, and will survive you. You must choose; you cannot make."'

And then all at once he took fire. Godfrey Carew, Father

Bernard, the Prior, the fruits of much careful reading—all that was wisest and best in the Catholic Church—came to Dagleish through the fine medium of Thatcher's temperament. The rigidity of Rome seemed to disappear in the saving conception of *umbræ et imagines*. Were not these dogmas of ours but symbols at the best? The ideas of Development, of Relativity, of Assent, seemed to shed a reconciling light on much at which the natural man rebelled.

Dagleish was taken by surprise. He had expected a clever defence of the old untenable positions, but Thatcher attempted nothing of that. He presented the whole question from the modern standpoint. He brought it into line with a thinker's view of life. 'Rome asks us,' he said in effect, 'to accept far less than the Protestants do. Believe in the development of doctrine—in a visible Church. Interpret in this way the coming of the Holy Ghost,—and all the rest follows.'

Dagleish loved the man, and longed to accept his teaching. He went to bed in a fervour of enthusiasm, and lay awake half the night, rejoicing to picture himself a fool for Christ's sake.

The morning brought a measure of disillusionment, of course; but the sight of Thatcher's worn, ascetic face, and the spiritual atmosphere of the forest, renewed their charm. There were long conversations day after day. The waves flowed and ebbed, but each night saw the tide lie higher on the beach. Dagleish seemed, as it were, possessed by a great glow of spiritual life. It was a joy to kneel before the shrines, and to feel himself at one with the great Church Visible.

One afternoon he walked out alone. The day was overcast, and he turned his steps towards the *Costa do Sol*, in search of what sun there was. With a great leap of the heart, he came upon Naomi Thatcher seated on a fallen tree.

'I am not sure,' she said, 'that I don't like this view better than any other in the whole place.'

It certainly was very fine. From the mountains high on the left, a great gorge rent the forest asunder, and far down through the trees below their feet they could hear the sound of rushing water. Beyond the gorge, the wooded western ridge was crowned by the steeple of Caiaphas,—a cross mounted on a rough stone building that was little more than a cairn. The evening sun above it was lost in cloud, but

a great shaft of pale gold light struck down on the cross in the midst of a landscape of gloom.

Naomi sighed, and motioned to him to take a place by her side. 'John has been telling me about a friend of his who set out to show him the pixies in a Perthshire glen. I would defy her to find any pixies here! Those brutal old monks might have stopped short at exorcising demons.'

'I don't suppose they *meant* to exorcise the pixies,' said Dugald seriously.

'Didn't even see them, probably; but the mischief is done. The very birds chirp Credos, and warble Paternosters. Last night I heard a frog croak out a whole Confiteor.' Dalglish laughed, but clearly she was in one of her pensive moods. 'I wish,' she said, suddenly, 'you would tell me more about your mother.'

It was not easy at first, but, little by little, the words came. He told the story as he had told it to Judith long ago, and so on to the end.

'How beautiful of her,' said Naomi, 'to leave you such a memory!' She thought again of the sanctuary she had found in that sweet cottage home, of her meeting with Grizel on the hill, and she longed to say something to comfort him.

She raised her eyes to the cross. "To him that overcometh," she murmured, "will I give to walk with Me in white."

The words at the moment were scarcely more to her, perhaps, than a mere bit of flotsam on the tide of memory, but Dugald turned to her amazed. How strange, how strange, that she should have said just that!

'Overcometh.' The word sounded in his ears like a trumpet call. It forced him to realize the slackness of his thews and sinews. Was this overcoming,—this yielding of mind and will to a heavenly and seductive languor?

For hours he paced about the forest in the sharpest conflict he had ever known. He saw for the first time, as in a dream, the old Bishop's Palace, with its weird mosaic of strange uncanny forms, half beast half man, wholly malignant and evil. He shuddered at the gloom of the tree-encircled pond at the foot of the Scala Santa, and every step of the ascent was a passionate prayer for light. He read once and again the rudely carved tablets in the lovely canopy that enshrined the well of the Samaritan Woman,—

'He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he

that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.'

And, on the other side,—

'Lord, give me this water that I thirst not.'

Above all he was possessed by the thought of his mother. What were the prayers of the monks compared to that simple heroic life of endurance? Yes; his mother had overcome.

Finally his mind was made up. He looked back on the beautiful teaching of the last few days and told himself that in sober truth it summed up 'all he did not think and did not believe.' Sainte-Beuve was neither the first nor the last who has been forced to say, '*J'ai le sentiment de ces choses, mais je n'ai pas ces choses mêmes.*'

And then he sought Thatcher out.

'It's no use,' he said, 'Whatever you do is right, but not for me. I must go home and face the music.'

Thatcher's face clouded. He told himself that his own mind was still open on the great subjects they had been discussing, but he was grievously disappointed. If 'it is certain that my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it,' the converse in its measure must also be true. But Thatcher had not set out to make a proselyte, he had spoken only in response to Duguid's urgent request, and now he entered no protest, made no remark.

'I must go home,' repeated Dagleish. 'Would you mind before I go taking me with you just once up the *Via Sacra*? I have never traced the whole sequence, and some of the stations I have never seen. I can't tell you what it would mean to me to go with you.'

Thatcher hesitated. The *Via Dolorosa* was dearer, more sacred, to him than any other path on earth. It was hard to think of sharing it with another, especially now that he and that other had come—it might be—to the parting of the ways. He felt almost as if he had been asked to share his 'white stone.'

Almost, but not quite. 'Do you really care?' he said kindly. 'Then by all means we will go together.'

CHAPTER LV

THE VIA DOLOROSA

It was a journey on which a man well might meditate to his dying day. The Station of the Garden lay within a stone's throw of the drive, yet so shut in by trees that few even guessed at its existence. On a steep slope, embowered in ferns and moss, with great trails of ivy hanging from its walls—it lay hidden, a tiny chapel and garden, with a natural cave. The figures were long since gone, but the old story seemed to live in every stone, in every blade of grass. It was as though the faithful of old had realized it all so intensely that the place bore for ever the imprint of their meditations. Many a time Thatcher had thrown himself face downwards on the ground, and, clasping his hands, had stretched out his arms as if they would reach the Infinite. To-day he bent the knee indeed, then stood by silently,—and Dagleish had sense enough not to speak.

The path was narrow and overgrown at first, winding about, turning back here and there in a sharp zig-zag, traversed by numberless short-cuts through the forest; but Thatcher never hesitated. They crossed the brook Cedron, and, under the shade of the trees, they came upon the Station of Annas. The chapels were simple in the extreme, but man and nature had combined to give to each a charm and character of its own. Wonderful perception the old monks had shown in their choice of stations, and yet one felt that whatever the monks had done the forest would have turned into a picture.

From Annas the path emerged on an open hillside, fragrant with young pines and aromatic shrubs, till it reached the prominence where the cross of Caiaphas stood out against the sky; then back along the western ridge to shadow again and the Station of Pilate. The enclosure here was relatively large—a pathetic indication of the grandeur of the Roman

Praetorium—and in a tribune reached by a double flight of covered steps, stood all that remained of the figures of Christ and of Pilate. That of Pilate was hopelessly broken, and the main parts were gone,—a riddle for all to guess at. The outline of the Christ was intact,—a mere suggestion of defenceless dignity into which each passer-by might read all that appealed to him most as good and beautiful. Below, the broken pillar of scourging still stood in its place as of old; but a great tree had fallen athwart the enclosure, and here as everywhere the loving hands of the forest had softened all with a carpet of tenderest beauty.

Hard by was the Station of Herod. From there they went back to the Praetorium again, and then the path—broad and unmistakable now, paved with great cobbles embedded in moss—turned steadily up the hill. Dugald's heart beat fast. He had an overpowering feeling that here, in this very forest, the great drama had taken place.

As it chanced, there was a wedding at the inn that day, and, as they mounted slowly, the strains of distant music, wafted hither and thither by the wind, fell now and then upon their ears. High trees shut them in, and beneath, in great profusion, the arbutus threw out its waxy blossom and tufts of crimson fruit. At their feet the brilliant red berries of the *Ruscus* recalled the legend of the holly.

They paused at Simon of Cyrene, at the Daughters of Jerusalem, and then the path grew steeper, till, on a ledge of the mighty cliff, they reached the Calvary. Here too there was a hermitage and chapel, larger than those they had left behind, and the tiny courtyard was walled-off, as it were, from immensity by a battlement of stone. Within a few yards lay the Sepulchre.

Surely nowhere in the world is the story told in words so simple and so real. There was nothing to jar, nothing to disturb. On actual holy ground one might seek in vain, perhaps, for an impression so vivid and so true.

Dalglish longed to speak, but the words would not come. He felt instinctively that Thatcher's whole being was in tune with the spirit of the place, and the temptation to profess an unquestioning allegiance to his leader was almost overpowering. But it must not be. With a sudden impulse, the two friends wrung each other's hands.

Thatcher pointed to some rude steps in the rock. 'A

minute more,' he said smiling, 'and you will reach the *Crus Alta*.'

And so they parted.

There it stood, the great beacon, on its windswept platform, flung out between earth and heaven. A breath of mist and cloud had drifted across the landscape, but it only served to make the outlook grander than before. It was stupendous to gaze through those changing rifts straight across to the Atlantic, with miles of rolling country stretched out between.

The hotel, like a fairy palace, lay embosomed on a wooded hillside below, and beyond it stretched range beyond range to the Sierra d'Estrella on the north.

Dagleish felt a great sense of exaltation. At his feet the ground fell away so steeply that his head well-nigh swam, but he would not give in to that weakness. Mounting the steps, he clasped the shaft of the cross with his right arm, and stood in the teeth of the wind, looking forth on the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

And faintly, from far away, came the strains of the wedding march.

Thatcher, left to himself, had re-entered the tiny chapel. Was it only a dream, or did he hear a pilgrim's triumphant psalm? With a movement of uttermost abandonment, he fell on his knees before the dismantled altar.

Such old, old words they were that rose to his lips!— words mellowed and worn by the prayers of the saints, as the stones of the Holy Way were worn by the feet of pilgrims:—

'Angusta est domus animae meae, quo venias ad eam; dilatetur abs te. Ruinosa est; refice eam. Habet quae offendant oculos tuos; fateor et scio. Sed quis mundabit eam? aut cui alteri praeter te clamabo: Ab occultis meis munda me, Domine, et ab alienis parce servo tuo.'

'Deus tu scis insipientiam meam: et delicta mea a te non sunt abscondita.'

'Non erulescant in me, qui expectant te, Domine, Domine virtutum.'

'Non confundantur super me qui quaerunt te, Deus Israel.'

CHAPTER LVI

THE RETURN

THE hilltop has a perspective of its own. As we stand on the dizzy height, looking forth on the mighty world, we find it difficult to realize the importance in our lives of one small valley. Its doings have become insignificant—almost unreal—and we wonder that it should have occupied so much of our thoughts in the past. Never again, we say, will it regain the old absorbing power.

But, as we descend, the outlook changes. The valley and the things of the valley grow large, the mountains hasten up into the sky again. Well for us, if we can retain so much as their memory-picture.

When Dalgleish walked the streets of Edinburgh once more, he was amazed to find how real they were,—hatefully real. He had thought to come back a new man, and so, in a sense, he did; but it was the old Dalgleish of whom he was predominantly conscious now, the old Dalgleish, the old life, the old problems,—ugh!

He shrank from seeing a face he knew; it was a relief to turn into the comparative shelter of the familiar common-stair. He sprang up like a squirrel, till he reached his landing; there, market-basket on arm, stood the redoubtable Jenkins.

She looked him grimly up and down.

'Well, *sir!*' she said at last. Then her face brightened. 'Come right in,' she said, opening Miss Lemaistre's door with her latchkey. 'The sight of you will do Miss Dalgleish more good than any physic.'

She ushered him straight into a comfortable little bedroom where Grizel lay by the fire. The young girl was looking slight and fragile, but her face shone and flushed at the sight of her brother.

'Oh, *Dugald!*' she cried, throwing her arms round his

neck, with an impulsiveness she had never shown before, 'I am so glad! I have been thinking what a worthless sister I must be to drive you away like this.'

'I have been thinking what a little donkey it is,' he said, kissing her affectionately. 'You don't mean to say she is an invalid still?'

'Oh, I shall be all right now you have come home.'

He sat close to her couch, and stroked her cheek with his hand. Never in his life had petting been so welcome. It took a great load from his mind. Clearly Grizel knew of nothing wrong, and who should know it, if not she? Thank God, thank God! He told himself that he had been ready to face the worst, but oh, how thankful he was that there was no need to face it. There and then he registered a solemn vow that he would profit more, far more, by this experience than if he had been found out.

'How selfish one is!' Grizel said suddenly. 'I was quite forgetting that I had promised to let Rosie Blount know the very minute you got home.'

'What for?'

'How should I know?' A mischievous smile played about the corners of Grizel's mouth. 'Perhaps she wants to come and congratulate me.' Grizel had long since discovered Rosie's little secret; and although—in view of the great issues of life—she would not willingly have seen her brother tied to any one woman of her acquaintance, she could not help being profoundly interested. Grizel loved Dugald as probably no one else on earth loved him now, but it amused and surprised her greatly that a woman should be able to put him into her dream-picture, just as he stood. A nicer brother did not live, but the fairy-prince was so different, so different, from that!

'Just run down, dear,' she said, 'and send up little Tom Scott. I'll give him the note myself.'

But the mischievous smile had not been lost on him. 'I must see it first,' he said.

'Must you?' she asked demurely.

It was a commonplace little note, such as any girl might write to another, and it asked for a book which Grizel had left at Mr. Blount's.

'Why, there's not a word about me in it!' he cried, disconcerted.

'No,' she admitted. 'That was Rosie's idea. She'll understand. You don't think it is wrong?'

'Wrong? Good heavens! . . . Well, Goodbye, dear, I shan't come back just now, but I shall be in all day after I have paid my respects to Miss Lemaistre.'

'Oh, do that at once!' she agreed. 'Cheer her up as you have cheered me. She hasn't been herself at all lately.'

Jenkins awaited him at the door. 'Miss Lemaistre would like to see you at once,' she said. Her manner was grim, but in Jenkins that was not surprising.

He strode gaily into the friendly sitting-room, but for once Judith received him with her flag, so to speak, at half-mast. She took in silence the hand he held out; then, unlocking the writing-table drawer, she produced a telegram.

'Men of affairs,' she said coldly, 'should leave an address behind them when they go away for indefinite periods.'

The colour rose to his forehead. 'Telegram for me?' he asked lightly. 'May I open it?'

'By all means. I did open it—when it came.'

He read it aloud. "'Return immediately. Important business. Blount." When did this come?'

'Almost immediately after you left.'

'Grizel didn't tell me.'

'There was no need to worry her.'

'Well, I suppose the business has settled itself by now.'

'No,' she said gravely, 'I don't think it has.'

'You know about it then?' His face was growing paler.

'I called on Mr. Blount the next morning, and heard what he had to say. Shall I tell you?—or do you prefer to go straight to him?'

Her manner was only cold, not severe, but it frightened him. 'Fire away,' he said, 'please,—if you'll be so good.'

'You understand that I haven't the least wish to criticize or advise. I shall merely put you in possession of the facts. It is for you to decide on your course of action.'

He nodded, and, with no small effort, she told him the wretched little story, as Mr. Blount had told it to her. 'Since then,' she added, 'oddly enough, the kitchen-maid has returned to another situation in the same street. Mr. Blount has seen her, and is practically satisfied that she knows nothing about the money. Of course he would never have dreamt of suspecting you, if you had been at home;

but he knows you are not a millionaire, and—it seems somebody saw you at Calais.'

He guessed from her manner that she felt sure he had taken the money; but, although his lips trembled just perceptibly, his voice was steady.

'I did take the money,' he said quietly. 'I deny that it was a theft. If Grizel had been well, she would have lent it to me. I am prepared to produce it any day.'

She nodded, as if the matter did not greatly concern her. 'I quite see your point of view,' she said, 'but I am bound to tell you that, as Mr. Blount states the case, it sounds quite different. However'—her voice shook suddenly and unaccountably—'I promised to put you in possession of the facts.'

'Thank you.'

'If this were a case for the police-courts——'

He made an inarticulate protest.

'If this were a case for the police-courts, I don't see that Mr. Blount could prove anything at all. He has only the testimony of a maid who does not even profess to have seen the transaction; and she declares—they all declare—that they didn't open the door to you after—after we three left the house together. Without Dr. Heriot's evidence, how can he feel sure that the money was not taken away again and put in the bank?'

Dalglish shrugged his shoulders. 'Dr. Heriot's evidence is easily got. He wouldn't spare me.'

Judith drew her hand across her forehead, as if she were in physical pain. 'You haven't heard—even that?—As it happens, his evidence is just the most difficult thing in the world to get just now. The doctors won't allow him to be spoken to.'

'How's that?' he said.

And then in a moment the restraint of her manner gave way. 'Oh, because I was mad—mad!' she cried. 'I wanted to spare you, and I sacrificed him.'

He looked at her amazed. Was she indeed mad? 'What on earth do you mean?'

He spoke anxiously, almost sharply, and she pulled herself together.

'It sounds mad, I know,' she said wearily. 'You see I had always liked you so much, and—as I say—I saw your point of view even in this matter. I could not bear to see

you dragged through the mire, and—oh, I suppose I wanted to play Providence as usual!—Dr. Heriot happened to be staying with my sister in the north, and I travelled up to forestall a letter from Mr. Blount.'

'How awfully good of you!' he said, touched, and yet alarmed to think she should consider the matter so serious.

'I believe I meant to ask Dr. Heriot to lie, but—when I saw him—I stopped short at asking him to avoid an interview with Mr. Blount, and to hold his peace.'

'And he refused?'

'Practically—yes, he refused.'

'And then——?'

In broken words she told him the story. 'I don't know how it was,' she added, 'but I seemed to lose all sense of proportion. I believe I almost prayed that something might happen to keep the two men apart.'

'Prayed,' said Dalglish reassuringly. 'If prayers were answered like that——!'

'Unfortunately I did more than pray. I kept him in from the moors one day to talk the matter over. If he had been out shooting as usual—' She stopped short, and forced down some obstruction in her throat, '—the men would have been killed, or injured, their wives pensioned,—and—Dr. Heriot would be—as he was before!'

Again she saw him, strong, well-knit, athletic, on the wall against the sky, and the sight was more than she could bear. Laying her arm on the table, she bowed her head, and burst into tears.

It was terrible to Dalglish to see her, of all women, like this. 'Don't! don't!' he pleaded. 'What's wrong with him? I don't believe it is hopeless.'

She raised her head, and pressed her handkerchief hard against her eyes.

'For days he was unconscious,' she said, 'and they feared for his life, feared for his reason. Then he came round, and we were all so full of thanksgiving. There was no obvious injury, except a few bruises. But—the days have gone by, and—he can't walk,—he can't even stand.'

Dalglish looked scared. '*What is it?*' he said. Among all the incidental horrors in the bye-ways of history, none had made his blood run cold as did the stories of brave men hamstrung by their enemies.

Judith shook her head. 'They don't know. So far they

haven't been able to trace anything wrong with the spinal cord. They think it must be some serious internal strain,—some muscle perhaps—'

'Oh!' His face brightened. 'If that's all! I strained a muscle in my leg once, and couldn't move it a bit for days. But it came all right, as you see. Cheer up! Do cheer up! He'll pull through. His work isn't done yet by a long chalk!'

She was touched by his generosity,—ashamed that, in a natural rebound, she had ceased altogether to care what became of him.

'And you?' she said almost in the old tone. 'What are you going to do?'

'Produce the money, and say—what is true—that I borrowed it for purposes of my own.'

She nodded several times, as if in deep thought. 'You are sure that is best?'

'Quite.'

'How will you get the money?'

'I have got a good deal of it. I'll borrow the rest from some Jew beast. It must be possible to raise money on a fixed income—however small.'

'How much have you in hand?'

'Twenty pounds,—odd.'

Again she nodded gravely. She was thinking of Dr. Heriot. Every word and thought of his was inexpressibly dear, but she could not see eye to eye with him in this. If she had acted mistakenly in the past,—that was the more reason for not leaving the lad in the lurch just when the strain was greatest.

'Then look here,' she said,—'let me be your Jew beast. Oh, we'll be very business-like. You shall pay me capital and interest before we have done. As I tell you, I saw your point of view; but if it happened again—. You know I have meant kindly to you, Mr. Dagleish? You won't put me to shame?'

His lips were very firm. 'It will never happen again,' he said solemnly. 'Some day I will tell you . . . I have come through great happenings . . . I have learned my lesson.'

At that moment the door opened, and Jenkins appeared, looking grimmer than ever. 'If you please, ma'am, Miss Blount is asking whether she can have a word with Mr. Dagleish.'

Judith nodded. 'In a moment. Bring her when I ring.' She raised her hands to her ruffled hair. 'I must make my escape first,' she said to Dalgleish, smiling bravely; 'but don't go till I have seen you again. I will fetch the money.'

She left the room, and Dalgleish turned towards the other door with a conscious little smile of expectation. It really was very pretty of Rosie to care so much. How flattered many a man would be!

Strangely enough, it did not occur to him that her father might have confided in her. But even if it had,—was not Miss Lemaistre fetching the thirty pounds?

Rosie was always shy in his presence. To-day her nervousness was almost uncontrollable. 'I came,' she said breathlessly, 'because I wanted you to hear of this first from a friend, but now—I suppose Miss Lemaistre has told you?'

So she knew about it too? What a little goose she was to make a mountain out of a molehill, and work herself into a state like this!

'Miss Lemaistre tells me your father wants to see me,' he said coldly.

'Has she told you—what for?'

He drew down his brows. 'She has. I thought I was entitled to take charge of a sum of money. It seems I was mistaken, and your father is the proper custodian. That being so, of course I will return it to him without delay. I was going to call this afternoon in any case.'

A light of dawning hope came into her eyes. 'You have got it?' she said eagerly. 'Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad! You have not spent it?'

'I have got it—certainly.'

Her eyes literally brimmed over with gladness, but they met no answering joy in his. Then doubt, chill doubt, crept over her. He had the money indeed, but how had he come by it? Miss Lemaistre—of course, Miss Lemaistre had lent it! Why had not she, Rosie Blount, thought of doing that? Her savings bank account would have stood more than double the strain.

Slowly she became aware that no loan could put matters right. She was jealous of Miss Lemaistre, but that was a small, small part of her trouble.

Dugald watched the last gleam of light die out of her face. 'Well,' he said, speaking kindly as if to a child, 'you don't doubt me, do you? What is wrong?'

He moved towards her almost affectionately, but she turned away. 'I don't know,' she said miserably. Then she took her courage in both hands. 'I suppose I wanted you . . . to have done . . . the right thing.'

Ten minutes later Judith entered the room with eyes and hair above reproach. 'Has Miss Blount gone?' she asked, surprised. 'I did not hear her. She must have been very quiet.'

Dugald did not seem to hear. He was still standing where Rosie had left him in the middle of the room.

'Here is the money. Good luck go with it!'

He took the notes, but with no more air of accepting a favour than if she had returned some trifle he had lent her.

'Thank you,' he said absently.

'So you will settle that matter at once.'

'Yes,' he said, but again he scarcely seemed to hear. 'I am going across to my own room to have a wash.'

Judith started. 'You haven't been there yet?'

'No.'

'Oh,' she cried, 'what a shame that sorrow should make us so selfish! I meant to tell you. There is trouble there too. Miss Brown is ill.'

'Nothing much, I hope?' he asked indifferently.

'She has been ailing for some time, but I never could get her to talk of her symptoms. I kept her in bed as much as I could, and Jenkins was very good to her while I was away in Perthshire. When I came back I went in to see her, and for an hour we talked about everything, except her illness. When I asked her how she was, she said, "Fine," or "I canna complain." Just as I was leaving the room she called me back,—so like human nature, wasn't it?—"I canna bring mysel' to speak to a doctor," she said. "You've been a nurse. Perhaps you can tell me if there's anything wrong."—Of course I assured her I was not competent, but the more I said, the more eager she became. At last I yielded,—'

'Yes?'

Judith stood looking out of the window. When she spoke, it was very quietly. 'Oh, the poor fusionless thing that you and I have despised was suddenly invested with a new dignity,—that's all,' she said, meeting his eyes.

'Nonsense! Not death?'

She nodded. 'Death. Any tyro could have told her that.'

The time for operation has long gone by. We have a doctor now, but the verdict is the same. You have only to look at her face to see that the enemy is in full possession of the citadel.'

He sat looking on the floor, swinging his hat between his knees. 'And no Dr. Heriot to attempt the impossible this time,' he thought to himself.

'No doubt,' Judith went on, 'it was the beginning of this trouble that made her take to drink. It often does.'

'Is she drinking now?'

'She!' said Judith proudly. 'Do you know she has not touched a drop for two years, with the exception of that one night when you found her in your room?'

Dugald looked at her fixedly. 'Good Lord!' he said. Then, 'What a mercy you were here to be good to her!'

'Oh, I! She doesn't need me. The chapel people are as kind as can be; and, as for the Pastor—she says the sight of his face is like a light shining in darkness.'

There was a long silence. 'I am glad you told me,' he said wearily at last. 'Not that it makes any difference. My mind was made up.'

'Made up to what?'

He laid the bank-notes on her writing-table, and gave them a little push. 'Oh, to face the music,' he said.

Slowly he went across to the other flat. Like men who live through some terrible danger—plague, or earthquake, or siege—he felt himself surrounded by an atmosphere of greatness.

It was easy to see that kind hands had been at work. Miss Brown's room was neat, and bright with flowers. She leaned against fresh p" , and her grey hair was brushed smoothly on her fore Dalglish had never seen her look so attractive.

She saw in his face that he knew. 'Puir laddie,' she said affectionately. 'Ye'll hae to seek anither hame. The auld haverer is played out.'

He laid his hand firmly on her shoulder, and the boyish voice she loved rang out in a sort of fierce triumph.

'You're a grand old soldier,' he said, 'that is what you are. Nobody in all my life has taught me such a lesson as you have.'

CHAPTER LVII

'FACING THE MUSIC'

It was on the way to Mr. Blount's that the full horror of the situation came home to him. It would be one thing to tell his story to an archangel, to a chum, or even to any chance priest; it was quite another thing to tell it to Mr. Blount, the stern man of business, and 'office-bearer.' The man of business was bad enough, with his prejudices and preconceptions; the office-bearer, with his claim to a jurisdiction which Dalgleish, in his heart of hearts, simply refused to acknowledge, was far, far worse. Where could one look for an inch of common standing-ground with a man like this? Again and again he would have turned back if that atmosphere of greatness had not sustained him. No heroic action was required of him; only just this—not to be a liar and a coward. If he had even been conscious of an orthodox sense of penitence, things would have been easier, but the thought of Mr. Blount crushed any such feeling in the germ. Dalgleish was mainly, miserably, conscious of having been trapped. It was all an accident. His real fight lay on higher planes by far. The whole episode was too horribly beneath him.

Was it his fancy that the parlour-maid looked half scared when she saw who had rung the bell?

'Yes, sir,' she said, in answer to his question, and she ushered him into the cold, stately drawing-room. 'Mr. Blount came in late to lunch,' she added, 'but I think he will be at liberty very soon.'

A minute later Rosie stole in. 'You have got the money?' she asked anxiously.

So even her faith had failed! It was all he could do to keep himself from saying, 'I have not actually brought it with me'; but had he not told Miss Lemaistre he was going to face the music?

'No,' he said harshly, 'I have not got the money. I suppose . . . I have come . . . to "do the right thing."'

For a moment Rosie's heart sank. To *have done* the right, is one thing, to *do* the right, is quite, quite another, for the speck has become a mountain while our opportunity slipped by. Knowing her father as she did, she could not have advised Dugald to forego the solid advantage of those good bank-notes. But Rosie was in fighting trim, and she rose to the situation in a moment.

'How splendid of you!' she said, with pale lips and kindling eyes.

He tried hard not to look nervous.

'I suppose he won't be very easy to deal with.'

'No,' said Rosie bravely, 'he won't. He will be very hard on you . . . but what else can we do?'

'It was such a trifle to begin with,' he urged, 'but circumstances have all conspired to make it bigger and bigger.'

'Oh, I know! You are a genius, you see, and you were all distraught,—and Father will understand nothing of that. But—' her voice shook with the effort she was making, '—it was a wrong thing to do, Dugald. We are bound to meet him on common ground there.'

She sighed. Regarded aright, these men were both so pathetic! 'You see,' she went on, 'as a boy he was dreadfully poor, and honesty—"the common honesty of the marketplace"—didn't come easy. It came so hard that he began to think of it as the cardinal virtue. Even now that he is a rich man, it towers above everything else. And he carries his business ways into everything. He is very kind, but—he never forgets a kindness he has done, unless, perhaps it is to me. He likes to see it prove a good moral investment.'

Dagleish groaned inwardly. That was another view of the case. How horribly—hatefully—kind Mr. Blount had been!

'You will be tempted to lose your temper and walk out of the room. Don't do that! Make up your mind that you will let him have his say, however cruel it seems.'

She slipped away, and Dagleish was left to face some of the grimmest moments he had ever known.

There was another aspect of the case which had not occurred to either of them. Mr. Blount was ambitious for his eldest daughter, but his ambition took an unusual form. There was no need for her to marry money, and family made

no strong appeal to old Ralph Blount. He longed to see her at the head of some great city chapel,—the wife of an earnest successful minister,—forwarding his manifold schemes alike with her personality and her fortune.

Dalgleish—even in the early days—had not been in all respects the man he would have chosen; but he could not fail to see that Dalgleish had been the first to touch the young girl's heart.

And now the lad had shown himself so utterly unworthy! Even the supreme initiation of a life and death illness had failed to make a man of him.

At last the summons came, and it was too late to draw back. 'Mr. Blount will see you in the library, sir.'

Dalgleish just retained sufficient presence of mind to look the old man full in the face, and to take the first word.

'I have come, sir,' he said, 'to tell you the whole story.'

There was something very disarming about his appearance,—the flexible mouth, the straight forehead, the eager eyes. Sternly Mr. Blount held out his hand. At best Dalgleish had behaved wrongly and foolishly, but a man must be judged honest until he is proved a thief.

A chair had been placed uncomfortably near the old man, but Dalgleish had sense enough not to move it by so much as a hair's breadth. Sitting down, he looked straight into the fire, and plunged into the story. With every sentence the tale grew blacker in the light of that cold judicial personality. Dalgleish tried not to be mawkish nor sentimental,—tried to stick to facts; but, as he came to the end, his voice faltered.

'I suppose you would say I was off my head, sir,' he said. 'I was frightfully lonely and upset, and I just loathed the thought of returning to the old routine. I felt as if I must break away somehow.'

Had Mr. Blount in the whole course of his strenuous life ever felt a similar longing? If so, he gave no indication of the fact. 'Who opened the door to you?' he asked abruptly.

Dalgleish pulled himself up short. 'Nobody. It was open. Somebody seemed to be waiting for an answer.'

'And who let you out?'

'I let myself out,—as usual.'

'You watched your opportunity?'

There was a moment's silence. 'Yes.'

'And you went into your dead mother's room——?'

Dalglish had known that this must come, but it seemed now as if he could not bear it. He raised his hand in involuntary protest.

Mr. Blount tapped him sternly on the knee. 'People who do these things,' he said, 'must not be too sensitive to hear about them.'

It was so true, so obviously, brutally true, that Dalglish wondered how he could have been so foolish as to show his resentment.

'As to being off your head,—men of the world don't make that excuse, unless they wish to be considered as candidates for a lunatic asylum.'

He proceeded deliberately 'o emphasize all that was most sordid and hateful in the story,—all that Dalglish had instinctively glossed over; and then he adjusted his eyeglass, and focussed the young man relentlessly.

'You were much in my mind that day,' he said, 'and late in the afternoon I called at your lodgings.'

Dalglish uttered an exclamation of horror. Until this moment he had forgotten that part of the story.

'You were packing, and you told me that you were going down to the cottage in the country.'

'Yes. It was a lie.'

Mr. Blount remembered how much he had admired the young man for choosing solitude at such a time, for having no thought about money. 'Yes,' he repeated bitterly, 'it was a lie. And now tell me this,—' again he leaned forward, and tapped the young man's knee; '—when you were breaking the lock and stealing the money, and creeping out of my house in terror of every maid-servant, in terror of every creak on the stair,—did you feel yourself a very heroic figure,—you who have thought yourself too good for the chapel, with its old-fashioned ways and its doctrines?'

Dalglish clenched his teeth and sat silent. He felt bitterly that all the natural man in Mr. Blount was triumphing over him.

Perhaps the senior deacon was dimly conscious of this too, for, when he spoke again, his voice was less harsh.

'This is what comes of your philosophy, your doubts, your advanced views——'

'No, no,' said Dalglish, 'I can't lay the blame on them.'

Mr. Blount leaned back in his chair, and answered with

quiet finality. 'There is no reason at all why you should. Your actions have spoken for you.'

The young man groaned involuntarily.

'You didn't know that the money was meant for your sister?'

Dagleish drew in his breath. He was desperate now; his back against the wall. 'Yes,' he said, doggedly, 'I did.'

If Mr. Blount appreciated the admission, he did not show it. 'And the pleasure when you got it?' he said, 'what did it amount to? Apples of Sodom! What would you not give if it could all be undone?'

But, strangely enough, the question brought a new light into Dugald's eyes. 'It is a terrible story, as you tell it, sir,' he said, 'and I don't urge another word in my own defence. But even now,—' he raised a haggard face, '—I can't honestly say I wish it undone. The whole episode has taught me too much for that.'

Mr. Blount looked amazed. The interview, after all, was running off the rails. In his perplexity he bethought himself of a rumour which had come to his ears a few days before, a rumour he had scarcely credited. He determined to risk a bold stroke.

'Ah,' he said, 'you were to tell me the whole story. You have omitted the top and bottom of it all,—your infatuation for an actress.'

It was the young man's turn to look amazed. How in the world did the senior deacon come by all his information? The blood rushed to his face, but, after the first shock, the challenge seemed to lend him a much-needed dignity.

'I don't quite know what people mean by an infatuation,' he said. 'Since you put it to me,—it is true that for years . . . I have loved a good and beautiful woman . . . who happens to be . . . yes . . . an actress.'

'And you followed her to Paris?'

Dagleish shook his head. 'I went in search of her to Portugal.'

Portugal! Mr. Blount clapped his hand over the pocket that held his letters. Had he not heard that very morning from Thatcher *père* that his son was pursuing his *Wanderjahr* in Portugal?

Slowly the senior deacon groped about among his facts, and a moment later the inevitable question came.

'Was the lady's name—by any chance—Ianthe Brooke?'

He read the answer in the young man's face, and, as he read it, he recalled the winning woman who had sat in that very chair. He remembered how he himself—an elderly man and an office-bearer of the church—had felt the full force of her charm. With a rush of comprehension he grasped the whole tangled story.

'What did you expect?' he asked, and Dalgleish listened in vain for the note of condemnation in his voice. At this moment of all moments, the senior deacon was speaking as one man to another. 'What did you want of her?'

'Nothing, I believe. Only to see her and hear her speak.'

'Did you find her?'

Dugald nodded.

'And what did she say to you?'

'She was very kind,—as the sun is kind to every living thing.'

'And how do you stand with her now?'

'She counts me her friend—nothing more. But I shall never love any other woman as long as I live.'

It was as if he were making his Confession of Faith. Mr. Blount knew how much such assertions are apt to be worth, but he admired the young man's courage in saying this to him.

'And what about this Miss Lemaistre who has made so much of you?'

'Miss Lemaistre!' Through the vista of this torture chamber, Dalgleish had a sudden glimpse of Judith's fine head bowed low in a passion of tears. 'Miss Lemaistre! She has been very kind—like an elder sister. You don't suppose, sir, she would think of marrying *me*!'

'There's no saying,' responded the senior deacon dryly. 'I've learned to put no limit to the folly of some women. You seem to have met with no lack of kindness in your time, young man.'

'That's true! A deal more than I ever deserved.'

'Miss Lemaistre is a woman of means, is she not?'

'I don't know. I have fancied sometimes lately that she is.'

'Why didn't you ask her for the money?'

'There was no need to ask. She offered to lend it to me.'

'And you refused it? (What a fool that woman was!) Why?'

But Dalgleish had come to the end of his tether. He could say no more.

Suddenly, in the presence of a great hope, the Christian in Mr. Blount awoke in full force, trampling underfoot the man of business, the office-bearer, even the father. He, too, felt a breath of that atmosphere of greatness. 'My dear Dugald,' he cried earnestly, 'tell me you refused it because you were making a fresh start!'

Dugald raised his eyes. They were full of conflicting emotions, chief among which was pain, and yet there was the far-off suggestion of a smile in their depths.

'This looks a bit like it,' he said, quietly.

Mr. Blount was touched by the lines in his face. He laid his hand on the bell. 'We'll have tea here, Sarah, if you please,—tea for two.'

And Rosie, hearing the message at second hand, went dancing upstairs in the gladness of her heart. '*It just shows,*' she was saying to herself, 'that one never, never can risk too much.'

Dalgleish was glad of the tea, for his mouth was so parched he could scarcely speak, and, strangely enough, even so trifling an exercise of hospitality as this drew out all that was best in Mr. Blount. He chatted to his guest as he might have chatted to him a year before, not looking for any reply.

At last he laid down his cup with the air of one who returns to business.

'And now, my dear boy,' he said, 'we must put our heads together. Tell me what you propose to do.'

CHAPTER LVIII

SUNRISE

A FEW days after Dr. Heriot had been removed to Edinburgh, Mrs. Traquair followed, and installed herself in rooms within a stone's throw of his house. Day after day she convinced herself by a lengthy process of reasoning that she was in no way responsible for the accident. Night after night she was roused in the small hours by a sense of horror, in the presence of which reasoning was of little avail. It was some comfort to be able to send round flowers and fruit,—to be within reach of the ebb and flow of the medical report.

'You know, Judith,' she said one day, 'no one could have foreseen anything of the kind. Everybody believed the wall to be as firm as the solid rock. If Dr. Heriot had *really* thought otherwise he never would have risked his life in that insane fashion.'

'You forget,' Judith said quietly, 'that he could have saved himself a dozen times over. And the doctors think it was not so much the fall as the strain of holding up the stone that did the mischief.' She turned and gazed into the fire. 'How he must wish he had never seen us!' She caught her breath as she thought that the bitter-sweet days at Florence had led to this. 'No, no, Frances,' she said wearily, 'the dreadful thing has happened,—right here in our lives, and there is no use trying to shuffle off the responsibility. We have just got—' she smiled faintly, '—to "face the music."'

'It is very good of you,' Frances said bitterly, 'to unite yourself with me in the matter. It was I who made his acquaintance, I who sent for you to meet him, I who invited him to Perthshire——.' Characteristically, she stopped short of the last link in the chain. She could not bring herself to say, 'I who gave the order about the wall.'

Judith was in no mood to press the point. 'I,' she added gravely, 'who kept him from the moors that afternoon.'

'Why did you do it? I don't think you ever told me.'

'I wanted to ask a favour of him. A young man in whom I was interested had done something very foolish—wrong, if you will,—something of which the consequences seemed to me to be out of all proportion with the guilt. I wanted to save him from the consequences, and I could only do it with Dr. Heriot's help.'

'And you succeeded?'

Judith drew in her breath. 'Fate and I succeeded.'

'And he got off?'

Judith's low laugh came very near breaking into a sob. The whole problem appeared to her now in so different a light. 'He didn't choose to get off. When I—when the penalty had been paid—a young girl—a girl whom I had met and did not think in any way remarkable—suggested that he should "do the right thing." He was not a bit in love with her, but she just managed somehow to put her finger on that little spring of fortitude that exists in all men—for those who have faith to find it! Oh, Frances, what a mess I have made of my life!'

Frances looked half frightened. 'Judith, Judith, dear,' she said, falling on her knees at her sister's side, 'don't look like that! What is it? Why, Judith, you don't mean that you *love* Dr. Heriot?'

She was amazed at her own daring, but Judith's pale face showed neither resentment nor surprise.

'If love hurts like this, I suppose I do.'

'But you never told me! You never gave me the smallest hint. You were so frank—such chums—When did it begin?'

Judith shook her head. 'I suppose it began that first night in Florence. I found it out—together with many other things—when he was holding up the copestone on the wall. . . . Of course in a sense I had been *conscious* of it. . . . I was like a man who stands at sunrise with his eyes on the western hills, never asking what makes them so beautiful.'

She was sitting with clasped hands, her arms resting on her knees. Her eyes, unseeing, gazed fixedly across the room. In her brain the weird music went on and on,

'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

'Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.'

As Dalglish had trod his *Via Dolorosa*, so Judith was living through her *Tenebrae*,—the hours of darkness she had

seen as in a vision. But there was a grimness about the reality that appalled her.

'*He* "did the right thing," did not he?' she said quietly at last: 'you must not think that I regret that. But life seems all to be on a bigger scale than I fancied.

"Believe and venture,—as for pledges,
The gods give none."

'And he——?' said Frances.

'Oh, I don't know. Sometimes I fancied he cared for you.'

'Nonsense! As if I should dream of marrying again! And he never cared. Of course there may have been moments of—glamour, or whatever you call it. There always are. You see he met me first under such very—unusual circumstances. But the glamour never survived the sunset and solitude that called it forth . . . and perhaps it was partly my imagination. Judith, the more I think of it, the surer I am that he cared for you. He was just the man to bury it deep . . . but there's no deceiving me. . . . And of course he is going to get well. The report was disappointing yesterday, so it's sure to be better to-day.'

Judith nodded her head wearily several times.

'Good-bye, dear,' she said, rising from her low chair, and stooping to kiss her sister.

Frances caught her hand. 'Forgive me, Judith!'

Judith drew a long breath. 'I have no difficulty now in *forgiving*—even myself. I wasn't big enough for the occasion,—that's all. Other people were,—including apparently, the little girl from the chapel.'

'You don't seem to see how much of accident there is in the thing we do in a hurry, as it were.'

'No,' said Judith, 'at this moment I confess that is not the aspect of the case that comes home to me. Good-bye.'

'Wait a moment—Judith! I wonder if you could let your puritan maiden, Grizel, spend a few days with me here. I am frightfully down, and I have taken a fancy to the child.'

'By all means,' said Judith surprised. 'The air is better in this part of the town, and—she will find you a liberal education.'

'I won't take her to Mass if you really prefer that I shouldn't.'

Judith's laugh rang out almost as of old. 'Do your worst!' she said, 'I am not afraid.'

She walked to the corner of the street, hesitated, looked at her watch, and turned in the direction of Dr. Heriot's house. There was little change in the bulletin, but, as she was turning to go with a heavy heart, Betty came flying downstairs.

'Don't go, Miss Lemaistre!' she cried. 'I am sure Father would like to see you. He was so disappointed last time to hear you had gone.'

Judith's heart thumped unbearably, and, when they reached the threshold of the sick-room, she trembled so that she could scarcely stand. All the traditions of a lifetime were in favour of self-restraint, but she had never been put to the test as she was now.

Dr. Heriot lay flat on his back, and the head of the bed was towards the window. A many-jointed reading-desk stood at his side. His face and hands had lost much of the tan they had gained on the moors, and the dark blue woollen jacket emphasized the unexpected fairness of his neck and wrists.

'That is right,' he said with a little sigh of satisfaction, as Betty placed a chair beside the bed, and left them alone together. 'You are not in a hurry?'

Judith shook her head. Every duty she had in the world might have drifted past on life's stream, and she would not have known it.

It seemed a long time before she could trust herself to speak. 'I am glad,' she said, 'to see you looking so like yourself.'

He smiled. 'They keep me in royal comfort, don't they?' It was precisely the thing that came hardest to him in his glorious strength, to lie there like a log, but one would never have guessed it. 'It is quite a new luxury for me in my busy life to have time to read—and think.'

So that was how he meant to take it? She might have known.

'It must try your eyes,' she said prosaically, 'to read like that.'

'After a time—yes. My sister is very good in reading to me, and Betty's will is excellent. I am afraid I am rather fussy in the matter of a reader. . . . Do you know I have often thought how pleasant it would be to see you sitting there . . . with your hat off—'

She removed her hat promptly, and threw it uncer-

moniously aside. '—in no hurry to go, . . . with plenty of leisure to read the poetry you like—*you know!*—the kind of battle-music you used to recite at Settignano.'

She met his eyes. There was a red spot on each of her cheeks, and her breath still came rather unevenly. 'If every wish were as easily gratified as that!'

'Not now. We have plenty of time, haven't we?' He looked strangely content. 'Wait till you are—rested. I want you to tell me about your friend, Mr. Dalglish. I have often wondered how the story ended.'

It had seemed to her beforehand that any mention of Dalglish between them must be more than she could bear; she had wondered how and when it would come; but now, like the stab of his surgeon's knife, it brought sudden relief from almost unbearable tension.

She looked at him pleadingly. 'I am tired of Mr. Dalglish, she said. 'I went far to spoil the happiest day of my life by talking of him—and his friend . . . but if you want to hear the end of the story, I am sure you shall.'

She told it very simply, without obvious bitterness or self-reproach; if she must be emotional, she would at least refrain from being deliberately emotional; but, as she finished, a big tear took her by surprise and fell with a splash on her hand.

'Thank you,' he said. 'Your story does one good. She must be a good little girl, that. I confess I did Mr. Dalglish injustice.'

'He is a different being,' said Judith gravely. 'It is as if he had suddenly stepped into his freedom.'

He chatted of books and poetry after that, and there were pleasant spaces of silence in their talk. Judith had quite regained her composure before he took up the former thread.

'You spoke of the happiest day in your life,' he said. 'Tell me about it.'

She smiled. Who should know, if not . . . ? 'That Sunday,' she said, 'in the Glen. It ended in cloud.' Her lips quivered. 'And so did the other happy day—at St. Peter's.'

'I remember you did talk of young Dalglish that day. I thought—perhaps—you wished to prevent my saying—what I wanted to say.'

The colour rushed up to the roots of her hair, and she shook her head.

'You didn't mean . . . to keep me at arm's length?'

'You?'

Her hand was very near his now. Involuntarily it moved a hair's breadth nearer, and a moment later it was seized in a warm comforting clasp. Never surely had there been a more perfect embrace. Judith drew a great quivering breath. She had got home.

But she felt that even now he did not understand, and, after a time she summoned up her courage. 'It sounds incredible, I know,' she said. 'As I told Frances this morning, I was like a man who stands at sunrise with his eyes on the western hills, never asking what it is that makes them so beautiful.'

'Ah,' he said, with quick appreciation of all her confession involved, 'you were so fresh, Judith, so young, and I—I had not even a man's first love to offer you.' He drew a long breath. Never before had he felt his helplessness as he did now. 'And here we lie—on the lap of the gods. There is nothing to do but to wait. You say the happy days end in cloud. I hope I am not doomed, dear, only to cast a great shadow over your life.'

She raised his hand from the bed, and rested her cheek against it. 'The shadow,' she said, 'of a great rock.'

At that moment Dr. Heriot's sister came in with the patient's lunch. If she saw that she had come at an unfortunate moment, she did not show it.

'You will stay and lunch with me, won't you, Miss Lemaistre?' she said. 'You would like to wash your hands. My room is the first at the top of the stairs.'

And Judith made her escape, glad to avoid Betty's keen affectionate eyes. Not that she greatly cared even for that. Her whole heart was singing a pæan of thanksgiving that drowned everything else.

Mrs. Marshall had always been very friendly to Judith. She was more so than ever to-day. 'You know, Miss Lemaistre,' she said, 'my impression is that Angus will recover. He *means* to get well, please God. But the doctors say the case is very obscure, and they will promise nothing. At worst, there is no chance of any immediate danger, and I fear I must soon think of returning to my own husband and bairns. I know I shall find them all in terrible mischief. I hope you will come in as often as you can. No one does my brother so much good as you. I know you are a person of many claims——'

Judith raised her eyes quite frankly. 'There is not one of them,' she said, 'that does not give place to this.'

'I am so glad.'

When Judith returned to the sick-room, 'to say Good-bye,' the atmosphere was changed, the thread of intercourse was broken. She had fancied that, after what had passed, it would be possible for her to take the initiative, but it was quite, quite impossible.

For a time they talked fitfully of indifferent things, and then, in despair, she rose and looked for her hat.

'Must you go?'

She turned to him with a great light in her eyes.

'Not unless you like.'

There was a moment's silence. 'You mean——?'

She dropped on her knees by the bed. 'I mean,' she said breathlessly, 'that I will go if you like . . . or stay if you like,—as long as you like . . . and on whatever terms you like.'

The blood rose slowly to his face as Judith had never seen it rise before. It seemed to come from his deepest being. He waited till he could speak quietly and tenderly. 'Ah, Judith,' he said, 'you are a brave, generous girl, and your heart is full of pity just now.'

'Pity!' she cried scornfully. 'Do you think there is room in my heart for anything but pride?'

He turned to her gratefully, but there was no sign of yielding in his eyes. 'The future is so dark,—so uncertain. How could I let you share it? We must wait——'

'Oh, my dear,' she sobbed, 'there is no future, nor any past, there is no life nor death. There is nothing but you—in one great present.'

For a moment the lines in his face relaxed, but only for a moment. 'I must put before you,' he said resolutely, 'just what this may mean. There may be a gradual change for the worse, or—there may be no change——'

Her face was half hidden. 'And is not that just the strongest argument for what I ask? Do you grudge a man air because you cannot give him all you think he ought to have? This—just this—is my life,—the great good thing.' She paused and tried to smile. 'Don't treat me so stingily! Give it me royally! . . . If there is much of it—well; if little—is not that the more reason for treasuring every moment?'

But oh, dear heart, surely you see there is no question of much or little. There is just you, and beyond that—nothing.'

'Agatha,' said Dr. Heriot when his sister re-entered the room, 'do you know what this generous girl proposes to do?'

Mrs. Marshall laid her hands on Judith's shoulders and kissed her. 'Of course I know,' she said, 'and a very lucky woman she is to be able to do it.'

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CHAPTER LIX

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

WEDNESDAY evening again,—the first Wednesday in the month,—and the Business Meeting is very full. Everyone who knows anything at all is aware that the main subject for discussion to-night is the case of Mr. Thatcher. The three months he asked for at that informal deacons' meeting have long gone by; a letter of enquiry as to his present position has remained unanswered; he has been seen more than once in Edinburgh, and now Brother Dewar has refused to postpone the matter another day. Mr. Thatcher's friends are present in full force, sad and downcast. The Ultra-protestants have furbished up their weapons, and are ready for the fray.

The Pastor looks aged and worn, like a man who has received a blow. When the preliminary exercises are over, and the formal business has been briefly despatched, he rises to his feet, and faces the assembly in silence. Through all his sadness, there runs a little vein of wholly human exultation. Everyone in the room save himself is on a false scent. They are furbishing their weapons—but where is the foe?

'I have to lay before the meeting,' he says slowly, 'a letter which I have received this afternoon.'

"DEAR SIR,—It is my duty to inform you without delay that I have to-day been received by Father Bernard into the Catholic Church.—I am, yours faithfully in Christ,

JOHN THATCHER."

The announcement is followed by a few moments of utter consternation. The silence is so great that one hears the cheerful crackle of the fire, and when at length a movement breaks the spell, three brethren are on their feet at once.

Coldly the Pastor's eye falls on Brother Dewar. As the arch-antagonist, he must have the first word.

Brother Dewar clears his throat ominously, and begins:

'The event so unexpectedly announced to us by the Pastor this evening can have come as a surprise to no one who has watched Mr. Thatcher's career for the last few years. I for one rejoice that the separation has taken place. "Better a finger off," says the proverb, "than aye wagging." Better a finger off than a gangrene spreading up the limb!

'There is, I say, no cause to regret that the separation has taken place. There is every cause for regret as to the method in which it has been allowed to take place. Why has it been left to Mr. Thatcher to take the initiative in this matter? Months ago his case was ripe for discipline: months ago I urged the brethren to put their trust in the Lord, and do His work. And why did they hold back? They held back because, forsooth, Mr. Thatcher had so great an influence with the young men. I ask you now to judge their action by its results. Which would have been the more instructive example for our young men?—to see Mr. Thatcher disgraced, cut off from the Church of Christ? or to see him snapping his fingers at the Church, and taking refuge with the Mother of Harlots?'

The rhetorical pause is filled by a faint groan of disapproval.

Brother Dewar sweeps a scathing glance in the direction of the groan. 'Yes,' he repeats doggedly, 'the Mother of Harlots. Let me remind you of some of the tenets which Mr. Thatcher now professes to believe.'

He produces a slip of paper from his pocket, and proceeds to enumerate some of the grossest superstitions prevalent among Roman Catholics. From these he passes to the abuses of the confessional, the immorality in monasteries and convents—proved, so he says, by the number of infants' graves within the 'sacred' precincts—and finally he stops to take breath.

'For all this,' he says, 'Mr. Thatcher has made himself responsible. If he be an honest man, there is a terrible awakening, a terrible humiliation, in store. I can only hope his example may prove an awful warning to our young men.'

Wiping his forehead, he resumes his seat, not without a fair meed of appreciation and applause; and he is followed by a number of speakers who are anxious to echo or to modify his views. The old old ground is gone over once and again,

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS 409

with occasional references to 'another painful and perplexing episode' in Mr. Thatcher's career.

The senior deacon fidgets, adjusts and re-adjusts his eyeglass, and at last he can bear it no longer. 'With regard to that other episode,' he says, frowning almost ferociously, 'I find myself placed in a position of unusual difficulty. In view, however, of this new calamity, which will, I fear, cause a rupture between father and son, I am perhaps justified in saying on—on—excellent authority that no blame attaches to Mr. Thatcher in the matter referred to. Let me just hint at a great family sorrow, a perhaps inevitable breach, an enforced silence concerning what had taken place. The lady poor young Mr. Thatcher befriended was a near relative of his own.'

There is an involuntary breath of sympathy, and then a great hush falls on the room, but the hush is full of ominous suggestion, like the lull before a storm. The dramatic antagonism between the old and the young is intensified to the utmost. In this bare and homely room, with its prevailing tone of quiet respectability, the very elements of tragedy are let loose,—'the spiritual principle in conflict with itself, the war of good with good.' The strain is so great that some of those present wait breathless, for the unlucky word that may precipitate open rupture.

The Pastor heaves a little sigh of relief when the merciful brother rises to his feet, the brother who spoke so kindly at that Discipline Meeting years ago. So long as he keeps the lead, farther calamity is at least postponed.

The brother speaks very quietly, like one who has weathered worse storms than this. 'It is an unwritten rule at these meetings,' he says, 'that the young men shall listen, while the old—the mature—men speak. I propose that to-night we make an exception to that rule. The young men are profoundly concerned in the business before us, and we feel for them keenly in the blow that has fallen upon them more heavily ever than it has fallen upon us. Let us hear what the young men have to say. And don't let us be afraid of a few sharp words on either side. We are in sore confusion, and we must ask forbearance one of another. I doubt whether silence is golden in a time like this.—I propose that the young men be asked to speak.'

There is a moment's pause, and then—Mr. Dobbs is on his feet. For once Mr. Dobbs is brief.

'There are some present,' he says, 'who will remember a great meeting of the Debating Society some two or three years ago, when the subject of discussion was Toleration. Wild statements were made on that occasion, wild views were aired; and, in the light of subsequent events, I should like to repeat the words I used then.

"Pull one stick out of the bundle," I said, "and what becomes of all the rest? It is easy work pulling down the dykes. Wait till you try to build them up again with the river in spate. Give me twenty years——"

The speaker breaks off dramatically,—an unusual practice with Mr. Dobbs. 'I asked for twenty years. I might have said two or three.'

And now it is Scrymgeour's turn. He has never before taken part in a Business meeting, and his manner is unusually nervous.

'Mr. Dobbs,' he says, 'may well refer to "a great meeting of the Debating Society." It was a great meeting. I appeal to the memory of every man who had the good fortune to be there, and in so doing, I appeal to many who will never think it worth while to enter our ranks again. When I contrast that meeting with our tame little gathering last night, I say to myself,

"Oh, for one hour of Wallace, wight!"

He too pauses, but the pause is to gather courage.

"Oh, for one hour of Wallace, wight!"

he repeats slowly . . . 'It is not easy for us of a younger generation to "bear testimony," but Mr. Dewar has referred to Mr. Thatcher's influence, and I feel bound to say something of what his influence has been upon me. I have known something of the highways and by-ways of his life for years, and no man has so impressed me with his single-hearted devotion to truth and righteousness. He never stooped. I remember once when he seemed more uncompromising than usual, quoting to him the words, "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." "True," said Mr. Thatcher, "but that is no reason for being any dustier than we can help." I have thought of that often since. He has not tempted me to join the Church of Rome: in that respect we have come to the parting of the ways; but his whole life and action have forced me to say, "If nothing short of this

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS 411

will do, if it is necessary to be as good as this,—then—it is worth while trying.”

He drops abruptly into his seat, thankful for the murmur of appreciation with which his words are received, and a moment later the silence is broken by cries of ‘Dagleish! Dagleish!’

Dagleish is slow to respond, but at length he rises, pale as ashes, yet burning with enthusiasm. His voice has scarcely been heard in public since the events of the previous autumn, and every instinct of decency—so he thinks—bids him be silent now. But if no one else will give utterance to the things that are crying out to be said, what can he do?

‘I am one of these,’ he says, ‘who have not forgotten Mr. Dobbs’ remarks at that debate on Toleration. It was my first experience of the Debating Society, and I suppose nothing else of the kind will ever seem to me quite so remarkable. I remember the proverb Mr. Dobbs quoted. It was not the last time I have heard it on his lips. To-night, if you will let me, I want to take that proverb up for a moment, and look it in the face. “Pull one stick out of the bundle, and what becomes of all the rest?” They fall to the ground, of course. What then? Is our life, is the faith of our fathers, a bundle of sticks? God forbid! Our life, our faith, is a living, a growing thing. What becomes of a tree if you snap off a lifeless twig?

‘Some of us have never forgotten a sermon the Pastor preached on Growth. “The chief value of any life lies in its expectancy.” What is the expectancy of a bundle of sticks? Just this,—he glanced at the blazing fire,—‘that to-morrow it will be cast into the oven.

‘Mr. Scrymgeour has spoken of knowing something of the highways and by-ways of Mr. Thatcher’s life. I am afraid,—he glances at the senior deacon,—‘those who know something of the highways and by-ways of mine may think it great presumption on my part to echo Mr. Scrymgeour’s words, but, if I have to choose between presumption and ingratitude, I choose presumption with all my heart. No one will fill Mr. Thatcher’s place: no one will ever be to us what Mr. Thatcher has been.

‘We are not going to follow him to Rome, but it cuts us to the heart to hear some of the brethren speak as they have spoken. We know how differently the whole question looked to Mr. Thatcher. One is just thrown back upon

this, that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. His conception of truth must be on a different plane—as well as on a different scale—from ours. How else do the best men reach such different results? How else do the best men seem sometimes to make the biggest mistakes? One is almost tempted sometimes to think that the Almighty wishes to spell out saint in the individual, truth only in the race.'

The speaker is losing touch with his audience—fortunately perhaps—and he feels it,—feels the need of winning them back. But he is still very pale, and his voice has not even now quite regained the old ring of boyish assurance.

'All through the discussion this evening,' he says, with a sudden change of manner, 'I have been thinking about a poem I came upon the other day. It was about a ship, the *Lauresmina*, that made a voyage from Bremen to London in mid-winter. The weather became fiercely cold, and the compasses were frozen. Of course the risks of disaster were terrible, but the captain steered his course by the stars, and the ship came safely into port, "a white Christmas ghost." The whole poem was good, but the last two quatrains were the best.

"When hearts are heavy and wits are worn
With the gloom of some crumbling creed,
When the old is dim and the new unborn,
Your riddle is here to read:—

"The *Lauresmina* has held her path,
All sound are her gallant tars;
For the compasses froze in their alcohol bath,
But the captain steered by the stars."

He resumes his seat in a wave of approbation that goes far to drown the criticism and censure. ('Played, sir, indeed!' whispers Jones.) Of course it is a great piece of audacity for a young man to speak at such length, but there is something very disarming about Dalgleish's audacity: it gives the impression that he is expressing his thoughts quite honestly, and keeping nothing back. The apt quotation has gone home to almost every heart, and has sent a refreshing breeze through the heavy moral atmosphere of the room. The old problems are there unchanged, but there is not a man nor a woman present who does not at least *wish* to 'steer by the stars.' When the senior deacon and the Pastor rise to close the discussion, they speak mournfully, indeed, from the conservative plat-

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS 413

form, but not quite despairingly. They cling to the hope that Thatcher may return to the fold.

'And I cannot but think,' says the Pastor, 'that we judge ourselves and others far too much by the point where we stand, the position we have reached. We forget that, just as we leave our footprints on the road, so every step of the way makes its mark upon us. The man who finds a short cut to the goal is, for better or worse, a very different being from the man who came all the way round. I cannot think it is all waste.'

When the meeting was over, the Pastor withdrew to his little vestry, and sat gazing into the fire. Say what one will, it was a terrible blow, this defection of Thatcher's, and perhaps, if one had been wiser and kinder, it might have been averted.

The feeling of loneliness and isolation grew on the Pastor as the years went on. Instinctively he held aloof from his deacons: instinctively the young men, for whom his heart yearned, seemed to hold aloof from him. It was all very sad.

With a heavy sigh, he donned his coat, and made his way out into the raw wintry night. On the threshold a young man was awaiting him.

'May I walk home with you, sir?' said Dalglish affectionately.

EPILOGUE

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER

It has been a busy day, and Judith is sitting in a low chair by the fire, awaiting her husband's return. Seen thus, in the dim, kindly light, she seems to have changed but little since the old strenuous days; but her hair is growing grey none the less, and the virginal austerity is merged in something more motherly and lovable. Her son—her one child, born after eight years of married life—has fallen asleep on the hearth-rug, with his head resting on her knee. He shows little of the delicacy she dreaded, but she does not like to think of the day when he must pass from her care into the great world of schoolboy life.

Her husband has achieved what is called success. He does great operations for handsome fees, he is constantly appealed to by his colleagues for help or counsel, and far beyond the limits of the kingdom 'Heriot's method' of doing this or that is spoken of with respect. But he has never been quite the man he was before the accident. He has to accept limitations, to husband his strength, and, whenever the day's work involves an unusual strain, Judith feels something of the old tension with which she watched by his side in the early days of their married life,—and she welcomes him home with something of the exultant happiness that overflowed when first she saw him stand erect and take a few steps at her side. Frances declares laughingly that, if he had wholly recovered his strength, his wife never could have made him the centre of her life and activity as she now does; but Judith has lost none of her common sense with the passing years, and he guesses but little of the half-conscious anxiety that gives a sharp edge to her love.

He does less work than he might have done, but who shall regret it? There are younger men coming on who can wield

the surgeon's knife almost as well as he, and the sense that he might be doing more only breeds in him a great brotherly tenderness for his fellow-creatures. In a man of his type there can be no waste. With him, as in the world of nature, heat and motion are only different forms of the same all-pervading energy. It is perhaps the temptation of the good man generally to give the world too much motion and too little heat.

And Judith loves people still, 'just because they are people.' She is not a person of schemes, but she and her husband are one in aim, and their home is a haven to many whose lives have been cast in more troubled places.

There it is—the unmistakable step on the pavement, the click of the key in the door, the unfailing joy of reunion.

Dinner was over, and husband and wife were seated cosily by the study fire, when Judith took a letter from the mantelshelf.

'From Betty,' she said. 'Shall I read it?'

He smiled, amused. 'All that from Betty?'

'All that from Betty.'

'CAMBRIDGE.

'MY DEAR OLD MOTHER JUDITH,—I am having such a splendid time that it is difficult to find space for letter-writing, and I have such a lot to tell you! . . . Miss Dalglish is quite a novel kind of hostess, and I am getting out of my visit just what I wanted, *plus* a good deal that it had not occurred to me to want. She has taken me to one or two of her lectures. They are dreadfully profound, but it is pretty to see her with her students. There is not a scrap of the dominie in her manner, no pose at all, but the girls are just devoted to her. Tell Aunt Frances when you write that Miss Dalglish does not "teach negations." So far as I can make out, she leaves ultimate questions alone, but all her methods, her whole life and character, are about as "positive" as they well could be. She is very proud of her brother's success,—you have no idea how that great building in London is thronged Sunday after Sunday to hear him preach!—and I can see that she is very pleased about his marriage with Miss Blount after all these years,—just at the moment when, so to speak, he might have married anybody.

'And now about the great meeting. Miss Dalglish and I went up to town rather late in the afternoon, and had just

time for a snack of dinner at the Club. It was a good thing our seats were reserved, for we arrived to find St. James' Hall simply crammed from floor to ceiling. You know how I love a crowd. It gave me a great thrill of expectation.

'Mercifully we got in before the speakers. I would not have missed their reception for the world. As you know Lord Glenluce was in the chair. He is not handsome, not brilliant, just a big, honest, lovable Englishman,—the sort of man you would speak to in a foreign hotel if you had been robbed of your money, and did not know a soul in the place. Lady Glenluce was with him. *What* an ovation she received! I have heard nothing like it since that magical night long ago when Father took me to see *Woodbine*. Ask him if he remembers, and tell him Ianthe Brooke is as sweet and gracious as ever. She seemed pleased that people had not forgotten her, and I am sure Lord Glenluce must have wondered how she *could* give up all that for him.

'As usual we were flooded with facts and figures. The speeches of the evening were those of Mr. Dalgleish and Father Thatcher, or rather, Mr. Dalgleish's was the speech, Father Thatcher's the personality, of the evening. Of course every one knew how much thought and labour they have given to the subject. They are both very striking men to look at. Mr. Dalgleish has a fine noble face. Father Thatcher looks much older and worn, but the very sight of him breaks down one's worldly defences in an odd irresistible way. Grizel believes he sees always before him a vision of that grim, lonely, unbending old man. It is too awful that any one who, like old Mr. Thatcher, believes he lives only for God and righteousness, should disown a son like this. You may laugh, dear, as you did when I was a little girl, but he truly is the only man I ever loved. You should have seen him and Mr. Dalgleish grasp each other's hands when the meeting was over! Grizel says this is the first time they have come together since they parted at some wonderful old Calvary in Portugal.

'But I am missing out the speeches? Oh, you will read them in the papers. And no written account can give any idea of the throb we all felt as those two spoke. Mr. Dalgleish drew a graphic picture of the problem of the poor as it faces us to-day. He showed that in the nature of the case it must be more difficult to deal with than anything else,—any of the enquiries which could be answered in study or labora-

tory, and yet what enthusiasm, what life-long devotion men were willing to give to these!

"It is very encouraging," he said, "to see this great audience to-night, but what we want to know is,—what are you going to give? I don't refer to cheques, though these never come amiss. I want to know *how much of yourself* you are prepared to put into the problem. You would be glad to hear of any "satisfactory scheme" for dealing with it. You would even subscribe largely, if by so doing you could salve your conscience and enjoy your good things in peace. Nay, I know there are some here who would rob themselves of their last penny, if by so doing they could still the "bitter crying" in their ears. Well, we are very glad of schemes, and some of them are working grandly. But we know that no scheme is big enough, nothing is big enough save a great aggregate—in time a great organization—of human hearts. Tell me, are you—you individually—taking a real personal interest in any one man or woman among the disinherited? If not—"

'Father Thatcher spoke on a totally different plane. He seemed to belong to a different age. It is almost appalling to meet a man in these days to whom the Gospel story is more real than anything else in the world. He just accepts the fundamental demands of Christianity with an awful simplicity that pierces one's heart.

'As you know, Father brought me up to think more of mercy than of judgment. Even as a child I never had any vivid picture of a judgment day; but Father Thatcher made the whole thing live. He was absolutely relentless. You have gone to church; you have fasted and prayed. No matter. "*Inasmuch as ye did it not . . .*" Even in that great comfortable lighted hall, with so many fellow-sinners in the same case, he made me feel myself a lonely shivering soul. I heard myself feebly protesting, "Lord, *when* saw I Thee—?" And I had a sickening realization that I was saying it too late.

'And nothing else in the world—none of the many things I have cared about—seemed of the smallest moment in comparison. Yes, Mother Judith, I repeat it,—he is the only man I ever loved.

'Mrs. Dalglish had invited us to supper, and we all met at her house. If I live to be empress of all the Russias—

contingency that seems more remote as the years go on,— shall never expect to be present at such a gathering again. Think of it, Mother Judith! Lord and Lady Glenluce, Father Thatcher (who never goes anywhere), Mr. and Miss Dalglish. I won't say, *Quorum magna pars fui*,—(be sure Father hears that apt quotation!) for they scarcely spoke to me except to ask after you and him. They were full of old memories,—some wonderful meeting on the lowland moors, and then that strange place in Portugal. Lady Glenluce calls Grizel the Lady of the Lambs. I don't think she can have seen her Cambridge students. They don't strike me as particularly lamblike.

'Mr. Dalglish told some delightful stories about my dear Mother Judith in her young days, and Father Thatcher says it was she who first brought home to him the claims of human brotherhood . . .'

'I am glad they realize that at least,' said the big doctor gravely.

Judith's eyes were bright with tears. 'Oh, my dear! seem to have made nothing but mistakes, and my husband wants to give me credit for everything that is good.'

'Not everything,' he said, with the old exactness, smiling slowly as his thought took form,—'only for a single heart and a very unselfish purpose.'

THE END

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