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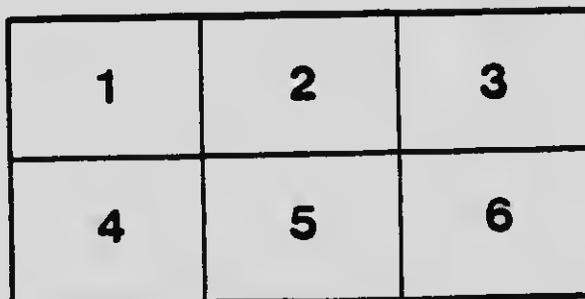
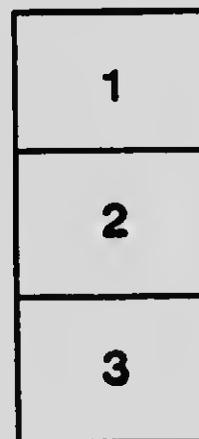
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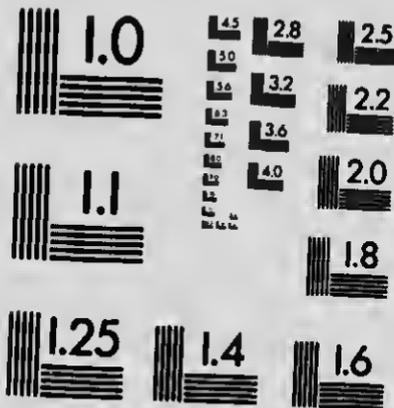
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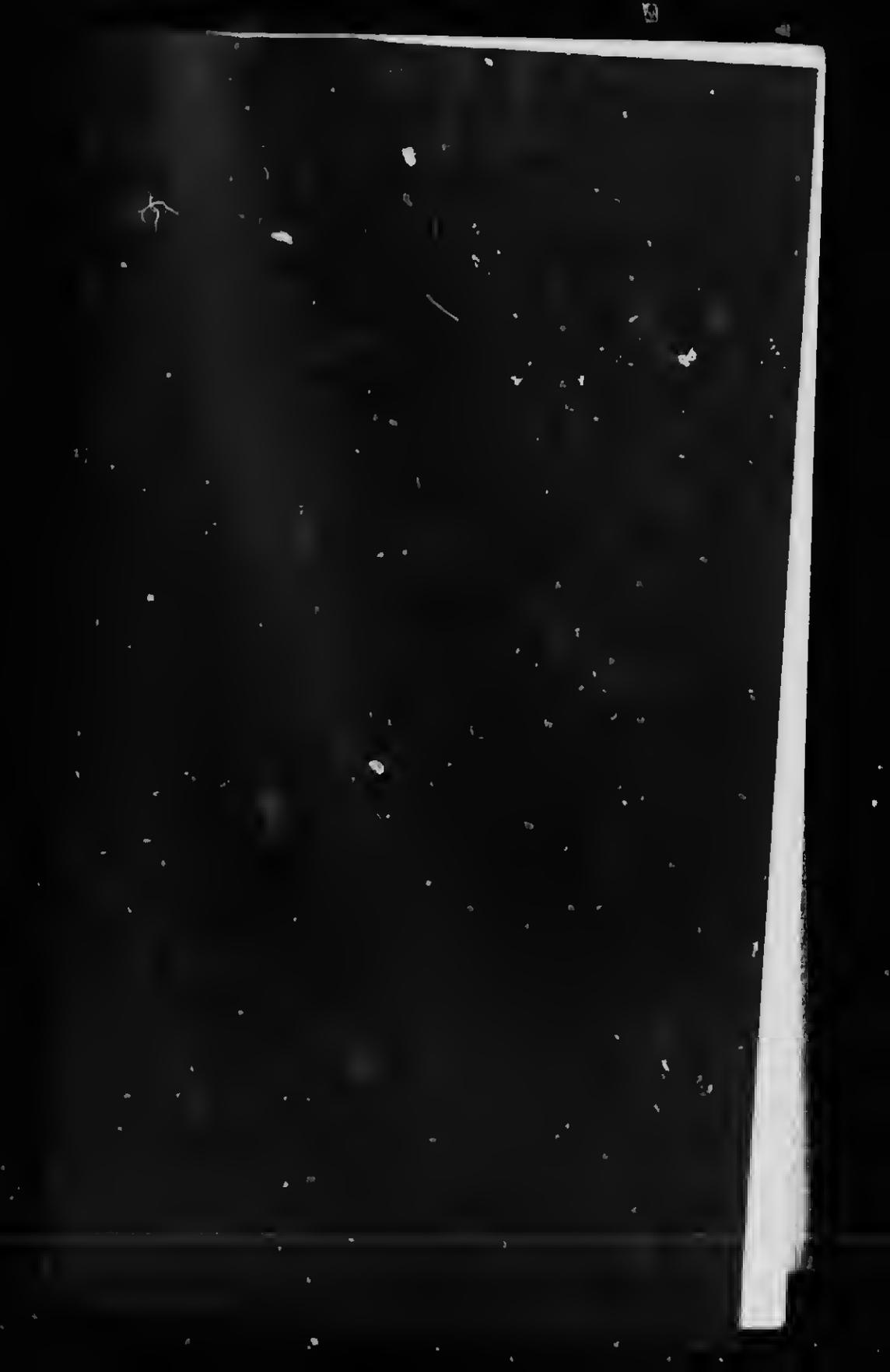
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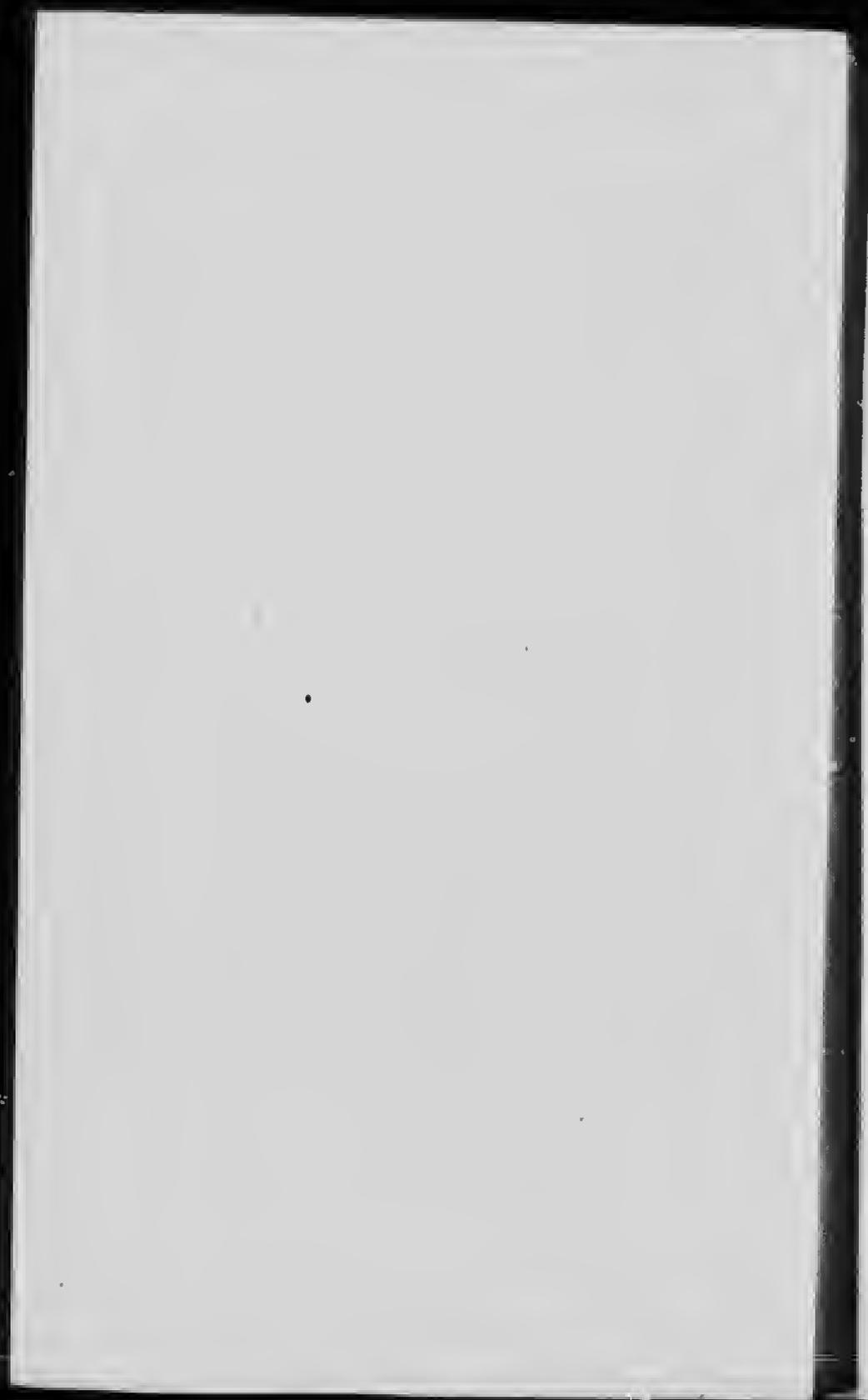
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L. DOUGALL

AUTHOR OF

'REGGARS ALL,' 'THE MOEMON PROPHET,' 'THE MADONNA OF A DAY,'
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Cup o' my sowl,
Gowd an' diamond an' ruby cup,
Ye're noucht ava but a toom dry bowl,
Till the wine o' the kingdom fill ye up.

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AND ALL OTHERS
WHO, ABANDONING THE PURSUIT OF SUCCESS
BY THE PATHS OF THE MULTITUDE
SEEK TO AID IN REALISING THE HIGH IDEAL OF JOURNALISM
AS THE MEDIUM OF
TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN MAN AND MAN



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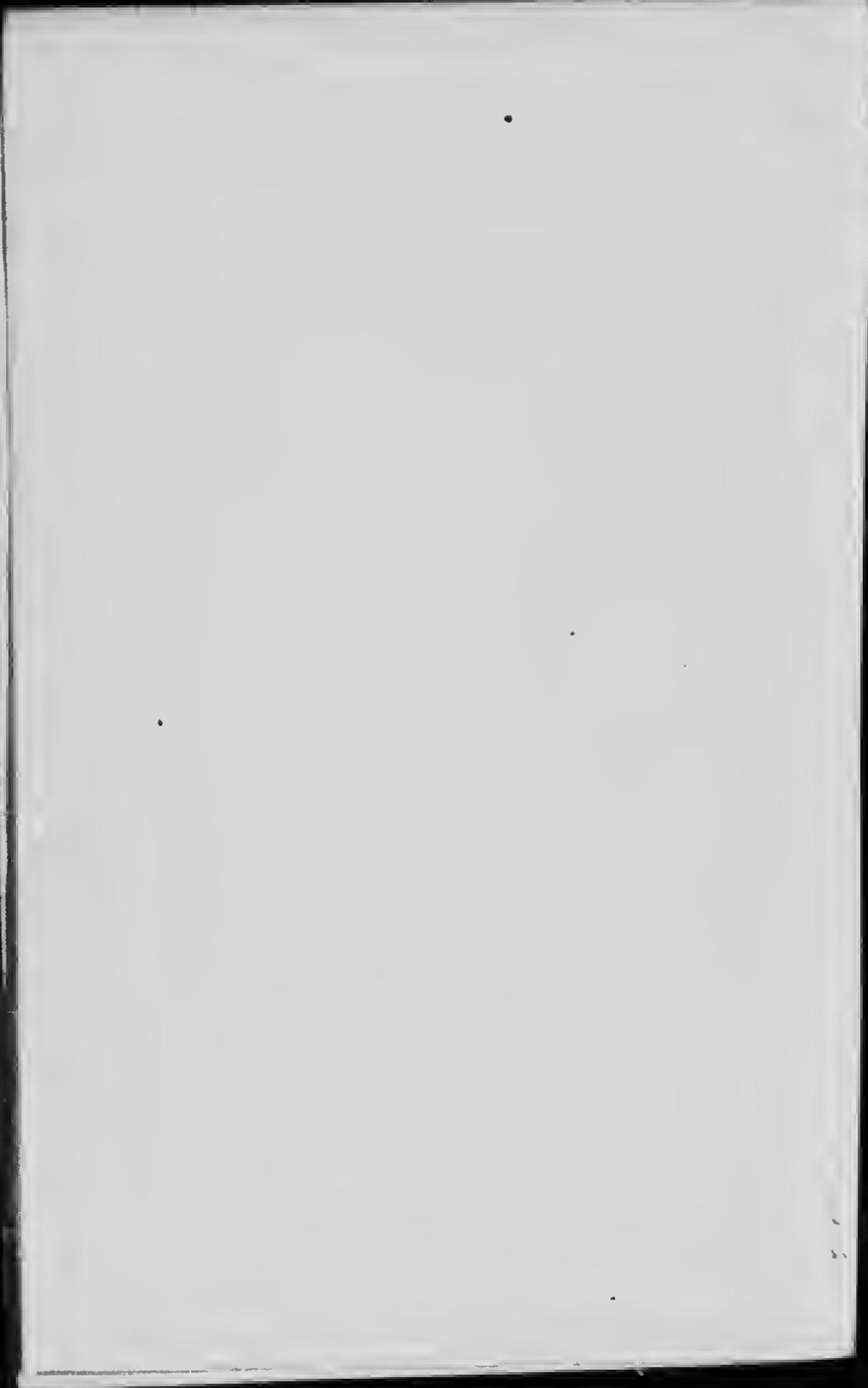
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BOOK I
THE SECRET

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CHAPTER I

THE PLOTTERS

AN October day in the year 1905 was drawing to a close. In London, in a small private hotel near the Strand, an elderly man and his wife sat in a private room receiving a visitor. Any one with ear trained to the accents of the English-speaking world would have known at once that the old folks had spent their lives in Canada; and they had the unconventional and debonair aspect which belonged to the man and woman of an earlier period of that country's history, rather than to the type evolved by its more recent condition of opulence. Their visitor was a man in early middle life, an Englishman with some weight of presence and whose face showed the keenest intelligence. The three were looking upon one another with the affection of a friendship that had sustained long absence and recent reunion—two crucial tests of friendship.

The visitor was saying, 'I cannot give you very much information about Mosford. It is a picturesque old village, with a small factory town

growing out of it on one side. The living was presented to your nephew some years ago; it is worth about three hundred a year. Your nephew is a well-principled, hard-working, poverty-stricken vicar. England is full of such. He is what is called "a good Churchman," and has a tendency towards ritualism. His wife goes further in that direction, I fancy. She is distantly related to the Sarum family. The vicar is what the poor call "quite the gentleman"; if I were trying to express the same idea, I think I should say, "His clothes fit." Now, look at me.'

The speaker was a thick-set man, with a pleasant clarity of complexion. His hair was abundant, shiny, and rather long—not a length to suggest its owner's desire for artistic distinction, but rather that he had forgotten the existence of the barber.

'Look at me,' he repeated, rising. 'My clothes do not fit. They did not fit when I began life, preaching at Mosford. They did not fit when I went out to lecture in Canada—you may have observed the fact there. They do not fit me yet, although I probably employ a better tailor than does the vicar of Mosford. Nor do your clothes fit, Mr. Ward. It is one of the radical differences between one man and another.'

'I have known that all my life,' said the old lady, 'but I never thought of saying it.'

'You have detected genius, Sally,' said the old man. 'You did not suppose they made Nathaniel Pye here a university professor for nothing?' The old man laid a great work-worn hand on the table, and looked with expansive affection at the

younger man. 'Sparkle a little longer, Nathaniel. Do the clothes of my niece-in-law fit?'

'To perfection.'

'You do not like her?'

'It would be nothing to her credit if I did,' said Nathaniel Pye. 'My personal preference runs out to all sorts of wild and villainous folk.'

'Hear him, Sally!' cried the old man. 'But a short time ago his preference led him to express the most ardent delight at seeing us again.'

Nathaniel Pye had a genial expression, almost an habitual smile in his eyes, but he rarely laughed. Old Ward indulged in a comfortable chuckle all to himself.

'I think perhaps there is something both wild and villainous in us,' said the old lady gently.

'You and I are hatching a very deep plot.'

'How did you come by this great sum of money?' asked Pye.

'Honestly,' said old Ward, his bright eyes twinkling.

Even Pye laughed. There was what seemed almost a superfluous and blatant honesty in the appearance of the old couple. He continued his question. 'It was an unexpected godsend?'

'That is more than we can yet say.'

'But in any case it was unexpected?'

'Surely. Having worked all my life to secure a modest independence, how could I possibly have expected that a loan given years ago to a young fellow starting life would return such interest! He has become what he calls "a multi-millionaire," and given me my share. In the mean-

time I had lost all track of him. The money upset all our calculations. We were looking forward to a few years of quiet enjoyment, and the power of doing an occasional kindness or so——

‘I know how very occasional your kindnesses are,’ observed Nathaniel Pye with loving irony.

‘Well, you see at a glance our cause of dismay. We can’t turn misers at our time of life. We must either spend this abominable fortune on ourselves, or on other folks, or give it away. I can’t imagine anything more irksome than the first expedient.’

Nathaniel Pye mused, looking at the two. They were Quaker-like in their simplicity. The pose of their bodies proclaimed their habits of untrammelled activity, as their clear eyes and serene faces made it evident that they ate plain food and not too much of it. To wear fine raiment, to be ministered to by many servants, to turn to a rich diet—these would indeed be undeserved misfortunes.

‘Not, of course, that I won’t buy satin gowns for my wife,’ added the old man fondly. ‘Satin she shall wear whether she likes it or not—yes, Sally, yes—but beyond that I don’t see that we can do much in the way of using it. And it’s not easy to spend money on other folks without doing a lot of harm. It would seem wiser to hand over the disposal of it to a younger man, who would be more in touch with things; so we think, as this blessed nephew of mine is our nearest kinsman, he ought to have the first chance.’

'I am sure that he needs the money,' said Pye.

'Are you? If I were *sure*, he'd have it to-morrow.'

'I mean that I am sure that he could put more money than he has to a good use.'

'Yes, but how much?'

'Quite so; I understand; there are many of us who could use an additional hundred, or an extra thousand, wisely, who would waste more than that if we had it. But I have no reason to suppose that the vicar of Mosford would waste it.'

The old man answered solemnly, 'It's a small thing to waste the money, but it's an awful thing to see a character go to waste by possessing it. I've seen too much of that among young folks in Canada.'

'I wish you could say that you liked our nephew's wife, Mr. Pye,' the old lady urged wistfully.

'My dear Mrs. Ward!' began Pye. He felt ill-used at being credited with a dislike he had not expressed; but as he looked into the frank, quiet eye of the trustful old lady he ceased to expostulate. 'I will not say I dislike her,' he said, 'and, in any case, I do not know her personally. She does a great deal of good parish work. I have every reason to think highly of her—that is, judging her from the point of view of her own conscience and her own prejudices. But having said so much, I shall be miserable if you don't go down and make friends with her.'

The old lady went on. 'But you agree with us that it would be of no use to attempt to do that

if we let them know that their uncle is a very rich man. If they were proud, for instance, they would not let the kindness of their nature appear, lest they should seem to curry favour.'

'Just so,' said Pye, with a slight inclination of his head.

'Or again, if they felt the need of the money very much—if not for themselves, for their church and parish—they might perhaps try to appear better than they really are.'

'Just so,' said Pye more heartily; and then he added, 'But I think the vicar is quite straightforward.'

'More so than the wife?' ejaculated old Ward keenly.

'No—oh no! I have no reason to say that. I think, in fact, that in some ways she is too downright.'

'In any case,' continued Mrs. Ward, 'we could judge of them and their affairs better if we say nothing about the money. That is the deep plot we have hatched; and we have not mentioned the money to any one on this side the Atlantic except you, Mr. Pye.'

'I suppose I must go and whisper it to the rushes, but in any case I fear I must go.'

Ward put his hands up to his ears. 'I am not Midas,' he said, 'but I understand your allusion. I am uncouth; it will not be greatly to the credit of an English gentleman to have an uncle like me in evidence. Uncouth old men are more attractive while they remain in a distant colony.'

'I am sure you know that I was only thinking

of the difficulty you would have in keeping this secret,' said Pye.

'If there were less money,' continued the old man, 'I might let him off with a week's visit; but I really think I ought not to decide to bestow so much upon him until I have been his neighbour a year—what do you say, Pye?'

'If you don't give it to him, what will you do with it? There are, of course, such things as, for example, missionaries.'

'Yes,' said the old man, 'and orphan asylums, and hospitals. They're all very well with regard to the income from it during the few years I live—the missionaries are getting that already,—but I don't believe in endowments in a world of progress. I have the feeling that I owe it to John Compton to leave the capital to him intact unless I find a good reason for not doing so.'

Nathaniel Pye went through an affectionate leave-taking; but when he had half let himself out of the door he turned back and spoke again, and for the first time fluently and earnestly. 'I ought to say more than I have said. If you decide upon a year at Mosford, decide it before you go. Do not let first impressions, or second impressions, turn you from your generous purpose. Your chief interest is in religion, but it is not possible, I think, for you to realise at first the religious position over here. The temper of your religion and mine leads us to belittle the dividing lines of sects; it is difficult for us to imagine that a sane man can regard a line of external division as drawn by God. You

have lived in the Dominion, where only the Roman Catholic Church appears to contradict our view; where the Anglican Church appears as one among other branches of the Christian Church, and where her ministers and adherents very generally accept, or appear to accept, that position. Then again, even where what we call distinctively "Church" doctrine has permeated in Canada and produced religious aloofness, it has not been associated with the social and political prestige which unfortunately attaches to it in England—unfortunately, I mean, for the Anglican Church. Perhaps at the end of a year you might understand that a certain attitude of the vicar of Mosford, which you will be inclined at first to regard as mere bigotry, is in reality a sacred part of his religion, and further, that he is not personally responsible for the alliance of caste with Anglicanism, which we cannot fail to deprecate. I have seen enough of him to know that he is a good man and true. Do not allow any offence he may give you to cause you to doubt this.' Then he added, with more hesitation, 'I know two ladies in Mosford who appreciate his worth, and whose society you may find agreeable. I will write a line to them—not, of course, that I have much influence.'

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOLAR

NATHANIEL PYE stood for a moment in the tiled entrance of the small hotel while the porter called a hansom. At his side was one of the long mirrors apt in our day to bedizen such places. He turned musingly and surveyed himself. It appeared to him that the collar of his coat at the back stood out as if some one had held him suspended by it and just put him on the ground. His trousers were rather baggy at the knee while they showed no sign of wear. He did not know at all what was the matter with his hair or why it had an angular outline round his neck, although any one else would have known it was too long. His hat did not seem to him to be at home upon his massive brow. He did not in the least perceive that the massive proportions of the head were fine, that his face was an exceedingly pleasant one; he mused sadly for a moment on what seemed to him his own unmitigated ugliness. Then some Syriac words rose in his mind; first their inner meaning, and then an abstruse grammatical point which they suggested, carried him far away.

But when he was stepping into the hansom his self-conscious pain, the thought of his own ugliness, returned. That this was so declared his thoughts to bear some relation to a woman who was, or had been, beloved by him, for sober men seldom think of their appearance except in such connection. He began to reflect on the letter of introduction he had offered to send to Mosford—a letter to be seen by the woman whose hand he would fain have won.

Many men as humble-minded as was Nathaniel Pye would have performed at this juncture some half-conscious arithmetical process in which they would have subtracted a plebeian appearance from the sum of academic honour and a comfortable income, and would have regarded the remainder with tolerable satisfaction. This mode of comfort was not for Nathaniel Pye, because his mind did not focus clearly on such secondary questions. He supposed that a reasonable woman would reject a man only on personal grounds or for the sake of some moral principle.

Pye was one of those men whom the English educational system of late has enabled to rise from an elementary school to the highest learning without their being compelled to accept patronage or slur over any religious bias. He was the son of a poor Methodist preacher. Trained in the belief that it was the duty of every one to preach the Gospel, it had never occurred to him not to be a preacher, and of his father's persuasion. He had from his childhood easily taken every scholarship within his reach ; he yielded himself always at odd

hours to learning and research, as other men yield to an irresistible facility for football or for collecting china. After a few years spent as a young minister in a country circuit he had become an authority on cuneiform writings, and been elected to a chair of archæology, first at a young university and then at Oxford. On Sundays he still always found his way to some poor chapel of his own sect, and gave his very best to the same sort of congregation to which his father had ministered. He would not have his sermons advertised, and had they been so announced it would only have been in the vicinity of some seat of learning that his name would have drawn a crowd. He was not the sort of man to get himself talked about by those who make up crowds.

Just now, as he looked out into the flashy dusk of the London streets, into the confused medley of men and horses, glossy with rain, gleaming with lamplight, he was not seeing anything before his eyes, but was in thought traversing the town of Mosford. He saw the graceful street of the old village with its soft definition of old walls and timber gables and roofs of thatch or moss-grown tile, or t'e new squalid streets sharply cut from the surrounding country by rows of new garish brick tenements. In those streets he saw always his own figure—youthful, timid, earnest—and the figure of a girl, strong, exquisite, with laughter in her face, her foot upon the neck of fashion, her hand upon the rein of the richly-comparisined steed of fortune. There were a few other figures

about ; one a young Anglican of priestly guise, who, in the name of God, held out a stern hand to debar the Methodist from approaching the maiden ; there was also his young wife who, when not acting as a priestess of the Church, posed as a priestess of social convention ; and another figure—— But the hansom stopped with a jerk in Paddington Station, and Nathaniel Pye, who was not old enough or stupid enough to be *outré* in his fits of absence, jumped out and sought the Oxford train with a business-like gait.

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CHAPTER III

THE LETTER

MOSFORD lies in the fertile vale of one of those streams that feed the upper Isis. Its old street, which northwards has been lately built upon by factories and shops, opens to the south, its sides parting like a river's banks at the estuary. The Norman church, under the giant trees of its churchyard, stands in the centre of this rustic triangle. Round about the larger houses and humblest cottages group themselves, and the vicarage on one side and quaint Methodist chapel on the other lift their ivy-covered walls.

Upon a day a letter-carrier entered one of the gardens and delivered his wares at the drawing-room window of a substantial dwelling.

'My beautiful aunt, here is a letter from Professor Pye.'

'Now, why do you think it is from him? We have not seen his writing for years.'

The first speaker was Oriane Graham, a woman in the prime of life; the second was her aunt, Miss Kennedy, a faded woman, slight and bright-eyed. The first voice was full, clear, and

musical; the second was soft and thin, with a somewhat humorous intonation.

'How many men do we know who use that college crest? Who else addresses you in dots and kinks of polyglot penmanship?' said Oriane.

'How many ancient alphabets does one need to write habitually in order to be excused for forgetting one's own?' asked the aunt, lifting her eyebrows.

The house to which the letter had come stood a little back from Mosford Street. The two women were in a large, low drawing-room. It was clearly a woman's room; the curtains were a pale rose colour, and the deeply cushioned lounges and chairs were covered with white glossy chintz besprigged with roses. A white rug was on the floor. The windows were open to a sunny garden. Beyond lay golden meads and the rich grouping of autumn trees. Beautiful, joyous, and yet with the pathos of a summer gone by, autumn reigned in the landscape and also tinged the sentiments of the women.

Oriane Graham was handsome, tall, with splendid curves of figure. Her yellow-brown hair, parted in the middle, waved in thick, full lines over her temples, and then twined back in radiant puffs over her shapely head. Her well-formed nose had the breadth that indicates physical force. Her lips had the curves that one sees in the ideal mouth as given in the drawing class. If there had not been a certain slightly dogged squareness of the chin, the mouth

would have been too perfect to express character, but the pink and white tints of the fair skin were so delicate that the doggedness of the chin was apt to escape notice. Her eyebrows and eyelashes were golden-brown, her eyes grey and full of laughter.

'Aren't you going to read Mr. Pye, my beautiful? You are usually devoted to works of his authorship.'

'I wonder what he is writing about,' meditated the aunt. 'Here! I can make nothing out of such hieroglyphic; and besides, his name is so ugly! Read it yourself.'

'You ought to feel enormously honoured to hear from a person who translates papyri and potsherds and cakes of brick. I will not decipher him to you, my beautiful, while you are reading Dante.'

The small, grey-haired aunt was contumacious. She seemed determined to force upon her niece all responsibility for taking an interest in the letter. 'I can understand both Dante and Mr. Pye at once quite well,' she said. 'I could also understand a cookery-book if you read it at the same time. That reminds me that I promised cook to look up a recipe for——' The little lady mechanically drew a cookery manual from a drawer in her desk while at the same time she turned a leaf of the Italian book on her lap.

Oriane was studying the letter. 'I must admit that it is most learnedly illegible, but it begins "My dear Miss Ken——"'

'I don't see how else it could begin, as it is addressed to me,' said Miss Kennedy.

'He is asking us to be nice to some friends of his who are coming to Mosford.'

'Are we going to be nice to them?' said Miss Kennedy.

'That, of course, must depend upon you, my beautiful.'

'My niceness would be futile if you were indifferent.'

'Isn't this surprising?' said Oriane. 'It seems these friends of his are related to the vicar!'

'Friends of a "higher critic" related to Mr. Compton!—you must be misreading, Oriane. Tell me something I can believe.'

'I will run over to the vicarage at once and see what Ethel Compton knows about these interesting people—it might help to the complete decipherment of the letter.'

Oriane had started down the long room to question the vicar's wife when her aunt said, 'Don't go. Don't tell Ethel that the new-comers are friends of Mr. Pye.'

Oriane was one of the few women who have a strong enough character always to be docile in small things. She returned at once. 'Why not, wisest of women? I am deeply attached to Ethel, and I feel it is an honour for her husband to have a relative who is a friend of Mr. Pye.'

'That is just what she is too stupid to know,' said Miss Kennedy.

The younger woman, still holding the letter, put both her hands behind her, and stood, head slightly forward, looking out of the window. At length she said, 'I like Ethel. Do you really

think that is what is the matter with her—stupidity?’

‘My dear Oriane, you have attained the age of thirty, and you are a very intelligent woman; it is impossible that you have failed to divine that Ethel is stupid!’

Oriane spoke slowly. ‘I don’t think I agree with you. I know her better than you do. I think that Ethel is clever enough to—well—I think, for example, that in the ancient world she might have earned fame as an orator of the Sophists.’

‘And you think that she walks perpetually in the narrowest of grooves out of mere principle?’ inquired Miss Kennedy.

‘Yes; I think she has strong principle. That is why I admire her. I have not a shred of it myself, you know.’

‘I would not depend on Ethel’s principle if her interest clashed with it,’ said Miss Kennedy, ‘while in yours I have always confided with reverent tranquillity.’

‘What have you confided to me, my beautiful?’ asked the niece.

‘The care of what I prize most—yourself,’ said the aunt.

‘Except once,’ retorted Oriane.

‘Then that once I must have been in the wrong. But let us not talk any more nonsense at present—I wish to read recipes for soup.’

At which Oriane began, apparently with a light heart, to puzzle over the letter again, and after a while said, ‘To-morrow I may do better,

but I may as well give you my present translation. The letter, as I said, begins, "Dear Miss Ken——" then something cuneiform. Then comes something about "liberty," which, I think, does not refer either to the abstract idea, or to the shop for silks and pottery, but rather to his own attitude, by which I judge that he is asking a favour. Then he relapses into child-like print in the name "Ward." The hieroglyphs before it are surely "Mr. and Mrs." I gather that he met them in Canada, that he feels for them filial affection (it looks like "filtered," but it can't be that). That would suggest that they are pretty old, wouldn't it ?

'Mr. Pye himself must be getting older,' said Miss Kennedy.

'You ought to be awfully flattered that he thinks you would be kind to his friends. This Mr. Ward is, I think, a cabinet-maker ; he "had a shop." I gather he has retired and becomes the vicar's uncle. That is the gist of it ; but I will apply myself to its further study for half an hour later on to-night, and again to-morrow if needful. Mr. Pye says in one of his books that prolonged application to the interpretation of an abstruse inscription is a mistake ; it is better to rest the eyes and the mind and then return to it.'

'But, Oriane, what precisely does he ask us to do ?'

'He leaves that to you—it is merely an introduction.'

'But if this old man had a shop—are you quite sure Mr. Pye does not ask something definite, something we could do ?'

'I judge from the brevity of the epistle that it is a mere introduction. It ends up with a wiggly stroke "to Miss G——"; then there is something like "ham," which I think does not suggest luncheon but refers to me. I am honoured!'

CHAPTER IV

THE AUNT

WHEN Oriane had gone away, Miss Kennedy sat alone with the letter in her hand. She was a woman of many and varied intellectual interests. All her affection and all her ambition were centred in Oriane, whom she had adopted in childhood. If Oriane had not been handsome, good-hearted, and intelligent beyond the average of women, it is possible that Miss Kennedy would not have loved her so very much; she was not largely endowed with that sort of liking that goes out to the young or the poor or the lonely irrespective of merit. Miss Kennedy believed that Oriane's power of personal affection was greater than her own and more easily called forth; yet by training, and perhaps also by nature, Oriane had to a large extent her aunt's critical power and keen appreciation of intellectual differences and achievements.

Miss Kennedy was now thinking of her niece in connection with the writer of the very obscure calligraphy on the notepaper that lay on her lap. When, years before, he had come to Mosford to minister at a poor little Methodist chapel, Miss

Kennedy, who took no interest at all in Methodists, had chanced upon him in the fields one day reading a learned book. She had detected his mental power ; she had given him books ; she had had him at her house and talked much to him. She had been slow to perceive, but had at last realised, that Oriane's charm had struck the youth with tragic force.

Nothing had been said. She tried to drop his acquaintance as quietly as she had picked it up, but the youth had force of character and was intoxicated with the most potent of all wine. Yet he said nothing. Others beside Miss Kennedy had seen his unfortunate passion. The young vicar of Mosford emphasised the religious difference, warned the girl, endeavoured to convert the lover, and, failing in this, did several slight things which were rude enough to be decisive. The young Methodist understood ; he withdrew ; he never said a word on the subject of his love to any of them. It was his power of silence that had made Miss Kennedy, even at the time, unhappy about the incident, for it was her nature to esteem reticence and good taste very highly. Nor had he, in the succeeding years, either betrayed resentment or omitted any rare opportunity which might chance of expressing his obligation for her first friendliness and his appreciation of the value of her acquaintance. This last act of his, if it showed, as it seemed to do, his quiet reliance on her good faith and better feeling, touched her.

The question in her mind was whether Oriane had ever fully known of his passion, and if so, in

what way it had affected her. Oriane had made no sign at the time. For some years after his departure from the place she had never mentioned him. Then, on an occasion when he came to Mosford to speak at some meeting in the little chapel, she had announced a wayward determination to hear the speech, and had carried her point. Oriane had had two offers of marriage from other men and refused them both. One of these was a captain in the Engineers, a man of not more than average intelligence or energy; the other was a rich young curate, an acquaintance of the vicar's. Ethel Compton had been very anxious for the acceptance of each offer, but Oriane had not apparently given a serious thought to either. Then, quite suddenly, when she was older than most girls are who go to the university, Oriane had desired to go to Cambridge and read for the Historical Tripos; she had worked early and late for three years, and, in spite of the lack of early training, had taken a second. She enjoyed the college life and the games thoroughly, and had made several desirable friendships; but afterward she settled down again in Mosford, displaying what her aunt considered an almost regrettable degree of filial affection for herself. Miss Kennedy's was not a nature to crave for the devotion of others, and, by that curious perversity of nature so often to be noticed, she seldom failed to attract it. Thus Oriane was fixed at Mosford; but the place had no outlet for her energy, and the aunt naturally desired that she should marry, and marry a man of distinction. Miss

Kennedy was happy in her solitary and independent life ; she was convinced that Oriane would not find happiness in solitude.

Was Nathaniel Pye still interested in Oriane ? The only shred of evidence the aunt had as to the state of his inclination was that he had not married. She knew the world too well to build on that. If he should still feel, or should again be disposed to take, a special interest in her niece, would the marriage be desirable ? Miss Kennedy was still alive to the drawbacks of his extreme form of piety. Dissent in all its forms was repulsive to her taste and love of stateliness. She objected now as strongly as before to his plebeian name and appearance, and his general inability to appear or to act with elegance of manner. But against all this she now set his fame, learning, and the fixed excellence of his character. Miss Kennedy's worldly wisdom caused the last item to weigh largely : it is only a very shallow and superficial worldliness which affects to be indifferent to goodness.

After all, the whole question turned upon Oriane's fancy. If she could be happy in such a marriage, then it would be desirable. Oriane's open admiration of his scholarship seemed to show that she had no personal feeling about him ; but she was quite clever enough to use this form of concealment. Being ignorant of Oriane's inclination, and perceiving that this was a possible chance of her happiness, and, moreover, possibly the only chance of it, she determined to exert herself to attract the whilom lover by being very kind to his friends.

Apart from the question of Oriane, Miss Kennedy was glad of an opportunity to atone for what she recalled as the snobbish manner in which Mr. Pye had been dismissed. That she should have permitted this stood out in her memory as the one ill-mannered act of her life, otherwise blameless in such respect. Yet she answered Mr. Pye's note in sentences brief and stiff although kind; she could not bring herself to mention her niece except as joining her in the conventional 'kind regards.' Her reserve was born of pride; having been unkind to an unknown youth, she would not now appear to curry favour with the same man in his hour of fame. It never occurred to her that the circumstances which had so altered the case to the worldly mind had not altered it in his.

Professor Pye read her note several times. He discerned pride, but did not divine its cause.

CHAPTER V

THE MOTHER

ETHEL COMPTON—or, as she always signed herself, using her husband's second Christian name, Ethel Cunnor Compton—was, like the vicar, always tired on Monday morning. Three services, at two of which she played the organ and led the choir, Sunday School morning and afternoon, where she was the most active teacher, the care of her own children at tea when the nursemaid was out, were arduous duties. She rose on Monday mornings to feel that her lot was rather a hard one.

Yet she was always kind and gentle to her husband and children, for she had a great deal of concentrated goodwill. Subject to the claims of her very real religion, her whole desire and purpose in life was their welfare. The children were three, and all girls. They all had pretty features and delicate complexions. Only one of them had really good eyes—dark eyes, with sparkle and depth in them; the other two had their mother's eyes, rather smaller and less defined than is necessary for beauty. This Monday morning, with the perversity of children, they were troublesome, and

as soon as they went out into the garden they fell over each other on some wet earth and came in again screaming and dirty.

‘Mummie, Muriel pushed me.’

‘Mummie, I didn’t. Ida poked her foot in my tummit. Ow—ow—yow.’

‘Mummie, baby’s naughty.’

‘Come, come. You must not disturb daddy. There, what does it matter if Muriel did put her foot on you? That isn’t where your tummit is. Come, baby; would you all like to wear your big pinafores and make mud-pies? I shall be wanting some pies soon to put in the larder, because we’ve eaten up all those cook made last week. There—gently. You must not wake daddy. Daddy is so dreadfully tired.’

‘Mummie, why is daddy always tired?’

‘Because he can’t afford to have a curate, and there is more than two men’s work to be done. See, here is nurse with the overalls. We’ll put them on just here.’

‘Mummie, do curates cost much to buy?’ It was the thoughtful little person with the black eyes who spoke. ‘Does a curate cost as much as a new carpet?’

‘A curate costs more than a carpet.’

‘Nurse says there’s a hole coming in the drawing-room carpet. It’s coming rather slowly, for she says it will be here by next year.’

‘You must all try to prevent it coming, for I’m sure mother hasn’t any money to buy a new carpet.’

‘It’s coming just between the door and the tea-table. I don’t know what we could do to stop

it unless we danced on the other parts. Mummie, if we bought a curate, should we keep him in the loose box now the pony's gone?'

'It's a pity she isn't a boy, ma'am,' said the nurse when the three little scarlet figures raced away. The elderly nurse was a family confidante.

'Oh, I don't know, nurse. You see, if a girl marries well she is really lifted above all misfortune. A man who has no fortune is obliged to work so hard.'

'Yes, ma'am; but what if a girl marries a poor man?'

'I hope and trust none of my children ever will,' said the mother in the tone of one making a short prayer. 'If they do not marry, I'm sure my godmother will secure some small income upon them. And you know, nurse, even upon a very small income a gentlewoman can be most dignified as long as she is alone.'

Ethel remained a little while on the garden doorstep, where she had sat down to button the overalls. The nurse went to her work, and the tired mother, who was still young and fair, indulged her hopes in the morning sunshine. Her hopes were very practical and definite.

The Earl of Sarum, from whom her husband held the living of Mosford, was incapacitated by ill-health from administering his affairs. His brother, the Hon. Nicholas Glynne, was virtual head of the family and heir to the title. He had married the daughter of a political duke, a woman of narrow class prejudices but very gracious to the Comptons. The Dowager Countess of Sarum lived

at Mosford Park, a stately Georgian mansion some mile and a half out of the village. She was the one fixed star of Ethel Compton's social firmament. In the vicinity of this fixed star a comet sometimes flashed for a brief space. This was Lady Alicia Glynne; her husband and her three little sons were her brilliant train. They were very rich and very important and very religious.

Ethel had long devised a plan for persuading Mr. Glynne, who had high ecclesiastical friends, to advance her husband's preferment in the Church. If only she could have a thousand a year when the girls were growing up, she was sure she could manage matters so that each would fall in love with a person of rank and wealth. She would not approve of a marriage without love; and if a man was young and in love, the woman's influence would always make him good and religious. That was all she stipulated for; she did not care for clever men. She was not afraid that her daughters would have any eccentric preferences—indeed, she was determined to nip all that sort of thing in the bud. Mr. Glynne and Lady Alicia were so very kind, and her little girls had been invited once or twice to The Park to play with the boys, the eldest of whom was the future earl. Who could tell what might happen? Their mother, it was true, was somewhat narrow and exclusive; she had an aquiline nose, and knew very well when she was condescending, although she was too nice to betray it in her manner. Still, there was nothing to prevent marriage between one of the boys, preferably the eldest, and one of her girls;

for, if her husband's grandfather had been unknown, all his relatives had, fortunately, drifted from the scene; her husband was to become a dignitary of the Church, and she herself, happily, was related to the Sarum family. Everything depended on the training her girls got, and what she could do for them would depend upon her husband's advancement. She could not believe that he would be passed over, for in her eyes he was not only the best and most hard-working of men, but the most eloquent of preachers.

She worshipped that section of the Christian society called the Anglican Church, with which her husband's career was bound up, and was convinced that no greater benefit could accrue to it than that he should attain a prominent position in it. Hers was a type of character which always tends to enhance the value of its own possessions; and when this quality is combined with womanly devotion natural to a wife and mother, it is always an interesting question how far such an one will discern the faults in her inner circle. In this case the woman was to be credited with good sense, for her husband was a truly good man, a devout Churchman, and tender-hearted in his domestic relations. When, added to these qualities, a man has a face which may be described as beautiful rather than handsome, a good figure and a nice personal taste, the devotion of such a wife as Ethel Compton requires no explanation.

CHAPTER VI

THE WIFE

THE village doctor had recently ordained that the vicar was to go back to bed after early service on Monday mornings ; and the vicar, being a rational man and having paid for the medical advice, obeyed it. Whether he slept or not, he remained in a room dark and quiet.

On this Monday morning he came to his wife about noon with the morning letters in his hand.

'Dearest,' said she, 'you have eaten no breakfast ; your tray has come down almost untouched.'

'Never mind,' said he, 'I shall have all the better appetite for luncheon.'

'I am afraid your toast was tough,' she said. 'Martha, I fear, is too young and ignorant even for us.'

'The toast appeared to me very nice. Tell Martha the tea was delicious, and that will encourage her. But now, to the letters. Here is one from the Bishop, asking us if we could arrange to have the diocesan retreat here this year. We have not had them here for a long time. The Bishop himself is to take the retreat.'

She became at once the woman of business, resourceful and attentive. 'Have you thought how it can be managed?'

He passed a rather unsteady hand across his brow. 'I had hardly thought—indeed I felt that you would better cope with ways and means than I. It is a good many for Mosford to put up. If we took the Bishop we could not take more than one other guest. The squire is uncertain, but if he were in the humour they could take six or seven at the Hall. And Miss Kennedy and the Browns would take two each. The food, of course, would all be provided in the parish room, and the labour of that would fall upon you.'

'Oh, I do not mind the work at all; I can easily attend to it. It would be a great honour and a great pleasure to have the Bishop with us for three days.'

'But at least twenty beds would be needed. Is the "Red Cow" possible?'

'I am not very sure whether we ought to send any one there; it was only last week they tempted poor Bastin in, and he had kept the pledge for three months.'

'It is very difficult for us to tell how far they tempted him.'

'Mrs. Bastin told me that——'

'Yes, but Mrs. Bastin was in great trouble; and besides, she had the account from Bastin.'

'I feel sure that it was true; she gave me details; and there can be no doubt that they give many men more than they ought to have.'

‘The policeman tells me that he has never seen them serve men actually drunk.’

‘He takes a glass himself, and gets it for nothing. How can you place any confidence in him?’

‘Are you sure he takes what he does not pay for?’

She was quite sure, but had no proof to give, and he was satisfied that she was too ready to take up a reproach against her neighbours.

The next matter was one in which he did not find her so eager to assist him.

‘This is from poor Dinsmore. I am afraid I shall have to lend him ten pounds.’

‘But he has not repaid any of what you have lent him.’

‘No; but it is a very hard case; and if your godmother were not so generous we might be in like case. His wife has had a very serious operation; the doctors have charged almost nothing and will wait, but the nurses had to be paid. How is it possible for a man with three growing children to live decently on a hundred and fifty a year? And he has never got into debt until his own long illness last year, and now this trouble about his wife.’

‘It is a crying shame that our clergy are so poor.’

‘There is something very wrong,’ he said; ‘it is hard to say exactly what. But Dinsmore, of course, is my oldest friend, and he probably thinks we are more flush of money than we really are.’

‘I don’t quite like the fact that he hardly

mentions what you have already done,' said she, reading the letter.

'Even if he were much more in fault than he is, we are not told to lend to the brother who is perfect but to the brother who is in need.'

'Yes; but, my dearest, there must be reason in all things.'

'There is, no doubt, a Divine reason, dear, for every command our Lord has laid upon His Church, but it does not follow we can always see it.'

'Still, I cannot see that you have any right to give to beggars till it comes to your having to beg yourself.'

'We can always starve first, you know,' said he, with one of his placid smiles.

The matter was compromised. She persuaded him that five pounds was all he could possibly send.

When this was settled he brought forward a third letter. 'The contents of this,' said he, 'are rather astonishing.'

'It is from your Canadian uncle,' said she; for although she had not seen the handwriting very often, it was not her way to forget anything that might bode good or ill to her family. She had thought more than once of Compton's one relative who might die and leave them a little money—more than a little, she knew, was not to be expected.

'He is a Canadian uncle no longer. He and my aunt are in London. He says that he has retired from business—sold it and obtained an annuity

which will keep them comfortably. He wants to live near us in Mosford for a year, so that he and his wife can get to know us and the children.'

'Isn't it rather selfish of him to have sunk all his money in an annuity?'

'I can hardly say that. He has worked hard for it all his life, and they have no one dependent on them. We have reason to know they are not ungenerous, even on a small income, for they have often sent gifts to the children, and then, you know, we got rather a handsome wedding present from them. It is not as if I or mine had ever done anything for him.'

'Still I always think it selfish to sink money in an annuity. It is so regardless to those who come after.'

'So it is; but I have just pointed out that there are none to come after.'

'Still, of course, anything he left would have come to you and your children.'

'Not at all. It might have gone to the Baptist sect. It is in a Baptist society that he has bought his annuity.'

Her face assumed a more solemn expression. 'That is a reason why we could not have them living in Mosford, Cumnor. It would confuse the minds of the people. It would counteract much of your good influence.'

'Of course there is that to be thought of,' said he. 'How far he would prove a factor in the life of Mosford would depend a good deal on what sort of a man he is. I never saw him, and his letters are always brief. Some men can go in and out and

find pasture, and are never noticed by their next-door neighbours.'

'But of course the whole place would know that you had an uncle who was a Dissenter.'

'I can easily see that his coming here might be disagreeable for you in more ways than one, and I should be very sorry for you to have to face disagreeables on my account.'

'I think, dear, you know that I would always do anything I could for relatives of yours.'

'Yes, I am sure of that. If he were poor or ill you would offer to have him here at once——'

'I am sure I should. But he is neither poor nor ill, and I don't think they would be at all happy in Mosford.'

'I do not really think they would,' he said reflectively; 'I have so very little time that I could devote to them; and when they knew me I don't suppose they would care very much for my society. They have been accustomed to live in a large Canadian town, where, no doubt, there were plenty of popular diversions and where they would have many friends of their own sect.' A happy thought seemed to strike him. 'I suppose he is a Baptist; they have no chapel here at all; he would be obliged either to go to the Methodists or come to church, and he could not conscientiously do either.'

'He certainly could not,' she said. 'You remember the pamphlet he sent us that he had written himself. It was very schismatic. I think he held that baptism was "the seal of conversion," or something like that, wasn't it, dear?'

Compton could not avoid a smile at the horror in her face. 'He is so misguided that I think we ought to be thankful he has bought an annuity; any gold he might have bequeathed to us would have been tainted by the heresy.'

She did not understand the irony. 'There is something in what you say; and I am glad we know that he has sunk his all in an annuity, otherwise we might not have been quite sure what was right to do, for the children's sake. But, as it is, I think our duty is quite clear. We must, of course, be kind to them—indeed, I think you ought to go to London and see them; it would not cost very much; but urge them to settle among people of their own sort. You know, my dear, when I think of that pamphlet, it seems to me it would be very wrong to have him here, because he would certainly preach his doctrines, and we are responsible for what goes on in this parish.'

The smile died from his face and the irony from his voice. 'I believe you have sometimes a clearer insight into duty than I have, my dear. If my uncle is the sort of person who would propagate his views, I certainly ought not to encourage him to come here; and I think you are right in suggesting that I go to see him at once—I never thought of it.'

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL QUESTION

THE Countess of Sarum was at the head and forefront of the vicar's flock in Mosford. She was a clever, stately old woman, now by infirmity confined to the house. She was really kind to a few people, one of whom was her grand-niece and god-daughter, Ethel, wife of John Compton. The vicar was grateful; and although he rated the shallow dignities of rank and wealth more truly than did his wife, his gratitude made him feel that it was necessary to be nice to the old lady. His wife was quite sure that it was necessary to be nice to her, because the quarterly allowance which Lady Sarum had always given her for dress was now indispensable, not only for dress, but as an aid to the household expenses.

Mr. Glynne was a Churchman, and called himself 'a good Catholic.' When he visited his mother at Mosford Park, he and Lady Alicia, who was also devout, always came to daily celebration at the parish church. They frequently breakfasted at the vicarage, and the vicar and his

wife were invited in return to dine at The Park. While these visitors remained in the neighbourhood, the vicarage was always a centre of pleasing animation ; Ethel Compton walked with a lighter step ; she looked more youthful, and she wore her better clothes.

Next in honour among the Mosford parishoners was the squire, Mr. Latimer. He was by nature a farmer, very intelligent and industrious, and only by name in any way a person of distinction ; but at the vicarage that name always gained him deference. He was kind and gentle and generous, just to his tenants, merciful to offenders, gracious to the poor. If he could only have been brought to care the least little bit about Church doctrine or points of ceremonial, even so far as to vacate his old-fashioned pew in the chancel, he would have been an ideal character. As it was, he did no particular honour to his station in life, because it was well understood in the vicarage that the squire's unfailing humility and good taste lacked moral fibre. The squire's wife was dead. His son had built himself an exquisite pleasure-house on one side of Mosford churchyard, in the choicest spot of the dear old village street, and there lived, and painted pictures which brought him money and renown. And there he brought his beautiful wife, and reared a family of beautiful children, and kept beautiful ponies to drive about with. He said that he and his family were children of the Renaissance ; and his family never came to church, nor did he, except to sketch in it when no service was going on, or to play the organ. And

he was never at all respectful to the vicar, but was merely good-natured to him in a half-humorous way, as if the vicar and his wife were playing a little farce which he found quite artistic and amusing when it did not happen to bore him. These, with Miss Kennedy and Miss Graham, and a Mrs. Brown, the widow of a former vicar, and her two daughters, constituted 'society' in Mosford.

It was only natural that Ethel Compton should foresee great difficulty in introducing Mr. and Mrs. Ward to her Mosford friends.

One day, when Oriane was out taking a lesson in the business of chauffeur, Ethel went to see Miss Kennedy.

'After a great deal of calculation, Oriane has decided that we can afford a motor if we don't need a driver,' explained Miss Kennedy.

'I have something to tell you, Miss Kennedy,' said Ethel unheeding. 'It is rather important, and I really want your advice.' She made a brief statement concerning her husband's Canadian uncle. 'And last week, to our surprise, he wrote from London and said that he had brought his wife over to finish their days in England, that he wanted to come and live in Mosford beside us.'

'How very nice!' said Miss Kennedy placidly.

'It is not nice, Miss Kennedy. He is a very peculiar man, a rabid Baptist. Some years ago he sent Cumnor a pamphlet about the wickedness of baptizing infants. It was very awful; I burned it.'

'People who write pamphlets are usually quite

interesting,' said Miss Kennedy. 'I am always rather sorry that the fashion of pamphleteering has gone out; it was a wholesome outlet for the feelings. I should be more amiable myself if I had written several.'

'But I am speaking of this horrid man's religious views.'

'You mean "this man's horrid religious views"?'

'But no one could hold such views and not be horrid. Our Lord said so explicitly, "Suffer little children——"'

'It seems to me,' said Miss Kennedy, 'He also said something about people who held wrong religious views not always being horrid.'

'Cumnor is so perfectly sweet about his uncle,' went on Ethel. 'He went up to town at once to welcome him to England, and when speaking to me he always calls the wife "my aunt"!''

'But she is his aunt,' said Miss Kennedy.

'I am afraid she is not a lady,' said Ethel. 'Cumnor heard once from some people who had seen them in Canada that she did all her own house-work. Of course in a colony that sort of thing does not matter so much, but here—— In any case we could not have him here. He might preach in the streets and very much undermine Cumnor's influence.'

'The vicar has had a twelve years' start of him,' said Miss Kennedy. 'His influence must be established.'

'But you know how people run after a novelty; and he might do more harm here than anywhere else, just because of his connection with us. Of

course, as Cumnor said, if they were poor or ill, we should ask them to the vicarage at once; but the old man says he has quite enough to live upon—I suppose in a small way—and that he and his wife are “hale”—that is the word he used. Cumnor is so very refined and sensitive himself that I can't help feeling grieved for him. It is hard enough for him to do the work of two men, as he is doing, without having people come who will jar so on his taste.'

“Hale” is not a bad word!'

'Are you laughing? I do not see why. It is really a misfortune to have such relatives—pronounced schismatics too. But I have not told you all. Cumnor so good-naturedly left all his work and went to town, to the hotel they wrote from. He found they had gone to Oxford, and he got their address and went on there. Who do you think they were visiting? You would never guess! It was that Mr. Pye, the Methodist, who used to dog Oriane about. Cumnor was so surprised; but I am not, for I am sure he is just the sort of friend you might expect them to have; I told him so. It seems Mr. Pye has been out in Canada. But I want to tell you what Cumnor says. This Mr. Pye has a good house in Holywell, and everything new and most artistic. Is it not sad that such a man should be allowed to fill one of the chairs at Oxford?'

'Did you not know that Mr. Pye was an Oxford professor? And Professor Brown told me it was said in Oxford that he gives away two-thirds of his income.'

'To whom does he give it?' asked Ethel with interest.

'Oh, I don't know. It was implied he gave it to good objects.'

'In charity? Oh, nobody gives away two-thirds in charity. That is just a tale. It is terrible to think that Oxford should be getting into the hands of Dissenters.'

'Well, you know, your husband and I always differ, because it seems to me that you and he lay the emphasis in the wrong place in your frequent lamentations. Let us agree that it is sad, that it is a real misfortune that half the people in England have parted from the Church, either towards Dissent or agnosticism; and let us lament that the Church is not winning them back very fast. I agree with you that that is a real misfortune; but I cannot think it right that, while that is the case, the Church should have the monopoly of any national institution.'

'But how is the Church to win the people back if the land is flooded with schismatic teaching in the schools and universities too? How can the Church make headway against it?'

'If it cannot make headway by persuasion, it has no right to do so by tyranny. But, you know, we have discussed this before, and we never agree.'

'I sometimes think, Miss Kennedy, that you and Oriane are not really good Churchwomen. Dissent seems to me so wicked. Why should a man like this Mr. Pye, who must have some intelligence to be a professor—why should he be a

Dissenter? I see no reason but wrong-headedness—do you?’

‘I’ve not the least idea why he is a Dissenter! I have not the least idea why electricians always say they “must have a circuit”; but I know electricians to be men of intelligence, so I suppose there is a good reason for what they call a “circuit.” As I know Dissenters to be intelligent, I am forced to suppose they have grounds for dissent which I do not understand. I am even willing to admit that a Methodist may also require “a circuit.”’

‘The chief ground of Dissent is spiritual pride, or obstinacy, or both. Cumnor, you know, talked with this Mr. Pye when he was a youth, and Cumnor was convinced that was at the bottom of it.’

‘That is very likely, but Mr. Compton may have made a mistake. However, I agree with you it is a great pity that Mr. Pye is not a Churchman. Have your uncle and aunt changed their minds—are they going to settle in Oxford?’

‘Don’t call her my aunt, please; it makes me shiver, and then I have the children to think of.’

‘We choose our friends, not our relatives. Except in the case of marriage, we have no choice as to who are, and are not, our relatives. Did Mr. Compton persuade his relatives not to come to Mosford?’

‘No; that was what I came to tell you. They would not take any hint he gave them. Any one with any fine feeling would have seen that he felt it was much better for them, as well as for us, that

they should not come. He told them that there was no suitable house, and no Baptist chapel, and that there was nothing going on in Mosford to interest them. But they were perfectly pig-headed about it and determined to come. Cumnor did not positively forbid them : he was not sure that would be right. He came back last night to consult me. They actually threaten to come down next week to look for a house ! Cumnor thinks we perhaps ought to ask them to the vicarage while they are looking about. I came over to tell you about it. I think perhaps I had better run over to Oxford and take the children. They make their wish to see the children an excuse for coming. I could show them the children, and I think I could make things plainer than Cumnor did—men, you know, are so apt to bungle a thing like that.'

At length Miss Kennedy asked, 'Was Mr. Pye present when Mr. Compton saw his uncle and aunt? Did Mr. Pye hear the various objections Mr. Compton made?'

'He was not there all the time ; but he came in, and my husband said everything distinctly to him again, because he thought, now that he is a professor, that he would have sufficient sense to understand. But he was just as obtuse as he used to be long ago. You remember he could not take a hint.'

'No, my recollection is quite the reverse. I remember that he understood our first plain hint perfectly, and acted upon it at once.'

'That is not my recollection of him at all. I

am sure he would have simply bullied you and Oriane if Cumnor had not interfered.'

'It is curious what different impressions people get sometimes of the same thing,' said Miss Kennedy.

'And I shall tell my husband that you quite advise me to go to Oxford with the children. You see—as he said to me last night—it would be disagreeable for you and Oriane if they came here and invited Mr. Pye to visit them. He is not married, and we might have all that business up again.'

'I have not given you any advice,' said Miss Kennedy. 'As you know, I have Highland blood in my veins, and strong tribal sentiments. I think if I were your husband I would stand by my own kith and kin.'

'But you surely do not think this old couple could possibly be happy in Mosford! Why, in Canada, you know, they are probably used to going to the circus, and having big tea-meetings, and perhaps driving about neighbouring in a buggy—without having the horse properly groomed. And who could they neighbour with here?'

'They may come to see me if they like,' said Miss Kennedy.

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIE LATIMER

WHEN Oriane came in, Miss Kennedy repeated the greater part of the interview with excellent mimicry and spirit. She was too well-bred to use her powers as a mimic except for Oriane's amusement.

'Poor Ethel!' cried Oriane laughing. 'But you know you might just as well expect a horse in blinkers to see what is going on behind him as expect Ethel to see a thing like this in a large way. What I respect Ethel for is her intensity. She is not broad; she is not to be blamed for not being broad, any more than for not being long-sighted. Poor dear! I know she is thinking of what that wretched Lady Alicia will say, and the old Countess. And, after all, they are *her* relatives, so, according to your principles, she ought to consider their feelings.'

'But if religion is anything it is surely emancipation from the tyranny of Lady Alicias.'

'No; I don't see that, unless she admits that Lady Alicia is wrong. And that is just Ethel's misfortune—she is made to see things as Lady Alicia does.'

'I think,' said Miss Kennedy, 'you must admit that if they think there is no certainty of salvation outside the Church, it should make them more attentive, not less, to the feelings of any poor outsiders. But I wonder,' she went on, 'why this old couple are determined to come. You see it is quite evident that Mr. Compton said enough to make it clear to Mr. Pye, any way, that he did not want them in Mosford.'

A week after, another neighbour came in to discuss the Comptons' relatives. It was Willie Latimer the artist. He brought two beautiful little sons with him. They were both dressed in velvet with broad lace collars, and had long curls, and behaved like spoiled children. Willie Latimer himself was dressed in a coat of quite a beautiful robin's egg colour and a flannel shirt and blue neck-tie.

'It's so awfully comfortable to have a prim tea. One thing we never are at our house is prim. Poor Diana has a very bad headache to-day, so I brought the boys out.'

Willie Latimer's theory of life was that it ought to be pure freedom and pure joy and pure beauty, from which goodness would naturally result. He had married a young girl who had appeared the very incarnation of the theory until she fell a victim to chronic hysteria. She was always complaining of some disease or other. To his friends this seemed to mar the harmony of the household, but Willie had never been known to admit by sign or word that domestic joy had failed. He had another great misfortune; his eldest boy had not

developed normally. For two years now this boy had been banished to a school for defective lads. It was said that the mother could not bear the sight of him ; but Willie always spoke of him, as he spoke of her, as if he saw no defect. The children that were left were many and bright enough, and he managed to be both father and mother in his leisure hours. His friends thought it no hardship to help him a bit, even by allowing his children occasionally to trample upon their best cushions or break their exotics.

There was little inquiry made about poor beautiful Diana's headache. He was allowed to forget her and rattle over all the gossip, as he loved to do.

'There was a queer old couple came down in the train with me yesterday,' he said. 'Old man rather like Raphael's St. Peter. If he had only dressed like him he would have been quite good-looking—but St. Peter in check tweeds, you know, looks rather a cut.'

'What exactly did Raphael make him wear ?' asked Oriane.

'I don't suppose a tailor could produce those togs ; but he could have them made at home. His wife is quite a serviceable, working person, I should say—like somebody's housekeeper. She'd look quite like a Holbein if she wore a white ruff and a black farthingale, and a huge bunch of keys at her waist.'

'I never heard it was St. Peter's wife who kept the keys ! That's quite a new idea.'

Willie laughed. 'Well, in this case it wouldn't

matter which had them ; either of them would let one through easily enough. Good-natured couple, but awful cuts. The old man has nice black eyes. Couldn't think where I had seen those eyes before ; it puzzled me all the way from Oxford. They belong to the middle child at the vicarage—always wondered where she got her eyes, and here comes a smiling old gentleman with a similar pair. I hope she will keep hers as bright for as many years. She's a very decent little person, that middle child—best of the vicarage lot. Still, the coming of this old couple here is nefarious—quite nefarious I call it. When we got here it turned out he is Compton's uncle ! Compton, as worthy as usual, at the station to take him up to the vicarage. Ethel, suppressed and smiling, aggravation incarnate, from the waving tip of a stiff aigrette to the tips of her shining shoes ! I was amused ; didn't they both—Compton and Ethel—think it necessary to turn in, one at a time, and see me last night and explain matters ? Neither knew the other was coming, so I let them each talk. I suppose you have heard all about it ? Inconvenient old relative ; won't take a hint ; won't listen to reason ; squats down here beside Compton as freely and firmly as he might squat on Government land in the West. He hasn't any right to do it, you know. I haven't any patience with people annoying one another. The object of life is happiness and beauty, and if people are not beautiful and can't make other people happy, they ought to stay away from the objects of their affection. The more you care for

another person the less you should be willing to annoy him. To my mind, the old couple are quite in the wrong, but what amuses me is the reason Compton has for disliking them. If I, for example, had an uncle that annoyed my wife, I'd say out and out, "He annoys my wife, therefore I don't like him and won't have anything to do with him." But, you see, Compton thinks annoyances are sent by Heaven, and so he makes the old man's religion his reason for objecting to him. Compton thinks he's a Baptist; and when he was younger he wrote quite a learned pamphlet to explain that people ought to be dipped in whole when they are full size. Now, there's no Baptist chapel here, and Compton explained that to the old man, because he thought the old man couldn't conscientiously say his prayers among people who weren't dipped in whole and didn't wait till they were full size to be done at all. But the old man said that he had grown old enough to know that external things were not of first importance, quoted the text, "God looketh upon the heart," and said he had decided to go to church every Sunday morning to hear Compton preach, and to the Methodist place in the evening. Well, the funny thing is that Compton can't get that idea into his head at all. He thinks the old man ought to set down his foot about dipping in whole, full size, and think that nobody's fit to pray with who doesn't agree with him. He says he can get on, and he can even do Christian work, with a man that's one thing or another, but men that are neither one thing nor another he hasn't

any use for. I laboured most kindly with Compton—not that I care about St. Peter in tweeds—but I said to Compton, “If you’re talking about an outward sign for an inward grace, can’t there be two outward signs for the same inward grace?” But you know what Compton is—if he doesn’t bless you with three fingers you’re not blessed; two wouldn’t do it. He hasn’t got any width of brow; that’s where Compton’s lacking. He’s quite pretty in his surplice, quite pretty enough to paint; but you need to take him in profile so that you don’t see that his temples are a bit squeezed together. Now, I’ve a great deal more respect for Ethel’s judgment. When she came she went at the thing straight. Of course she said all this about the religion too; but she said also that they were a couple of old horrors, and she didn’t know how she could explain them to Lady Sarum or Lady Alicia. And she knew—oh, she knew quite well—that with her the religion is only an excuse, and if they were rich and well-mannered and aristocratic, she would go and be dipped in whole herself to please them.

Oriane checked her laughter. ‘No, no, Willie; you’re quite mistaken about Ethel. She doesn’t know herself clearly at all, and if she did she wouldn’t know what you are saying, because she does care very much about her religion, and she thinks all Mr. Compton’s doctrinal points of vast importance.’

‘What do you think, Miss Kennedy?’ he asked. ‘Am I right, or is Oriane?’

Miss Kennedy only said, ‘The curious thing is

that Oriane is the only one of us who is really attached to Ethel, and she is not sorry for her a bit; Oriane simply ripples over with laughter at the whole situation.'

'Because I think it will do Ethel good,' said Oriane. 'She will broaden out a bit. The old people are really so good that she must before long begin to be sorry for the way she is taking it. I am Ethel's friend, and I think she is worth educating; and in some ways she is a great deal better than either you or I. Willie.'

'Or than I,' said Miss Kennedy.

'No one in the world is better than you, my beautiful I' cried Oriane.

'Stick to that, Oriane; you won't go far wrong,' said Willie, looking with eyes of affection upon his hostess. 'If I ever go to church, it will be with this aunt.'

'Yes, Willie; there she sits,' said Oriane, pointing at her aunt. 'You and I both adore her, and she absolutely would just as soon we were both sitting in some one else's drawing-room and adoring somebody else, as long as we were both happy.'

'You'll find that unselfishness works according to some law,' said Willie. 'Everything works according to some law. There's a Christian Scientist who has written a book to say that if you can only arrive at being above wanting a thing you'll naturally attract that thing to you. There's some truth in it.'

'Not much, I hope,' said Oriane. 'I, for instance, having had enough bread and butter, would hate to see the plate following me about.'

'There is certainly something in it,' said he; 'if Compton and Ethel were not always itching to get us to church we should be more likely to go. But, Oriane, you say that the old people are good—how do you know? I thought I was the only Mosfordian who had had the privilege of seeing them, and I brought my gossip to you as a titbit.'

Oriane's cheeks were always rosy, but now Miss Kennedy noticed the colour flush up round her eyes. She began to play with one of the boys. She did not betray further her confidence in Mr. Pye's judgment. 'Didn't you just now say that the old man's goodness went beneath externals?' she asked.

'I didn't know I had proved as much as that,' said he.

When he was gone they said what they always said—'Poor Willie!'

'You would wonder,' said Miss Kennedy, 'that he should go on thinking the pursuit of joy quite satisfactory.'

'I believe he never has a moment's peace at home,' said Oriane. 'I don't think Diana is ever without an agony of some sort. He is only thirty-five, and yet, when his face is at rest, you can see the crow's feet round his eyes quite distinctly.'

'Her troubles began with her disappointment over that eldest boy Ernest. I think she knew he was not like other boys long before Willie discovered it.'

'Poor Willie!' said Oriane again. 'Poor

Diana ! Poor Ernest !' And then she added, ' You think me a heretic, auntie ; but that household always gives me an aching sense that the tide of Christianity is ebbing. Mr. Compton thinks that his prayers will be answered and they will return to the Church ; but it seems to me it is the Church that has ebbed away ; it is because the river of the water of life runs low that they are left to wither.'

CHAPTER IX

THE CHAUFFEUSE

'WILL you come for a drive with me?' Oriane stood on the street side of a paling. On the other side, in a little old-fashioned garden, the vicar's uncle was pruning trees in his shirt-sleeves. Oriane wore a brown motor coat and a soft-brimmed felt hat which made her look almost like a pretty boy. Her yellow hair, which was usually her most conspicuous ornament, was tucked up almost out of sight.

Mr. Ward turned round and surveyed her with interested deliberation. 'I never rode in one,' he said, looking at the car which she had drawn up. 'Do you really want me to come? Sally's out. She's gone to market.'

'I have just seen her,' said Oriane. 'I asked her if you would care to come, and she encouraged me.'

'It's very kind of you, young lady. All right: I'll get a hat on.'

While she waited, Oriane wondered whether a coat would come or not; but it did.

'I cannot offer to take the reins for you,' he

said. 'If it were a beast, now—I can drive any kind of beast, from goat to ox, but I prefer a good horse. I drove a cow in a pony-chaise once. She wouldn't give any milk, so it was the only way we could make her useful. She was a queer cow; she liked going in the chaise better than being put to dairy uses. My word! but she did run when she had a mind.'

'I didn't know that the symptoms of "the new woman" had spread to cows,' said Oriane.

'I was just wondering if you would think there was an application,' said the old man, settling himself and tucking the rug round Oriane. 'If you run into anything, be sure to run in on my side,' he said. 'I've been pitched out several times; it doesn't hurt me much.'

He soon became keenly interested in her driving. Oriane began to notice how bright and observant was the glance with which he followed her every movement.

'I believe,' she said, 'in half an hour you'll be able to manage a car as well as I can, and I've had a man down from Oxford day after day to teach me.'

'I reckoned you up as clever,' said the old man.

'No, I'm not clever; I'm intelligent. I know when I don't understand, so that I stick to a thing till I do; but that's the extent of me.'

Oriane was surprised to find that she was endeavouring to say exactly what was true instead of attempting repartee; and it evidently didn't occur to him to think that she wanted to be contradicted.

'Well,' he replied, 'to be able to know one's strong and weak points, and to be able to act on the knowledge, shows what I call rare good sense.'

'I've had great advantages,' said Oriane. 'My aunt has a great deal more of that sort of sense you speak of than I have, and, you see, she brought me up.' Then she added, 'Didn't you like her when we called on you the other day?'

'If I don't say "yes" it isn't because there is any "no" in my mind. But, you see, Sally and I are not quite accustomed to the outside wear of you English people. What I mean is, that as a person thinks so he is on the outside in all he says and does; but in different countries I've noticed there is a different kind of "says and does" to the inside "think." If it isn't too much trouble, will you find out whether you understand me?'

'I'll work at it till I do,' said Oriane. 'You mean that if I had lived in Canada and said, "How do you do. Won't you come to tea tomorrow?" you'd have a better notion of my degree of hospitality and my motives than if I said it in Mosford.'

'There are two sorts of people one gets to know in Canada,' he said. 'There's the stay-at-home Canadian, and there's the sort of person who's travelled all over the world—governor-generals, you know, and that sort of person, or hangers-on to him—the army man and his wife that immigrates to Canada to farm; we've lots of them. Been in India; been in South Africa; a great deal of *savoir-faire* and good-heartedness and practical

nonsense. You can't say they're not practical in a way, but they've no practical sense, so Sally and I call it practical nonsense. But you sort of people, who look out at the world through spectacles with pictures on them,—one eye, old street Mosford, thatched roof, church and churchyard very prominent; the other eye, interior of dining-room, old oak, with ancestors on the wall,—we don't know yet exactly what's inside you from what we see outside.'

'I think it's awfully nice of you to tell me about the spectacles,' said Oriane; 'but does every one in Mosford wear the same pictures in their glasses?'

'No; some of you have got the queer little brick chapel in the right eye, and in the other, instead of ancestors, they see their descendants trotting along nicely in the narrow path of truth and duty, and the church folks all parading along what might be called an old Roman road, with the Pope for a goal.'

Oriane was chiefly struck with the phrase 'some of you'; it occurred to her that she had never before thought of the Dissenters of Mosford as part of the civic whole to which she belonged. Yet she would not have thought it novel if he had said, 'Some of you live in squalid houses and have no ancestors.' She began involuntarily to wonder whether she was not in reality more widely separated from some with whom she would have instinctively claimed a closer kin than she was from the folk who had the chapel in the right eye-glass.

She said, 'Your friend Professor Pye used to preach at this little chapel.'

'Are you a Christian?' asked the old man quite simply.

She had been driving rather slowly and choosing a quiet road, as, for some reason—she hardly knew why—she very much wanted the old man to enjoy himself. When he asked this question she gave him a quick look. She had not known before that any one out of the Salvation Army asked a question in that form.

'Do you mean to ask what my personal motives of action are; or only whether I have adopted some new-fangled belief?'

'The first,' he said.

'As far as I understand,' she said, 'I am not a Christian. I think I understand that "Christian" in its primary application meant to be one of His disciples. Now He said that unless people gave up all they had they couldn't be disciples. So you see I am not, for I keep everything that I have, and I use it for my own enjoyment.'

He made no comment whatever.

After a while she said, 'Are you shocked?'

'I'm sorry I forgot to talk,' he said; 'but you see you tossed me with a pitchfork into the middle of an awfully big question, and I have not found myself yet. It's a thing I've often thought about; and I'll tell you what the crux of it is—it's whether, when a good thing is the thing you like best to do, there is more or less virtue in doing it than if you're doing the same thing because it's your duty and you don't like it. I was talking it over with Nathaniel Pye the other day. He says that when the grace of God takes

possession of your heart, then, do what you will, you can't deny yourself, because, unless you're being stoned or beaten or something of that kind, you like most enormously to do what you ought. So then I said to Pye, "Yes, that's all very well; but what's the grace of God? Isn't it all goodness that there is?" Now, this morning, for example, according to your own account of yourself, I suppose you'd say that you came to give an old man a drive to amuse yourself; but that same old man, you must know, was having an awful fight with the devil inside of him, and nearly getting the worst of it; and he said a prayer for some angel to come and manage the devil, which was just himself, you know; and he looked up and there you were; and the driving of this thing is so uncommonly interesting that I'm quite all right again. Now, what you did, you see, was the grace of God.'

'But if I were a Christian,' she said, 'I should never have bought the car; I should have given the money to some good object instead.'

'It's a very difficult question,' he said. 'I'd hate to be rich. For of course the Lord intends there should be motor cars, and telegraphs, and marconigrams, and every element of progress that helps to make the nations of the earth one brotherhood. And He's given men brains to invent them, and brains to paint pictures and build cathedrals and play music; and of course He wants all of us to enjoy these things. The Socialists have a neat rule of thumb for providing that we should enjoy them and be unselfish too; but the question in

my mind is, Would their rule, when applied, make things better or worse ?'

'I am very glad you don't think it easy to decide, for I have thought a good deal about it and always got into a fog. But, you see, being a woman, I always come back to "I" and "mine." When I've a little extra money I spend it on making myself a little happier; and as long as I do that I trust I am too clear-headed to think that going to church, and teaching little ragamuffins their catechism, makes me a Christian in your sense of the word.'

'Do you spend money in making yourself happier, or in trying to? I suppose you often have a little extra money—where have you got to? how happy are you?'

'We haven't a thermometer to mark degrees of joy.'

'But do you keep getting happier? The whole question of life is a question of growth. What are you growing into? Now, Sally and I are quite agreed that we get happier every year. It's years now since I had such a bad time with the devil inside me as I've had since I came to Mosford. And there's our friend Nathaniel Pye, he agrees that the fountains of joy get deeper and deeper. He says that a little child, or a flower, or the picture of an old Assyrian demon, or finding a new bit of an old inscription—he says these things give him keener pleasure every year.'

'I suppose Mr. Pye has all that he wants since he got this post at Oxford.'

'I hope the Lord will preserve him from ever

being in such a dreadful box as that, either here or hereafter.'

'You don't refer to the chair of Oxford?'

'No; I mean not wanting anything. That would be being dead as a door-nail—the sort of thing, you know, that some people think actually will happen when you die.'

This was said with such pleasant energy that Oriane experienced a distinct accession of faith in the immortality of the soul. She wondered why it seemed impossible to doubt that life was worth living, and that the grave was not its goal while the old man was at her side. This afternoon the sunshine seemed brighter than when they began to talk, and the air sweeter than for many a day.

'If you're quite comfortable about my driving,' she said, 'I'd like to put on speed to go down this hill and up the next; and I'll take you to where you'll get a fairly good view of Windsor and home again by dinner-time.'

'Have you been going softly for fear of frightening me? I'm game for anything. It's just the sort of thing that suits my taste—this billowing along in lively luxury.'

CHAPTER X

ETHEL IN SELF-DEFENCE

'My uncle has such a kindly smile,' said the vicar. 'It is quite impossible not to feel that he is good-hearted. The moment he catches sight of any of us he always looks so glad to see us.'

'Yes,' said Ethel dubiously. 'He has a huge sort of smile. But, you know, Cumnor, I notice that he smiles at every one. I think it is largely habit.'

'No; I can't say that, Ethel. I can't help feeling he has some affection for us that he doesn't feel for all the world. They lost their children, you know; and I can't but think he has a fatherly feeling towards us, and that our children are more to him because they are ours. My aunt, too, is exceedingly kind to the children.'

Ethel Compton was sitting in her husband's study in a very pretty morning-gown. Underneath the skirt of her gown her foot tapped impatiently on the carpet, but he did not notice the movement.

'Well, of course, dear, it's natural enough they should feel extremely proud to have you for a

relative, and your manners to them are so very cordial that they are naturally flattered.'

'You are partial in your estimate of all that I do, but I cannot disguise from myself that I am not cordial to him as I ought to be. I wish very much that I had less sense of'—he hesitated and then said vaguely—'incongruity.'

'I think, dear,' she said seriously, 'that you are confusing very important matters. You are much more clever and clear-headed than I am, but I sometimes think you spend so much of it on writing your sermons that you are really too tired to think when you come to practical matters. Now, of course, it goes without saying that the fact that your uncle and his wife are rather rough, backwoods specimens—eccentric, to say the least of it; and that they do jar upon our taste in things unessential—as I say, it goes without saying that neither you nor I would allow anything of that sort to interfere with our paying them the utmost respect; but the fact that they are not morally straight in religious matters puts the whole question on a different footing. And it is because you confuse these two things that you are always trying to persuade yourself and me that they are better than we think them, and that we are not doing our duty towards them.'

'You go far when you say, "not morally straight." We have not the slightest reason to——'

'Well, of course, you men are able to put morals in one department and religion in another, but we women never can. For people of their

age to agree together to set aside their religious principles just because it happens to suit their convenience to do so, appears to me to be not only religiously, but morally, wrong. If they were young people who had not much time to think, and who, as one often sees, are inconsistent in their actions for lack of depth of any sort, we could not feel about it in the same way. But your uncle and his wife cannot be excused that way.

Her face had now an air of solemn thoughtfulness, such as it assumed in her best moments in church. The expression was quite natural to her, and very becoming to her fair type of beauty. To look solemn and, at the same time, perfectly sweet-tempered does not belong to most types of countenance. A woman is apt to look cross when she looks serious. This aspect of Ethel Compton's face had always charmed her husband, and, taken together with her ardent churchcraft, it gave her great influence, not only over him but over all his clerical friends.

She went on in tones gentle and yet suggestive of strong feeling, 'What I see so clearly is that when you speak to him about his convictions he will not retract them; and then when you tell him that if he took a house in Oxford he could go to a chapel where they believe those things, he merely says, "We are all one in one spiritual Church." Now that, of course, is not straight thinking; but, worse than that, it indicates a character not morally straight. Why are they here? Because they want to be. Why do they want to be? what have they to gain by being, as you say,

“affectionate” to you? Well, of course, it’s a social rise for them; but I think the reason they desire that is because they want to propagate their own religious views in circumstances that give them greater influence than they could possibly have elsewhere. They have plenty of time to talk things over, and they have agreed to do this. They talk in a very religious way to people about their own schismatic views. Oriane has told me as much. He was trying to get Oriane to think it did not matter whether you went to church or chapel, and in a very insidious way. I can’t go into details, but he said we looked at everything through spectacles with a picture of the parish church in the glasses, and that the chapel people thought more of training their children to do right than we do. He actually said as much to Oriane. They are having a bad influence on Oriane already—I can see that. And, you know, they must be making an effort to attract her; otherwise, why has she anything to do with them? They are either deliberately deceiving themselves with the idea that it is right to do wrong that good may come, or else they are deliberately deceiving us for the sake of undermining the Church.’

‘Oh, not that,’ he interrupted. ‘They may deceive themselves, but I do not think they would knowingly deceive us.’

‘I quite agree with you; that is exactly what I think; but I wanted to point out that it must be one or the other. And you know, my dear, how often you have tried to show in your sermons that self-deception is the root of all that is crooked in

character, and inevitably leads to the worst form of deception towards others.'

'Well, what I say is, that when a man deceives himself he is more plausible in presenting his case to others, because he is not conscious that he is lying; but I don't know that that exactly applies here.'

'Where there is deliberate self-deception,' she said, 'there must be more or less consciousness of it, although it may be kept down and hidden away. Now, this is exactly what I feel about the Wards. Think of his trying to persuade Oriane there was no difference between church and chapel, nothing wrong in schism! And it is evident to me that he had the most subtle arguments all ready to put before her. And it seems as though Oriane, who has more education and better taste than any other woman in the place, is falling an easy prey. What, then, can we expect of those who are more ignorant? and of children? My dear, I would not allow our children to be alone with that old couple even for half a day. One never knows what indelible mark will be made on a child's mind by a word or two skilfully spoken. I cannot understand how it is that you don't see that that sort of thing is not morally straight. To come under the guise of family affection, and secretly proselytise your very children——'

'My dear, they would not do that. You allow yourself to be carried away.'

'Do you really think there is nothing in what I say?' she asked.

'I do not say that; but simply that people are

not logical in their faults any more than in their virtues ; and even if there is this deep fault—or one might say general intention—that you suspect, I do not think they would carry it so far as to interfere with the religious training of our own children.'

'I do not think you ought to accuse me of unfounded suspicions.'

'No, dear ; I do not. I have often told you that your insight is clearer than mine.'

'But this is a thing that you yourself have seen and pointed out to me ; and yet, just because the old man has a hearty way of smiling and grasping your hand, you are ready to think he is honest and honourable to the core—as, for instance, poor Willie Latimer is, who makes no secret at all of his paganism.'

This was one of a good many talks that the vicar and his wife had upon the same subject during the first six weeks that the Wards were at Mosford ; and on the whole, the vicar grew more stern in the conduct of himself toward the old people. He felt the stirring of his pulses which affection in near family relation must always give. He felt that his heart was drawn towards his sole kinsman, that the hearing for the first time of many stories about his mother's beauty and sweetness gave him keen pleasure, and of a kind he had never before experienced, for, until his marriage, he had not known anything of the natural joy and pride of the family circle. At the same time he became more and more aware of a great gulf which seemed to be fixed between his

notions of religion, and even honour, and those of his newly-found relatives. Every time he talked to his wife he felt strongly that he would be doing wrong to give the rein to his natural affection; and the nervous distress which this constraint wrought had for one of its symptoms an irritable dislike of every breach of decorum which the elderly couple innocently committed.



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CHAPTER XI

CHURCH DEFENCE

As far as Mosford parish was concerned, the vicar was the sole male representative of the priestly class. But, beside his wife, there lived in Mosford three others whom Oriane Graham called 'clergywomen'—the Browns, the family of the former vicar. Mrs. Brown and her daughters, Anna and Theresa, were all well on in life. They lived in a good-sized house built flush with the old street and having a pleasant outlook behind upon a high-walled, old-fashioned garden. Within the walls of this house and garden many criticisms adverse to the Comptons were whispered, but externally the alliance was complete, and the three Browns were always heard to utter a loud and cheerful 'amen' to everything the vicar said and did, and they always referred to him as 'the dear vicar.'

The Wards had settled in Mosford in the autumn of 1905. With the expectation of a nearing general election, a Liberal candidate was going about the constituency, and one of his main points was opposition to the Conservative Education Act. Thus the wave of the education con-

trovcrsy broke over the community. The little place, which had hitherto known some degree of outward amenity between Church and Dissent, was torn by open strife. There were in it only a few people of influence who were not riding full tilt upon the horses of party spirit. Willie Latimer, Miss Kennedy and Oriane, and old Mr. and Mrs. Ward, whether rightly or not, were convinced that the crying need of England was a better national system of education; and to their minds every controversy which delayed the opening of smoother highways to knowledge for the mass of the people was, whatever its aim, a greater injury than benefit to the cause of truth.

'You see,' said old Mr. Ward to his neighbours, 'when a child comes out of our Canadian schools he's got a few ideas in his head. But look at the boy here that brings our milk in the morning. He's passed his standards; he's full-fledged; and his mind is vacant—as far as I can make out, as vacant as the morning sky looks when the stars have gone out and the sun has not come up. I've talked to him about field-mice, about potatoes, about the reason that his metal measure is colder to touch than his wooden bucket on a frosty morning; I've talked to him about making roads, and about King Alfred, and about flying-ships, about the Corn Laws, and about Mr. Balfour. He never heard of one of them! If you doubt it, come and talk to him yourself. There aren't any such things within his horizon. What is within his horizon I've failed to find out; I've lent him three of the best boys' stories I

know, and he isn't able to tell me what's in the first chapter of any of them. So one day I tackled the schoolmaster, and asked him why there wasn't some sort of training for idiot children; but he said our milk-boy wasn't an idiot, was quite up to the average of the boys he turns out. He says this boy can read and write and cypher and do what he is told; and the worst of it is, he seems quite satisfied with his output. Now the girl that works in our kitchen—she's had the same education and she's got more wits. She said to my wife the other day she didn't see how the ships could ever come back from America; it was easy enough to see how they could slide downhill, but not how they could slide up again; and when we tried to find out what she had in her head, she asked us, with all due respect, if we didn't know the world was round. She had at least learned one fact, and reflected on it. She, with better opportunity, would make a good empire-builder; but the boy, with a whole world of opportunity, will do nothing but what he is bidden to do, and when no one bids him, will do nothing. A nation of such chaps must fall behind. Yet he has a good digestion, and if he had been taken in the right way when he began to toddle, he would have some enterprise and resource.'

'That dear old St. Peter has got wits,' said Willie Latimer. 'If he is pious, I don't believe he has got more patience with priestcraft than I have.'

'Yes, he has more patience,' said Miss Kennedy, 'and he is more straightforward also than we. You and I and Oriane say these things between

ourselves, Willie; but Mr. Ward says them straight out, first to Mr. Compton and then to the Methodists. I heard him the other day when the vicar was talking about the crooked morality of the "passive resister." Mr. Ward said, "Gently, Johnny, my boy; gently! It is quite as immoral for a Christian to break the law or charity as for a citizen to break the law of the land."

'I've no doubt Compton would turn "resister" if they took his school from him,' said Willie.

The vicar and his 'district visitors'—a parochial phrase which meant Ethel and the three Browns and one or two more—were already working in the interest of the Conservative candidate. The vicar did not canvass obviously, nor did Ethel, but the Browns began to do so. They wore their best frocks and bonnets, and behaved in a very taking manner. Had they not good reason? They were under the impression that if the Liberals won the next election, Christianity would be swept from England and atheism reign over the length and breadth of the Empire. The vicar had never taught them precisely this, but he had given them that impression, and their papers confirmed its truth. The consequence was that they were joyfully enjoying themselves immensely. For the first time their very real religious zeal was allowed to flow quite unchecked into their social and party prejudices; they experienced that unity of self which belongs to the child, the non-moral man, and the saint. There is no joy so great as that which is the result of activity flowing out from undivided impulse.

For once within their breasts the 'old man' and the 'new man' saw eye to eye; the higher and lower life within their souls rose up in one powerful impulse; the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of their passions struck out as with one righteous arm against the chances of the Liberal candidate. They drank their coffee every morning talking with cheerful scorn about the 'vulgar Radicals'; they took their afternoon tea discussing with satisfaction the dishonesty of Dissenters.

They were not entirely conscious of their own heyday of satisfaction. As is often the case with human nature, when they were enjoying themselves most they believed that they were undergoing more or less martyrdom. This belief will often be found to add to, rather than detract from, the enjoyment. There was a fine sparkle in their eyes, a glow of health on their cheeks, a new vigour and grace in their carriage, as they went in and out of the houses, conversing with the voters, converting and confirming the unstable.

Compton was not quite easy. He sometimes thought, at this juncture, that it would be better if he and his friends were not so openly political; but when he said so he allowed himself to be overruled. He and Ethel were returning one Sunday afternoon over the churchyard from the Sunday School; children in twos and threes were clattering down the street. The highest welfare of these children was near to their hearts; Ethel looked up with a light in her eyes that seemed to Compton to betoken the higher vision.

'Ah, Cumnor,' she cried, 'how can you urge

inaction? Just now the great danger of the day is the tendency to indifference in religious things.' She stopped; her sweet voice quavered; then she went on firmly, 'Surely it cannot be wrong to show that we are on God's side, when half the nation hate Him and are trying to trample His Church under their feet!'

'Well—perhaps,' said the vicar, with slight impatience, for he thought her words extreme; but then he added humbly, 'You women have often a clearer vision of right than we men.'

He allowed himself to be influenced by her opinions without reflecting that he had formed her mind by his own restless forebodings of evil and hopes of a party success, that he had for years subscribed to religious and secular party newspapers which had lighted and fed the flame that now appeared to him to have been kindled at the very altar of God. In this device of first forming the opinion of the godly women about him and then following it, the vicar was just like most other good men in both parties who have a general desire to be just and even generous to their particular opponents, and a more ardent desire to think ill of them all.

Another combination of religion and politics was going on in the Methodist manse. The Rev. Jarvis Cole and his wife were satisfied that the progress of the age towards a more liberal and more catholic form of religion required that the attempt of the Anglican Church to retain the control of half the schools of the nation should be defeated. It was the latest stage of the great struggle by which the

Nonconformists of England had been obtaining civil and religious equality, the historic struggle against ecclesiastical tyranny which had descended from the brave martyrs of the Waldensian and Vaudois valleys and the hosts of slain and tortured reformers of France and the Netherlands, and at home through Wycliffe and Cranmer and the old Puritans. Their children of to-day had not to face the stake nor contumely at the hands of the magistrate; but they would be unworthy of their spiritual ancestors did they not assert the rights of conscience, if only by declining voluntarily to pay their pence for the State teaching of religious error and by giving their whole energy to advance the political party which would champion their cause; the coming contest afforded an opportunity for honest toil for the Kingdom of God. Their half-penny 'daily' and their penny religious 'weekly' inflamed them against the political Churchmen by constant and subtle invective, by accounts of intrepid 'passive resisters,' and, most of all, by citation of the most uncharitable and belligerent passages from the speeches of Church defenders, lay and clerical. In these pages all efforts in defence of the Church's political privilege were made to appear contemptible. The Coles and their chapel workers were working incessantly in the important months before the General Election, giving time and thought and strength to the Liberal cause, under the firm belief that they were serving God.

CHAPTER XII

A SUFFICIENT MOTIVE

ONE day Ethel and Oriane walked together. They had arranged that Oriane should accompany Ethel to see a sick parishioner on condition that Ethel should join in a visit to the Wards on the way home. They were passing through an exquisite bit of autumn woodland. Oriane said :

'I believe, Ethel, from what the vicar said to auntie, that you actually think that dear old Mr. and Mrs. Ward are trying to make me a Dissenter. That is not their attitude at all. They want to see both Church and Dissent on a much higher level, so that we shall not quarrel over religion in this ridiculous manner.'

Ethel did not argue the point. She felt that opposition would only make Oriane more determined.

'You know, Ethel,' Oriane went on, 'they are both darlings—they are simply darlings; and they have more original ideas and more common sense than any one else in Mosford. Auntie is as much taken with them as I am. She actually had an old-fashioned "high tea" for them the other

night, instead of dinner—mutton chops, and tea, and pork-pie, and apple-tarts all on the table together, just a lovely jumble. And they called the pork-pie "cake" and the tarts "pie," and I haven't seen auntie eat as much, or laugh as much, at one meal for a year. It did her lots of good. There is such an innate refinement about them, you know; and the dear old lady has such fine taste in satin and shawls. Auntie said the black satin gown reminded her of what her old grandmother used to wear; it would stand by itself; and there was not a flounce or a furbelow or a jet bead upon it. And the muslin kerchief! They must have hunted all over London to get muslin like that in these days when you can hardly find anything worth more than two or three shillings a yard. And he was showing us a Shetland shawl he had sent for for her. It was so fine you would hardly have known it from lace.'

'Where do they get the money to spend on these things?' asked Ethel. 'He told my husband he had invested all his savings in a Baptist Insurance Society, so that if he doesn't get his money's worth out of it the Baptists will get the benefit. So their income is evidently quite fixed. It seems to me that spending money like that, on a quality of satin she does not need, may land them in debt.'

'Oh, they are not the sort of people to get into debt,' said Oriane comfortably. 'Come along and have tea with them, and be as nice to them as you are to the Countess. Now, don't pull a long face.'

'If you have known me all these years, Oriane,

and think I act from mere snobbishness, you had better say so plainly.'

'I think you are a bit snobbish,' said Oriane quite plainly.

'I suppose you think, as Mr. Ward evidently does, that that is the reason we don't care to know Mr. Cole the Methodist minister, and all the Mosford Dissenters. Oriane dear, did you ever seriously think what a perfectly awful sin schism is?'

'What about the Willie Latimers? You are very good friends with them.'

'That is very different.'

'If I were a Christian I should think it very different. The Coles are with you heart and soul in all your main motives and aims; Willie Latimer advocates pure heathenism whenever he gets a chance.'

'Of course you can put it that way, and it sounds plausible; but you know very well that a thing that looks like a bridge is much more dangerous than an open river. But, Oriane, I can't think how you can use such an expression—"if you were a Christian"! What can you mean? It sounds like cant. You don't doubt the truth of our religion?'

'I don't know enough about it to doubt intelligently. I take it on trust, but I never do anything from the Christian motive. If I worked in the devoted way that you and the Coles do, I should have something in common with you both.'

'Well, I do not know what you are driving at, but if you are only intent on making fun of me

because I will have nothing to do with schismatics—unless, of course, I can do them a kindness—then I will cheerfully bear your ridicule.'

They had been walking up a wooded hill, and, coming out of the wood, were looking over the red-brown of undulating fields, ploughed fields that yield to the eye the softest of all colours, light and shade and warmth and quiet inextricably tangled in their plum-like hues. Before and behind them in the low copse were creeping fires of red and yellow that here and there cast up a bright jet of flame in red bramble leaves or the yellow of birch shoots. These flames were repeated far away in the broad lakes of crimson and gold that were receiving the falling sun beyond the edge of the purple world.

'Isn't it just lovely?' said Ethel.

Oriane switched a feathery heap of bronze bracken with a light cane she carried. An old line came into her mind—'Joy flies monopolies; it calls for two.' She felt at that moment so much alone that she must disregard the sunset.

'Oriane,' said Ethel, 'you may deny it if you will, but the Wards are certainly having a bad influence over you.'

'He makes me reconsider some things that I have taken for granted.'

'Infant baptism?' asked Ethel, with a face of horror.

'No; I am guiltless of having given even a thought to that subject.'

'Well then, are you going over to the Methodists?'

'They would not have me ; they would require the genuine Christian motive. What is more, I have not thought about Methodism.'

'You are just teasing me ;' and tears shone in Ethel's eyes.

'No ; I am considering your position. You will have nothing to do with Dissenters : you do not even wish to know what they believe, or how they act. Now, we know already that you will have no social intercourse with people in trade or with people who hold Radical opinions. Well then, what will be the natural consequence ? All these classes of people will seek more and more to worship God where they find friends.'

'If a man's religion spring from such impure motives the Church is better without him.'

'It is the purity of the Churchwoman's motives that I am considering. You clergymen rule parish society in country places ; you can't go on any longer ostracising shopkeepers and Radicals and Dissenters and pretend that you are building up the National Church.'

'I think you are most unreasonable, Oriane. No one deplures such evils as arise from social distinctions more than Cumnor and I do. But we must remember there is good in them also. In any case, what could I do to change the constitution of society ?'

'Where there's a will there's a way,' said Oriane.

They were both out of humour now—Ethel swelling with grief at Oriane's injustice, Oriane contemptuous and silent. They tramped down a

rough descent, where the tawny leaves of beech shrub and bracken returned the passing colour of one great cumulous cloud that lowered and toppled like a huge molten image of copper and brass and gold—such an image as Mammon might have set up to attract and crush his worshippers. The tread of their own feet in broken brushwood, and the caw of rooks above them were, in fact, the only sounds that came between Ethel's gentle but assured protestations, and yet it seemed to them both that the very rooks were repeating Oriane's gibe, and that the tread of their feet in the withered leaves whispered it.

'Where there's a will,' cawed a rook, 'there's a way,' cawed another.

'I assure you, no one has a better will to live in the best relations with every one than Cumnor and I,' said Ethel.

'Where there's a will,' whispered the glistening beech leaves, 'there is a way,' rustled the bracken.

'You are quite unjust, Oriane. It is impossible to do more than we do to keep up good relations with those who hate us.'

'Rubbish!' cried Oriane. 'They don't hate you any more than you hate them. Your papers tell you they do, but you ought to have enough sense to discount that sort of thing.'

'It is not possible to interpret their actions otherwise,' said Ethel.

'Where there's a will,' whispered the bracken, 'there's a way,' cawed the rooks in chorus.

They came to the house of a sick labourer, the

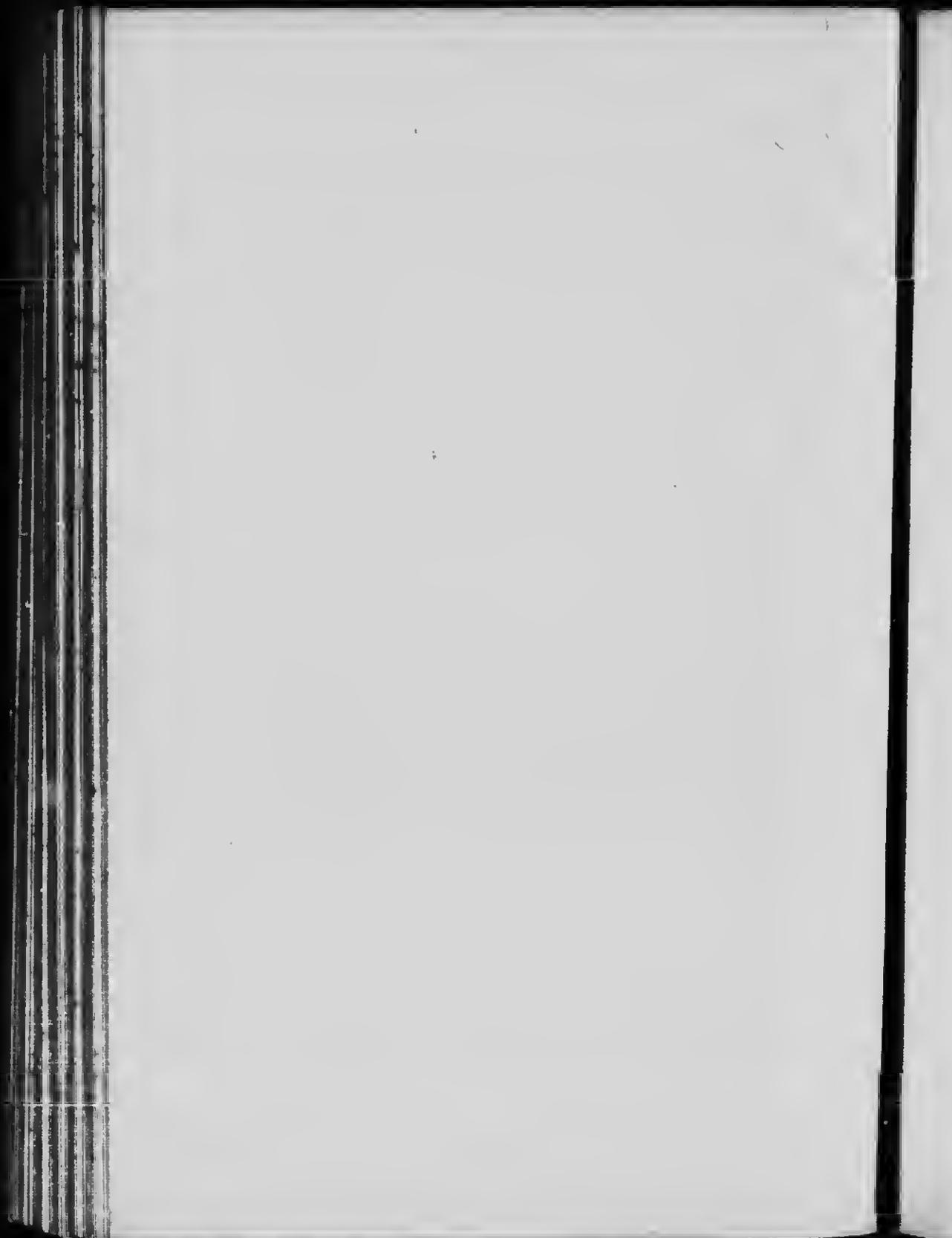
object of Ethel's walk. While Ethel ministered to his needs, and the early day waned, Oriane nursed her ill-humour. They returned by a short cut to Mosford. The rooks were silent; the moist ground was quiet as velvet under their feet.

They soon stood in the ivy-covered doorway of the cottage the Wards had chosen. They were both tired, and neither of them spoke as they waited for an answer to the bell.

The front door stood ajar, and old Mr. Ward, coming out of a back parlour to the front room where his wife was sitting, said in an audible tone :

'I'm sending five hundred to the China Inland ; that will do for this month's income.' Then he added, 'If John were only a bit less of a bigot, and we could shelve all our money off on him now, how happy I'd be !'

In excessive surprise Oriane again pulled the bell sharply and looked at Ethel, but she could not see her face. Ethel had turned, and, with a whisper which implored silence, she made her way swiftly and quietly along a path that led to the back gate of the cottage garden. Oriane leaned over and watched her lift the latch noiselessly and disappear in the lane.



BOOK II
ETHEL AND THE NEW MOTIVE-
POWER

CHAPTER XIII

ETHEL AND MAMMON

WHAT did it mean? Oriane's was not a mind that jumped to conclusions. She perceived that the Wards were not poor, but rich; but the reason of Ethel's sudden departure she did not understand. She felt that it was scarcely her part to inform her friends that a moment before she had not expected to pay her visit alone. Ethel's relations with them were, unfortunately, bad enough already.

'I'm awfully sorry,' she said, when the old couple had made her welcome; 'I'm sorry, Mr. Ward, but I think I must tell you at once that while I was standing at the door just now I heard something you said about money.'

'What did you hear?' he asked.

'Something about five hundred pounds, and that you would have liked to get rid of it to Mr. Compton, and something about bigotry.' Oriane was blushing all over her face. 'I can't tell you how sorry I am,' she added.

'Yes, dear,' said the old lady, 'we're sorry too; but it wasn't your fault—it was ours.'

'Not yours, Sally,' said the old man. 'You're always telling me to speak lower; but I never had a secret in my life before, Miss Graham; I'm not accustomed to undertones.'

Thus the old people sat before Oriane, without attempting to disguise their real chagrin.

Oriane said humbly, 'I didn't pull the bell hard enough the first time, and I think there's something in the atmosphere of the day or I shouldn't have heard so abominably well.'

'You ought not to have done anything but just what you have done,' said the old man. 'I feel so vexed with myself that'—he smiled—'I'd be very glad to blame you if I could; in fact I'd like to say to Sally after you're gone that you had no business to come to our front door when I happened to be talking inside with the door open. But, you see, it's no good; my common sense tells me it wouldn't hold water for a moment.' His big, genial smile had gradually broken through the distress on his face.

'It was I who left the door open,' said the old lady. 'You see, in Canada we usually have the door open except when the snow is on the ground, because we're always in and out of the front porch that we make a sort of living-room of.'

'I'm wondering, Sally, if we might venture to ask Miss Graham to lie low about a thing like this?'

Oriane blushed again. She was feeling very uncomfortable about Ethel. Ethel, of course, must come back and confess on her own behalf.

Oriane did not know why she said to herself 'Ethel must come' instead of 'Ethel will come.' There had been something in the attitude of Ethel's shoulders when she slipped quietly out of sight which annoyed and distressed Oriane, she could not tell why. She said aloud :

'Of course, as far as I am concerned, it shall be exactly as if I had not heard.'

'That is a good deal to say,' said the old man.

Oriane said, 'I shall say nothing about it and do nothing about it. I shall try not to think about it, try to forget——' She drew in her breath quickly. Then she added, 'Of course, if I let myself think for a minute, I can't help being awfully glad that you are rich.'

'Why?' asked the old man. There was quiet humour in his eyes.

'You think I am conventional. You think money doesn't necessarily make people any happier. To me it is not money, but everything—the power to choose among such a quantity of different pleasures; there seems to me something unnatural, something morbid, in not being delighted at the thought of possessing that power—power to go all over the world and see it, to feast the multitude, to make a flying-machine.'

The old man laughed quite cheerily. His short period of chagrin rolled from his mind. He took her at her word and trusted her as a child would.

As soon as Oriane left the old people she went to the vicarage. She heard with surprise that Ethel was in the drawing-room—a room kept for occasions, not the usual haunt of the busy housewife and mother.

Oriane went in and found Ethel reclining on the sofa, not restfully; her head was not down; she had not even taken off her hat and gloves. She leaned back against the cushions with her feet straight out before her, and looked at Oriane with dry, feverish eyes.

‘Oriane,’ she said, in a voice of pain, ‘sit down where I can see you.’ Then she asked with trembling eagerness, ‘Did you tell them I was there?’

‘No, I did not. I understood you to ask me not to.’

‘You—you didn’t say anything about what we had overheard? I don’t know exactly what we did hear, but I suppose you didn’t refer to it?’

‘Yes, I did; I told them at once exactly what I had heard.’

‘But not—that is, you say you didn’t tell them I was there? Had they heard me go away?’

‘No; of course they didn’t hear us at all, or it wouldn’t have happened. The ground is so soft. But of course, Ethel, you must go now and tell them you were with me.’

‘Yes, of course I will do what is honourable. But, Oriane, what did they say?’

There was an excitement in Ethel’s voice that Oriane did not like, that she found it hard not to

despise. 'They said nothing,' she replied; 'at least they told me nothing at all that would interest you. I offered to think no more about it, to forget it, to act exactly as if it hadn't happened, and they accepted my offer, and said "thank you"; and that's the whole of it so far as I am concerned. You're looking positively haggard, Ethel; what in the world are you sitting in this cold room for? Why don't you take your things off?'

'Sit still a minute.' Ethel spoke in a constrained voice. She seemed to swallow several times before she spoke again. 'I'm feeling very ill, Oriane. I don't know exactly what is the matter.' She put her hand up to her eyes, pressing her gloved fingers on her brow, and dropped her hand again, apparently not noticing that her glove was still on.

Ethel's statement carried no conviction, and in a moment Oriane wondered why this was, because it was quite evident that Ethel was suffering. 'Is it anything serious?' asked Oriane.

'Oh no; nothing serious at all,' said Ethel hastily. 'It is only—I have a dreadful pain,' she moaned, and a spasm of pain passed over her face as she said it.

'Where is the pain?' asked Oriane. She began to think of a doctor and hot applications, but she found these thoughts had not sufficient motive-power to produce exertion.

'Oh, I can hardly tell,' moaned Ethel. 'Here, I think.' She laid her hand upon her chest, and as she did so she coughed a hard, dry little cough.

'Never mind,' she said; 'I've felt it before, only it was never so bad as now.'

'What does the doctor say?' asked Oriane.

'Oh, I don't want the doctor. It's just a sort of nervous contraction, I think, because I am overworked. I am terribly overworked, and so is Cumnor. I am very anxious about Cumnor, Oriane.'

'Well, why do you do so much trotting round —with this political literature, for instance? With all the other things you have to do it is too much. And, you know, Mr. Compton needn't keep writing letters to the papers as he does.' Oriane knew that she said this because she was nettled. She was quite prepared to hear Ethel defend these activities as, in the first place, most necessary of all, and, secondly, as mere relaxations. She was surprised at the reply.

'Yes, I ought to leave those leaflets to the Browns. It is far too much. Miss Kennedy told me so, but I was headstrong and wouldn't listen to her. You can tell her that I am sorry. It is true—I have done too much.' Again she pressed her hand above her eyes; again she seemed to swallow in order to ease the dryness of her throat.

Oriane sat silent. She began dimly to understand something that she tried to reject.

After a minute Ethel said, 'Oriane, I don't know exactly what it was that Uncle Ward said, and, of course, under the circumstances, I should not think of trying to remember it, or of talking it over with you. It would not be honourable.'

Of course my one thought since I left you has been how to act in a perfectly honourable way. You see, it is quite obvious it would not be honourable for me to repeat it to any one—I could not, for example, repeat it to my godmother or the Latimers.'

'That goes without saying,' said Oriane amazed.

'That is what I say—it is not to be thought of. I cannot speak of it to old nurse, although I tell her almost everything. And, of course, I cannot say anything to Cumnor. I couldn't say anything that would come between him and his only relatives, especially as Mr. Ward used to be so fond of Cumnor's mother.'

Oriane heard amazed; then she found herself wondering whether it would be quite straightforward of Ethel to keep such a secret from her husband.

'And, you see, Oriane, this is what I seem to see clearly—although, indeed, I am feeling so ill that——' She moved uneasily and held herself as if in pain. 'I ought not to have to think of these things when I am so ill; but what I see is, that if I went and talked about this thing to our uncle and aunt—you see, then I couldn't keep it from Cumnor, could I? It seems to me that the only honourable course is to do exactly what you have done—to put it out of my mind, to forget it, to go on exactly as if it hadn't happened. Don't you think so?'

'But I told them that I had overheard,' said Oriane.

'Yes, but that is just what I can hardly do—at least, not if I am to act with perfect honour in the complex relation in which I find myself. For, of course, if this went any further, if I let myself think of it, or act upon it in any way—as, for instance, talking to them—then I should be keeping a secret from Cumnor. And if I had to tell Cumnor—well, I don't suppose he would have anything more to do with them. Cumnor has, in some ways, a very peculiar mind. No one can know a man thoroughly, Oriane, but a wife.'

Oriane did not answer. Ethel's voice rose a little, as if the silence were a challenge. 'I suppose you all think that you know Cumnor perfectly; but in reality there are certain kinks in any man's mind that none but a wife can know.'

Oriane felt the challenge of the voice, and would have been glad to disclaim any thought or desire of knowing the vicar's mind perfectly, but something held her lips sealed. She was subject to the direct instincts of childhood, which she was not always clever enough to analyse quickly or understand.

'And then, besides one's own delicate sense of honour,' Ethel went on '—which is, after all, an inward and personal thing, so personal that it is almost selfish—one has to think what is most really kind and considerate to others; and, you know, I cannot think it would be happier for Cumnor's uncle to know that I was with you. It would probably distress them.'

Again silence, and again Ethel raised her voice querulously. 'Of course it would distress them—you must see that, Oriane.'

'Yes, I am sure it would.'

'Well then, you see——' Ethel had begun in a tone of elucidation, but she stopped and pressed her hand to her side. 'O Oriane, I really am ill! I am not able to consider this very complex question. It is very difficult, while weighing so many small things—things that seem small in themselves and yet may lead to quarrels and misunderstandings—it is very difficult to be sure what is wholly right.'

'If you are not feeling able to go into this matter, Ethel, you had better let me decide for you, for I am quite sure what is right. You must go and tell Mr. Ward exactly what happened. Just go and do it on my authority. In all that occurs after that you must do as nearly right as you can, but the consequences to them and to Mr. Compton are not your responsibility.'

'No, Oriane dear; I cannot allow you to take moral responsibility for me in that way. We are each responsible to God for our own actions; and however ill I am, and however difficult I find it to decide what is right, I must still use my own judgment; and if we disagree you must not be angry with me.' She spoke with great gentleness, and then she added, with the tremble of approaching tears in her tone, 'There are circumstances—there are things, vital to this matter, Oriane, which you know nothing about.'

Oriane felt a sudden impulse of anger. She

was inclined to say 'What rot!' But while she hesitated her sense of justice called upon her to consider what proof she had that Ethel had no reason for what she said; and from that she was diverted by the effort to picture such vital circumstances as Ethel might have referred to.

'You see, Oriane,' Ethel began again, 'I understand my husband as you cannot possibly do, and to-day, for the first time, I began to appreciate—I mean I began to understand several circumstances about the Wards that I had previously not been able to understand—in fact, family matters, Oriane, which I personally would be very glad to discuss with you, but I don't feel quite at liberty to speak of them.'

Oriane rose. 'I had better tell nurse you are ill, Ethel. I suppose she will know what to do. In any case she won't leave you here in the cold. Of course I have no desire to interfere in your family affairs, and I am not responsible for you in any way; but I only told the Wards half the truth when I said I had overheard, and if you don't go and tell them yourself that you were there, then I will go and tell them. You can tell me to-morrow what you decide to do in that one respect.'

Ethel rose also, and apparently without difficulty. She seemed to forget her own pain; she was very gentle and sweet. 'How sorry I am that I have allowed you to sit without a fire. Really, Oriane, you ought to scold me when I am so rude. I was thinking of nothing but myself. We had better both go into the parlour and get warm before you

go ; and then I will tell nurse how ill I felt ; she will be sure to know what to do for me. You surely are not determined to go without a warm ! It almost seems as if you were going off in a huff, Oriane ! I did not mean to be rude in speaking of family affairs.'

Oriane was quite aware that she was going away in a huff, but she was not quite honest enough to admit it to Ethel. Being only an ordinary woman, she did not like to be accused of being huffed, so she tried to smile and say 'good-bye' amiably.

'I see now exactly how you look at it, Oriane. And very likely when I have had a night's sleep, and do not feel quite so tired—I have done far too much walking lately—very likely to-morrow morning, when I feel brighter, I shall see it as you do ; and if I do, I will do as you advise. I am quite humble-minded just now because I do see'—she put her hand again to her side—'that I ought to have taken your aunt's advice about those leaflets work, and I did not. Will you come in to-morrow, or shall I go to you?'

By the time Oriane had walked half the way home in the quiet dark of the winter afternoon she began to upbraid herself for having judged her friend harshly. The more she tried to muster her rational soul and bring a reasonable argument to uphold her distrust and convict Ethel of insincerity, the less she could find any evidence consistent with her instinctive judgment.

When she got home she said to her aunt, 'I am sorry for Ethel. She is over-tired ; and this

afternoon, when we got back from our walk, she was decidedly hysterical—the suppressed style of hysterics, you know. I wish we lived in the times when people screamed and fainted ; it was so much more picturesque.'

CHAPTER XIV

ETHEL AND PROVIDENCE

It is very often the consciousness of virtue unrewarded that brings the acutest pain to the religious mind, for the worst pain of humanity is probably the suspicion of God's injustice. The arraignment of Providence, in fretful thought or solemn conviction, may be noble or ignoble according to the character of the offended mortal. In the drama of Job we have the highest and most intense form of this misery depicted, and there can be little doubt that the deep poetic insight of the writer led him to believe that the real God, however much Job might misunderstand Him, must be better pleased with the candour of Job's accusations of Divine injustice than with the apparently more reverent cant of the comforters. On the other hand, there is nothing more despicable than the self-righteous complaints of the common fool.

Somewhere between these two extremes came Ethel Compton. She felt that Providence had tricked her, as it were, into spurning the greatest earthly good. After Oriane left her with the

threat of the tell-tale upon her lips, Ethel spent the night in the nursery. Her youngest little girl was out of sorts, and the mother was taking turns with the nurse in caring for her. Ethel lay upon an improvised lounge which was not comfortable; but, mother-like, as a usual thing she would not have considered the discomfort for a moment, and would have slept soundly between the intervals of the child's complaints. To-night sleep would not visit her eyelids, nor would tears come to bring them relief.

It was not Ethel's fault that she had been born with the sort of mind that is perhaps incapable of perceiving the highest standard of values and peculiarly prone to be satisfied with a conventional standard. Rank and fashion and luxury and the power of generous patronage—these, modified by refinement and religion, were her constant conceptions of good; and money in her hands would be the means of obtaining them all. It was for her husband and her children and her Church that she desired these goods, for she herself only figured in her own thoughts as the dispenser of the family fortunes and the parish ministrant. She wanted nothing for herself as herself; she never thought of herself except as wife and mother and parish visitor, but in those capacities she felt the most intense hunger for the advantages of wealth. Her present moderate welfare, which she had so far viewed with some contentment, now appeared execrable. The cheap furniture of the vicarage, its spare diet, the plain clothes of the family, the poor trappings of the church, the bare benches of the

parish room—these which a few hours before had seemed to her 'quite nice'—triumphs of her own contrivance—now became an occasion for shuddering, because of the picture of better things to which her active mind had swiftly leaped at the mere mention of a family fortune.

And she and Cumnor had always been so good ! When had they ever failed to do their duty ? What toil had they ever shirked ? What could they have done more in the service of God ? And God in His providence was not only crushing them under the wheel of poverty and insignificance, but had now showed her that all that she desired had been within her reach and she had thrown it away out of pure zeal for God. Up to yesterday she had always comfortably felt that, whatever privations she must endure in this world, she and her family were certain of standing well with Heaven. She had, of course, never said this to herself before ; she had, in fact, always said exactly the reverse about her own personal deserts ; but now she realised that, setting aside intervals of conventional penitence, she had always felt assured of God's entire favour toward her family. Now that assurance could be hers no longer. God had put into the hands of these two old people the means that would obtain all that her husband and her children and her parish ought to have. God had ordained that they should dangle it before her eyes ; and she recognised that, under cover of believing them to be enemies of the Church, she had in every legitimate way tried to offend and drive them away. What good could money do

them? How terrible that it should flow unchecked into schismatic organisations and enrich the coffers of societies which were doing their utmost to hinder the work of the true Church or to promote its downfall! In the small hours of the morning she tossed and turned, feeling intolerable pain.

Ethel shuddered with the chill of actual fever. Her mind flung itself with intense longing toward a more vivid vision of that possible future which she had been in the habit of holding before her longing eyes. She thought of one of her beloved little ones actually married to the Earl's heir; of the widespread and profound influence which her husband's piety would exert when, shining in the light of this illustrious union, she saw him attired in bishop's sleeves, a friend of royalty, a chief light in the land, her other girls uniting themselves with rising Church dignitaries who, brought into filial relation with her husband's saintliness, should prolong and increase his beneficent influence. To her it was such a beautiful vision; it was pure from earthly taint, as she understood earthliness. It was undoubtedly what God might easily do; and instead of that——! Ethel clutched the corner of the poor little lumpy pillow on which her head was pressed, and clenched her hands upon it to check the dry, convulsive sobs which threatened to overmaster her. It was real physical agony; and the terror and sting of it was that God had ordained that the chance of good should come so near and that she, she herself, out of zeal for Him, should have ignorantly cast it away.

She knew now for the first time perfectly well

how much kinder her husband would have been to his relatives if she had not harped upon their heresies and shortcomings. But she had done it from a sense of duty ; she might have gone too far ; she might have been over-zealous ; but her zeal had had the highest motive, and God had betrayed her. With burning, aching eyes she stared up at the ceiling of the night-nursery, and her misery was such that she began to be frightened, thinking that she would perhaps lose her mind, or contract some nervous disease, if she could find no relief. She tried to pray ; it was her habitual way of seeking relief in the hard places of life. She tried to say conventional words about her own utter unworthiness and God's overwhelming goodness. At first such words in unfamiliar setting seemed like the most horrible mockery ; for God, who knew all things, must know that His providence toward her was unjust and cruel. Her conscience, well-trained, took the side of the penitential prayers ; her sense of truth—all the truth that she could see—was at war with her conscience. But then, both these voices at war within her told her that her help must come from God, for in her whole life it had never occurred to her to think of getting any good thing and enjoying it against God's will. Had she been capable of contemplating open revolt, she would now have been saved from much self-deception, but it was a thought that her religious training made impossible. Such a desire would have been a denial of the grace which, from her infancy, she had possessed by virtue of her baptism, and which was now

increased within her by her own constant and humble participation in the other sacraments. Therefore, since no good could be hers except by God's permission, she could not quarrel with God; the necessity of in some way regarding His conduct as right was laid upon her. If Providence was right, her standpoint must in some way be wrong; she must find something to repent of and thus change God's attitude toward her. When asked to accuse, her conscience quickly responded.

'If the Wards had been more educated, more fashionable, and if you had known they were rich, you would have behaved more nicely to them,' said conscience. 'Oriane says there is an element of snobbishness in your behaviour; and there has been. You might, you ought to, have been just as grieved and alarmed at their schismatic teaching, but you could have shown this in a kinder way and a more Christian spirit.'

Ethel's conscience went on quite as far as this; and when it had repeated its accusation, she agreed and repented.

Her conscience was highly trained; it had nothing more to say, and this was not enough to change the face of the situation. 'I have been rude,' thought poor Ethel, 'but they don't appreciate shades of behaviour enough for such veiled rudeness as mine to make all the difference, and they are deeply tainted with schism. They are certainly making both Oriane and Miss Kennedy, and probably Willie Latimer, more indifferent to Church teaching. Nothing could possibly make it right for Compton

or for me to gloss over this terrible sin ; if we had been more indifferent to it we should have been more wicked. Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do? I am very miserable! It is not as if any good could possibly come from their leaving the money to any one but Cumnor. The money must come to Cumnor ; it is his by right ; he is the natural heir ; God instituted the family partly for this very purpose. No one could do so much good with it as Cumnor. It must be a vast sum, yielding about £6000 a year, and the Church is terribly in need upon all sides. Just now, when the value of things is so terribly depreciated, and one cannot tell how much lower they may go if the Radicals should come into power—why, all the endowments of the Church may be taken away, and it will only be by the gift of private fortunes like this that the very existence of the Church in England can be continued !

‘And Cumnor’s uncle himself thinks the Church does a great deal of good ; he has said so several times. He said one day that, while he was quite willing to admit that, it struck him as odd that Cumnor wouldn’t admit that the Non-conformists were doing as much good ; and it is on account of this, which he calls bigotry, that he probably intends to disinherit the man whom God has ordained his heir. If God allows this it is surely cruel ; it is surely unjust to us! But if God cannot be accused of injustice and cruelty, then perhaps we have done something wrong that I have not thought of.’ And again she and her conscience hunted through all the circumstances of

the case, and this time her conscience acquitted her. She knew now that she would have been willing and glad to admit any sin the repentance of which might have opened the golden door; but, literally, she could not find a place for further repentance. She was too excited to sleep, far too much out of gear physically to rest, for her excitement and mental distress had already wrought sad havoc with her physical condition.

An uneasy doze towards morning was broken by the housemaid calling her to rise. She took her cold bath mechanically. Her life was filled with such exemplary habits, which it seldom occurred to her to break, and she was in her place at the daily eight o'clock service. Cumnor's voice was musical, and as she knelt, Ethel's worn-out nerves relaxed and she found relief in secret tears. This made her more sure of her own humility and repentance, and the mere physical relief brought a sense of larger goodness in the heart of the universe.

In the hush that followed prayer new light came to Ethel Compton. She seemed to hear a voice, 'Be not righteous overmuch; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?' She thought that it was a very sacred experience; in consideration of her night of agony, God had vouchsafed a special word of guidance. But what did it mean? She let the two or three present leave the church, and she remained there kneeling alone. What could it mean? It seemed to give her credit for good intentions, but she had made some mistake; she had overstepped the mark. Then what the old

man said about bigotry recurred to her conscious mind. Could it be that she had exaggerated the wickedness of schism? Scarcely; for Cumnor believed just as she did, and so did Lady Alicia and Mr. Glynne, and they were very good people. Still, the text was in the Bible; its words must certainly be the words of God, even had she not an inward conviction that they were sent to guide her. She remembered now Oriane's indignation against her social attitude, not only to the Wards, but to every one in the parish who was not of her cult and class. It was possible that in this she, and Cumnor too, were 'righteous overmuch,' *i.e.*, over-zealous for the truth? Even Lady Alicia and Mr. Glynne might be subject to further light from heaven. Yet she had been so sure that she was right, and that these, her best friends, were safe spiritual guides. And yet, of course, if this voice was sent to her she could not disregard it. She must reject even Cumnor's teaching if God vouchsafed to show her that Cumnor was mistaken. Yet what could she do? This question must be reserved for further prayerful reflection.

She went back to breakfast feeling very humble and very solemn.

CHAPTER XV

ETHEL AND THE DEVIL

AFTER breakfast, when physically much revived by tea and bacon, Ethel remembered Oriane's threat. Oriane had said, 'If you don't go and tell the Wards that you overheard, I shall tell them.' In this overbearing conduct Ethel thought that Oriane was wrong; she had no right to interfere. But then Oriane could not always be made to see how complex life and duty were. She would probably carry out her threat; that would obviously be very undesirable. 'Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?' the voice had said. If she allowed Oriane to do this, Mr. and Mrs. Ward would probably misjudge her and think the reason of her own silence ignoble, whereas she was only trying to do what was right. She must either tell them herself or in some way secure Oriane's silence. As to telling them, she could not possibly know what was the right thing to do until she had had more time to think out her course of action.

Ethel felt too ill to go out that day; the very thought of going to tell Mr. Ward that she had

heard their secret made her feel ill; and then, too, she had to think how to say it. She had been unkind to the Wards; of this she had truly repented, and must bring forth a new behaviour toward them meet for repentance. She was quite willing to do this; it was the only way of proving her own sincerity, and she thought that above all things she hated insincerity. But it would require a nice tact to abandon the one manner and acquire another without making the old people uncomfortable.

Just at this juncture she heard Mr. Ward's voice in cheerful greeting to her husband at the study door. He had brought a book which the vicar had expressed a desire to see. It darted quickly through Ethel's mind that she had often been surprised at the ease with which the old man spent money upon the books that Cumnor wanted. Before this she had always said to herself, 'How extravagant!' now she determinedly murmured, 'How kind he is!' She felt the virtue of this last sentiment, and in its glow she was able to repeat it with more unction. At that minute her little black-eyed daughter threw open the door of her sitting-room and was dragging in the old man, while she exclaimed with little shrieks of childish delight:

'Mummie! Mummie! Look, mummie, what uncle's brought me! It's the dead bodies of some little rose-trees, and they're going to be resurrected when the warm days come. He told me about it one day, and now he's brought them. Oh, look, mummie! that's a pink deader there; it's got

a ticket on it; and that's a yellow deader. Mummie, when people like us are dead in the churchyard, do they put tickets on us so that they'll know if we come up again right?'

'It's mostly out of her own head,' said the old man. He stood smiling down, first at the child and then at Ethel, and Ethel staggered up from the depths of an easy-chair into which, contrary to usage, she had shrunk with a sense of being unfit for the day's work.

'You're tired,' said the old man. 'You're not well; I mustn't disturb you.'

'It is so very good of you to bring the rose plants, and I heard you giving a book to my husband. How kind you are to us!'

The child bubbled over again with her own delighted talk, entreated him to sit down, and then climbed on his knee.

'You're tired,' he said again, looking over the child's head at Ethel. 'You look as if you needed a day in bed.'

'I walked too far yesterday,' said Ethel, because in her confusion this was the first thing she thought to say; and having said it, and being nervous, she repeated it with greater emphasis; and then she looked up in his face, 'I was with Oriane Graham, you know,' she said.

'Yes,' he said, 'she told us.'

'Oh!' Ethel gave a little gasp. For a moment she thought Oriane had not waited, that she had broken faith.

'You went to see that poor sick fellow at the cross roads,' said Mr. Ward.

'Yes,' said Ethel, 'that was why I did not feel able to go in to see you with Oriane.' If Oriane had told she felt she must put the best face she could on it, for the sake of Cumnor and the children.

She looked up at him pleadingly, and her face wore quite its prettiest and most solemn look. 'I've been very wrong, uncle, in doing so much. Cumnor told me not to do it, but I was wilful and disobeyed him; and now I see that I was wrong, for yesterday——' She looked at him eagerly. Oriane had told him nothing of moment!

Then a new thought came to Ethel. It was the supreme temptation of the confessional—to tell without telling. She did not analyse her temptation; she only acted on it.

'I was really at your door, and just going in, and then I turned away suddenly on the threshold.' She dropped her eyes. There was a little silence which seemed to her most expressive; then she added, 'I could not even take my tea when I got home; I was too tired; something in my nerves seemed to snap.'

'Yes; Sally's been saying that you were nearly worn out. Keep quiet by the fire for a day or two and you'll feel like another woman.'

She looked up at him seriously and said, 'You quite understand? Yes, I am sure you understand. It is very kind of you.'

'There is always a breaking-point, you know,' he said comfortably, 'and too many of us nervous, active mortals are apt to come to it before we know. But I'm very glad you've got the sense

to see it ahead of you and avoid it. It's the tree that bends that never breaks, you know. If you just give your attention now to coddling yourself, you'll get back your roses and look a deal prettier in a few weeks,' said the old man in a caressing tone.

She said earnestly, 'You are different from other men, uncle, because you understand with half a word where other men would require so much explanation and would be censorious.'

'I believe in women keeping their roses as long as they can,' said he tenderly. 'For John's sake, you know, you should try to get them back, and then look sharp after them that they don't diminish again.' He got up to go.

'Certainly,' thought Ethel, 'he has one virtue—he is never tedious.'

'If I were you,' said the old man, 'I would do nothing but amuse myself for a few days.'

'You are very kind,' repeated Ethel with feeling. 'And you'll tell Aunt Ward, won't you, how very sorry I am—about—well, all about yesterday, you know, and my reason for turning away from your door in that way when I had fully intended to go in.'

When he had gone Ethel felt much better. At first she said to herself, 'I hope he understood'; then after a few minutes, 'I am sure he understood. I told him. Of course I should not have spoken so seriously and repeatedly if I had not been referring to something important. He was obviously determined not to allow me to go into particulars because he knows I am too

honourable to tell Cumnor, and he rightly feels that in that case I ought not to go into any details with him or his wife. How blind I have been! Oriane and Miss Kennedy have been always telling me how much refinement he had; now, for the first time, I see it for myself. He understands me perfectly, and I understand him. I must go and tell Oriane.'

Ethel met Oriane in the street. Ethel was in that little flutter of happy spirits that sudden relief from a painful situation brings.

'Oriane,' she began, 'you have really more insight than I into people's characters. I'm feeling so vexed with myself, and quite ashamed, because you really did perceive the inner refinement of Mr. Ward's nature when I did not. Oriane, I have told him, and the way he took it showed such delicacy. He even checked me when I would have gone into details, speaking about my health and himself excusing me for leaving you at the door like that because I felt too ill to go in.'

'I'm glad you told him,' said Oriane.

'Of course you cannot understand, Oriane, what reasons I had for hesitating; but as soon as I began to tell him I was very glad I had done so, although I do not see how I could be sure beforehand. But when I saw how perfectly he entered into my whole difficulty about telling Cumnor, I could see from his face that he had turned it over in his mind and felt with me exactly. His consideration and courtliness took me entirely by surprise, but it is such a relief.'

I cannot blame myself sufficiently for so misjudging him before.'

'I wish, Ethel——' Oriane began emphatically, and then stopped. She was going to say, 'I wish you had begun to like him before you knew that he was rich,' but it occurred to her that if she did, Ethel, in her present mood, would only meet the reproach with plausible excuses. She stopped short, and looked at the branches of a tree over Ethel's head.

'And now,' Oriane, I am going to ask a favour of you. You know I explained to you last night that there are elements in this case that I am not at liberty to repeat.'

'I haven't the least desire that you should repeat them,' said Oriane.

'No, I know you have not, and that is the reason I am sure it will be easy for you to grant my request. I am just going to ask you never to refer to this matter again, even to me. You can't understand my position even as well as Mr. Ward does, for he of course knows the family affairs, so if you will only be as good as to promise this?'

'Now that you have told Mr. Ward that you know, I have, of course, no further interest in the matter,' said Oriane. She moved on, trying to talk of other things, but Ethel interrupted.

'You know, Oriane, I have been thinking, too, about our social attitude. I think it is perhaps a little wrong—not much—and of course there is very little I could do—but I am going to think about it.'

A day or two after, Ethel said to her husband

prettily, 'Cumnor, something has happened to me which I am not going to tell you about.'

They had come into the sitting-room after their simple evening dinner. Compton usually sat with her for a while before he went back to his study. He was always overwhelmed with work, but this rest after dinner—a relic of the time when it had been the greatest joy of both their lives to find themselves for a little while alone together—was still religiously adhered to. This was often the first opportunity he got to look at the daily paper, while she, prettily dressed and in a pretty way, darned the children's socks or did some other domestic needle-work. It had never before occurred to either of them that this hour was not so ecstatic as it had been in earlier years because there are more satisfying things in life than ecstasy. What they had was better than what they had outgrown.

This evening, however, Ethel's remark reminded them both of an incident in their earlier married life when Ethel had kept a little secret from him and made a pretty little fuss about doing so, and he had been all tender eagerness and excitement to find out what it was. She had chanced upon almost the same words now. Though both remembered, neither thought of commenting on the memory to the other.

'Well,' he replied, glancing over his newspaper with a smile, 'why will you not tell me?'

'Because I have decided that it would be more right and honourable not to.'

'All right,' said he with another smile, and

then he added, 'The Bishop of Carchester made a splendid fighting speech last night on the Education question. I'll read it to you.'

'Yes, I want to hear it. But, Cumnor, you don't mind my not telling you, do you?'

'No, certainly not; why should I? It says there were four thousand people in the town hall of Carchester.'

'What a fine audience! But, Cumnor, I want to tell you a little about this first, please; and I have a confession to make. It was something about which your uncle was exceedingly kind to me, and I want to say that I feel I have never rightly appreciated him before. I do not know how far I may have been mistaken and how far I may have been right before, but I am sure of one thing—I have never realised before how truly kind he is. Now I want to ask you something. You were saying one day that Mr. Ward was dissatisfied with the state of feeling in the parish. Do you think he is entirely in the wrong?'

'My uncle wants us to behave to enemies of the Church exactly as we do to friends. It is impossible.'

Cumnor lowered the paper, and sat for a minute or two looking into the fire. The thought of his uncle roused feelings and opinions with which Ethel was not closely related. The degree of family affection which the old man had stirred in him made the doctrinal divergence between them all the more bitter to him; bitterest of all had been an hour when the old man had solemnly accused him of lack of charity in this very school

controversy. Whenever Cumnor thought of it he searched his heart to find out how far it could be true. As far as he found reason for self-accusation he yielded at once. His whole heart was set upon righteousness, and he was thankful to any one who would show him his secret sins. But, as far as he could see, although his temper was defective, his opinions were not unfair or unkind. The accusation was the harder to bear because Cumnor was representing the Church of Christ to this dear old heretic.

From this reverie it was a great relief to turn again to the fighting speech of the Bishop of Carchester; possibly there some argument would be found that he might use to justify himself to his uncle. He said mechanically, 'I am very glad, Ethel, that you and my uncle have come to a better understanding'; and then he began to read the speech, which was very long and very convincing to minds that wanted to be convinced.

The vicar read the speech through with great animation, sometimes stopping to say, 'That's a good point, isn't it?'

Ethel cooed her usual responses, the sort of out-of-church 'amens' with which she was in the habit of capping his remarks; but when he came to the end she said:

'I wonder if, after all, politics is the highest work the Bishop of Carchester could do. You know, Cumnor, I'm glad you never speak in quite such a violent way as he does.'

'Why, Ethel, this is exactly our position, and extremely well put. I wish I had his eloquence;

I wish I had his opportunities. But I endorse every word of this—so do you.'

'Yes, yes; I know we endorse it in the main; but I thought I detected a note of exaggeration. I may have been mistaken; of course you know much better than I do, but——'

'But it is exactly what you yourself have for weeks been saying.' Compton's tone was distinctly aggrieved.

'Is it? Well then, I suppose I can't have understood it rightly. But don't you think, Cumnor, one does sometimes thoughtlessly say, with a perfectly good conscience, what, when we hear other people say it, does not appear to us quite admirable?'

Compton refolded the crackling sheet of the *Times* with some impatience of manner. 'It really is most extraordinary,' he said. 'I should have thought you would have enjoyed so admirable a speech. What do you object to in it? There is a time for righteous indignation just as there is a time for gentleness.'

'Yes, yes; of course, Cumnor. I am sure what you say must be true. Yet I think, to put it in plain words, the Bishop is angry, and saying all the nasty things he can think of about his opponents, although, of course, in a dignified way.'

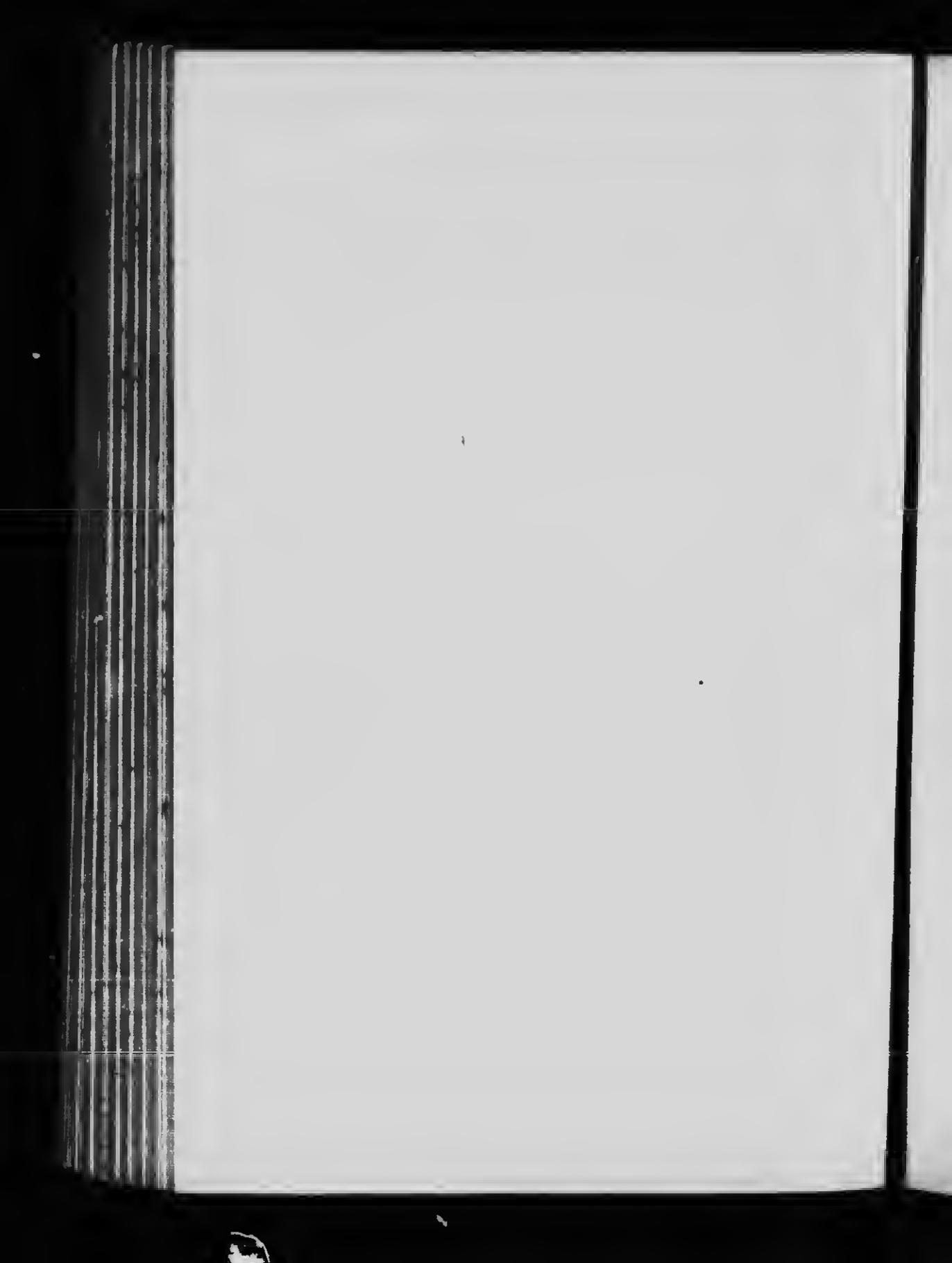
Compton said no more, but soon went to his study and locked himself in. What had bewitched the world that a foe in his own household should echo an accusation of spite against the arguments he endorsed?

Ethel sewed on by the waning blaze of the hearth fire. A purpose was conceived in her heart, nothing less than to soften the asperity of Churchman toward Dissenter and Dissenter toward Churchman in the little plot of souls in which her husband toiled. This, if deftly done, and this alone, would win for her husband his uncle's respect and confidence. She was alarmed at the indignation roused in Cumnor by her first small beginning, but she did not waver in her purpose. She felt, indeed, almost stunned by what seemed the greatness of the task; she knew not how to begin or where. A thousand thoughts came crowding in. She could not grasp any aspect of the case in which blame, great blame, did not appear to be the Dissenters' due; but, stimulated by the intensity of her purpose, she began to see that it might not always be wise to express that blame, and that its expression ought at least to be dispassionate and, if possible, sympathetic. Her own native good sense—that insight in which practical women of her type excel—told her that her reformation must begin with her own people. 'Twas but a mote in their eyes that had to be removed, but still she perceived clearly that that mote must be removed before she could sally forth with dignified kindness to extract the beam from the eyes of the Mosford Dissenters. Her mind roved over these purblind worthies, and she saw as yet no point of access, but she refused discouragement and persistently returned to the plan of small beginnings at home. She would be very quiet, very unobtrusive, but very firm. She drew in her breath

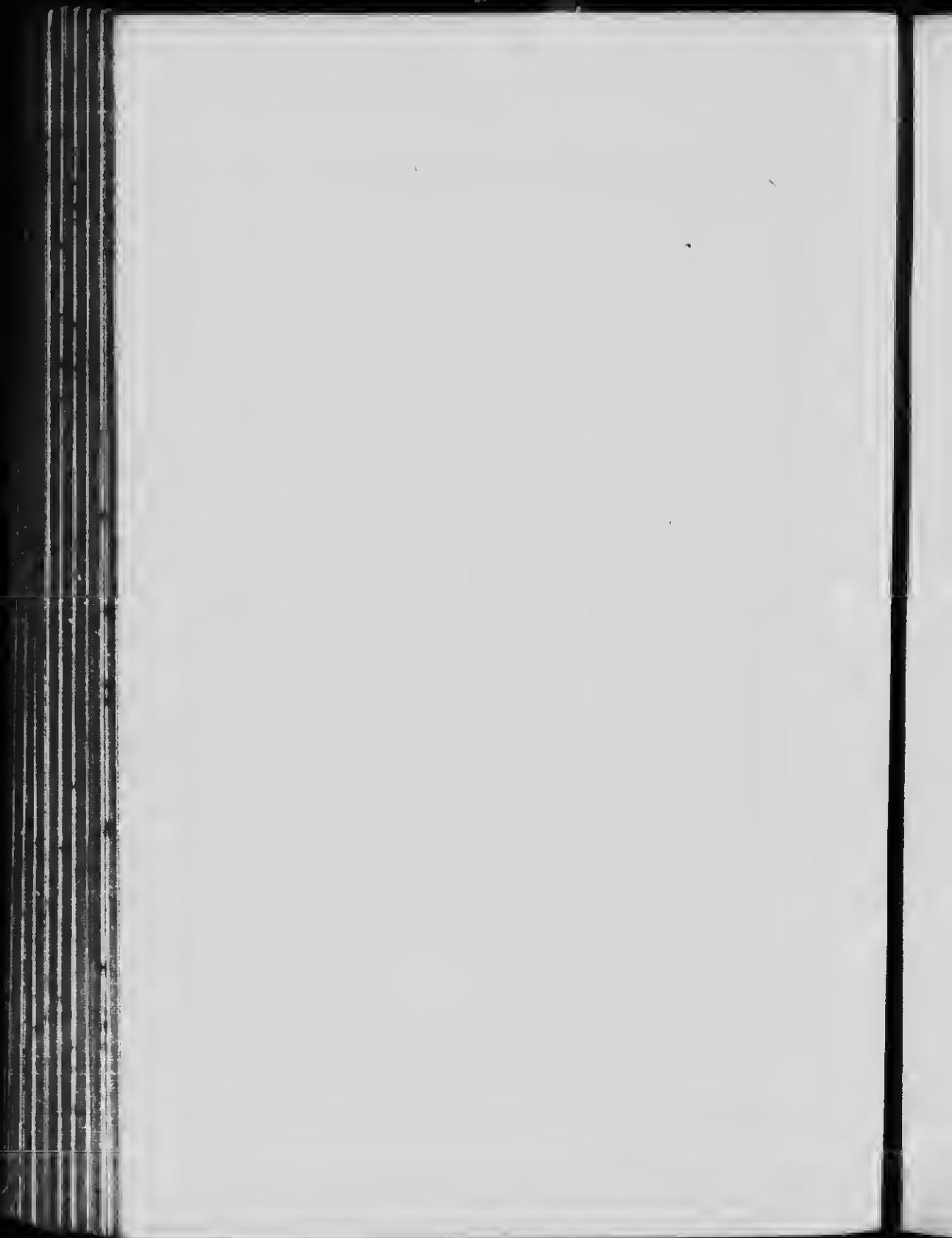
with a little sob of fear, because the sound of the key in the study door still lingered in the air of the room ; but she pulled herself together and said again that she would be firm. She began at once to school herself to say 'Nonconformists' where she was wont to say 'Dissenters,' thinking the term more complimentary.

It is quite possible to shut up certain ideas in a dark cupboard of the mind and refuse to open the door. Such ways of self-government may be honest or dishonest according to circumstances. The religious mind which bows to some external authority must always treat any doubt of that authority in this way ; the man or woman who would keep another's secret, or forget as well as forgive some personal wrong, must have recourse to this same method. Oriane was using it with regard to her accidental knowledge of Mr. Ward's wealth ; and Ethel now treated in the same way the half-acknowledged fact of her own duplicity with regard to her confession to Mr. Ward. Her passionate desire to obtain the money of which she had heard, her vivid picturing of all the good this money could effect, carried her on, absorbed and excited. In such a mood of the mind unpleasant incidents are easily overlooked. Certain life-long habits of downright speech, the sort of downright-ness which arises from an incapacity to picture other people's feelings when different from her own, caused her to think herself, and to be thought, a straightforward woman. A certain mental inability to see two sides of a question at once, which helped her to be intense in all that she

did, hindered her from ever dwelling upon the idea that this money might not be the highest good for her husband and children. She went forward conscious simply that her purpose was good.



BOOK III
IN BATTLE ARRAY



CHAPTER XVI

THE ODDS AGAINST ETHEL

ORIANE sat in Mrs. Ward's parlour. Here and there on the floor by the wall bulb flowers grew gaily in shallow dishes. The old man took his greatest daily delight in cultivating these harbingers of spring for his wife's enjoyment. He put them where she could look down into a cup when it opened.

Her visitor was deeply interested in Mrs. Ward's conversation. A minute before the old lady had mentioned the name of Nathaniel; Oriane had never heard this name said by a woman in a familiar tone. Her inward attitude was that of pricking up her ears, as a domestic dog does when he hears the name of an absent master. She did not, dog-like, gaze round-eyed and wistful, but, following the instincts of her nature as truly as a dog would, she affected to be absorbed in the flowers.

'As I was saying, dear, it was such a joy to my husband to be with Nathaniel in Oxford; if the household had not been such a sad one I should also have enjoyed it very much. But my husband

just seems to bask in his presence, and I think the reason is that they two are so much alike in not caring about possessions. You know, my dear, perhaps I ought not to say it, but since we have been rich every one who knows we have the money has asked us for some of it for some purpose or other—except, of course, you, my dear.'

'Theoretically, you know, I know nothing about it, Mrs. Ward; I promised to forget it.'

'Yes; but Nathaniel helps my husband to decide how to spend it, so that they are always discussing it when they meet; and Mr. Ward has often said to him, "Bring on your poor folk, Nathaniel; I believe in personal work more than in great institutions"; but he always says he has enough of his own for all the personal cases he can look into. Most men would spend more on their own pleasures, and let a rich friend who offered do their charity for them. But that isn't Nathaniel; he counts it the greatest privilege to give; it would never enter his mind to let us take that privilege from him. And you know, my dear, in England, college work like his is but poorly paid.'

'Why doesn't he get married?' asked Oriane in idle tone. She had lifted a little glass dish of purple crocus flowers, and was holding it out on her palm in a ray of sunshine that saluted them from a western pane.

'Oh, my dear, I am afraid there is a very sad reason for that.' The old lady said this softly and sighed.

Oriane's grey eyes gave one quick, keen look

from under her golden-brown lashes. The old lady's eyes were on her needle-work; her gentle face, downcast with compassion, showed no consciousness of having dealt a sword-thrust. Oriane was assured that if she herself was the cause of the sorrow referred to, the dear old lady did not know it.

Oriane sat silent and longed for the next word. Except under strong stimulant human volition is habitual, not incidental. The reason that many people do not ask the right question, or say the right word, at the right time, and thus obviate a good deal of life's travail, does not consist in the incidental folly for which they often blame themselves, but in the habitual wisdom which operates to preserve them from saying a thousand things they ought not to say. Oriane believed that she was quite able to speak, but she wanted to and did not.

The gentle, aged voice continued tranquilly, 'And so, although my husband always says he wishes Nathaniel would put his hand in the bag and take something for himself, I am sure he respects him more for not doing it. So, my dear, when I see how many ways there are of raising money for what people call religious purposes—the begging and collecting, and collecting and begging, the bazaars and entertainments, and this and that—I sometimes think that if there were a few ounces of true religious purpose in us all there would be none of it.'

'My practical sense tells me that we can't live in such rarified air, Mrs. Ward. I suppose, after

all, there is something gained in extracting shillings, like teeth, from each other and from ourselves. If I did not rigidly and painfully draw a silver tooth from my own purse sometimes, I should never give anything; and I only do it because some one else would annoy me if I did not. But, you know, I honestly feel that it would be unpractical and excitable if I gave away half of what I possess in a lump sum.'

'I wonder if the worry of the present state of affairs is not more morbid and unpractical.'

'Perhaps.' Oriane did not take any keen interest in the general question.

'At any rate,' said the old lady, 'as long as religious bodies salve the consciences of very rich men by always begging from them, there will be superfluity and starvation. I soberly think that very few would care to keep more money than they could decently use if beggars, religious and otherwise, did not solicit their bounty.'

Oriane put down the crocuses with a little clatter on the floor. She was amazed at her own impatience.

'Does Mr. Ward often visit Mr. Pye?' she asked at length.

'He needs to go occasionally to get help about the money. Poor Nathaniel is far too busy to come down here.'

Stung somewhere in the region of her heart, Oriane went out into the winter air. The early day had declined, and yet she walked far and fast down a western lane, her face toward one ruby streak between the grey layers of distant cloud.

What folly it was to think that one man could be so unlike all other men as to have retained an early love-fancy through long, silent years! Yet what had been her animating hope in these last weeks? Was it not that he had remained single for her sake? that, having introduced to her notice friends of his own original station in life and of his own religious tastes, he had intended, if she received them warmly, to renew his suit? She had never said this to herself before; now she knew it had been in her mind. And she had not failed; she had done what must assure him that she could set aside the barriers of class and sect. Yet now she heard that he would not make time to come! What did it mean? Was her hope pure folly? She tried whole-heartedly to give it up. Grown tired of trying, she let her mind dart down an interesting by-way. What would Mr. Ward do with his money? If the vicar must give up his principles to inherit, the wealth would surely never be his. The coming election, the new Liberal Education Bill, would undoubtedly make the vicar's narrowness all too patent. Was it not then possible, nay, even likely, that this Nathaniel, so dearly loved by the old man for his aptitude in giving and slowness in taking—that he might be the heir? The more she thought of this the more possible it seemed. Mr. Ward's one idea of a good use for money was to give it away; who could be discovered less covetous and more practised in the art of giving? Ethel Compton would be terribly disappointed. Oriane mused in a puzzled mind about Ethel. She did not know

exactly why Ethel distressed her. She had no direct evidence that Ethel had set her heart on the money except the too sudden fancy she had taken for her new relatives; and Ethel's natural liking for people of wealth or distinction did not, in a usual way, imply any covetous desire.

For her part, Oriane certainly coveted the money for Nathaniel Pye. When the idea had once leaped into her mind she was astonished at the force of her wish. Apart from any natural hope of sharing his good fortune—even knowing that if she did share it with him he would never use it for private delight—she realised that she did very strongly desire that he should have the money. She even began to be jealous lest Ethel should trim her sails so cleverly as to obtain it. Ethel was a clever woman; none rated her cleverness more highly than did Oriane; but as she walked up the darkling lane, and reckoned up the *personnel* of Mosford parish and the relation in which the vicarage stood to opposing forces, she thought that Ethel's wiles could not possibly turn the edge of that hot contempt which a broad-minded onlooker would be bound to feel for English Christianity in the coming contest. In Oriane's thought the Liberal and Dissenting opposition in Mosford grouped itself under two leaders, in relation to whom she felt sure the vicar could never appear other than a bigot in Mr. Ward's eyes. Of these leaders we must now hear more.

CHAPTER XVII

'THE MAN WITH THE BEARD'

THERE was in Mosford a retired Independent minister. He was a wiry man, with a beaked nose and a long iron-grey beard that looked most picturesque in the wind, just as a horse's mane looks best when it is tossed by the elements. He taught Latin to the Latimer children, and was known to Willie's friends as 'The man with the beard.' He was very ardent, very puritanical, very learned in grammar and certain aspects of history, and very ignorant about other things.

A day or two after Mr. and Mrs. Ward had for the first time attended the chapel on Sunday evening, this man walked up their garden and knocked at their door.

'Come in, sir; come in,' said Mr. Ward, going himself to the door, for he had seen who it was.

'We are very pleased to welcome you and your good lady to Mosford,' said the visitor. He sat down in the comfortable and airy little parlour, but as far from the open window as possible.

'Afraid of the air?' asked Mr. Ward. 'My

wife and I are great people for fresh air of all sorts, but we don't wish to impose it on our visitors.' And, closing the window, he cordially reciprocated the welcome.

After a little small talk the minister said, 'We were glad to see you at our service on Sunday evening. The Free Church in Mosford has to struggle with many disadvantages.'

'Of what sort?' asked Mr. Ward with the interest of surprise. 'I should have thought it was most advantageously placed—a growing population and not too many different sects in the place.'

'That is so; and we are doing our best to supply the spiritual needs of the place; but our people are, for the most part, poor, and Church influence is strong.'

'Does the strength of one religious body mean the weakness of another? We don't look at it that way in Canada, and my experience certainly has been that if the spiritual level is high in one congregation of a town it will be high in others. Goodness is infectious, you know, very infectious, although it takes different forms.'

'Unfortunately in England that is scarcely true. We suffer, you know, sir, from an Established Church, and that entails evils of which you have probably no experience.'

'I can see how Establishment might injuriously affect the church established, but how can it affect any other church?'

'The point is, sir, that every Englishman is responsible for his National Church; and the

National Church is increasingly obnoxious to half the nation.'

'It is surely a reflection on all parties when any form of genuine Christianity can be said to be "obnoxious" to Christian men!'

'But the Church of England now harbours many men who have no marks of genuine Christianity. Perhaps, sir, you have not studied the history of the Papacy and learned how invariable are its policy and tactics? Perhaps you have not heard of the Roman conspiracy against England in the thirties? It is that which makes our present warfare so important; we must stand for religious liberty.'

'"Conspiracy" is a strong word. Would you say, now, that the China Inland Mission is a conspiracy against China?' Mr. Ward smiled his broad, genial smile.

'"Conspiracy" is the only word for that to which I refer; and although it may be difficult sometimes to know who are the conspirators and who are the dupes, since the thirties it has been clear that there exists in this country a very large society of hard-working Jesuits who, under the guise of ministers of the Protestant Church of England, are straining every nerve to bring first the Church and then the whole country under the dominion of the Roman See.'

'But in this age of the world a man would need to be off his head with fanaticism to believe that any cause he considers good can be served by casting aside every shred of human honour.'

'The Pope absolves their conscience in these

matters, sir. They are not on a level with men who admit no intermediary between themselves and God.'

'But the Pope himself,' cried Mr. Ward with genuine astonishment, 'has he none of the ordinary sentiments of a gentleman? We've had three Popes within my memory: one of them might conceivably have been stark mad, and therefore beyond the ordinary tests of decency in conduct, but it is impossible to believe this true of them all; and even if it were, your belief would imply a like insanity in all those who did their infamous bidding. Consider, my dear sir, if it would be difficult for you to bring your mind to the smallest deception,—such as deceiving an invalid for the sake of his health,—how impossible it must be for any decent man to live a whole life of deception, and especially in those very matters in which he requires to lay bare his soul before God.'

'It might certainly seem so; and, as you put it, your remark is very telling; but you must remember that they are trained to this from earliest infancy, and we who live in Gospel light have little idea of the unfathomable depths of darkness in the soul which shuts out that light.'

'Self-deception may go a long way, but I understand you to think that many of these men are acting with their eyes open and conscious of their duplicity?'

'Alas, we have abundant evidence on all sides that both deceivers and deceived are at work, and it appears to me we have Scriptural warrant for believing that human nature, apart from Divine

grace, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'

'Do you think that these High Church chaps are without God's grace?'

'God is a spirit, and must be sought in the utter truth and purity of spiritual worship, and these men are so sunk in formalism. Thus they have no light to show them their own iniquity.'

'Well,' cried the old man, taking a long breath, 'I shall require a great deal of evidence before I can believe that a respectable-looking set of fellows were such rascals as that!'

'Oh, I can give you documentary evidence if you will examine it.'

'I'll examine it,' said Mr. Ward. His mind attacked every new subject with a boyish alacrity.

His promise was so hearty that his visitor, who had appeared to freeze up in the cold breath of a scepticism which could even temporarily doubt the bad faith of the priestly temperament, now became more kindly. He was even persuaded to talk with enthusiasm upon a subject in which the National Church was not concerned; and Mr. Ward, who had an adroit way of finding the topic on which every man could talk best, soon headed him off on to the regions of ancient lore. He had, during a large part of his life, combined the duties of a country parson with the teaching of Greek and Latin in a preparatory school, and he had a real love for several of the ancients.

'I hardly know any Greek or Latin at all,' said Mr. Ward. 'Oh, I've taught myself enough to

spell a bit in the Greek Testament. I suppose you don't care to give lessons nowadays?'

He made out that his visitor enjoyed nothing so much as giving lessons and would be only too glad to be paid for them. Mr. Ward arranged to begin the next morning at nine o'clock, and, under instructions, wrote at once for grammar and lexicon.

'We'll do a little Latin as well while we are about it,' he remarked. 'I've often thought it would be a great pity to go into the next world without being able to talk to the early Christians.'

The man with the beard gasped at this suggestion. 'There will be but one language there,' he said solemnly.

'Can't say I know all the details of life in the next world, but I always suppose that all one can learn in this world must be so much to the good when one gets to the next,' said Mr. Ward cheerily.

When relating the arrangement to his wife, Mr. Ward said, 'The poor old gentleman wants a little more of the milk of human kindness. A man must have found the world crabbed before he could ascribe such shameless conduct to his fellow-men.'

The next morning when the classical tutor arrived he carried an armful of books in the English tongue, on the working of priestcraft in history, on the Christian Papacy, and, more modern still, on the dark ways of the Anglican Ritualist. He laid them one by one before Mr. Ward with words of commendation.

Mr. Ward discovered, to his surprise, that his new friend was not lacking in good temper or charity in other matters. His character had not been soured, nor did he consider that the world had dealt hardly with him. It was evident that he thought he had intelligent ground for his incriminating statements.

'You will find,' said he, 'that history clearly proves that the priest is always the same : what he has done in the past, always, everywhere, he is doing to-day in England. Insert into the minds of any class of men that it is their duty to come between their fellows and God and you give them a taste for the life-blood of the people which they can never resist. When they cannot suck their blood openly they will sell their souls to do it by stealth.'

CHAPTER XVIII

THE METHODISTS

THE house of the Methodist minister in Mosford was a very good one. It had been recently built by the denominational authorities upon a plot of land on which an older manse had stood, and where the minister of a former generation had planted a few fine trees and graceful shrubs. The new house was of brick with stone facings, 'in the Tudor style,' its occupants said. An evergreen creeper already climbed to the windows, and an old elm hung its branches over the well-pitched roof.

The stout young minister and his stout young wife left their cards upon Mrs. Ward at an early opportunity, and when Mr. and Mrs. Ward returned their visit the house and garden were displayed to them with pardonable pride. Mr. Ward took particular interest in the garden and remained some time in it, while Mrs. Ward lingered over the excellent kitchen range and modern domestic appointments.

'This,' said she, 'appears to me to show evidence of civilisation, for I protest that the

basement kitchen at the vicarage is uncivilised. How any servant can be persuaded in these days to spend her life in a room that is damp and dark, to cook at a stove which is half-open, and to carry water which might easily be introduced in pipes, is more than I can understand.'

'I never was in the vicarage,' said the bouncing Methodist dame. 'Now that I think of it, I never was inside any vicarage in my life.'

The women repaired to the drawing-room, which was more handsome and less elegant than was desirable.

Outside the window the minister was saying pompously, 'Yes, sir; these two fine young silver birches by the gate were planted by the Reverend Professor Nathaniel Pye, now known to fame. He lived here, sir, as a young minister, but before the new house was built, and I am told that he took great interest in the place. The Methodists of Mosford, sir, have a fine record. The first minister was one Brocus Hall, personal friend of the Wesleys, who was heavily fined several times for preaching the Gospel to the poor; and the man who planted these elm-trees wrote some well-known hymns. It is a curious thing that the Anglicans, with all the advantage of a fine old church and vicarage, have never, so far as I can ascertain, had a man of any distinction here in Mosford.'

Tea was served in the drawing-room by a small maid almost extinguished by the size of her cap and apron.

The Methodist and his wife were about of a

height, and he was not a short man. They were both rounded in contour, but not lacking in muscle. He was fair and clean-shaven; she was dark, with a great frowse of curly hair dressed low over her forehead. They were both warm-hearted and much given to little quips and jokes of a harmless but seldom witty nature. Such were Jarvis and Muriel Cole.

'Jarvis,' said his wife, 'Mrs. Ward is surprised that we don't know the vicarage people. She has asked me why. Can you tell us why it is?'

'We are anathema to them,' said Jarvis comfortably, as he poured a liberal supply of cream into Mr. Ward's cup. 'Sugar, sir?'

'I don't suppose they'd have had anything to do with us any way,' went on Mrs. Cole; 'but you see, we came just when the tug-of-war over the Education question was beginning; and you will admit that people who are tugging with might and main at different ends of a rope haven't much breath left to say, "How d'ye do" to one another.'

'You have been here two years,' said Mr. Ward. 'You can't have been tugging all the time!'

'Certainly not!' said Jarvis Cole. 'Don't let my wife make you think we are worse than we are. But new-comers to a place can only know socially the people who take the trouble to call upon them. Neither in this place nor in the last did the vicar ever call upon me. The first place I had the vicar came to see me, but as his wife didn't call on mine, you see we had only a business acquaintance.'

'It's pitiful,' said Mrs. Ward. 'It's pitiful.'

'I am a "passive resister,"' said Jarvis Cole.

'It's only cost me twenty-five shillings a year since Balfour's Education Act came into force. My great-great-grandfather was fined forty pounds for trying to teach the boys in his village to read and write. He wasn't a religious man at all; all he wanted was to give the poor little urchins some book learning of the most elementary sort; but he came of a Dissenting family, and it was illegal then for Dissenters to keep a school at all. Forty pounds meant a good deal then, so it broke him, and he and his family nearly starved. You see it's no wonder if I've inherited a pretty strong feeling about ecclesiastical tyranny.'

'Every one in those benighted days thought it right to tyrannise over his neighbours for their good; your forefather would probably have forced every one to learn to read and write, whether they wanted to or not, if he had had the power,' said Mr. Ward pawkily.

'That's rather good, Muriel, isn't it? Mr. Ward means to say that it's very hard to tell where tyranny begins and ends.'

Mr. Ward went on. 'When they tried to make their religion compulsory they were just as sure they were acting for the common weal as we are when we make education compulsory. I met a Derbyshire man once who left England because he wouldn't have his children vaccinated. He went out to America, "the land of the free," and having settled in a town in one of the Western States, he one fine morning sent

his six children to the town school. They trooped home at noon all vaccinated, their arms neatly bandaged and no questions asked. He was so angry with American democracy that I understood he was making preparations to move to China, thinking he could only get individual liberty under an ancient and well-established despotism.'

'Don't you believe in vaccination?' asked Mrs. Cole.

'That is not the point, Muriel,' said her husband. Then Jarvis began to be oratorical. 'Admitting that the welfare of the few must be subordinated to that of the many, don't you think that history proves that our progress towards liberty is continuous? The laws that a good commonwealth lays down are better as the years go on, and our methods of enforcing them are more humane. That being so, we must look for our ideal State and our ideal Church to the future, not to the past. The essence of tyranny is to fetter the present and the future with the past. To-day we teach, we vaccinate, we isolate infection, and for my part I would at present cause every schoolchild to give thanks daily to the Giver of all good and crave from Heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, that our future may be better than our past. But in none of these cases do we impose the iron heel of what has been upon what is.'

'Some would go further and say that all religion is a fetter of the past. They would refuse to teach any religion,' said the old man.

'So be it, then. I am not appalled at the

thought of banishing religion from the schools for a time, because I am certain that free men will ultimately choose to have pure Christianity taught in every school when they have swung free from the stupid animosities that warp their minds. In the meantime none will refuse to every man the liberty to teach his religion to his child. For my part, believing as I do in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, I am convinced that pure Christianity will by their blessed inspiration increase more and more until it cover the face of the earth. So far from education being secular in the days that are to come, no branch of learning will be taught except as a part of the scheme of the All Father for the salvation of His universe.

‘At heart every Christian man has that hope in him; the only difference among them is as to how best to work for its realisation.

‘If you will excuse me, sir, I think many of our friends of the Established Church have not this hope at all; nor have they, so far as my observation goes, the faith that God, who gave us Jesus Christ, is able to inspire His people and preserve His Church. For example, sir, I am a Methodist. I believe with my whole heart in the evangelical faith and in the methods of John Wesley. I think that Methodism to-day, in all its branches, is the greatest instrument in God’s hands for the salvation of the world. But, mark you, I don’t, at every turn of political events, go about shrieking, “Methodism is in danger,” and

preaching the necessity of "Methodist Defence," and why? Because I believe God created the Wesleys, and God inspired and built up the Methodist body and still does inspire it, and that if by any mischance the Methodist body were destroyed, God could and would build it up in the equivalent of three days. What His inspiration has done it can and will do always; and if we did not retain that spirit in the Methodism we know, we should have the same spirit in a more glorious body. But if I were always grubbing in the annals of the eighteenth century to find out, not the power behind Wesley, but exactly what Wesley and his friends actually did and said, so that I might reproduce it like a sort of gramophone, I suppose I should soon come to think that my gramophone was a thing another man could smash, and when it was smashed there would be no more chance for the salvation of the world.'

'Now, Jarvis,' said his wife, 'offer Mr. and Mrs. Ward another cup of tea. I am sure that in Canada it is bad form to enter into religious argument at afternoon tea.'

Jarvis passed the teacups, but his eloquence was not easily checked. 'We are now recovering much early history from inscriptions and papyri, and finding out that much we have copied was Pagan, not Christian, and much that was real Christian development it would not be desirable now to copy. But we are learning every day more clearly how intense was the devotion of the early Christians to the personal Christ, and that

the Spirit of Christ, brooding over the flux of nations, found in this devotion then, as in every subsequent age, that attitude of heart to which He could reveal Himself, and which He could inspire with all that tends to the world's best civilisation. It is only that attitude of personal devotion to a personal Christ that we of the Free Churches require. That is why we do not go about trying to convert other Christians to our particular sect as the Churchmen do."

'I don't know enough about all that digging,' said Mr. Ward, avoiding controversy. 'Until I sold my business I never had very much time on my hands, and now I find there is an enormous amount of reading to be done. What volumes on archæology do you recommend, sir?'

'The gentleman to whom I referred in the garden, sir, who planted those silver birches, the Reverend Professor Nathaniel Pye, has written one or two most illuminating works.'

'Oh, I've read all that I can understand of what Pye has to say,' said Mr. Ward. 'My wife and I know Pye pretty well.'

'Do you mean the great Pye?' asked Mr. Jarvis Cole with enthusiasm.

When Mr. and Mrs. Ward were walking home Mr. Ward remarked, 'That young minister evidently thinks that church parsons have no faith. He has his ideas, but he's long-winded, and he becomes positively pompous when he gets on Pye. Pye has his buttons on, but you'd think, to hear Mr. Cole talk, that Pye was the Great Panjandrum.'

'The Great Panjandrum had only one button on, and that was a little one,' said Mrs. Ward with the soft inconsequence of a perfect inward apprehension.

Then Mr. Ward said with a sigh, 'It would be good for our John to know that young man. I can't think why he is so stiff and stand-offish with a fellow-minister like that.'

'England's a very wicked country,' said Mrs. Ward with emotion. 'I never could have believed that Christians could quarrel with one another in this way. I don't think either Mr. or Mrs. Cole wished to know John and Ethel; I think they despised them.' Then she added, 'Ethel's habit of giving John a comfortable, sit-down tea in the dining-room, and asking any caller to come in, seems to me at once more sensible and more hospitable. Of the two women, my dear, I think I should like Ethel the best, even if she were not related to us; and I wish, poor dear, she could have as convenient a kitchen.'

CHAPTER XIX

THE BISHOP

MOSFORD was in the diocese of Elminster, to which some months before a new Bishop had been appointed. He was not new except as a bishop, being an old man known to the world as a great historian and to the diocese as a somewhat wayward saint. He was a friend of the Glynnes and a connection of the Latimers; but Mr. Glynne confided to Ethel that he feared the Bishop was not a very good Churchman, while Mr. Latimer said that the only thing wrong with him was that he was 'too churchy by half.'

Near Elminster an old priory with a fourteenth-century chapel had been turned into a school for backward and defective boys. The house stood low, surrounded by an undulating park, in which great oaks, half-dead with age, and beeches of huge growth gesticulated to one another and made a solemn music when the wind blew. The little old chapel and the trees fostered deep religious impressions in some of the more imaginative children.

Elminster and Mosford were on opposite sides

of the diocese, and the journey between was made a long one by awkward railway connections and a country drive. The Bishop was at this time going about to confirmations in several places. One of these was the Priory School, and another was Mosford. It was a stormy morning when he confirmed some lads in the school chapel; distant thunder rolled and lightning lit long lancet windows and the faces of the lads. The Bishop looked to see if any of them were frightened. One of the candidates riveted his attention. As the keen eyes of the Bishop met his, the lad smiled and nodded as in happy recognition. Even a bishop in a chancel may be puzzled as to how to carry on a very small incident. The boy looked so intelligent, so loving, and withal so spiritually disposed, that the Bishop could not wholly ignore the sudden greeting.

When the anthem began this boy's voice was the clearest and sweetest. There was no organ in the chapel; the wind in the great trees that clapped their hands together over the roof was the accompaniment, and the lad's voice seemed to rise like that of a soaring bird into heaven above the storm.

'Who is the lad that looks like Galahad?' asked the Bishop afterwards of the master.

'Young Latimer.'

'Ah!' said the Bishop; 'then he may have known me. I know the family.'

'I hardly think he would remember that. He smiles at every one whose face he likes, even in the street. It is very sad.'

'It is a better practice than ours,' said the Bishop.

The headmaster said afterwards that you never could tell what the new Bishop was going to say next, or what he meant when he said it.

'Did he want to be confirmed?' asked the Bishop.

'He simply insisted. Our chaplain did not think it right to deny him; otherwise his father——'

'Yes, I know,' said the Bishop.

'Personally I question whether it was right. He cannot understand doctrinal teaching.'

'He may have an understanding with his Father in heaven,' said the Bishop.

'I do not know, I am sure. He has no feeling of reverence.'

'I am sure he has affection,' said the Bishop.

'God will guide him by that.'

A day or two after this Mr. Ward, having gone up to town on business, was making his way back to Mosford in slow local trains. He had just passed the last junction when the train came to an unexpected halt. Mr. Ward leaned out of a third class carriage and looked up and down. A still, white fog hung on the land. A man was running back along the line. He said that the guard had fallen out on the permanent way. Mr. Ward got out and ran back also. He helped to carry the fallen man and lay him on the grass by a signal-box close at hand.

There were only three carriages on the train, and most of the compartments were empty.

Most of the passengers were market women and children. The brake was found to be out of order, and the train must be delayed while it was righted.

Mr. Ward knelt over the stunned man, and did what he could till his consciousness returned. Then he shouted into dull ears, 'No bones broken; not much harm done. Thank God! Take courage!'

When he rose from his knees he met the keen and wondering gaze of an elderly gentleman who was seated in an open vehicle which had been hailed from some place in the blank fog. This gentleman was already prepared to finish his journey by road, sitting snug with rugs drawn round him. He said, as if in excuse for his look, 'I wish to thank you, sir, for your kindness to the poor fellow.'

Mr. Ward wondered why this other person should thank him. 'You'd have done it yourself if I hadn't happened to get first innings,' said he.

The thin, withered face looked wonderingly at the answerer, and a gentle, benign smile beamed over its gravity.

'Which way are you driving?' asked Mr. Ward. 'If you're going any part of the way toward Mosford I shall be glad to share the cab with you. My wife will be getting anxious.'

'I shall be most happy,' said the other old man. 'I am going to Mosford.'

They were bound for a tedious drive together, for the animal in the shafts was but a makeshift of a horse, lean and spiritless. When the driver

flogged him Mr. Ward's companion called out in a voice of well-bred authority and bid him desist.

'Thank you,' said Mr. Ward. 'It's wonderful how a poor beast like this will go and go for miles without being overdone if they let him take his own pace.'

'You do not belong to this country?'

'In a sense, yes. I am from the backwoods of Canada, and I take it we have all a share in the motherland; but I'm not accustomed to the ways of folks here, and how their minds work round things is very surprising to me.'

'It would be very kind of you to beguile this tedious drive by telling me some of the points that surprise you most.'

'It's the religion that surprises me most,' said Mr. Ward with a sigh. 'In some ways it's mighty queer.' His inward astonishment lent burly force to these words. Then he relapsed into silence, unconscious apparently that he had ceased to speak.

All about them the fog lay in a thick white fold. The slight air that passed over them carried its voluminous veil slowly across the limited area of their vision. They saw it come from the dim outline of hedge and hedgerow elms upon one side, and pass into indistinguishable greyness when it became entangled with the briars and evergreens of the opposite hedge. Sometimes trees were seen looming above, like giants of measureless magnitude in active attitude, and sometimes they could see nothing at all but the box seat and the back of the sleepy driver, and

they heard nothing but the slow splash of the horse's hoofs.

There was silence for about half a mile. Then Mr. Ward remembered that he had been asked to beguile the journey. 'I beg your pardon,' he said. 'I am forgetting your request. But the things that are chiefly surprising to me may not interest you—indeed they will not unless you are—as I believe you are—a follower of the Lord Jesus.'

The other old man turned somewhat and gave him a keen look. 'May I ask why you believe that I am?'

'Well, sir, there is a certain subtle sympathy and community in these things, and I usually give a guess, when a man speaks to me, as to whether we have the most important things in common or not.'

'There is truth in what you say,' said the other meditatively. Then he added, 'You think poorly of English Christianity, then?'

The vexations incident to Mr. Ward's first few weeks in Mosford came out in his reply. 'I pray that God may preserve me from a harsh judgment, but in England I find such an entire lack of brotherly love, especially in the churches, that it is hard for me to see where real Christianity comes in at all.' He spoke with startling energy, looking straight before him in the fog.

Over the thin face of his companion there came a quiet beam of amused interest and a certain sarcastic quiver of the eyebrows. 'You cannot overlook the fact that we English consider that we have the highest conception of humanity, and

have taken upon ourselves to teach a lesson in brotherly love to the rest of the world.'

'The Jewish dramatists had their wits about them. I've read most of the best stories of the world in translation; and, by what I can find, some of those old Jews that wrote the Old Testament are not surpassed in their knowledge of men and nations by the Greek play-writers or any others. Now, in almost every case they damned a man and a nation for being false to the very virtue for which they were famed. Israel, who alone knew the true worship of God, went after idols; Israel, to whom the mission of converting the world was given, came to desire the destruction of all the world except themselves. There was Moses: with what kindly patience he had borne with the gainsaying crowd; and then he missed the reward of it all by losing his temper. And so on with a lot of those old fellows. Your people, even the religious sets among them, may have had good notions once, but now, broadly speaking, sir, it's fighting that English Christians love, and not each other. It is the unwarranted imputation of moral defect to those who differ from them in matters of political, and especially religious, judgment, that gives free rein to the love of fight in them.'

'I hold no brief for the superiority of our nation,' said the other old man, with the same quaint arching of his grey eyebrows. 'I am afraid, sir, you have been reading that heretical book called Jonah. You have come too completely under the writer's influence to admire our desire for

the downfall of our opponents. You would even believe that we ought to sympathise with the Almighty in His affection for our arch-enemies in Church and State.'

'And their cattle,' said Mr. Ward tenderly. The tenderness that always came into his tone when he thought of the love of God seemed to rest on the silence between the two old men and make it holy.

At last the other said, 'But now that we have arrived on common ground, I would say, on behalf of my people, that you have come to visit us at a sad hour. This fever of religious warfare is a plague, like the infectious manias of history, to which each party is equally prone. I hope you will remain with us long enough to see us in our convalescence; for the return of life and health after the virulence of fever has often an uncommon cheerfulness and sanity about it, and a man seems at his very best; as if God and nature would say, 'See what a good child I can make him, although but a short time ago the ravings of his delirium were prompted by the devil!'

'I am glad you can speak so hopefully,' said Mr. Ward kindly, 'but I'm in the blues about it myself. There are some fevers that arise from poison in the very source of life; even if a man recover, some infirmity or deformity results. As I look at these wretched, party-driven men on both sides, I'm not surprised to find the common working man, whose energies are needed for something more useful than fighting, deserting the God of his fathers.'

‘But you cannot think that God will desert him?’

‘God bless you for that word, sir! you’re putting heart into me. I wish there were some with your faith in the Church of England. I wish I could get the hang of what they’re driving at in the Church. I heard a parson the other day telling that he had been called up in the night to baptize a dying child, and his boots had gone down-stairs, so he had to run in his slippers, and the child died the instant he had baptized it. He called it a wonderful working of Providence, for if he had stayed to lace his boots the child would have been lost to the Church. In all the annals of heathendom you’ll not find a better magic story than that. What difference could it make to God or the child? How can you blame decent men for not wanting such a conception of God’s government to be taught in the schools?’

‘Yet you would not say that prayer made no difference; and perhaps you will admit that the rite is an occasion and symbol of prayer. You have more sympathy with what has been called the evangelical view of truth than with the sacramental, perhaps?’

‘I understand it better. I’m blest if I can understand all this talk about the sin of schism. Who makes a schism? There isn’t a Dissenting sect of any importance that will not welcome Churchmen to partake of its sacraments and preach in its pulpits, on the common ground of a permanent difference of belief. They do not want to pull Churchmen over to their views.

They are quite content to say, 'We are all trees of God's planting,—some oaks, some elms, some beech,—all with roots in the river of life. It is only these folks who call themselves "Catholic" who hold aloof; they make the only schism I can see. It is this doctrine of aloofness that the sects don't want taught to their children. But, for all this, they ought to fight without venom.' Mr. Ward was shaking his shaggy head at the hedge-rows in the ardour of his impatience.

'May I suggest something that has proved a consolation to my own mind in religious warfare? You say you can understand the aspect of Christian truth we have called evangelical; I hope that I also partly understand it. Let us begin there. As a mere matter of modern history, I think we must both admit that in that movement there have been numbers of men—sometimes numbers working together—who, not being in any way great men, either in head or heart, taught a certain doctrine to the exclusion of all others, thus making that doctrine both grotesque and pernicious.'

'Right you are!' said Mr. Ward heartily. 'I knew a minister once—his name was Kegg—who was always preaching that his people should have no higher ambition than to have it written on their tombs that they were "sinners saved by the mercy of God"; and they had no ambition to be more than sinners. I never came across a worse lot, and, as I said to him, whether or not God could do better for them ultimately was not within the province of man to say.'

'Can you think of any way in which that over-

emphasis and half-statement of a great truth can be prevented? Education does something, but not much; the specialist scholar may be the worst bigot. Nor can we say that sincere godliness will prevent it, for in so saying we judge men as we have no right to judge them. Can we say more concerning a great deal of foolish Antinomian teaching than that it appears to need great men to emphasise any one aspect of truth in a great and wholesome way, that when the teacher is paltry in either understanding or character, one element in the faith, if over-emphasised, ferments within him and becomes something other than nourishment to either his own soul or the souls of his flock.'

'That's a strong idea,' said Mr. Ward encouragingly. 'I shouldn't wonder if it's true.'

'Certain aspects of evangelical truth were largely caricatured because those who taught them denied the corporate nature of the Church and the need of the outward work and the outward sign. What happened? Great men rose up to emphasise these counterbalancing aspects of Christian truth. They in their turn were sorely tempted to deny what was called the Evangelical plan of salvation; but those great leaders of the Tractarian movement did not deny it, nor did they deny that the individual side of salvation was of supreme importance. Smaller men have made these denials; the great men were constructive.'

'That's the difference between sense and nonsense,' interrupted Mr. Ward. 'Most fools nowadays are cautious about saying what they believe,

but they go about freely declaring they don't believe this and that, as if they were snapping off the heads of withered wild flowers.'

'Let us not say "fools"; let us say "men who are not largely endowed with sympathy and understanding." Some such men, taking up with this Tractarian movement, have in turn preached a grotesque and pernicious view of its principles by denial of what you call evangelical truth. You will agree with me that this denial is wrong. They ought to have had more sympathy and patience, and helped the Evangelicals to sift out the gold from the dross, and so have added to their store of gold, instead of contradicting them and fighting against them.'

'And you think the Free Churches should not fight against the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and a visible Church, and all that?' said Mr. Ward sharply. 'Are you a Dissenter, sir?'

'No,' said the other slowly. 'No; I am just saying that I think the root principle of Dissent is wrong—although I find the old Adam in me constantly tempted to it.'

The travellers found themselves in Mosford.

'You've given me a lot of ideas, sir,' said Mr. Ward. 'I'm sincerely obliged to you.'

He got down near to his own door, when Compton, who was crossing the square, recognised them both and came up to them.

When Mr. Ward got home he said, 'Sally, I've been wiring into Johnnie's bishop about Johnnie's stupidities. He was such a fine fellow, I never once suspected the cloven gaiter. And

now he will guess that it was Johnnie I had in mind.' He was depressed for a little time, and then he said, 'He is one of God's children; I think I can trust him to see the best of Johnnie!'

CHAPTER XX

ARTIST AND MODEL

WILLIE LATIMER had early the delight, not only of recognising his own creative power, but of seeing his creations give satisfaction to men who in matters of art had the knowledge of good and evil. He had in some degree the subtle quality of genius ; his painting was sometimes really great.

It has been remarked of several great imaginative writers that their fancy always roved, not among scenes in which they dwelt or cared to dwell, but in those in which their ancestors had been compelled to dwell. Whether there is anything in this suggestion of inherited tendency or not, its statement proves that a discrepancy between the conduct of the artist and his artistic taste is not infrequent.

Willie Latimer certainly belonged to this type of artistic mind. He was most keenly alive to the dramatic and picturesque details of those principles and emotions which he had for himself abju.

So far his success had been in subjects that the newspapers call 'sacred.' In his youth he had

begun with mediæval saints, had apparently wasted much time in seeking to express the atmosphere of religious enthusiasm. He could not get at what he wanted. He had thrown his saints aside, but from them he carried over the power to see what was essential in the suggestion of human emotion. He took to village scenes and portrait painting, and in this line convinced his friends that he possessed neither taste nor talent. He called himself a fool, spent his vacations in Arabia and Palestine, and at last produced a small picture of a modern theologian looking at the human skeletons which lay beneath an old-world altar-stone. He knew this to be good, and it was not exhibited in vain. 'This is something real,' said his critics; 'these flesh tints, these stone tints, this modelling; and nothing overstated, the emphasis only on what is vital to beauty.' 'If you will only leave religion alone,' they added, 'and study beauty, you will become a painter;' a criticism which caused Willie at once to turn to the Bible and study its artistic possibilities in such light as is thrown on it by our modern excavations. A half-size picture of Samuel offering Agag in sacrifice before the Lord, painted in a low tone of colour, brought him fame. At last in the human face and figure he had caught and expressed a genuine religious passion. But the grim subject was not in keeping with his temperament, and he turned to the New Testament miracles as irresistibly as a flower turns to the sun. At this time his studio was hung about with different studies of the Apostles on their first brief mission of life and joy. He did not attempt the great

central figure of the story ; it was the twelve plain men, as they went out two and two to heal diseases and to expel devils, that at present fascinated his imagination. He had already proved that he had imaginative insight into character and delicate precision in the drawing of attitude ; he was now trying to express the sense of joyful power and self-consecration which a common man must feel in discovering that he can deliver and save.

One morning Willie appealed to Oriane for help. He ran in by Miss Kennedy's garden gate, bareheaded as usual, and bounded upon the sill of the breakfast-room window, to appeal for Oriane's help. He wore a jacket of purple velvet so plentifully ornamented with bright splashes of paint that he almost did duty for the flowers that were out of season.

'Do you think that if you asked him, and if you came to read to him at every sitting, he would sit to me—I mean the Apostle Peter?' He bubbled over with further explanation. 'I've just a perfectly splendid conception of another Apostle. This idea has been simmering ever since I first saw him. I couldn't have the impudence to ask him myself. I've tried to sketch and snapshot him when he didn't know, and it isn't what I want. O Oriane, friend of my infancy, life-long friend, do ask that dear old man to sit to me!'

'You don't deserve it. You said nasty things about him when he first came ; you said he ought not to have come.'

'I recant ! I recant in dust and ashes—no, I think you recant in ink ; it's something else you

do in dust and ashes, but I'll do them all. I'll cleanse my double-minded heart—no, the heart and the mind cannot be the same thing—although'—with rueful face—'about the internal organs of penitents I know very little!'

'Go and tell him how much you need him. If he only knew, it would give him pleasure to satisfy you. We are all like that, more or less.'

'Most of us much less,' said Willie. 'For instance, there is nothing would give Compton greater pleasure than for me to sit to him once a week in church, but I won't.'

'You don't call that sitting "to" him; my Scotch aunt calls it sitting "under" him.'

'I should certainly feel fearfully sat upon if I had to do it.'

'But then, that is against your principles—the more's the pity.'

'I haven't got any principles. If it were made worth my while I'd do it in a minute—no, even then it would take ninety minutes. There's the rub—ninety minutes once a week. And I want the apostle to sit to me for ninety minutes half a dozen times in a week. I haven't the face to ask him to do six times over what I wouldn't do once.'

'Minus one multiplied by six isn't what you mean.'

'Well then, if you understand mathematics and I do not, it is for you to go and persuade the apostle.'

'What has that to do with mathematics?'

'All that I want is to get the right figure, and please bribe him by promising to come and



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read to him every time. Poor Diana, you know, feels so wretchedly ill ; it's no use expecting her to read aloud.'

And at the mere mention of 'poor Diana's' futility Oriane's compassion caused her to go upon his errand.

She said to Mr. Ward, 'Poor Willie Latimer has no religion at all. He feels inclined to jest at our religion most of the time, and that is not very agreeable to us. But, on the other hand, it is not very surprising, because, if you will think of it dispassionately, it is only the truth of religion that keeps it from being absurd.'

'I can see a glimmering of what you mean,' said the old man, 'for I've felt inclined myself to chuckle over my neighbour's capers when he, good soul, thought that, so to speak, he was dancing before the Lord. But it only needs that we see his gyrations from his point of view and then we respect them.'

'I'm awfully sorry for Willie,' said Oriane. 'His wife is so beautiful, and she might be quite well and make him happy if she would only think so. The doctor says there is nothing the matter with her, but that she will certainly work herself into some of the diseases she is always fancying. Isn't it tragic?'

'Poor thing! there's more suffering in that than we know.'

'Yes, it's worse for her than for him ; but that doesn't make it better for him ; and he always tries to be so cheerful. I feel sure that it is because there is something wrong with our religion that he

is not religious. He said the other day that if our religion were what the Gospels represent it to have been, he'd go to church. And now he wants to put you in a picture. He wants you to sit as a model. I am sure Willie needs the money he gets for his pictures.'

Mr. Ward rose and said, 'I'll go at once.'

Before Oriane could explain that she had only hoped to make an appointment for the next week she saw him walking across the green churchyard. Willie Latimer also saw him coming and began dragging about his canvases and easels. In his big white studio he made a brilliant figure, his fair complexion almost as scarlet with exertion as his red morocco slippers. He went flitting hither and thither in his paint-splashed purple coat, the very epitome of joyful expectation.

The next day Willie again accosted Oriane. 'You didn't come to read!'

'I never intended to. You must talk to him: it will do your soul good.'

'I should shock him. I put a cork to my lips for fear of doing so.'

'You needn't be afraid. It was awfully kind of me—I gave him a thoroughly bad opinion of you to begin with, so that you can easily make friends with him now. I told him the very worst of you.'

'Goodness! what is the worst? I haven't the slightest notion which vulnerable heel your gifted tongue could take hold of me by!'

'There ought to be limits to the abuse of metaphor.'

'It is more charitable to abuse a metaphor than a man. If you told him the very worst of me there can have been no limits to your abuse. But you ought to have come and entertained him, for I was so awfully respectful to him that I hardly dared to speak, and only said, "Hi, there! that's exactly the attitude I want." Every way he turned was just the way I wanted him. He might be called a model man.'

CHAPTER XXI

A ONE-SCHOOL DISTRICT

THE dissolution took place early in December, and the General Election was to come on in January. Mosford was a 'one-school area'; and the whole community, under rival religious leaders, was agitated about its school.

There is a main line of cleavage that runs deep in the religious instincts of the human race. By it all men are divided, as we may say, into two classes—conformists and nonconformists. The one class, realising that God must be reached by some material means, hold instinctively that some particular means must be necessary to His plan of imparting Himself to man. The others hold as instinctively that, because worship must be spiritual, all means must be equally the servants of God and man in their mutual approach.

The dividing line is not apparent. A man may spend his life outside any commonly received creed or cult, and in the practice of the presence of God, invent for himself nice observances that become to him as the essence of all true religion. Again, a man may sincerely practise the most

formal of religions for a lifetime, and yet at bottom be so hostile to its forms that a touch or word reveals his aptitude for finding God as easily under another guise. The touch or word only comes in times of revival and upheaval; only then are the latent forces of these two armies felt. Even then the line remains unseen, for many men continue by accident in ranks to which they do not properly belong.

Broadly speaking, to the nonconforming mind any institution which claims some one symbol to be God's chosen means of blessing must, sooner or later, appear to be a spiritual despotism; while the conforming mind finds itself always cast back by the waves of experience upon some such outward sign as upon a barque which offers the only means of safety from an angry sea. To the mere onlooker the Christian documents seem to be patient of both interpretations; had it not been so, many more poor souls might have made shipwreck of their faith.

The misunderstanding of the motives at work within himself and his enemy characteristic of the human warrior is conspicuous in the religious warfare between these two types of Christian mind. It is seen in the conviction that haunts the mind of the dogmatist that what opposes him is a definite system, an organised party, upholding a counter-creed and eager only to supplant his 'ism' with an 'ism' of their own. The Dissenter, again, finds it difficult to believe that devotion to the form need not degenerate into lifeless formalism. A clearer knowledge of the issue between them must help

the practice of that charity by which alone man finds his highest good.

In Mosford there were now two men who were almost typical of this difference. John Compton could not even conceive of a Church which was propagated only by personal character; a society that consisted only by the inner bond of spiritual apprehension was to his mind no society at all; whereas to the mind of Jarvis Cole personal character was the only force that could be used by Divine character, and the bond of inner spiritual apprehension was the only bond that could really unite men into a society whose outward forms might be many. For Cole, devotion to the person of the Leader and obedience to the ideas which His character embodied were all that was needed to ensure the inspiration of the whole Church. For Compton, the character of the Leader was only fully expressed in a visible order, in whose divine economy human devotion to His person could alone find adequate expression.

To the conforming class belonged the old man with the beard and the considerable following of worthy and pious folk which he had gathered: these were rigid ritualists in the importance they attached to the negation of certain ritual; they were bigots in the application of their tests as a measure for divine grace. To the nonconforming class belonged by nature Miss Kennedy and the squire and his son—the first two devout souls of the Anglican Church, the other an agnostic. The position was illustrated by the fact that Mr. Compton really suffered more sorely

under the laxity of Miss Kennedy and Mr. Latimer concerning his control of the school than under all the attacks of the opposition; while Mr. Cole found his own cause more weakened by the absurdities of his ultra-Protestant allies than by other forms of ecclesiastical tyranny.

Christmas came and brought no Christmas peace. At a large dinner at the Hall Compton's political sentiments found such strong expression that one or two of the neighbouring landowners afterwards discussed the danger that these fire-brand parsons were to the community, and a young man of some parts, who was thinking of seeking orders, decided that he would take to the law. Yet Compton, because he was obsessed by the notion that the opposition were only animated by hatred of his Church, thought that he had spoken most moderately. The Browns were so cold and stiff to the women of a Liberal family who commonly drove in from some distance to Mosford Church that in a little while they ceased to come. There was another absence from church, one which the present ardour of the vicar and his district visitors made it difficult for them to perceive: the unspeakable presence that we call spiritual life, which had been wont to meet the quiet church folk when they joined in prayer and to uphold the vicar and his helpers when they taught the children—this had gone away. In its place there was a fever of zeal that had much semblance of life.

Nor was the state of affairs among the

Methodists any better. There was no limit to the unkind thoughts they had got into the habit of thinking about the Church people; and out of full hearts their mouths spoke more often and with more bitter effect than they realised. The class meetings grew hopelessly chill. The son of one of their leading men began to frequent the 'Red Cow.' The young grocer whom Mr. Cole had rescued from a life of dissipation fell back into his evil courses, none knew why. His father, harassed by domestic trouble, his small head turned by political rancour, was so rude to Mrs. Compton over his counter that she was obliged, at great inconvenience, to withdraw her custom. Ethel was wholly innocent, and indeed long-suffering; but the Methodists laid it to her charge as a part of that unconstitutional pressure which the Church was bringing to bear on voters.

Mr. Jarvis Cole was always on the platform of any meeting held in the Liberal interest, and his wife swelled the chorus of every choir that 'enlivened the proceedings,' as the reporters said. Muriel Cole was a good singer, indeed she was one of those singers who, commonplace in every other function of life, excel in song. Her soft-throated notes were not only beautiful in themselves, but they always seemed to express a depth of soul which at no other time did she appear to possess. At this election the 'songs of the people' were a marked feature of the Liberal meetings. The Tories really suffered everywhere through having nothing to correspond to them, either in wit or in depth of sentiment. A choir,

largely composed of young men and women of the chapel, under the leadership of Mrs. Cole, attended the steps of the Liberal candidate whenever he drew near to Mosford. In the coldest wintry weather they would march, or drive in a brake, to any neighbouring hamlet, and stand for an hour in some cold barn or on marshy village green, making the welkin ring, and cheering on the village Radicals with their music. In these songs sacred and secular alternated without causing singers or audience any sense of incongruity. That magnificent hymn, 'God save the people,' pealed in the wintry air with all the appropriate fervour of prayer, when a few minutes before a ridiculous political parody had been rendered with melodramatic spirit.

One real weakness of the Church position in Mosford was that its adherents were specially eligible for certain ancient 'charities' which annually bestowed flannel or coal on the deserving. It had never been the habit of those who controlled these charities in Mosford to let their sun shine alike on Churchman and Dissenter, on the clean and neatly clad who hobbled to church and the clean and neatly clad who hobbled to chapel. Therefore it could not be presumed that those who 'voted yellow' would be assured of remembrance at the next distribution of benefits. The consequence was that, instead of adherence to the Church being connected in the mind of the Mosford working man with independence and heroism, it was associated with self-interest, which repelled the better class of workmen from the

Church. The present vicar had not inaugurated the system but inherited it, and, to do him justice, had no wish to show sectarian partiality; but it was his duty to select the most deserving cases, and he had naturally more opportunity of knowing those among the worthy who went to Church, or at least sent their children to the Church Sunday School.

Another disadvantage to the Church was that the only school in Mosford was the 'National School,' still, as a 'provided' school, under the vicar's management. The vicar and his friends were constantly saying that had it not been for the Church, which had founded the school in 1820 and had since kept it up, there would have been no education in Mosford. As, however, the dear, innocent old squire and the women of his class made no secret of the fact that they thought the chief evils of the world arose from 'too much education for the poor,' there was a large section of working men in Mosford who had a general impression that the vicar and his school had for thirty years stood between them and the better education which otherwise might have been theirs.

'They wants nought but to keep us their servants,' said a stout ploughman to old Mr. Ward. 'There's two strapping lads of mine and three little maids. Squire thinks they'll all make good servants at the Park or the Hall—neat and trim and obedient—if they don't get too much learning.'

'I suppose, from the way you talk, si-, that you are a Liberal,' said Mr. Ward with a courteous

inclination of his broad shoulders. He stood half a head taller than the yokel.

'Naw, sir; I've been a truth-telling man all my life, and I'll not vote yaller and tell Squire I voted blue. I'll vote blue, for I think it'll be worse for my children if I lose my place. Squire won't have no yaller folks on the estate if he knows it. Squire's a good master; but I tells my lads to learn all they can and ship themselves off to the colonies, where they can vote the way they have a mind to.'

'You have had a good education yourself. Where did you go to school?'

'Naw, sir; I've no learning. There was no place for me to go to but the school here, and they teach more things now than they did then.'

'They taught you to sacrifice a great deal rather than tell a lie! I can tell you I think that is the grandest sort of education. And if you are not a learned man you have learnt the advantage of knowledge; you want it for your children; and you are able to look over the edge of the one small place in which you live and to know something of what goes on in the world. Do you know, sir, I think the school was a good one in your time.'

The labourer was soothed and scratched his head with delight.

CHAPTER XXII

DUCK, INOHOE

WILLIE LATIMER, his imagination always roving amongst religious scenes and characters, his satire always levelled at religious inconsistencies, began to take an interest in the fray. A Conservative by inheritance, he had not concerned himself much with local politics until of late they had taken a religious complexion, and now he was often standing, like an idle boy, gazing with interest at the stir and excitement whenever it happened to eddy into an excited crowd. Just as no form of beauty delighted him so much as that which caught its glow from some sacred theme, so no folly amused him so much as that which was perpetrated in the name of Heaven.

'You ought to be out, Miss Kennedy,' he cried one day, as he ran in for a hasty cup of tea. 'I tell you Mrs. Brown has been giving an oration in the market-place. No—you don't believe it? I tell you these three saints of the name of Brown—fine women, as I've always remarked—brought to bay, before my very eyes, a set of yokels singing a Liberal hymn. Now you must know

that these very chaps had all promised, severally and collectively, to vote for the Church. When these benevolent ladies go round canvassing they bring coal and blankets to the minds of the "independent electors"; so these worthies say, "Yes, yes, ma'am," to all that they're told and all that they're asked to promise, because they mostly know by this time that the ballot is secret. Well, they had a half-holiday this afternoon, and the lilt of that Methodist woman's song is too much for them, so they came swinging round the corner singing,

For we'll beat the Tories back,
With the honest Union Jack,
And we'll purge our flag of the stain of tyranny,

and, lo and behold, the Browns! with all sorts of charitable doles depending from their skirts, so to speak. You should have seen the faces of those men when they met the clergywomen in full force! There stood Mrs. Brown, perfectly pink under her widow's bonnet, with St. Anna on one side of her and St. Theresa on the other, each in her most bewitching picture hat, bought to entrance these very fellows. Mrs. Brown made a speech there and then. I'd have given half I possess to have been able to paint the exalted look in that old lady's face when she was preaching. She used pretty tall language, that I shouldn't care to repeat, about the divinity that hedges round the Church and the attitude of the Supreme Power towards all who vote "yellow," and about the Tory monopoly of King and Flag and National Anthem.'

Next day he insisted on driving Oriane over to a village called Ducklinghoe, to a Conservative meeting, because he understood that the Mosford Liberals had arranged to assist at a Liberal meeting accidentally arranged for the same place and time. 'The time,' cried he, 'is this afternoon; the place is a triangle of muddy green sward in the middle of Ducklinghoe. There is no power in the land can prevent them both occupying the same green at the same time if they choose. It will be a case of who can shout loudest. The Ducklinghoe parson is sure to be there, and bound to keep order; and if we don't have the exchange of Christian amenities between him and our Rev. Jarvis Cole I'm out of it.'

Oriane went out to find as many of Willie's pretty children in the trap as could climb into it. The horse was a young one, more graceful than reliable. Its mane and tail had never been cut. Willie always insisted that he would not drive a horse that went to the barber's. Oriane had enough to do to hold the little ones snug in their seats in the open trap. When they got to Ducklinghoe, her office indeed was no sinecure; for she must now hold the reins while Willie made hasty sketches in a note-book.

There were few people about the green. Two men were leading away a horse that had just drawn a large waggon to a central position.

'There is the stout old vicar,' ejaculated Willie. 'He's monarch of all he surveys, or thinks he ought to be. Now he's mounting into the waggon. See how majestically he paces its length.'

He is considering how many supporters of the Constitution it will comfortably hold. I wonder if he's got wind of the Liberal meeting yet! That sprightly cad comes from the Liberal agent's office. His eyes are too near together; he's a sharper of some sort—I see it in his eyes. He looks rather taken aback at finding the vicar and his waggon on the field. Nobody will lend the Rads a waggon under the eye of the vicar.'

'That's the sort of thing that makes me almost feel sick of our party,' said Oriane. 'Our new parlour-maid told us last night that, at the village she comes from, a small farmer, who lent his barn to the Liberals, had such a bad time of it, both with the parson and the squire, that his wife spread the story that he had been well paid for the barn and was glad of the money, though as a fact he'd not had a penny.'

'Well,' said Willie, light-hearted and judicial, 'the other side will do it when they have the power. My dear old dad does a good deal of that sort of persecution himself, and out of pure goodness of heart, for he is quite convinced that the Rads will ruin both the farmers and the labourers. Why should you let men go to their ruin if a little honest persecution might save them? For my part, I think there is a good deal to be said for the Holy Inquisition in all its branches. Now there, I've got the vicar to the life! Look at the round of his waistcoat and the business-like expression of his fat eyes! My word, look at the vicarage gate. If I'm not mistaken, there are St. Anna and St. Theresa over for a spree. I begin

to be really sorry for the vicar, for when he hears about the Rads' meeting he will think it his duty to prevent the people disturbing them; but it will also be his duty to prevent them hearing what the Rads say. He'll have a time of it! Now, the saints Anna and Theresa will be much better off, for they have no conscience at all; they will do their level best to get the Rads hounded off. Just look at the Christian tip of St. Anna's nose!

'There's a band coming in the distance,' said Oriane. 'I certainly won't hold this colt while a brass band goes by.'

Willie jumped down and went to the horse's head. 'It's an awful nuisance,' he said, smiling affectionately at his children, 'to have so many children that there is never room for the groom. It wouldn't be any fun for me, Oriane, if you were not here to testify to the truth of my sketches.'

'You'll not make many more sketches,' said Oriane. 'Here is a regular river fog arriving punctually, as usual, at three o'clock.'

Willie made a hasty effort to prop his sketch-book on the horse's neck and to draw 'the saints,' as he called them, while he murmured an apostrophe to the fog, beginning—

O Isis, mother Isis, to whom the Britons pray,
Wet blankets are not just the thing to rig us for the fray.

The fog rolled rapidly over the green, and the Liberal agent's clerk came forward, kicking a stout barrel before him. A number of villagers slouched nearer, making an obvious effort to secure a place half-way between the two hustings. Mr. Briggs,

the vicar, came over to give a friendly welcome to Willie's party, and at his approach the sketch-book was hastily closed.

'What's that barrel for?' asked Willie.

The vicar surveyed the barrel for the first time, and then said comfortably, 'I suppose we may have a few hecklers on the fringe of our crowd. I fancy they think to get a hearing by jumping on the barrel. I shan't order them off—fair play, you know, we all believe in fair play; and a little opposition adds interest. But I hear a band; our folks are coming, and the Miss Browns have suggested that we should go and meet them and head the procession on to the green with flags. That sort of thing tells nowadays, you know. You perhaps think it is not quite the right thing for "the cloth," but, as the Miss Browns say, we must sacrifice ourselves for the common good.'

He hurried off to join the 'clergywomen,' who were now unrolling small Union Jacks attached to light walking-canes. In the distance the brazen notes of 'God Save the King' drew nearer, and the fog rolled in luminous but thick.

'Now, look at that, Oriane,' said Willie. 'You see neither he nor the clergywomen have heard that the Rads are coming in force. Now, that's just typical of your whole clerical atmosphere. I'll wager a good deal every one else in the village knows, and no one cares to tell the dear old vicar anything unpleasant. The Anglican Church thinks it holds England, just as this vicar goes on thinking he holds this green.'

'I expected you to challenge him for saying so

magnanimously that he wouldn't order the opposition off: of course he has no control over the village green,' said she.

'Oh, that's just a part of his fool's paradise, poor old chap. Why should I disturb it? it will vanish soon enough.'

'Some one must be "cock of the walk" in Ducklinghoe,' said Oriane, 'and no one can bear that honour more worthily than Mr. Briggs. Every one knows he's a straightforward, honest man and respects him.'

"Cock," did you say? He's waddling down his walk exactly like a drake with a curly tail. But the majestic Browns are, I will admit, hens, not ducks. See them poke their crested heads this way and that to see if all their little world is following! They've got the choir-boys and all the roughs in the village, I believe. See the train go forth—our trio with banners at the head! They will wheel about and lead the triumphant host as it advances. Thank Isis! we can still see across the green. But hark, Oriane, is not that band our familiar Methodist clamour? Surely I recognise the quality of their brass! What a shock for our friends if the enemy arrive first in the moment of their own expected triumph!

'You ought to have warned the vicar, Willie.' Oriane prudently lifted the children out of the trap and secured the sketch-book. The young horse began to fret and plunge.

The Tory candidate and his followers were expected to arrive from the railway station a mile away; the Liberal candidate, on the other hand,

was coming from Mosford by road. Willie Latimer was filled with joy for some minutes, anticipating the encounter of the two processions. 'It's rather too bad of the Rads to come up playing the National Anthem,' he said. 'It's the one good song our party have to sing, and we're all convinced it's our party song.'

Some men were laying a slant gangway of boards to make an easy way into the waggon. From the misty precincts of the cottages which skirted the green, men, women, and children began to emerge hesitant, sidling along with non-committal faces. A boy suddenly ran out from a hedge behind Willie. With the frankness of youth the boy declared that he belonged to the Liberal procession and had cut across a field to herald their near approach.

'I don't understand it,' cried Willie. 'I can't make it out; for here come our friends certainly—the waddling drake and the hens, with their flags waving, and the schoolboys of Ducklinghoe in battle array. Here they come triumphant, singing at the tops of their voices, and not a Rad in sight, not a creature to challenge their monopoly of flag and anthem. It's too bad if the Rads have turned back; I've brought you out for nothing; we can see the Christian exultation of a few familiar Tories at home.'

For a moment more he grieved, and then he cried, with a little shriek of delight, 'Oriane, I vow they've all got mixed in the fog!—that's certainly the Methodist woman's voice.'

The schoolboys marching after their vicar, had

put quite an interval of fog between that worthy gentleman—who, as Willie remarked, was flanked by a flag-waving lady on either side—and the visitors. As the procession came up the vicar ascended the waggon, while each of the Browns, by a pre-concerted signal, led off half the boys, filing in a triumphant circle around the goodly red vehicle. Some straggling followers and the band, with their instruments, naturally stood aside, and then, to the astonished eyes of those assembled on Ducklinghoe green, the Mosford Methodist choir in full song, and the Liberal candidate, calmly ascended the waggon so evidently prepared for their reception.

It was obvious to any unprejudiced spectator that the Methodist band and the Liberal orators, absorbed each in their own part of the performance, were quite unconscious of the nature of the vanguard which had joined itself to them, nor did they suspect that the improvised platform to which they were led was not intended for them. A few moments more made the sentiments of their opponents also, alas! quite obvious to any spectator. The same enthusiasm which had caused the Miss Browns to mistake the first procession they met for their own party, and thus to lead the good and short-sighted vicar into a vast error, now prevented them from seeing the simplicity of the mistake and the simple humour of the situation. A laugh on both sides, a word of friendly explanation, and no dignity would have suffered. Instead of this, Miss Brown, who was standing on the ground on that side of the waggon that Willie and

Oriane could see, caught sight of the face of an arch-enemy in the person of the Methodist singer, and began explaining the matter to the poor vicar, who stood just above her, crowded into the front part of the waggon. Her explanation was incoherent with fury. She saw deliberate trickery in the mistake. In a minute more her sister was to be seen at the back of the waggon, demanding in shrill tones the exit of its still jubilant inmates. Those to whom she first spoke were not Mosford people and did not know her; and when the Mosford people observed her behaviour, they naturally did not recognise her authority. The band was still playing; the singers were still singing at the tops of their voices, intent upon attracting the attention of Ducklinghoe. The candidate was preparing his notes for an oration; his immediate bodyguard were rapidly arranging a programme. The unfortunate vicar found himself eclipsed from the sight of all the waggons by Mrs. Jarvis Cole, who, in huge picture hat and feather boa, stood in front of his corner, still exercising her function as choir leader. She had her back turned to him and so did not even see him. Although Miss Brown had already imparted somewhat of her fury to him over the waggon edge, he still essayed with self-control to demand of his neighbours an explanation. None heard his voice; the broad back of a woman penned him in; he rapidly conceived the idea that the whole affair was a deliberate plot, and that the huge woman in front of him had been placed there to hide his body from view and drown his voice

with her lusty song. Had the leaders of the plot been decent enough to confront him with a man he could have pushed him aside: hidden behind the back of a woman it was impossible to maintain clerical dignity.

The acting Liberal agent, in the meantime, had left his barrel and rushed forward to explain matters to the candidate; but the cordon of Church defenders skilfully posted round the waggon by the Miss Browns, recognising in him only an enemy, beat him back, and he was quick enough to allow these rabid young Tories to defeat their own ends. His mean eyes sparkling, he capered away from them as if in abject fear of their insults and missives.

But if the vicar of Ducklinghoe could not assail Mrs. Jarvis Cole, or even arrest her attention, Miss Brown could assert his sacred rights from the ground. Agile in her anger, she sprang upon the axle of the wheel, and, clutching the waggon-side with one hand, she demanded Mrs. Jarvis Cole's attention with her umbrella. The action of the umbrella might have been called a poke, or it might have been called a blow; but in any case it caused an indignant *volte-face* on the part of Mrs. Jarvis Cole, while she still had sufficient presence of mind, as leader of the choir, to finish the last strain of her song. Mrs. Cole's responsibility as choir leader naturally did not occur to Miss Brown, who felt, as she afterwards phrased it, that it was profane of that vulgar virago to shout 'God Save the King' in the very face of the vicar of Ducklinghoe.

The instant the song ceased Mrs. Cole on her side found words to express her view of the situation. She said in a loud, deliberate voice, 'If those who ought to know better—calling themselves ladies too—can't keep their tempers better than to strike us with umbrellas, we shall have the Tory mob throwing stones in a minute!' She pointed out Miss Brown. 'She began beating me from behind with her umbrella!'

'Madam, she did nothing of the sort,' said the vicar. 'Your words are a slander. Are you aware that you and your friends have no right whatever in this waggon?'

Mrs. Cole looked at him with infinite disdain. 'I am not aware of that, sir,' she said, which was perfectly true, but it appeared both to the vicar and Miss Brown to be the wickedest thing she could have said. What coarseness there was in Mrs. Cole's nature was roused. Her speaking voice was not sweet but loud, and she used it with oratorical effect. 'I suppose,' she continued in loud and withering tone, 'that you think we have no right on the village green, or no right to breathe the air of Ducklinghoe or even to stand under its sky!' Her singers around her emphasised her jeers with a defiant titter.

Now this was the more offensive to the vicar and Miss Brown, partly because she had stated what in the depths of their souls they really did think, and partly because, with her feathers and furbelows, she was still penning the vicar into an ignominious corner. Miss Brown made a gesture of wrath almost wordless. She indi-

cated the vicar and gasped, 'Let the parish priest speak.'

Mrs. Jarvis Cole now turned full on the vicar, recognising him for the first time, and pointing to Miss Brown's umbrella, she inquired, 'Do you encourage free fighting in Church defence, sir?'

The vicar began to try to assert his rights over the waggon by waving his hand to dismiss its occupants, and Miss Brown was heard to use the words 'infamous' and 'profane.'

But by this time the attention of the Liberal speakers was riveted on the younger Miss Brown, who, at the back of the waggon, had come into violent altercation with the bandsmen. Every one in the waggon was now under the impression that the Miss Browns were the ringleaders of an ill-mannered and concerted attack on the Liberals. Mrs. Cole, commonly a serene, bovine sort of woman, became rapidly infected with the growing excitement. She had been aware a moment before of being somewhat violently disturbed by the end of an umbrella; she was now convinced that she had been thumped by it. The Liberal candidate, who had not yet caught a glimpse of the vicar, thinking the only way to quiet the mob was to engage their attention, began his speech, raising his voice in an energetic harangue which silenced all other voices and riveted the attention of the crowd.

Willie Latimer, in an ecstasy of interest, had led his pony nearer and nearer to the waggon. The colt in its restlessness had knocked off his hat, and holding the animal with both hands, he

stood looking from one face to another, absorbed in each turn of countenance, in the flash of anger and flush of excitement that appeared on every face. Although the fog grew wetter Oriane had some difficulty in recalling him to the necessity of going home.

When they were driving along in the gathering shadows of the early winter evening, between hedges that dripped under the silent fog, Oriane felt ruffled by the incidents of the afternoon. 'It hurts my dignity,' she said, 'to see people who are worthy and full of good intentions carried by those very intentions into bad actions. The behaviour on both sides was bad and will lead to worse.'

'Truly,' said he, 'the false witness they will bear about one another will be appalling. I wouldn't have missed this afternoon for the world.'

Not far from Ducklinghoe they met the belated Conservative procession. Willie had to hold the horse while the band passed, their instruments looking fantastic in the mist. They were not playing but hastening their steps to recover lost time. He hailed the candidate, a personal friend, as he passed, shouting that the Rads had stormed Ducklinghoe and were in possession of the place.

'You have only added fuel to the fire,' said Oriane severely. 'You ought to have explained the mistake.'

'It's too late,' said Willie. 'They will none of them listen to explanation now; but it will be rare to hear the tales they will tell. There is

nothing more picturesque than the things people see and hear when they are excited—things that have no more existence than the rats and spiders of "d.t."

'But the difference between you and me,' said Oriane, 'is this—if I heard of a respectable neighbour having "d.t." I shouldn't enjoy it. I don't see how you can.'

'I don't see how I can help enjoying the umbrella and the feather boa,' said Willie. 'Neither can you.' He bubbled over with laughter, and Oriane laughed in spite of her better self.

CHAPTER XXIII

STRONG DELUSION

DURING these days Ethel Compton was very unhappy. The keen party spirit which had hitherto pleasingly animated many an otherwise dull passage of her religious and social life was now at war with her new, overmastering desire to satisfy Mr. Ward by her own behaviour, and to display her husband and his parish in an aspect calculated to win his respect. All things within and without seemed to contend against her purpose. In girlhood she had had to wear eye-glasses to correct the natural defect of short sight. She remembered vividly how she had at first been afraid of stumbling and fumbling in her dealing with all objects that had not before come within her short range of sight—so unfamiliar did her world appear. In the same way the judgment of old Mr. Ward's gracious heart was now put before her mind's eye many times a day. As she learned to focus her sight to it she shrank from what she saw, and at first became more and more afraid to act on her new power of vision.

The story of the quarrel at Ducklinghoe was

the first thing which pushed Ethel from the contemplation of her new purpose to its active pursuit. The next morning found her in Miss Kennedy's drawing-room.

'Have you heard what happened yesterday at Ducklinghoe? Cumnor has gone to a meeting at Leicester; I don't know what he will say when he hears of it. You know'—she drew her chair a little nearer to Miss Kennedy's and lowered her voice—'Mrs. Cole, the Methodist minister's wife, positively used bad language to Miss Brown. Miss Brown had just touched her with her umbrella to draw her attention because the vicar wanted to speak to her, and Mrs. Cole's behaviour passed all the bounds of decorum. I feel dreadfully distressed about it; the mere fact that the Coles belong to our parish makes it discreditable to us.'

'Perhaps Miss Brown did not understand; I hear the Browns and the vicar made a very awkward mistake and joined the wrong procession.'

'It was a decoy! They were actually flying our flags and singing our songs in order to get possession of the platform the vicar had had put up. For no one in Ducklinghoe would have lent a plank to the Radicals; they are all staunch for the Church there. But, Miss Kennedy, it is not the election I am thinking about; it is the scandal. Do you think I could do anything to smooth it over?'

'I think you have got the story wrong. Our gardener tells me that when the Conservative candidate did get there, the crowd for the most part sided with the Liberals.'

'The Browns have been telling me all about it. They would have had a splendid meeting had it not been for this mean trick. They say that the Nonconformists were not straightforward, that they took advantage of them—which seems certainly to have been the case—and then said what was not true about it. Of course I can't judge of party tactics, and of course I know how bitterly the Coles hate us; but I do feel that a personal quarrel with Mrs. Cole appears disgraceful, even though Anna Brown was not at fault. What do you advise me to do?'

'Perhaps, if you had already made Mrs. Cole's acquaintance, you might call and hear her side of it; but as you have never been in her house, I don't see what you can do.' Miss Kennedy naturally did not hope much from Ethel's intervention.

'It seems to me very shocking,' said Ethel; 'although we know wrong religious principles must lead to wrong action sooner or later, and we ought never to be surprised if people who seem fair outwardly fall suddenly into the worst faults, when their very religion itself has an evil tendency—yet I cannot help feeling that this quarrel is a disgrace.'

Miss Kennedy was amazed to see tears in Ethel's eyes.

She said afterwards to Oriane: 'If you had been here you might have given your testimony against the Browns, but I was afraid to say much. Ethel's general attitude to the Coles would be so offensive to them if she betrayed it that at this

junction I felt the best way was to soothe her and keep her quiet.'

Later on Willie Latimer came in to see Miss Kennedy. He said: 'I felt I must hear the Methodist tale, so I stopped Jarvis Cole on the station road this morning. He wasn't at Ducklinghoe, you know. I got him to be open by saying I was there myself and saw that there had been a misunderstanding, and I asked after his wife. The gist of his story is, first, that the vicar of Ducklinghoe says now he didn't know the Liberals were coming at all, which, says Cole, is absurd; he must have known. Secondly, when they got there the vicar led the way into a large waggon that had been provided as a platform; and, having got them in a trap, he and his friends tried to rouse the crowd to refuse them a hearing. Cole added that if their candidate were not so scrupulous to behave as a gentleman these tactics might have succeeded, but the people believed his word when he said it was a pure mistake, and he got the best part of the crowd round him in the end, though he had to speak standing on a barrel. Cole added darkly that he wouldn't say what treatment his wife received from some of the Churchwomen of Mosford. "Oh, but do tell me exactly what happened," said I; "I've always admired Mrs. Cole's singing so much, and I'm sure to hear the other side of the story, you know." So at that he went deeper into the philosophy of events, and said that, to tell the truth, nothing had happened but what was consistent with the way in which Church defence was being

carried on generally. It seemed at the first glance very astonishing that a lady in Miss Brown's position should so far forget herself as to strike another woman in public; but, having thought it over, he felt sure that the explanation was to be found in the fact that when really good people give themselves up day after day to upholding injustice and tyranny, an evil spirit takes possession of them, and they really are, for the time being, beside themselves! I must tell Compton that he must practise exorcism on the Miss Browns! It is a case for bell, book, and candle evidently! I said, in my most sympathetic manner, that I sincerely hoped Mrs. Cole was not seriously hurt. He said, "Oh no; nothing serious. Certainly her arm was very stiff and sore and had a great blue mark across it; but that is nothing, and we have agreed to say as little as possible, because of course my wife is a favourite with the people, and Miss Brown might be mobbed if the facts were known!"

'Now, Willie, you are drawing on your imagination.'

'So far from that, I have simply given the dry bones of his talk.'

'I am sure he would not tell a deliberate lie, and her arm can't be blue.'

'Oh, she felt convinced she was hurt, and the symptom arrived to match the conviction; it is a common result of nervous excitement.' Then he sheered off the subject and rattled quickly on, vexed that he had, for once and by accident, admitted that he was familiar with the phenomena of such hysteria.

Because of their great pity for him and for the beautiful wife who was always conjuring up dire symptoms, Miss Kennedy and Oriane let him rattle on, and were themselves carried away by his gaiety.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VICAR'S HOLIDAY

THE days of the General Election passed over, with the tremulous looking for returns, and the bitter disappointment and the glad triumph that they brought. For a few days Compton was almost stunned by the enormous Liberal majority. He believed what his party papers had said, that every Liberal was at heart hostile to the Church; and the Church for him represented the whole interest that God had in the nation. With the help of his newspapers he began to revive, being reminded that governments with unwieldy majorities did not last long, that the majority of voters would soon come to a better mind and be ready to reverse the wicked judgment they had given. What above all calmed him and renewed his hope was a trumpet-call in the Church weeklies to begin an agitation against the Education Bill which the new Government were about to bring in. The year was hardly well begun before the sense of defeat was lost in the courage of renewed warfare.

Every one, in speaking of the vicar of Mosford,

said what a good man he was. His piety was of an eager, practical nature. His theological training had imbued his mind with the doctrines of the visible Church and the apostolic priesthood as held in the Anglican Communion; and because these doctrines were imperfectly understood by almost every one in his parish, he had come to dwell upon them more than upon other doctrines in which he believed. His life was rich in the gift of himself to the Church, and his zeal grew year by year more lusty.

Mosford was a lonely place, and Compton had certain differences with his clerical neighbours, especially with him of Ducklinghoe, which had made him feel terribly alone. Now they were all drawn very close together by the agitation about the schools, and that companionship was in itself more cheerful. The vicar of Ducklinghoe had arrived at his view of the matter by honest inheritance of class prejudice; Compton had arrived at the same view by doctrinal argument. The majority of men are not half so good, and are no better informed, than were these rural priests, and they are not exposed to such cruel and subtle temptations as must always assail men set apart to be the successors of the Apostles.

Compton was already in touch with the larger clerical mind on the Education question; he had himself written letters to *The Church Chimes*, and of late he had composed paragraphs for his parish magazine warning his flock against the wickedness intended by the sects. His magazine had influence

because his self-denying toil was obvious. His parishioners knew that he was the first to welcome the new-born babe, the last to kneel by the dying; he was constantly among the children, and when they coughed he gave them sweets. These things sink deep into the heart of the common people; they believe such activities to confer a divine sanction on a man's words. Yet there was no one in the parish who suited him as a companion. For this reason it was a rare delight for him when a large meeting of the clergy of three counties was called to consider the new Education Bill. No one who has not lived an isolated life inspired by a great idea, yet feeling scarce a touch of corporate excitement, can conceive Compton's exhilaration when, in a great fraternal meeting, he felt his heart beat in unison with hundreds of other hearts, and joined his voice in a chorus of voices in cheer or song that had but one motive and conveyed but one thought.

The gathering was a successful one. Most of the sentiments expressed would not have been arrived at by any one man of them alone, nor would the meeting have arrived at them had not every member of it been receiving cumulative mental impressions from the religious and secular party press.

When Compton was returning, Jarvis Cole was in the railway carriage with two little daughters. There were also two market women and a stout old farmer. Cole offered Compton an evening paper. Compton that evening would as soon

have touched a red-hot poker as have received a courtesy from one of the enemies of Christ—that was, in substance, what Dissenters had been called by his comrades that afternoon. In his rigid gesture of thanks his feeling was more clearly expressed than he was aware. The soft eyes of Cole's little girls grew hard with dislike as they gazed at him. The market women, when Compton was not looking, nudged one another, and one of them gave apples to the children. Compton, quite unconscious of the offence he had given, was buried in a reverie concerning the afflictions of the militant Church and the certainty of ultimate victory.

They all turned out on the platform of the junction. It was already growing dark, and none of them noticed that among the travellers already waiting there was the Bishop of Elminster. He was a small, thin man, with a wonderful force of spirit in his withered old face. He had a way of getting himself into corners where he was overlooked; but those who knew him said he never overlooked any one or anything that came within the range of his keen intelligence. Compton strolled down the platform one way, Jarvis Cole and his children the other. Cole was not an ill-natured man, nor in the habit of magnifying small things; at any other time he would not have given Compton's stiff behaviour a second thought. Just now the air was charged with ill-feeling. In this atmosphere Cole felt that the civil offer of his newspaper was the utmost bound to which his charity could extend, and that he might jeer at

the result. On the platform he found The man with the beard in conversation with a farmer of 'Liberal views.'

'Look at this!' said Cole, holding up his paper, the *Evening Standard*, for inspection. 'The Liberal papers were all sold out at Reading, so I had to buy this rubbish. When I had read it, in comes our vicar, so, as it was suited to his palate, I offered it to him. Well, what do you think!'—Cole's eyes sparkled—'he wouldn't read his own party jargon because it had been in my hands.'

'No; that he wouldn't,' said one of the market women, who had listened with glee. 'Ye were dirt beneath his feet—I see'd it in his face.'

The man with the beard became tense with indignation. He said in a slow, vibrating tone, 'It is their policy just now to try to bring us into contempt with the people by insulting us in every public place!'

The moment The man with the beard spoke Cole felt inclined to mutter, 'What rot!' but in warfare sympathy, even of fools, is grateful, and he made no protest.

The story of ill-treatment was fast hatching itself into an evil thing with swift wings when Cole felt a slight touch on his arm from a little old gentleman who could not pass until the group gave him room.

'I heard you say, sir, that you had a copy of the evening paper. I should be much obliged if you would allow me to glance over it.' The well-bred intonation of the voice, its perfect gentleness combined with what seemed a tone of accustomed

authority, a shovel hat, and a pair of thin little birdlike shanks in gaiters, revealed the Bishop.

'I have read it, sir. Do not trouble to return it, sir,' said Cole. For the life of him Cole could not have helped saying 'sir' twice in one short sentence, although, when the little dignitary had taken the paper and trotted past, Cole took occasion to explain to The man with the beard that he honoured the Bishop as a great scholar.

The Bishop slipped down the platform till he stood at Compton's elbow, and with kindly small talk elicited from him some description of the meeting from which he was returning.

'These big meetings that are called successful are dangerous places,' said the Bishop. 'A crowd is a powerful engine for generating passion; and there are only two passions in this world—love and hate. When you came out of your meeting, did you love God or man better than when you went in?'

Compton said, with some hesitation and with some dignity, that he had certainly received a strong impulse to love the right and to do the works of righteousness.

'An abstraction from the concrete,' said the Bishop. 'Whom do you love? If one of your fellow-churchmen turned Radical, would you love him to-day? If Jesus Christ came to you disguised as a Dissenter, would you love Him to-day? If the children in your school took to shouting Liberal songs, would you bless them? Men come out of these meetings hating a good many people more than when they went in, and they don't love any real person a bit more.'

The Bishop's keen, aquiline manner was like a dash of cold water on Compton's glowing heart. He was bound to listen, but in no mood to believe. He answered that if the facts were candidly considered, it would be seen that he and his fellow-clergy were not given over to that animosity and spite in which the Nonconformists were banded together to destroy the Church.

'But, indeed, Mr. Compton, I never heard that the Pharisees were welcomed into the Kingdom because they were a little better than the Sadducees.' When the Bishop had said this he unfolded his newspaper.

Compton's heart swelled with indignation, even while he reflected that it was his duty to examine himself and make sure that there was in him no ground for the Bishop's warning.

When he left the train he had a walk of a mile in the winter darkness. A storm broke suddenly with a bluster of hail, and he was forced to seek shelter at the door of a Dissenting workman whose marriage with a young Churchwoman had been a trouble to him. He stood in the porch while she, now a buxom young matron, begged him to enter. The man was not in. Compton thanked her, but said he would respect her absent husband's feelings, who, he supposed, would have no welcome for him.

'My husband's the kindest man, sir. None ever said a hard word of him but you. He'd welcome any dog out of a storm.'

Compton remembered the Bishop, and felt the call of duty. Humbly as a dog he took a seat by the fire. 'Yet,' said he, 'I cannot be here, Mary,

without asking you why you have lately absented yourself from church ?'

'Well, sir, if you'd keep from saying ill of Jim and the people he belongs to, I'd come to church as I've always done.'

'I have said no ill, only the truth. It is your husband who bewilders you with false opinions. Ah, Mary, I warned you how it would be before you married; and now both you and your children are being drawn away from church.'

She held by the back of a chair, standing respectfully. This man had prepared her for confirmation, buried her parents, baptized her children; he represented all the sacred memories of her past, and with trembling voice she stated her trouble. 'You said in the magazine, sir, that Jim and his people were lusting after the property of the Church——'

'I said that the Dissenters were lusting after it. If the description fitted——'

'No, sir; it doesn't fit. What you say of Dissenters you may say of Jim and his people, and it isn't true.'

'I am glad if Jim and his family are better than their sect.'

'No, sir; they are no better—that's not the way any of them feels. Jim's old father is a "resister"; and you are saying that they hate all true religion and law and order—that isn't true.'

'I have no personal feeling against these people, Mary; indeed I do not myself know them; but I have spoken on the authority of those who do know them. It is confirmed by what I heard a

very well-known bishop say only to-day, and I could show you, any day, evidence of what I have said in the newspapers.'

'I don't know who write the papers, or what sort of a man that bishop is; they're not all like our bishop, who wouldn't hurt a fly, Jim says; but if you could show me what you say in the Bible I couldn't believe it.'

'No; that is just the sad fact, Mary. You were a good girl once, and loved your Church; but you dallied with temptation when Jim courted you; you yoked yourself with an unbeliever, and now——'

'Jim isn't an unbeliever; he believes in the Bible just as much as you do, sir; and you can't say he hasn't been good and often come to church with me, and let me do as I liked with the children—if he is a Dissenter. But now I've taken the children from school myself, and I won't go to church any more.' She was growing angry.

He was indignant, but he spoke in a way he thought gentle. 'I cannot dispute with you, Mary. I was about to say, when you interrupted me, that you have dallied with error until, as you say yourself, you cannot believe the words of Scripture.' He took the Dissenter's Bible from the shelf and pointed her to the words, 'He that climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief.' There were tears in his eyes, although his manner had elevation, while he reminded her that she had once known their proper meaning.

When he was gone, the woman, frightened by the sacred words, lost her self-control and began

to sob, calling her absent husband by endearing names. Her two little children, who had been listening, came creeping in their night-clothes down a ladder stair. They understood nothing more than that the vicar had in some way hurt their mother. While her eyes were covered they clenched their little fists at the door whence he had gone. The Bible had fallen upon the floor, and the eldest boy, knowing that it had been, in some way, part of the offence, privately stamped upon it with his small pink foot.

When Compton got home, very weary but uplifted in heart, he told Ethel, as was his wont, all that had happened to him during the day. He was more surprised than words can say to find that his account, especially the last part of it, gave her pain. She sat silent, with burning cheeks, and at last burst into tears.

She also was weary by reason of her bewilderment. The hope of £6000 a year was a great eye-opener; she no longer approved her husband's course. Yet when he begged to know the cause of her tears she did not at first explain it.

'I do not know what is the matter,' she cried. 'I am only foolishly depressed.'

But when he had accepted this explanation and was going on to speak of other subjects, she suddenly raised her head and said vehemently:

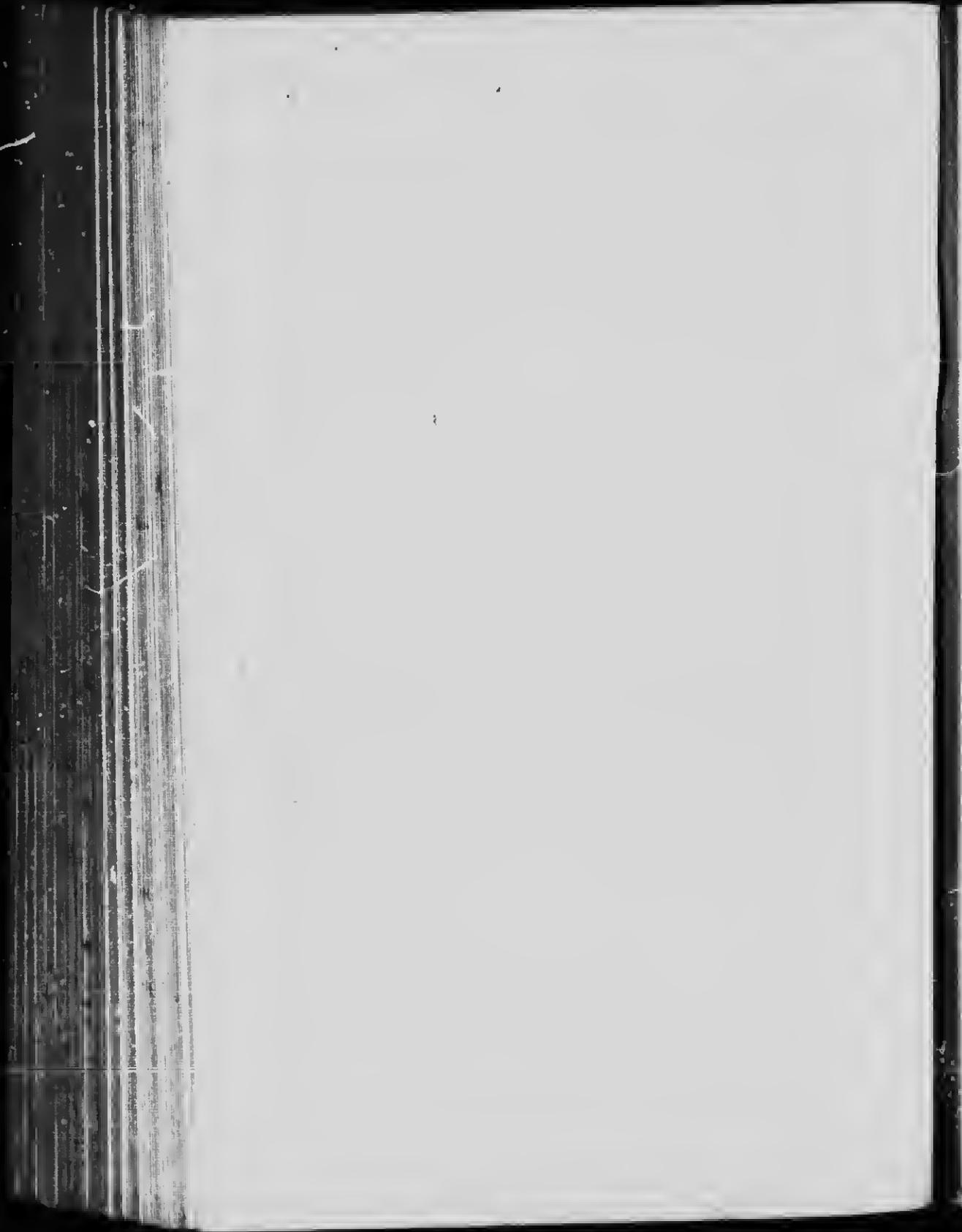
'Cumnor, you ought not to have spoken to poor Mary like that.'

'My dear, I have told you I said no more than was necessary to show her——'

She interrupted hotly, 'You may depend upon it you showed her nothing—nothing—but that you were a hard man, and that her husband was dearer to her than she ever knew before. I am a wife, and I know. She will join the Dissenters, and it will be your fault.'

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BOOK IV
THE WILL AND THE WAY



CHAPTER XXV

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

THE passion of tears to which Ethel had yielded over the open altercation with her husband, had cleared her mind. She no longer halted. Timidity and hesitation were over.

The next day, armed with a little frock she was making for one of the children, she went to sit cosily in Mrs. Ward's parlour. She was aware that in the friendship she had now to cultivate there was some back way to make up; but, apart from that, she supposed her gracious companionship to be entirely desirable from Mrs. Ward's point of view. The old people had always been as pleasant to her as if she had not neglected and affronted them in many small ways. Till recently she had taken this to mean either that they were unobservant, or that their motive in wishing to be on good terms with her was so strong that they were not to be repulsed. Now that she knew them to possess the power of wealth she did not find these former explanations tenable.

She could detect no suggestion of restraint or offence in the old couple's welcome that day. No

allusion was made to the fact that until that afternoon she had been almost a stranger in the house. At last, bewildered by this treatment, Ethel herself opened the subject.

'You know, Aunt Ward, I did not realise at first how good uncle is! You will think me very stupid, I know, but I believe I am usually slow to make new friends.'

The old lady, who had been examining the contents of her own work-box, now displayed two bits of hand-made embroidery. 'I think, dear,' she said, 'that either of these patterns would finish off that little frock. Will you let me measure and see which is the best length?'

'Oh,' cried Ethel, 'how exquisite your taste is! It would look simply lovely. But no—you are too kind; I won't take it. I do not deserve it, and my children must learn to be simple in their tastes. Do you know, uncle,'—she looked up prettily at Mr. Ward—'I believe aunt would quite spoil me if I had time to come here often enough!'

The old man looked down at her indulgently. 'It is never kindness that spoils us, my dear, but something in ourselves which turns kindness into an excuse for pursuing the highest things less strenuously.'

Ethel grew grave. To her mind the old man was too ready to talk about the highest things, and it seemed to her impossible to discuss them with him. In her anxiety not to show her disapproval, or to incur his, and to steer him off a religious subject, she said, 'I try to teach my

children not to be lax in anything—that they should be earnest and active,—and she added hastily—‘in all things.’

The old man chuckled. ‘I think I’d let them relax in some directions,’ said he.

Ethel was one of those good women who suspect the laughter they do not comprehend of implying either a jeer or a sneer. She flushed eagerly. ‘I thought you believed in the strenuous life, uncle?’

‘Burglars, ballet-dancers, and bricklayers are all strenuous,’ said he; ‘but a ballet-dancer, for instance, might be allowed to be lax in the matter of cooking dinners.’

‘Not if it were her duty to cook her husband’s dinner, surely?’

‘He’d be a brute if he did not sit down in a corner contented with a Belony sausage.’

The old lady interposed soothingly, ‘He only means that a bricklayer might be excused from cultivating his talent for music, even if he had one. Leave him to his odd ideas, my dear, and trim the little frock.’

Ethel was accustomed to have all her moral remarks received seriously, especially by those who lived in a humble way. With a confused feeling, as of losing her feet in water, she strove to gain some moral ascendancy. ‘But, uncle, I don’t see what that has to do with my little girls.’

‘I do not really think it has anything to do with them. Has the little one planted the rose-trees yet?’

‘Yes. How kind you were to bring them!’

I am so anxious that my children should be fond of gardening. I think it is such a refining occupation.'

'It is fashionable at present!'

'Oh, I should never consider fashion in a matter of that kind!'

'They are as nice chick-a-biddies as I ever saw,' he said.

Ethel became aware that neither of these old people cared to know whether she regarded fashion or not. In the wake of this suggestion came another—the suspicion that, in spite of their kindness, they were bored by her moralities. Then the idea that their kindness proceeded from hearts which could not be other than kind, and had no reference to her charms or deserts, began to haunt her mind. The idea was repugnant to her. She could not clearly realise it or believe it; but as far as she did so she was spurred by it to desire the more to make her worth known to the old couple, for she supposed that only by so doing could she secure their settled favour.

The missionary enterprise which had been discouraged by Miss Kennedy recurred to Ethel's mind; if she could persuade Mrs. Cole to repent and confess and be reconciled to the Browns, what a good deed it would be! Every one would be happier if some of the parochial animosities were thus healed. God must be pleased and the Church benefited by such an act. The Wards would certainly be delighted, and they could not then fail to understand how hard she was trying to do right, and how high her ideals were. They would

respect Compton, too, more if this effort for peace came from the vicarage.

That night Ethel said to her husband, 'From the point of view of Christian love it is a great pity that Anna Brown and Mrs. Cole are so angry with one another. I am sure it is the sort of thing that will make your uncle feel that our religion is not worth much.'

'Has Oriane been disturbing your mind again on the social question? We must all admit that all ill-feeling is wrong. The question is, what is ill-feeling? Uncle Ward, I fancy, would have thought our blessed Lord in the wrong when He denounced the scribes and Pharisees; but we cannot think so.'

'But we were only discussing Anna and Mrs. Cole,' said Ethel.

'It seems clear that Mrs. Cole told some very ill-natured lies about Miss Brown,' said the vicar. 'Unless she repents and confesses the wrong, I cannot think that the Browns are called upon to seek her acquaintance.'

Ethel was thinking of the tact and courage that would be required in her mission, while she said, 'No; of course what you say is true, Cumnor; Anna cannot take the first step. Yet I think your uncle is right if he considers it hardly desirable for two Christian women in the same town to be at open enmity.'

The phrases 'Christian love,' 'Christian women,' struck Compton as imported from Mr. Ward's conversation. 'Well, you don't suppose I think it desirable?' said he, nettled. 'Really, Ethel,

the common duties of tolerance and Christian love were not first proclaimed in this parish by my uncle!

He seldom spoke in such an angry tone. She was wounded. 'Did I ever say they were?'

'No, not in so many words; but one would think——' The vicar stopped. The inward conviction that he was surly did not at the moment put him in a better frame. He left her abruptly.

CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. COLE ON MISS BROWN

AFTER much thought and, let it be said clearly, much humble and earnest prayer, Ethel started on her mission to Mrs. Cole. The training which years of parish work had given her enabled her to speak and act on her convictions as people who have not had such training cannot easily do. To give addresses at mothers' meetings and girls' clubs, to lecture choir boys and direct the domestic arrangements of the poor, had become easy by long habit. All these activities required the courage, tact, and patience that she was prepared to call to her aid as she stood at the Cole's door. The duties of her position, however, had not taught her to see herself as others saw her. That was one experience that she was not prepared to meet. She entered the house buoyed up, not only with faith and determined good-humour, but with the conviction that, present strained relations apart, her religious reputation and social rank must make her a most welcome guest.

When Mrs. Jarvis Cole came into the room Ethel was looking at various pictures and books

in quite a little ecstasy of surprise and admiration.

The greeting over, she cried, 'I have been looking at your beautiful things until I hardly know where I am.'

Mrs. Cole's response was dry. 'You are in Mr. Jarvis Cole's dining-room.'

'If you had been buried in Mosford as long as I have, you would understand my delight in finding such a room as this.'

'I should have supposed there were more beautiful things at the Hall or at the Park.'

Ethel gasped at the bare idea of such a comparison. She could not see that her air of surprise had been patronising; she only thought that Mrs. Cole was in a bad temper. There could not be any amiable beating about the bush.

'You are perhaps busy, but when I explain why I came—if you will have the great kindness to listen with patience—I am sure you will not blame me.'

'Will you sit nearer the fire?' asked Mrs. Cole.

'Thank you; it will be more cosy. Mrs. Cole, I have been thinking long and very sadly about the unhappy differences that have arisen amongst us. I am sure you must feel as I do.'

'It is unfortunate.'

'Oh, Mrs. Cole, are we not all too liable to blame fortune for what may perhaps be in part our own fault? One of the cottagers told me the other day something Mr. Cole had said in one of his sermons. I was very much touched by it.'

'What was it?'

'It was old Grantham told me. He said that Mr. Cole had explained to them that it was not enough to sing hymns and utter prayers, but that true religion requires us to live in simple truthfulness and perfect love with every one. I thought it so beautiful.'

'Mr. Cole preaches in that way twice every Sunday. Is the idea new to you?'

Ethel's cheeks flushed, but she succeeded in a little laugh. 'I did not mean that I thought the sentiment very original, but beautifully expressed. Of course I have not attempted to reproduce the language.'

'I should hardly think old Grantham capable of reporting Mr. Cole's language, but I am glad you liked what you heard.'

'It is the idea that truth and love must be at the bottom of our relations to one another that I felt to be needed by us all just now. If the differences amongst us arise from a lack of these, surely we may seek to surmount them.'

Ethel's musical voice and pretty pleading began to atone for her first blunder. Mrs. Cole opened her mind. 'Well, I am sure if you really want to get to the bottom of things and make them better, I've no need to object. Mr. Cole and I both think that party feeling is a very bad thing.'

'It will be easy if you really think that,' cried Ethel with a note of joy.

'What in the world did you suppose we thought?' asked Mrs. Cole, but not in her first dry tone.

'I don't know,' said Ethel pleasantly. 'I don't know, Mrs. Cole, exactly what I thought, only it seems to us——' She paused.

'I should be glad to do my very best to help you ; but if it seems to you that we do not understand the first principles of Christianity—after all the good work Mr. Cole has done in Mosford—I'm afraid it isn't a very promising look-out, is it?'

Ethel could not conscientiously admit that Mr. Cole was a Mosford benefactor. She looked with grave, childlike eyes and said, 'It seems to me, Mrs. Cole, that in the healing of this bitter feeling we must each do our own small part. The question for each of us is, "What is my part?" If we would each conscientiously ask our heart that question, and then try to do our part, I think we should not fail.'

'Yes, I suppose we ought. We can begin by asking the Lord's direction and blessing ; that is the one thing we can each be certain is right. Mr. Cole is very fond of a petition from your Litany ; he uses it frequently in these times—that the Almighty may be pleased to turn the hearts of our enemies and slanderers in order that they may be forgiven.'

Ethel wondered for a moment if this was meant as a deliberate insult, but a look at Mrs. Cole's face convinced her that it was not. Mrs. Cole was, in fact, looking much more good-natured than she did at first.

It was necessary for Ethel to introduce that particular point which she had decided was her

part in this drama of reconciliation. How could she respond cordially about Mrs. Cole's prayers? She did not feel assured that they were acceptable to God. As Mrs. Cole grew more willing to enlarge on her own religious sentiments, Ethel became more fluttered and hurried.

'The truth is, you see, Mrs. Cole, I don't think there is much virtue in prayer until we are resolved to do right—each to do his or her own part, you know, to set things right.'

'Mr. Cole says he doesn't see exactly what we can do except lay it before the Lord.'

'But, surely, Mrs. Cole, if you were to make it up with Miss Brown——'

'Oh, I'm perfectly willing to make it up. I shouldn't think of harbouring an unforgiving spirit; it would be very wrong, and even if it wasn't wrong it would be silly; I've far too much to do to worry about Miss Brown. But, as Jarvis says, you can't go about telling folks that you forgive them, because till they want to be forgiven they resent it. Whenever I come in sight, Miss Brown holds her head as if she were a pea tendril feeling for some support behind her. I can't sing out, "I forgive you, I forgive you," as I go past.'

'Miss Brown is one of my closest friends,' said Ethel with quiet dignity.

'I beg pardon; I didn't mean to malign your friends. I used to think she was friends with you, but from what you've been saying I supposed she couldn't be. However, if you think it would do the slightest good to tell her I am willing to forget all about it, you may.'

Ethel took her courage in her hands and said, 'I could not tell her that, indeed, Mrs. Cole. I do not think Miss Brown was in any way to blame.'

'In what way, or when, do you think she was not to blame?' asked Mrs. Cole.

'I thought you were referring to what occurred at Ducklinghoe. I do not think it was Miss Brown who was to blame.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Cole; and then, after a pause, she said, 'Oh!'

'I think that, although Miss Brown may naturally have shown impatience—we all do in moments of excitement—she cannot really be blamed.'

Mrs. Cole said nothing. She did not look annoyed; she seemed merely to be awaiting Ethel's further remarks.

Ethel talked a little longer, and then she also waited for an answer.

'Well, you see, Mrs. Compton, what you think about Miss Brown depends entirely on what your standard of good behaviour is. When we came to Mosford we were told that the Church standard was—well, very different from ours; but of course, never having spoken to you before, I did not know how far the report was true.'

Ethel looked up helplessly at the large, calm woman before her. If she had meant to be rude—as Ethel feared she might in the first part of the interview—Ethel would have met the attack with patience and dignity; but it appeared evident that Mrs. Cole—now quite at her ease—was simply

saying what she thought. Ethel reluctantly perceived that her courageous stand as the champion of Miss Brown had not raised that lady in Mrs. Cole's estimation at all. Her opinion went for nothing! How could that be? Bishops and archdeacons had listened respectfully to her opinions. Mr. Glynne himself took counsel with her at times. To all her husband's friends she was an occasional adviser and guide. Here sat this Methodist woman totally unmoved by her opinions. It dimly dawned on Ethel that perhaps the reason why so many admirable people respected her judgment was that it agreed with theirs. She did not in this way agree with the Coles, and it was evident that her judgment went for nothing with them. Was it possible that her character and Cumnor's character and position were not so obviously superior as to carry more weight than this?

'I think perhaps I had better go for to-day,' she said gently. 'You will think it over, Mrs. Cole, won't you? and I will come back.'

'Oh yes, I'll think it over. I'm sure I'm most willing to do what I can. You can call again if you think of anything you would like to say.'

Ethel felt instinctively that this reiterated promise to do what she could was more hopeless than any snarl of ill-temper. She was surprised that Heaven had not seconded her laudable efforts more effectually.

On her way home she met old Mr. Ward. Since she began to fear failure she was glad that he should know of her effort. She could tell all

her good intentions, all her hopes, and recount the interview of that day quite frankly.

'You have been doing the Master's work,' said he, beaming down on her, 'and you must not be surprised if no one blesses you for it now. The time will come when they will thank you.'

'Oh, I wish I could bring about a better feeling in these people. I have not thought about it so much till lately; but now, the more I think how to reconcile Miss Brown and Mrs. Cole the more I see how deep is the Nonconformist distrust of the Church. Why, uncle, Mrs. Cole had no more respect for my opinion than if—she looked round vaguely—'than if I were not Cumnor's wife!'

'Aye, my dear,' said the old man, 'it's not these two women but Church and Dissent that you want to reconcile; and the more you try, the more you'll see that the bottom's deeper than you know. You may find that your own feet are not on the rock of that reverence for every human soul which the Master taught. But persevere! If you get the Christians in Mosford to respect one another, you will make those who are not Christians respect Christianity. You could not do a more blessed work.'

At these words Ethel's ambition soared beyond the reconciliation of two women. She saw in vision a united Mosford; church and chapel lying down together; and in that day the old man would contentedly leave his money to Cumnor. She did not use these words, or any words; she only went on to renewed effort, soothed and elated

by the old man's benediction. She was also stimulated by the growing perception that Mr. Ward was a very old man. That wonderful look that came on his face when he blessed her—did it mean that he would not live long? She had no time to lose.

CHAPTER XXVII

MISS BROWN ON MRS. COLE

NEXT day the following note was sent from the vicarage:—

Dear Mrs. Cole—Since talking with you, I have decided that I should like to invite Miss Brown to come here to tea some day to meet you if you will come; and I will ask her to apologise to you for anything in which she may have been remiss. But of course I cannot do this unless you would be willing to make some acknowledgment on your side about the words you used in speaking to her. I am sure you know that I only ask this for the sake of the kindly feeling which we both desire to bring about.

That evening Ethel received a call from Jarvis Cole. Stalwart and very clerical in appearance, he stood with Ethel's note in his hand.

'It is impossible for me to say how warmly I appreciate your present efforts, Mrs. Compton. That you should go so far out of your own way to seek to establish a better state of feeling in Mosford my wife and I feel to be a direct answer to our most earnest prayers. I have only come now as my wife's messenger, to ask you the meaning of a phrase in your note. You say, "the words you used in speaking to her"—(Miss Brown).' Cole

read the sentence and looked at Ethel. 'What words?' he asked.

Ethel looked bewildered.

'It is better to come at once to an amicable understanding about this sort of thing,' said Cole. 'My wife has no recollection of using any words that could reasonably offend Miss Brown; although, of course, at such a moment, and being in pain, she may easily have spoken unwisely. She would be sorry for that. If you will kindly tell us exactly what words she is accused of using——'

'Oh, Mr. Cole, I do not think the repetition of such things could ever be desirable.'

'Do you mean that you think my wife said anything that it would be improper for you to repeat?'

'We only now want to forget that such words were ever uttered.'

'You say "such words"; perhaps you can tell me what kind of words you so much wish to forget?'

Ethel faltered. 'I never heard exactly what it was Mrs. Cole said.'

'If Miss Brown was your authority, perhaps you will be kind enough to find out from her what the improper words were. We are entirely at one with you, Mrs. Compton, in our desire for Christian amity; but I have been told that Miss Brown has spread abroad a story that my wife uses bad language. This report has not reached my wife, and I will not tell her. Such an accusation can only react on Miss Brown's own reputation and that of her friends; it cannot hurt us. But if you really wish my wife to meet Miss Brown, you must first let me know that she has not spread

this report, and also exactly what it is she complains of.'

'I will speak to Miss Brown,' said Ethel humbly.

She felt a great desire to be rid of the inquiring Cole. Yet when he had gone she could not recollect that in tone or look he had betrayed any ill-feeling.

Feeling that her air-castle was falling about her pretty ears, and with the fear of losing Mr. Ward's approval lying on her heart like lead, she went to try her influence with Miss Brown.

'I have come, Anna, to speak about that affair with Mrs. Cole. You know, I really find that our quarrel with them is doing the Church an immense lot of harm in the village.'

With those whom she liked Miss Brown was really a delightful person, warm-hearted and impulsive. In appearance she was both handsome and active, in spite of the fifty years honestly worn in the natural lines of a healthy face and in the silver threads that enriched the sober black of her abundant hair. Like many men and women, she preferred to be generous both in love and hate to being just in either; justice was not a virtue in her eyes. When Ethel came in she was playing on the piano with brilliant execution, and she now whirled round on the old-fashioned revolving stool.

'What sort of harm? That is certainly a very becoming hat, Ethel. I think you grow prettier every year, my dear.'

On an earlier day Ethel would have expanded in this genial atmosphere. To-day the deceitfulness of riches was already taking the spring of

youth out of her heart, but she was acquiring strength of purpose.

'I am sure the mischief is very deep. Even Cumnor's reputation and my own are suffering. People do not regard us with the same respect that they did; and that, you know, must react on their love for the Church.'

'Is that awful Cole woman the author of all this? She must be telling dire lies about you! But why should people believe her?'

'I think perhaps it is rather uncharitable of you to speak of her as—well, as telling lies.'

'She does tell lies, whether I speak of it or not; but I think you said that was what you had come to speak about?'

'Surely, Anna, you would be glad to be on friendly terms with her. To feel nothing but animosity toward her is hardly right.'

'Of course one does not wear one's heart on one's sleeve in these matters. If you wish, however, to know my real attitude, I can honestly say I feel no animosity. There is no one for whom I really feel more profound pity. I would willingly do anything in my power to bring her to a better mind; but as for the result of her slanders, I don't think you need trouble about that. Even the common people are not long taken in by that sort of thing.'

'I went to see Mrs. Cole,' said Ethel perseveringly, 'and I was on the whole favourably impressed. She was not very polite, indeed she did not treat me with respect or attention; but, do you know, Anna, I am on that account

the more inclined to think that she is not deceitful.'

'She must be a little off her head, then.'

'But, Anna, what proof have you that she tells lies?'

'I heard her tell Mr. Briggs that day that I had injured her arm, and we know that she has spread that report everywhere. I quite expect soon to see a Dissenting cartoon of myself violently laying about me with Gampish umbrella. There is nothing these Radicals won't believe; and one can't blame them much, because they can have no idea what it means to be a gentlewoman. Still, I quite agree with you that it is most unfortunate.'

'You know, Anna, Cumnor always deprecates that expression "unfortunate," because we are all liable to use it about things that are, in some part at least, our own fault.'

'My dearest Ethel, if you wish to preach to me that I ought to have had more sense than to have come into any connection with that woman, you will only say what I already see. It is but prudent to give such people a wide berth, and I blame myself very much for giving her the least handle for calumny. What did you go to see her about? I should have strongly advised you to keep away.'

'What exactly did Mrs. Cole say to you, Anna, —I mean when you got into that quarrel with her?'

'I couldn't tell you exactly now. I've tried to forget the whole thing—Mr. Compton said that was the best way.'

'But what sort of things?'

'Oh, Billingsgate—I think that's the correct term.'

'But that implies the use of words that are either profane or indecent, doesn't it?'

'Does it? I don't pretend to know its precise significance. She was most abusive.'

'Can you remember any name she called you?'

'I shouldn't allow my mind to dwell on it even if I could remember; but I don't know really that she called me names. Oh yes, I think "virago" was one of them. But, my dear, if you had only seen the woman, the way she flaunted and flouted the poor old vicar—I thought for one moment that she was going to fell him with her fist. She is big enough to fell an ox, you know.'

Ethel was silent for a minute. If this conversation had occurred a week before, the picture of Mrs. Cole as she existed to the inward eye of Miss Brown would have easily transferred itself to her own mind. Soothed by her friend's esteem, and by familiar and pleasant surroundings, she would not have analysed her friend's impressions or the free and easy expression of them. But Ethel was a new creature; every hour her mind was growing more sensitive and acute on this vexed question. She really thought that God must be giving her a more charitable heart, a keener sense of truth—and who shall say it was not so? At last she said:

'We cannot blame Mrs. Cole for anything that

you thought she might be going to do. She didn't hurt Mr. Briggs.'

'Of course not. When I spoke of her making as if she would fell him, that was merely a figure of speech.'

'And I think I remember that you told Cumnor that Mrs. Cole was a virago.'

'Yes; now that you speak of it, I think "virago" was my word about her. She said so many things, I get mixed.'

'You told us at the time that she used bad language.'

'No; I said "abusive language."'

'Dear Anna, I remember perfectly telling Miss Kennedy that you said, "bad language." I was so distressed about it.'

'Then you ought to tell Miss Kennedy that you forgot what I said and made worse of it.'

'Do not be impatient with me, Anna. I am only trying, with a very sore heart, to make things in the parish a little better. You know you certainly gave Cumnor and me to understand that Mrs. Cole had used profane language.'

'I said "abusive"—that was my word; and that her rude conduct to Mr. Briggs as a priest was profane; and by that I shall abide. There's no use your trying to twist my words.'

'I am not trying to do anything but get at the truth.' Ethel's voice trembled. 'We might almost as well not say our prayers if we are not willing to do our best to put a stop to the awful stories that are afloat.'

'Is there any story afloat except that I chas-

tised Mrs. Cole? No sensible person will believe that.'

'Yes, I understand that they say you have spread a report that Mrs. Cole uses bad language.'

Miss Brown laughed good-naturedly. "Well, it seems, on your own confession, that we have tracked that report to you—you told Miss Kennedy!"

'But Miss Kennedy would never repeat it. In any case I am sure I got it from you.'

'Oh no; I never thought for a moment that the woman swore at me, if that's what you mean; and if you said so to Miss Kennedy, you may have said it also at the Park. Lady Sarum tells her maid everything, and then it gets round. You remember that your news about Lady Alicia's last baby got round. But how could you think that a Methodist would be likely to swear?—it wouldn't be serving the interests of the schism.'

'But you think it likely that she tells lies, and I feel convinced that she does not. She strikes me as quite truthful. As to her arm, you know if you accidentally hit your arm a comparatively slight touch will sometimes give acute pain. Then, also, you probably hit her harder than you knew.'

'You seem to think you know more about it than I do, although I was there and you were not. But what is it that you are driving at? As to your desire to help the poor woman to a better mind, I assure you I should be very glad to do anything I could to that end.'

'It is not only Mrs. Cole; the state of feeling all round is very bad.'

'We are not responsible for the bitterness of the Dissenters, and therefore cannot mend their manners. However, I am entirely at one with you in deeply deploring the state of affairs. I shall be only too glad to do anything that I can.'

'Then, dear Anna, don't you think you might be willing to say to Mrs. Cole that you are sorry for anything you may have done to offend her?'

'I did nothing to offend. I can't act a farce by confessing what I did not do.'

Miss Brown was growing vexed, so Ethel, with weary detail, told her of her first effort to wring an apology from Mrs. Cole and its result. 'I only want to do right,' said poor Ethel. 'I think, Anna, as my friend you ought to help me.'

'As your friend I advise you to leave these people alone! They are more wily than you are. They will lead you on till you do something that can be called an encouragement to schism.'

Ethel's temper had been strained too far. She cried petulantly, 'For Church people to behave in an un-Christian manner is the best way to encourage schism. I think your condition of heart is most uncharitable.'

'Well, then, go yourself and confess that you set about the tale of Mrs. Cole's profanity. It's only fair to me that you should vindicate my honour in that respect. If Mrs. Cole is clamouring for a sop to her pride, you had better apologise to her yourself. I would help you if I could, but I don't see what I can do.'

'Very well!' cried Ethel. 'In so far as I have

been in the wrong I shall certainly admit it and try to put it right.'

It was one of the first mild days of spring, when languor steals upon every one, but Ethel, indefatigable, at once called on Miss Kennedy to explain her mistaken report of Mrs. Cole's language.

'I am very sorry to have made you think what was not true,' said Ethel.

Miss Kennedy was surprised into saying, 'You did not make me think so. I never supposed it was true for a moment. I have always had a pleasant word with Mrs. Cole when we meet in the street.'

Then Ethel had to walk all the way to the Park. The reflection that Miss Kennedy took her words so lightly did not make her walk more cheerful. Very tired and fretful, she made her confession to Lady Sarum, only to offend the old lady by betraying her fear that the confidential maid had been indiscreet.

'Call Simmons,' said Lady Sarum in peremptory anger.

Simmons, the maid, was a person of influence not only with her mistress but with Lady Alicia Glyne. All Ethel's tact did not suffice that day to placate the Countess and Simmons.

'It is a most unfortunate bit of scandal,' said Lady Sarum. 'I am very sorry that you and Miss Kennedy set it on foot. But Simmons and I are incapable of repeating such tales.'

Ethel was sent home in the carriage, and so much in need of comfort was she that she went

at last to her husband and told him the whole pitiful tale—that is, she told him of her desire to bring about peace and the miserable result. She ended the long story with the little wail—

‘I am at my wits’ end. I can’t even go to Mrs. Cole and say that I said it and am sorry, for she does not know that it was ever said.’

Compton would not have been a good man or a good husband if he had not gathered the impression that his wife was taking an angelic part, and that, compared with her, every one else was selfish and unkind. While he caressed and comforted her he mused over the story in no little surprise.

‘I had no idea that you had these most unfortunate political and theological differences so much on your mind.’

‘Oh, Cumnor!’—with a little sob—‘don’t you say “unfortunate”; the word has got on my nerves! It seems to me that even you may be to blame somewhat. We have both’—she sobbed again—‘I am afraid we have both been too willing to take up a reproach against our neighbour!’

‘Perhaps so,’ said he sadly. Ethel’s pretty head was leaning against his breast, and he went on stroking her hair. Yet now he did not feel quite so sure that she was all in the right as he had done a minute before.

At last he gave his advice on the whole matter. ‘You have acted from the highest motives, and you think you were directed by Heaven to do this. But you know, dearest, there are nearly always two factors in the Divine direction—the impression on our own hearts, and the opening up

of circumstance. Now it may be that your own heart has led you to run in advance of God's working. There is something in what Miss Brown suggested; there is a danger of getting into a position where we might do real harm by appearing to endorse the Dissenting ministry. You see circumstances have not opened the way before you. You say yourself that you do not know what to do next. I would counsel you to wait quietly before that shut door. Wait upon God, and if He does not open the door, be content to await His time. It is enough just now to watch our own hearts and be careful not to harbour unjust or unkind thoughts of these people.'

'Oh, Cumnor!' she wailed, 'what is the good of watching your own heart if you don't take the trouble to find out what is just and unjust to these people? I will not give up. My heart is set upon this mission now.'

'Your heart is set only upon pleasing God. If God Himself bars the way with thorns, you must submit.'

Ethel was silenced but not convinced. How could she wait idle when the end was not attained? Had she been seeking a less desirable end she might have been satisfied by her husband's argument. As it was, every thorn that helped to bar her way convinced her that she was doing right to push on, because it distracted her attention from the real motive of her action and made her course appear the more self-denying.

She went to Mr. and Mrs. Ward, and told her whole story out to them, omitting Compton's last

advice. She did not wish them to know that Compton was at all callous on a subject on which she and they were so sensitive.

Mr. Ward gave her very different advice. After some thought he suggested that she should persuade Mrs. Cole to sing at the next weekly mothers' meeting. 'If she will come next week,' said he, 'you could announce her kindness this week to your women, and take the opportunity, while you explain that you do not approve of Methodism, to say a word about her high character and well-known kindness.'

'That is capital!' cried Ethel. 'I am sure I can do that; and I can give my lecture on feeding babies at her mothers' meeting in return, if she asks me.'

Ethel did not trouble Compton with these details. He was very busy preparing for the diocesan retreat, which was to be held in Mosford the ensuing month.

BOOK V
ORIANE'S PERVERSION

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE VICAR'S TRIAL

ALL this time Mr. Ward was looking eagerly for signs of greater grace in the nephew whom he longed to adopt as a son. As the old Methodists would have phrased it, he gave himself much to prayer for this nephew and his family. He was a man who believed in prayer, and he had no great confidence in the efficacy of giving advice except when it was honestly sought. Yet when he saw that John Compton's wife was beginning to take upon herself that attitude of humility and love toward her neighbours which, to his mind, was only the most obvious Christian duty, and saw also no sign that the vicar's heart was moving in the same direction, he began to inquire more closely what the cause of the divergence might be. Having carefully perused the various prints his nephew was in the habit of reading, he felt the word of remonstrance stir within him.

One morning he went to the vicarage, and deliberately settled himself in the vicar's study.

'I can't bear to hear you take the sacred Name upon your lips nowadays, Johnnie,' he began. 'I

nearly got up and went out of your church last Sunday morning. For if a man is bearing false witness against his neighbour all the time, he can't be the servant of God. You can't be a Christian in watertight compartments. God will have your whole heart or none of it. There can be no out-pouring of His Spirit while the poison of asps is under your lips.'

'I have not knowingly borne false witness,' said Compton stiffly. 'To what do you refer?'

'Yes, Johnnie, in the bottom of your own common sense you must know well enough that, taking one political Dissenter with another, there are just as many honest, kindly, and reasonable men among them as there are in what you call *the* Church. You must know that the members of the new Government are just as godly and honest, take them man for man, as the members of the last Government. You must know that; and yet, in these little allusions to Dissenters as a class that you are always throwing out now, you know very well that you're trying to make your women-folk, and any man that will listen to you, believe that, with rare exceptions, the political Dissenters are mostly scally-wags, and that to be a Liberal is to decry your Church.'

John Compton felt exceedingly unhappy, and he looked exceedingly stiff and cross. He sat at one end of his study table, holding a pen in his hand, but turning his face toward the old man with the most obvious determination to show courteous attention.

'I am not sure that I can define the term "scally-wag,"' he said.

'Can't you? For our purposes you must know that a scally-wag is an untrustworthy person, or rather, a person who can be trusted to save his own skin and to act generally from low motives.'

'A person may have fairly good motives in general, and yet in certain respects be so misguided as to do what is mean and to use dishonest arguments. That is certainly how the political Dissenters, as a body, are acting towards the Church to-day—just now.'

'That is certainly how your friends, in print and on platform, say they are acting; but of course you know, in your sane moments, what that sort of political jargon is worth. Partisans on the other side say the same things of you Churchmen, and with quite as much reason. Little boys in an English school talk of Frenchmen as if they were all cowards and sneaks; and little boys in an American school talk of the English as if they were all dunderheads and bullies. The jargon of party is worth just that, and nothing more. But you'—and there came a sudden fire in the old man's eyes and a sudden tenderness in his voice—'but you—for you to live is Christ, and it matters nothing to you what any church or sect may gain or lose in material things as long as Christ is magnified. What is required of you in order to glorify Him is "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Now, Johnnie, there is neither love nor knowledge nor judgment in slandering your neighbours—neigh-

bours who are just as good, and just as honourable, and just as intelligent, and just as sensible as you Churchmen are: That may not be saying a great deal'—the old man spoke with tremendous earnestness;—'indeed, it isn't saying much; but that much, at least, may certainly be said for them. As I was saying to that old minister who teaches me Latin, it's nonsense for him to talk as if all Jesuits were liars; it is just as foolish of you to talk as if all Liberals were enemies of religion.'

'Why do you not go and say this to your own people?' asked Compton sadly. 'It is they who, for political reasons, got up this whole agitation; it is they who defame us as a class. There is on the Church side, so far as I can see, no bitterness. We are indignant at the injustice proposed to our schools. The Church only asks for the same treatment as every one else. But the other side are bent on her ruin.'

'To say that is, of course, to beg the whole question. To assume that they are bitter while your indignation is merely righteous is to assume a slander as the basis of all your arguments,' said the old man. 'With that slander in your heart God can give you no blessing. Even supposing that slander were true; supposing their intent is to persecute you and spitefully use you, do two wrongs make a right? Is there any reason why you should spitefully use them? You ought to remember that historically the Church began the persecution all along the line, and try to make up for that now.'

'But,' said Compton, 'if, as I think, there is only too good reason for my belief that the Dissenters—or at any rate, the political Dissenters—are actuated more by enmity against the Church than by any better motive, it is our duty to expose them and warn the people of England against them, so far as in our power. Is the Church of God to be slandered, her right and duty to instruct the people to be denied, and those who love her be forbidden to defend her prerogative?'

'I'm not trying to decide, Johnnie, whether there ought to be political Dissenters or political Churchmen; in other words, whether it is right for them or for you to fight a political battle over any matter when your consciences differ. Let us agree, for the sake of argument, that it is. I am saying that your weapons are not truth and love. When you throw those down and take up the weapons of falsehood and spite, you have ceased to fight on the Lord's side, and nothing you can do in that way will really help the cause of Christianity. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child, the Dissenters of England are quite as fair-minded as your Church people. To try to make people believe anything else will not serve any good cause. You had better heed my warning, Johnnie; the looker-on, you know, sees most of the game.'

'I can easily see that, having lived but a few months in England, you may take this view of matters; but, as I said before, I cannot accept the statement you have twice laid down as the basis of your argument. Although any of us Churchmen

may sin against the Divine grace given to us, and so be morally worse than the better Dissenters, yet it remains true that the Dissenters, as a body, have deliberately cut themselves off from the means of grace, and it is natural to suppose, therefore, that there is less grace among them.'

'I have heard your argument about neglected channels of grace before,' said Mr. Ward. 'I had a neighbour in Canada who was a Roman Catholic priest, and we used to have great talks. He believed that all Protestant ministers were more or less insincere, and the Church of England parsons were the worst. He used to say that they could not be anything else but self-deceived in all the finer issues of life when they had cut themselves off from the Church; and those that pretended to be Catholics were, to his mind, the most open to moral defect. You know, Johnnie, it's a wonderful education to live in a new country and to knock against all sorts of folk.'

'From his point of view your Roman Catholic neighbour was quite right; his mistake lay in having too narrow a definition of the Church.'

'I brought him in here,' said Mr. Ward, 'in order to ask you if you think he was right in attributing to you a lower moral level without taking the trouble to find out what your level really was. He took his views of English parsons chiefly from what people of his own way of thinking wrote and said.'

'But I do not take my opinions ready-made,' said Compton. 'I review facts and think for

myself. Strange as you may think it, my dear uncle, in this matter I think for myself.'

'If you do, and still in all things fall into rank with your party, you are a very remarkable man, John Compton. But the fact is, you might think all your life and think wrongly, if you think only about those facts which your party spirit leads you to emphasise. The trouble about your theory of God's grace, and that of my Roman Catholic neighbour, is that you have to look at all that pertains to human nature with blinkers on if you are to believe it; and our Father in heaven—the old man's voice grew soft—'never told His children to believe anything that wouldn't bear looking at all round with the utmost power of thought and eyesight that we can spend upon it. If you are right about the channels of grace, you must square that with all the facts, and not simply with what you assume to be the facts.'

Compton did not immediately speak. He had no wish to enter on a discussion of this nature when, from his point of view, it seemed likely to be futile.

His uncle went on. 'It is just in order that you may review the facts and think for yourself that I have come here this morning. I have come to make you a fair offer. The Free Churches have got a big convention at Birmingham this week; they're going to spend some days praying and preaching; come over with me—I'll pay expenses; come and hear for yourself what they're praying for, and what they're exhorting one

another to do and be; and after that form your judgment of them.'

'My dear sir, your motives are, no doubt, excellent; but, to use your own phrase, it won't do. Personally I am certain that the mass of Dissenting parents had no grievance against the Church schools till political Dissenters made the dissatisfaction.'

'The mass of the parents did not care; but the dissatisfaction was got up, not by politicians, but by religious men who thought it right to educate them into caring. To say that the leaders on either side of this education controversy are merely political is a lie, and a silly one. It was men whose religion moulds their politics who were at the bottom of it. The parents have no objection to the religious teaching in the Council schools which you despise; the agitation against that is the work of the religious men on your side. The longer I live the more clearly I see that the devil never really does much harm except when he works through the passions of a saint.'

'You can hardly expect me to agree with you that the devil has as much to do with those who seem to me to be fighting for God's truth as with those who, blindly it may be, are fighting against it.'

'Will you come with me to Birmingham, and listen with an open mind to the men and women who you think are fighting against God?'

'No, my dear uncle, I will not go. I could not do so with a good conscience. I must teach the truth, and defend the truth, as I know it, and

leave those whose practices and beliefs differ so widely from my own to the judgment of God and their own consciences.'

'Then leave them to God,' said the old man sternly. 'Don't say they are bitter while you are only indignant against injustice; don't say theirs is a mere political agitation while yours is a protest against irreligion; don't say they are acting merely out of spite to the Church while you are working for the salvation of the children. Don't think or speak of them as if they were not animated by God's grace because you believe them to be deprived of the means of grace. And, above all, don't say or write what leads your women-folk to repeat these things over their teacups. Remember what the Master said about those who cause the little ones to offend.'

CHAPTER XXIX

THE VICAR'S CONSCIENCE

MR. WARD had intended, with his wife, to stop in Birmingham for the week of the Convention; but Mrs. Ward was nursing a serious case of illness in one of the cottages, which she could not leave. The old man, worn and fagged with the political atmosphere in Mosford, could not deny himself the refreshment of going daily to Birmingham for the meetings. He started very early each morning and reached Mosford again by eight o'clock in the evening, an arrangement which to his friends seemed exhausting, but when his old face visibly regained the lines of peace and happiness which it had worn when he first came to Mosford, they were satisfied.

He made a point of calling at the vicarage on his way from the station the first evening, to say he had come back safe and had had a good day, and if possible to elicit from his nephew some questions concerning the meetings he had attended.

'Well, uncle,' said Compton, 'did you find your way about Birmingham easily?'

'I hadn't far to go. I got to the morning

meeting at 11, and then we had time for a bite between 1 and 2; then there was a prayer meeting, followed by a conference till 4.30, so that I just caught my train back comfortably.'

'I suppose,' said Compton grimly, 'you heard them says things about us as uncharitable as I say about them?'

'They might have done if they'd been talking about you, but they weren't.'

'But of course they must have said something about the school question?'

'It wasn't that sort of a meeting. What they were conferring about was how to get on a higher level of experience, of faith, and the power faith gives. To-day, being the first, was devoted to the search for the inspiration that cleanses the individual life of its secret sins and infirmities and follies.'

'Oh indeed!' said Compton, and he asked with sincere curiosity, 'Was there a penitent form? or were you all asked to take a pledge against drink and tobacco?'

'I guess the folks there had got beyond that. They were mostly ministers and Christian workers, you know.'

'About how many were there?' Compton spoke with increasing curiosity.

'I was told between a thousand and fifteen hundred. There was a good deal of going in and out. The afternoon meeting was the biggest.'

'But you don't mean to say,' cried Compton, 'that you had a crowd like that morning and afternoon, and that they didn't talk about their

attack on the Church, or about the evils of Church doctrine !'

'If they'd wired into the Church I'd be quite willing to tell you what they said, but they weren't even thinking about it.'

When the old man was gone Ethel said, 'I never thought of it before, but I suppose Nonconformists really must have something else to talk about. Do you think there really is no reason for people to be Dissenters at all except their opposition to the Church?'

Compton did not answer audibly. He felt nettled by what the old man had told him, and could not analyse his vague irritation of temper.

The next evening, when his uncle had expressed his continued pleasure in the meetings, Compton said, 'I am sorry that I cannot enter into your feelings. These people are not my sort ; indeed, just now they are doing their best to thwart us and the cause of true religion ; and I rather naturally suspect that your easy colonial good nature is reflected in your impressions of them and their meetings. But of course, in so far as they are truly devout, one would wish to acknowledge it. Still I am sure in these two days you must have heard very bitter things said against the Church—things compared with which my warnings in the parish magazine are not so uncharitable as you thought them.'

'Well, you see, to-day the time was taken up with the subject of full consecration and the higher life. To-morrow they are to be searching

for the best means of doing spiritual work and winning souls for Christ.'

'Still, as these people must acknowledge that ~~their~~ one justification of their separate position is the antagonism they feel to the doctrines and institutions of the Church, this must colour all their thought, and it is impossible they should have days of public meetings without warning their followers against what they think pernicious and urging them to stamp it out.'

'I didn't stay for the evening meetings,' said the old man, 'but I see from the papers they got on politics, and said "amen" to some of the things their party papers are saying, which are bad enough.'

'But was there nothing of this at these day meetings?' persisted Compton. 'You cannot be telling me all, uncle; and since you have lectured me so frankly, I have surely a right to ask what the opposition are saying about us.'

'They said nothing about their opposition to the Church,' said the old man. 'They don't call you "the opposition," you know; they regard the devil as the opposition. But, any way, they never said a single word about you from first to last.'

'As they seem to have been going over all their beliefs and convictions, they cannot have omitted the chief item of their creed?'

'My dear Johnnie, do you really think that un-friendliness to you is the chief item of their creed?'

'Certainly, it must be; otherwise, why are they not with us?'

'You might just as well ask why you are not with the Jews, because you are not always fulminating against Judaism. You are not with the Jews because you believe you have got a bit farther on. You are sorry for the Jews, and you wouldn't want to see Judaism set up as the national religion; but you're grateful to them for all the truth and goodness you've inherited from them, and you concern yourself with worshipping God and directing your own lives according to a purer and higher revelation than theirs. That is exactly how the Dissenter feels towards you. He may be right or wrong, but he thinks that the Reformation was the rebirth of the purer truth that Jesus came to give, which in the Early Ages had got badly mixed up with Paganism. He thinks the Church of England is not clear of Paganism yet; and so he naturally does not want an institution he thinks effete to be ruling in the land. That affects his politics only; his religion is his effort to worship and serve God.'

Ethel had gone to bed. The two men were alone; and Compton unreasonably experienced in the depths of his soul a distinct temptation to hatred. He called God and reason to aid; he quenched it instantly; but he knew by the swift inward glance of self-examination which he was accustomed to practise that he would gladly have called down the fire of heaven upon the old man and his friends.

When one human being tries to do good to another, to cast out an unclean spirit by nights of prayer and the brief but fitting word of exorcism,

it is seldom that the result in any way resembles his anticipation. Yet it is probable that it is even more seldom that the effort is futile. The 'mysterious way' of God, of which Cowper sang, brings about wholly unexpected results in the interstices of human emotion. Compton sat there looking sour, and his manner was cold and silent; but he had realised now quite clearly that his own temper toward his religious antagonists was not right, that he was capable of that inward hatred which the Master he held divine had pronounced as sinful as is outward violence. He did not grasp the old man's point of view, in fact he did not give his attention to it; his opinion about Dissent had long been formed, and he was not a man to reconsider his opinions; but the degree of offence he felt startled his conscience and awakened him to prayer and vigilance.

CHAPTER XXX

IN NEW PASTURES

THE series of meetings which gave Mr. Ward so much delight were, in the phrase of their promoters, held 'for the deepening of the spiritual life!' When the vicar refused his invitation to go to them, the old man had carried the same offer to the Reverend Jarvis Cole.

'I know it may be hard for you to give the time, Mr. Cole; but it shan't cost you anything in the way of expenses. It is worth while, at a crisis like this, to try to get a bit away among people who have a high outlook. There is a great test of Christian love coming upon the nation, and unless we take some special care to prepare ourselves, we may miss our greatest opportunity.'

Jarvis Cole understood the old man's phrases better than did John Compton; but just because he was familiar with his way of thought he missed its force. His gratitude for the invitation was warm, his great regret in refusing it genuine. He asked with interest to what test of national Christianity Mr. Ward referred.

'It will be over the schools,' said Mr. Ward wistfully. 'The question is going to be, whether you are all going to ask yourselves how much you can conscientiously give up rather than how much you can conscientiously claim.'

'If a man's conscience is honest it would come to the same thing,' said Cole with confidence. He was standing on his own doorstep in the morning sunshine, a healthy, good-natured fellow, and well satisfied.

'I have observed,' said Mr. Ward, 'that in every transaction the question, How many points may I honestly insist upon? totals up very differently from the question, How many points may I honestly yield?'

'These meetings are not held in connection with the Education question, I think?' asked Cole.

'No; that is the value of them for men like us. We want to get away a while from our rights and our wrongs into a more quiet and spiritual place.'

'Just so, sir,' said Jarvis Cole; 'I quite agree with you, and I only wish that I could accept your kindness. Unfortunately I am responsible for a united Temperance meeting; and then I have promised to say a word at my wife's next Zenana meeting, and the Christian Endeavour——' He paused, feeling the list was too long to be profitable. 'And yet, Mr. Ward, speaking of yielding our rights'—he became somewhat pompous—'I conceive that we are only justified in doing that in matters where our own welfare alone is concerned. You cannot think it right to yield one

jot or tittle where the right to teach superstition to the helpless little ones of our nation is claimed !'

'To put it that way is to beg the question, Mr. Cole, isn't it? If we take a few days in which to realise the things of God we may learn that, because His eternal ways are so much higher than ours, our way in this strife is not entirely one with His.'

'That is true,' said Cole, 'I often think of that, my dear sir.' He quite expanded in general size, so sympathetic and genial was he. 'Yet of course, in all practical affairs, having used the best light we have, we must come to a decision and stand by it with courage and persistence.'

'Yet when so many equally good men are of another mind we should surely ask ourselves whether we may be allowing a partial view of God's way to warp our conscience and nerve our will.'

When confronted with this general view of a question on one side of which he was firmly enlisted, Cole did what nine men out of ten in like case will always do—left the general for the particular and defended his own position. 'We are not contending for the privileges of any sect of ours, but for the religious freedom of the nation. Our opponents have personal loss and gain to warp their minds; they imagine their prestige, their influence, their very office is at stake, although I think that in all these things they would be the gainers. We seek nothing for ourselves, therefore our eye is more likely to be single.'

'Well; suppose that your principle is the right one, and is to be agreed to by every nation as it

progresses, there is still for the Christian something more important than contention for a measure of civic justice for which the times may not be ripe. If St. Paul had turned aside to insist on the abolition of slavery he would never have converted the Western world.'

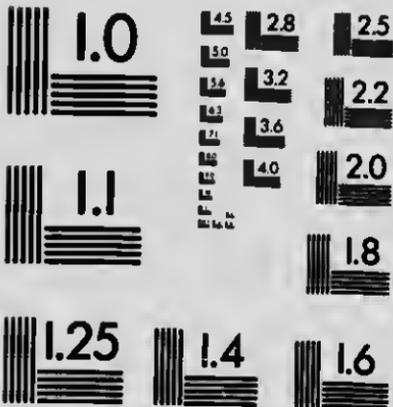
Cole held to his partisan contention. 'The mere fact that they are all accusing us of spite and hatred proves to me that they have no valid argument. The *argumentum ad hominem*—especially when it is so far beside the mark—is always the last resort of an unjust cause. Why in the world should we hate them? If some of their rich men would endow a nice little private school for every parson in the land to teach, in I should congratulate them heartily. So long as the secular teaching was up to the mark, and so long as there was a public school alongside it where my children could go without religious prejudice, I'd shout for joy at such an arrangement. But I have no right to yield my children's civic rights to please any set of parsons, however much I may like and respect them. It is for that reason that I feel it my first duty at this season to remain in the forefront of the battle, and'—he added airily—'I deeply regret that I cannot retire with you, even for a day, to the mountain-tops of God.'

The old man withdrew sorrowfully, and for the first two days of the conference the thought that he alone went from Mosford to enjoy his feast lay heavy on his heart. Then he received a most unexpected offer of companionship from Oriane Graham.



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On the morning of the third day Ethel Compton met Miss Kennedy in the village street. Ethel was intent upon her weekly marketing—the problem of never-failing interest, how to make twopence do the work of threepence without being mean to the tradespeople. Ethel had a great horror of petty meanness; she thought it ill-bred. But it was only in her dealings with things that could be seen and handled, like coppers and legs of mutton, that she perceived the temptation of her poverty and made efforts to rise above it. This morning she was cheerful and serene. She knew that her simple morning dress was pretty; she had a dancing sprite by her side—her eldest little girl, whose hand had to be held lightly in ‘mummie’s’ because her little feet had so much run and jump in them. At the back of the marketing problem Ethel held in abeyance the exhilarating prospect of collecting the signatures of the school children’s parents to a petition to Parliament praying for the rejection of the new Education Bill. She had planned to go with one of the Browns to some outstanding hamlets on this mission from door to door. Upon seeing Miss Kennedy she stopped, in the happiest humour, to ask if Oriane would motor them over. Oriane’s car had been absent upon sick-leave for a few weeks, but Ethel knew that it had come out of hospital a day or two before.

‘I am sure Oriane would have been delighted,’ said Miss Kennedy, ‘as she likes any and every excuse for driving; but she started early this morning for Birmingham.’

‘For Birmingham,’ repeated Ethel; and then she added, ‘With Mr. Ward?’

‘She is going to meetings with Mr. Ward. He seemed so much set up with his meetings that her curiosity was aroused. He likes to have her with him; his nature is so genial that he never enjoys anything so much when he is alone. Then, too, she thought the motor less tiring for him than the train.’

Ethel’s lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears. Miss Kennedy was touched, for Ethel did not easily weep. The suddenness of a blow will sometimes bring tears from women who have none to shed over deliberate grief, because they have formed the habit of covering any irritant matter with thoughts which either soften their hearts or flow into some pleasurable activity, just as an oyster covers a grain of sand with successive coating of smoothness. Dissent in general was a real trouble to Ethel, but she had long ago covered the trouble with the notion of the inferiority of Dissenters and the belief that God was on her side.

‘I do not understand it.’ Her voice had no animus, her manner no resentment. ‘Why should Oriane go to these meetings? Is not our Church enough for her? Oh, Miss Kennedy, why should she go? Why did you let her go? I don’t know how to tell Cumnor; it will hurt him so much.’

Ethel’s grief was so unaffected that Miss Kennedy’s heart went out in sympathy. ‘Don’t cry, dear,’ she said. ‘People must work out their own salvation, you know. I should not think of

allowing any wish of mine to influence Oriane in such a matter. If it hurts you to tell the vicar, I will tell him myself, and smooth it down as far as I can.'

Miss Kennedy accordingly made an excuse to call at the vicarage and mention Oriane's defection to the vicar. She sugared the news with a heartfelt expression of respect and admiration for the vicar's kinsfolk, and this was grateful to him. 'I do not think,' she said, 'that I ever met two people who lived so entirely above the level upon which the distinction of social class and political party can be seen.' She would have inserted 'religious divisions' had she been speaking to any of the Latimers, but, as she told Willie later, she remembered in time that the vicar thought that the higher the plane the clearer the religious division. 'I do not think I ever met any one who could speak to the "Red Cow" reprobates as Mr. Ward does, and not be conscious of it. He shows greater courtesy than he would to Lady Sarum, and it is his unconsciousness that makes it so fine.'

When Miss Kennedy was gone the vicar was more convinced than ever that part of what he had felt the evening before to be righteous indignation had been ill-temper, and that he must fight the devil by prayer and fasting. In that inner heart which lay below his conscious thought he was deeply moved by his uncle's pleading, but the right path was not more plain to him. He thought that his indignation must be, in part at least, righteous! He was in the midst of the battle;

there was little time for reflection ; he was being constantly struck and must constantly strike out for the right. In such a predicament it is very distressing to be pierced by the conviction that some of your blows would be better unstruck and some of your energies better directed into another channel.

In the meantime Oriane was sitting beside Mr. Ward in a meeting in which everything was entirely new to her. The inward peace and inspiration which she thought she had detected in the old man's life had caused her to come there upon a sudden impulse. She had not been seated half an hour before she felt persuaded that what she wanted was not to be had there. A common concert hall, garish by daylight, had been hired for the conference. It was filled with people of a sort Oriane could not class. She had expected parsons in white neckties and a few women in neat garb or in some decorous deaconess dress. She saw instead a great many women, all dressed more or less in the fashion of the day, and was still more amazed by the number of men in lounge suits, who put bowler hats under the seat. She found herself questioning . . . this sort of man had to do with religion on v . . . -days. Both men and women were sitting on the platform, and a woman was giving an address. Mr. Ward said the speaker belonged to the Society of Friends, but she wore a pink rose in her hat ! Oriane glanced about, puzzled and disheartened. A side door was constantly opening to admit late comers. At length a man entered who was not a

stranger to Oriane ; it was Professor Pye. He sat down on a bench by the wall. Oriane had not seen him for years. No sooner did she recognise him than she realised that it was natural he should be there, but in her restless, uncomfortable mood she plagued herself with the idea that he might think she had taken this unwonted step in the hope of meeting him.

He did not see her. He had no sooner possessed himself of a printed agenda and a hymn-sheet than an old woman came in, and he gave up his seat and possessions to her. As soon as he was again seated an infirm man entered, and the scene was re-enacted. Oriane felt annoyed that there was no doorkeeper. She was also vexed because she could not fix her attention on the address, could not keep herself from watching the door. Mr. Pye was now standing by the wall. Two over-dressed young women came in, rustled and creaked about for half a minute, leaned against the wall beside the Professor, asking him questions in disturbing whispers. Oriane marvelled that religion could take such divergent forms. How any one could possibly worship God or obtain peace of mind in such an assembly as this she could not conceive. Yet she saw Mr. Ward wrapped in attention to every word the Quakeress said. She saw, too, or thought she saw, that Mr. Pye wished to listen ; his eyes sought the platform even while he was answering the fussy young women.

Then she too listened to the words of the voice that pervaded the hall. The speaker said :

'I do not think I exaggerate when I say that all unbelief arises from the obvious failure of Christian prayer. We should all give in our loyalty at once to the Christian society which made visible the results of its faith in joy and health and power and love as Jesus commanded the Church to do. It is a visible Church that we want. The result of the real, inward, spiritual secret of a man's soul becomes quickly visible in look and word and action. If the visible is not beautiful, the secret source is troubled. The inward spiritual life of a society has its concomitant visible result. Let us never be misled by any marvellous glamour thrown over the invisible in the talk of those who are so satisfied with what is unseen and remains impotent, that they have never gone forth to seek the potent vision of the Holy Grail. Every one of us ought to be successor to the disciples our divine Master first sent forth. Are we, by the power of our faith, teaching men to observe all that He commanded?—all?—to observe the life of self-control, the life of mutual love, the life without worldly care, satisfied, like the birds, with enough, asking no more; the healing of the mind, the healing of the body? It is those who have visibly observed all these His commandments by the power of faith who compose the visible Church. It is only as that Church increases that the world will be convinced.' The voice paused. 'My friends, is there an invisible Church? There is a great host of feeble souls who have sought only a partial salvation, who have believed, but only with a flicker of unpractical faith, who have mistaken words for things and

shadows for realities. We dare not think that this indistinguishable host are not within His Church, but we must realise that the world will only be saved by those who make the victory of prayer visible.'

Oriane was lost in the utterance of the Quakeress; when she again became conscious of herself Mr. Pye was apparently gone.

Lunch time came, and she left the place with Mr. W. J. They took a bun and a cup of milk at a restaurant, and had a walk in one of the principal streets. Oriane did not see what was in the shop windows; she was thinking of what she had heard and seen and trying to assimilate some new ideas with her first impressions of the meeting. The old man had bright eyes for everything. He criticised the restaurant; it was not pretty and attractive and airy, as, to his mind, a place ought to be where poor, over-worked shop-girls took their lunch. He stood entranced before a florist's window, and then, noticing some poor children gazing hungrily at the flowers, he bought some and gave them each one. Oriane stood in the shop door and watched the little crowd of gutter children gather from nowhere and surround him in the slop of the winter street. A yellowish gleam in the flying cloud above made the wet pavements and windows glisten, and the childish faces looking up, avaricious of the sensations that colour and fragrance give, caught light from the low, reflecting clouds. But the light in the old man's face was of another sort. The brightness of his black eyes was like a perpetual spring of

youth. He seemed satisfied with delight—his own and the children's.

Two women behind the counter craned their heads for a minute to see through the foliage that screened the window. The elder, a dark, sad person, said, 'That gentleman won't live long—I never see that sort of face but I know.'

Oriane moved out of hearing. She felt annoyed that even a breath of this sort of croaking superstition should be anywhere within the vision of her old friend's radiant face.

They walked back toward the meeting. Oriane was still perplexed and spoke, hardly knowing what she wanted to say.

'If the joy and power of the Christian life is—well, what the people in these meetings seem to find it, ought not one—the world is so destitute in its ignorance—ought one not, in giving flowers to children, for example, to say something to them about the love of God?'

'Perhaps one ought,' said Mr. Ward heartily. 'I never do all that I ought.' Then he added, 'But somehow, the more one learns about God, the more one knows that He fills in the gaps.'

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ARCHÆOLOGIST

AT the meeting that afternoon Oriane felt that she learned a secret which lifted her heart to a new level, from which this life wore a different aspect. She was aware that such a sense of change is a common psychical phenomenon and was therefore not certain that it might not be a mere fancy; while going out she hugged the new experience, fearing it might not last. Mr. Ward dashed off from the entrance, saying he wanted to catch a friend, and Oriane groped about in the crowd, not knowing how to meet him again. While so doing she had a curious experience of realising that what she had gained—she knew not what it was—made her feel more at home in the commonplace of the world: even common people whom she usually despised seemed attractive to her. As the place cleared Mr. Ward came back at a swinging pace, bringing Professor Pye.

'My dear young lady,' said he to Oriane, 'I have just discovered that Nathaniel Pye is to preach this evening. With your permission, we must stay for that. I'll send a wire to Mosford.

Now, Nathaniel, you and this lady are not strangers; she wants a good rest and a good tea—which of your diggings can afford as much?' He was off again to send his telegram.

'I am sharing the quarters of a friend who, happily, does not dig,' said Pye with a twinkle. 'His den is on that account the more habitable. If you are not afraid to trust yourself to Mr. Ward's guidance——'

'He has left me no choice,' she said with a thrill of amusement in her voice. 'Oh yes, I would go contentedly into Nineveh with Mr. Ward—I think you chiefly live there?'

'In Nineveh people neither eat nor rest. They speak, but only on certain occasions of their lives.'

'But it is your duty to imagine the other occasions and reconstruct the conversation for us.'

'I leave that to the historians. For my work there may be no softening touch of the imagination. I live in desert places, sometimes with the Arab goat-herd of to-day, sometimes with the harsh, brick voices of past millenniums.'

'I do not think we have ever had an opportunity of thanking you for so kindly introducing us to Mr. and Mrs. Ward.'

'It is I who am greatly indebted to you for your kindness to them.'

'You must have heard their garbled account of it. I don't know any one who can garble so prettily as Mr. Ward—and be so unconscious of the falseness of the impression he gives. But

indeed I am your chief debtor ; he has taught me more than I can ever tell.'

Professor Pye made no further remark on this subject. He was thinking that it was greatly to her credit that she could appreciate Mr. Ward, but it did not occur to him to suggest this.

'It is not by the Tigris that I am living now. Mine, indeed, is always a nomad life ; I strike my tent all too often, passing from century to century and mound to mound ; but now I want to live in one place and one generation for a time. Are you interest'ed in our spade work ?'

She was perfectly interested while he described to her a pleasure place of summer palaces built by a prince who was thought to have married an Israelite princess and so become a patron of Hebrew lore.

'Who was he ? Who was she ? Where are these palaces ?'

'The tablets relating to him are very imperfect,' he said.

'But you spoke as if you knew.'

'I have made a new reading of the tablets. I have made sure of the man, and I believe I have the site of these lost palaces.'

She had begun the talk supposing that his work was done within the walls of his study, that it was only in thought that he was an habitual traveller ; but as he talked she began to suspect that the love of the East had bitten him more intimately. They were in the almost empty entrance hall when they saw Mr. Ward returning. There was a glow on his face which Oriane had seen before and always

interpreted as a sign of health ; now the croaking of the shop-woman recurred to her mind.

'You must make him rest,' she said to her companion ; 'at his age he must need rest.'

They walked for a few minutes by unknown turnings, went up in a lift, and reached a somewhat stately lodging above a pile of city offices. A fragile man, with white, pointed beard, delicate features, and hands almost transparent, received them without surprise ; and while a staid house-keeper laid a substantial meal upon such corners of tables as were not covered with books and objects of art, Oriane was glad to see that Mr. Pye did not forget to put Mr. Ward into a deep-cushioned armchair and lull him to silence and rest by determinedly engrossing the conversation. Because she had spoken of Nineveh he told her of the fields of ochrea, and of the great gourds on which the green and rosy water-melons grow beside the Tigris in the plains of Aram Naharaim.

No two men could be more unlike than the delicate, almost ghost-like, owner of these rooms and Nathaniel Pye ; but there seemed to be a good understanding between them, for when Mr. Ward dropped into a child-like sleep the one remarked it to the other by the slightest gesture, and the fragile host took Oriane into the next room to look at some pictures hung there.

Professor Pye remained quietly eating pigeons on toast. Oriane could see him, for the rooms were divided by a heavy curtain which hung aside. She resented his good appetite, and then chid herself for such folly when she might have been

looking at a Corot which she would probably never have a chance to see again.

'The nymphs are of no importance here,' said her host. 'They merely indicate the spot on which the sight must focus; then the landscape becomes exquisitely translucent and clear.' Both figures and landscape looked to Oriane blurred and confused with one another. She realised her ignorance of French impressionist painting. Then she saw Mr. Pye coming noiselessly over the floor rugs carrying a plate of eggs in aspic.

'You have had a poor lunch and little breakfast,' he said to Oriane. This room was not so full as the other; he found a small table and made her eat.

Oriane forgave him his own appetite when she perceived that she was still hungry. Their host went back to watch by the old man, and Nathaniel Pye succeeded in the silent transport of a fine old pewter coffee-pot and some Dresden cups.

'I should never expect to find coffee in that thing anywhere else,' said Oriane.

He did not make the obvious retort, but said, 'When I saw you so unexpectedly to-day I thought that I should like to lay the outline of a pressing question of right and wrong before you and ask your opinion. If I remember rightly, you see things without the complexity which often confuses others.'

'I should like to help, but indeed I am the worst person for that sort of thing; I have no talent for ethical problems.'

'That is just what I thought. People who

like to consider nice points of conscience are seldom able to give sound practical advice.'

'But surely your own judgment——'

'Even if it were sound I am too near to see the thing in right proportion. But I will not burden you if——'

She stopped him with a smile. 'Tell me all about it.'

'I do not want to tell you all—only what is essential. I believe I know where these buried palaces are. I have newly read a tablet which I feel sure gives the needed indication. The spot is an almost inaccessible bit of desert, and it would be a most expensive excavation. If I had fifty thousand pounds at my disposal I could make sure; I think I could secure inestimable treasure and some kudos for our archæological school; and, as I think,—but this is my own opinion only—help to establish some facts which would have their bearing on the truth of our sacred records. That is one side of the question. Another side is, that if I have not the money I must begin to proclaim my view as to the locality of this city. After agitating for years, and going through much unnecessary debate, one country or another will break the ground, and by slow degrees the facts I want to bring to light will be established, perhaps by better men than I, perhaps more surely because so much more slowly. Now, the point at issue is this,'—there was a little silence in the room; Mr. Pye was looking at the carpet—'I have a friend who would give me this money for this purpose, as certainly and as easily as he would give me a

night's lodging, if I asked for it. But it would not be possible for me to lay the archæological problem before him in such a way that he could estimate for himself the value or the probability of the results accruing. He might think he made an estimate, but he could not, really; he would have to take my judgment. He is at present devoting his income to causes which both he and I believe are certainly promoting the coming of the Kingdom of God. He intends this money to go to his nearest relative, who has plenty of use for it. Ought I to ask him for it,—while I know that, if I obtain it, it is possible that it may be merely wasted?’

‘Would he give you this fortune as pocket-money if you asked him—merely out of friendship, not asking or caring what you did with it? If he would consider the money well spent in giving you pleasure, that surely gives you a right to use it as you like.’

‘However that be, a man could not ask in that way.’

‘No; I see that—a man could not. There are so many tailor-made creatures nowadays who are constantly introduced to us in books, that we women do not always remember that the real thing does not act from motives of convenience.’

He waited, still studying the carpet, and she felt that she had made an intolerably feeble remark, the more because it might be construed into a fulsome compliment.

It was perhaps unfortunate for him that he had asked her then. The long day among crowds

who were, or appeared to be, taking the Kingdom of Heaven by violence and actually winning their way into the golden vistas of its future, had had an exciting effect on Oriane. She was undergoing the throbbing phase of exaltation which the first sense of life in a new element gives. It seemed to her that she had seen, as never before, the vision of the risen Christ. She felt all the solemn duty and exhilaration of a new vocation, and she very naturally fell into the fallacy of Quietism—if God willed this thing God could provide the means. She remembered now what Mrs. Ward had said about the giving and taking of money, and she felt ashamed of her former self that had not been able to respond to the old lady's sentiment. There was a higher stage to be reached than high-minded begging.

'It is Mr. Ward of whom you speak,' she said. 'Are there not men who would give money for your purpose who would never give it to the missionary efforts Mr. Ward helps? Is it not your duty to appeal to them first?'

'A public appeal would bring no satisfactory result. I believe I could gain ten talents with money which at present may be only gaining five; but that is only my personal opinion. Many religious people would not agree with me, even supposing my digging were successful—and about that, to begin with, there is risk.'

She had no means of knowing what Mr. Ward possessed. The sum required seemed to her likely to equal half his fortune. 'If I were the Comptons,' said she, 'I should think you ought

not to ask.' Then, feeling obliged to give her deepest reason for dissuading him, she said, 'It is not a case of honour—there would be nothing dishonourable in your asking for it; even the Comptons could not say that—but what men who care only about honour might do, it seems to me you, who are trying to live a life of apostolic faith, cannot do.' Lamely and hastily she added, 'Of course I know most religious people make a virtue of getting money that way for good objects; but you—God can send you what He wants you to have; you cannot beg.'

'Thank you,' he said.

He showed no emotion; yet she knew, or thought she knew, that this scheme was the dearest thing on earth to him. Nevertheless she was eager that he should not fall from his high estate by asking for money. He sat beside her, making, at intervals, a few remarks about pictures. They both felt their community of worship and of ideal.

Very soon Mr. Ward woke up cheerily, and the three went out again to the hall of conference.

Oriane found herself wondering whether it would be an effort to her former lover to preach in her presence. When he began to preach she forgot him in his subject as entirely as she forgot herself.

He took as his text the prayer attributed to Moses, 'If thou go not with us, carry us not up hence.' He described in some detail an ancient world in which all men believed in gods who belonged to the land. When men went forth 'on trek' they were forced, he said, to think they

had to leave behind the god they loved. He spoke of the religious necessity which first pushed into speech in such a prayer as the text. The true heart of man must think of his God as too precious and too powerful to be left behind. Simple human affection, attributing itself to God, thought out a deity who loved His people too well to remain behind when they went forward. The preacher described this need developed and spiritualised by the religious experience of centuries and embodied in the young Christian Church, unable to conceive of its Saviour as a mere creature of time and space. His argument was that a true human instinct, seen recurring again and again in the highest emotions of the race, is of itself proof of the Divine response. God must be more than man's highest hopes, and must fulfil such human need. Towards the end Oriane's attention turned to a muse on what had been said. Then she was aware of hearing him say, 'The human need to-day is not a Christ that is a mere human ideal—everything, everywhere, that a man may chance to desiderate, nothing that he does not naturally admire. Our ideas mould us. If we mould them, if no other hand be laid upon them to do violence to our puny dreams and coerce them into grandeur, it is ill for us. It is a transcendental Christ, the personal Jesus whom we require—one who, going with us, will offer resistance to our wishes and make us greater than we are. We cannot hark back to the past for any final letter or final institute. All history shows that when a religion begins to look back-

ward to its golden day it is decadent. Yet let us not go into a future unless He goes with us—Jesus of Nazareth, who will as surely contradict our ideals as He contradicted the ideals of His time.'

Oriane's enthusiasm over this utterance was heightened by that of the congregation about her more than she was at all aware of. The speaker's extremely quiet manner led her to suppose that she was forming an independent opinion. She thought she had found in this doctrine a clue to all the mazes of Christian dogma.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE NIGHT RIDE

THE heart is apt to be light when a crowd in heartfelt chorus pours forth its doxology. Till the meeting was over Oriane had felt reckless about the return journey to Mosford ; but she was immediately forced to recognise that she was not accustomed to driving in the dark. Mr. Ward had no fears ; it had not occurred to him that they could not speed home as easily now as in the daylight, and Oriane saw nothing to be gained by distressing him. As is so common in an English winter, the cloud wrack which obscured the sun had vanished along with the light and warmth of day, and the moon, dimmed by the city smoke, hung clear, giving promise of all her light on the country roads. But this was not enough to satisfy Oriane's prudence. She had realised that Mr. Ward ought to be cared for rather than leaned upon. She tried to hire a chauffeur at the garage, but the occasion was unfortunate ; no trustworthy man was available that night. She looked into the street, troubled now, not knowing in the least where courage ended and foolhardiness began.

Then she spoke guardedly to Mr. Ward, who was patiently awaiting her pleasure.

'You are very tired—shall we stay all night at the "Queen's"?''

He looked down with a smile. 'This benighted country of yours—incredible as it seems—affords us no means of telegraphing until morning. Alack, that in my old age I should ever have to come to such a backwoods settlement—no telegraph office open, and not one telephone wire to Mosford!'

'When you wired, did you say we should come?'

'I never thought of anything else; so now, unless it is impossible, we ought to go. Your aunt and my wife will be hunting the roads for our scattered remains if we don't turn up.'

'It is a benighted country, I admit.' She looked about, not knowing where to turn or whom to ask.

As they stood in colloquy the old man did not need to make the gracious droop of head and shoulders that was his natural attitude in speaking to women. Oriane stood straight and tall, like a youth ready for some athletic game. Her long fur-lined coat, open and thrown back, made a rich frame for the firm, rounded curves of her slender figure. Against the sable of the collar her golden hair shone in the lamplight. Her fair face was crowned only by a small hat of folded cloth. All that she wore was brown, except the long, white veil she absently held in her hand. The deep rose bloom of her fair cheek, the bright-

ness of her eye, spoke the stir of emotion within. Some one who was then approaching did not fail to observe every line and tint of the picture she made.

Down a long passage between the hotel and the garage she saw an ungainly figure coming at a fast, business-like trot, and she recognised the preacher. Her heart leaped. It was a moment when she, usually so independent, was ready to appreciate a guardian oversight.

'Ah, I am in time. I was not sure where to look for you first. I believe you said that you had no servant with you?'

'I am taking care of her,' said Mr. Ward.

'I came to ask——' He hesitated and looked at Oriane.

She moved a little back and briefly laid the situation before him. His solution of the difficulty took her quite by surprise. 'Will you be so kind as to take me with you? Mrs. Ward has frequently invited me, and to-night—perhaps I may as well be straightforward—I do not think you ought to go alone with the dear old man. Should any difficulty occur, he ought not to exert himself.'

Oriane felt glad, but at the same moment incredulous. The man she was speaking with had presented himself to her almost entirely as mind; it had not occurred to her that he could be of any muscular use. She had pictured him as living exclusively in libraries and pulpits. In that moment he became real to her as he had not been real to her during all the years of their separation.

'Are you willing to commit yourself to my

driving?' she asked. 'I never drove in the dark except the last few miles into Mosford, where I know every inch of the road.'

'I don't think you will find it difficult. There will be no traffic, and we need not hurry.' He added, 'If you cannot manage it, I can.'

'Can you?' she said. 'Can you really?'

'Oh, I do not know your car. I do not want to interfere unless at your bidding; but such things have been known as full stops on a motor drive, and in that case you would need help.'

Oriane could not get over her surprise. 'You don't,' she murmured faintly—'you don't motor in Babylon, do you?'

He smiled at last. 'Do you not know that the next step of the desert is to combine the virtues of the camel and motor? I have been broken in to both, and I am thinking of taking out a patent for their combination.'

'The next thing you will tell me is that you can wield a spade and pickaxe; but I should not believe you, for I know that the only thing you ever do is to stand under an umbrella and give orders to your myrmidons.'

She was in her happiest humour, and together they wrapped the rugs about Mr. Ward in the back seat. Oriane cautiously drove the car out of the great, damp, smoky town; and soon the leafy district of Arden lay around them.

Oriane stopped to investigate an unlawful click. They both got out, while Mr. Ward leaned over, pleasantly jeering at their anxiety.

'The number of queer sounds that a machine

can make without doing itself or anybody else any harm is a thing to make one pensive,' he said. 'Personally, I think that the little demons which don't inhabit men any more get into machines and amuse themselves by chuckling at odd times. Do one of your incantations for us, Nathaniel, my boy. Is it the *shedu*, or the *ekimmu*, or the *utukku*?' He clicked out the names almost as a machine talks.

'And to think,' went on the old man, as he bent over Oriane while she examined a back wheel—'to think that we are in Arden! And it isn't "as you like it," but as the motor demon likes it. "When we were at home we were in a better place, but travellers must be content."'

They could not discover that the demon was doing any mischief. They took their seats again. The night stretched fair before them under a dome of burnished silver sprigged with faint constellations, lit by Dian's lamp of pearl. The country they were traversing was glorified by verse and story, as well as by its present physical beauty.

'You have had a long day; are you tired?' the Professor asked Oriane.

'Not at all. I never felt fresher in my life; and I'm not afraid of driving now.'

Then it occurred to her that, as he was a hard-working man, and had always as many engagements as he could perform, he had probably given them his protection at some inconvenience. With an access of gratitude she suggested this to him.

'Yes,' he said, 'there are several other things that I ought to have done if I ought not to have

done this ; but——' He paused, and then said deliberately, ' Providence has given me some hours of perfect joy ; I had no reason to expect that such delight would ever be mine.'

Oriane understood these quiet words to be a declaration of his continued regard for her. She made no reply. She had now a sense of perfect security as to his intentions ; it only remained for her to estimate her own will in the matter. For the first time she acknowledged to herself how strong her sympathy for him had always been, how whole-hearted was her present respect and liking. Her emotions began to blossom out into happiness, and her imagination was filled with involuntary images of beauty. She did not feel the slightest desire to say anything, or that he should tell her more than was already told. The joy of motion in the pure night air, the beauty of the way, enthralled her. Whether in leafy lane or in the open by the silver river, whether passing by the battlements of ancient story or by the quiet cottages where domestic peace lay sleeping, Oriane drove on, more than content with the luxury of silent understanding.

The winter night sped past them as they went ; and Oriane never thought that its silver moments, which (as he said) were pure joy, were few and to be treasured as a miser treasures gold. It seemed to her rather that the joy of a lifetime, nay, of immortality, had just begun ; that what was so heavenly a gift had been given after the manner of heaven, without measure or stint.

Mosford was safely reached. As Mr. Ward

had foretold, his wife's lamp was burning brightly, and she herself looking out for his return. Oriane had the pleasure of seeing the happy old man enter his own door with springing steps.

Miss Kennedy's stables were upon a side street, and, after waking up the groom to receive the car, Mr. Pye walked round to the house door with Oriane.

'We shall see you to-morrow,' she said.

'No; I have no choice; I must go by the early train.' Then he spoke again in that same deliberate tone that told her his heart was speaking. 'I have had an untold pleasure—more than I ever hoped for. It will always be a golden memory—the happiest memory of my life.'

He went away slowly. Oriane stood, holding her latchkey, looking out from the jasmine-covered porch, looking at heaps of leafless snow-berry bushes translucent with the level light of the setting moon. All her life afterwards she disliked to see the moon set.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A SOLITARY

WHILE Oriane busied herself about the house and garden during the next days, and volunteered little detailed information of the day at Birmingham, the aunt waited. She was aware that Mr. Pye had preached the sermon that ended the conference, that he had been more or less in their company during the day, that he had come to Mosford in Oriane's car.

'Why don't you ask me about the meetings?' said Oriane at last. 'I don't exactly like to launch out into any description of them, because I can't get my various feelings and ideas sorted into order. If one tries to find expression for the highest one can understand, and in the same breath speak about the new Education Bill and the pleasure of meeting distinguished and interesting men—when one tries to talk of all these things at once, it seems to belittle the highest theme; it seems to accuse oneself of shallowness.'

'Let us take them one at a time,' said Miss Kennedy. 'I should like so much to know your impressions of the religious aspect of the meetings.'

'The meetings hadn't any aspect except a religious one,' said Oriane; 'but if I tell you that I seemed to get hold of something at them which I never saw, or even dreamed of, before, and which has made everything seem of more vital importance and more sacred, I am afraid that you will think that I only imagined the religious aspect because I was excited and delighted in other ways. I have very nearly become a Liberal; I am not at all sure I shall not begin lecturing in favour of the new Education Bill. I did not hear a single word said about politics or the Education Bill; but what I saw of the people who advocate it has made me consider the question. I am beginning to realise the Liberal point of view. Then when I go on and confess to you that I was very much flattered by Professor Pye's kindness to me, and also by finding that he had a quiet way of talking to me as if I was better able to understand some of the points that specially interest him than others are—that flattered me. I say it quite openly—I expand with vanity when I think of it. Therefore I feel convinced that if I try to tell you what was really more important—what I do not in the least confound with these other things myself—that after we had sat all day at the conference, and at the end old Mr. Ward got up just in his own seat and said a few words about what the love of God meant to him—then I knew for the first time that if I had ever worshipped anything before, it was for me only an idol, and that if I should never again see the sunshine or feel an hour of pleasure, life would still be inexpressibly rich and

well worth living—I know that you will think that all this impression was in some way mixed up with the breeze of new political ideas and the glow of gratified vanity.'

Miss Kennedy had been thinking how little vanity Oriane had. She looked with critical eye at her as she stood in the centre of the white drawing-room. The pure white evening-gown which she wore was not of more delicate tint and texture than the shoulders and arms that it displayed; the pink rose in the golden hair was not brighter than the rosy cheek. Had she realised her own claims to attention—her singular freshness and beauty, combined with a mental poise which most women only attain with the loss of their freshness—she could not have been in the least surprised, nor much gratified, by any adoration that a man could offer—at least so the aunt thought. She said, 'After all, everything that we call trivial, or relatively trivial—the common things of life—must be a sacrament, must they not? I think the Bishop said that in his last confirmation address, didn't he?'

'Whenever you say anything that you have really thought out, you try to make me believe we heard it from a bishop or somebody else,' replied Oriane.

There was, in fact, one very strong resemblance between the aunt and niece, a common inheritance, perhaps developed by companionship. It consisted, not so much in shyness as in an instinct of extreme reserve in purely personal matters. Few who did not know them well suspected the strength and

tenacity of this reserve, and neither woman was entirely sure of its extent in the other. Just now Miss Kennedy did not know whether Oriane was in love with Nathaniel Pye or not, and Oriane was aware that she had never been sure how much her aunt really cared for an exclusive Church doctrine or her political party.

Miss Kennedy went on, 'I am not sure that you can divide things as clearly as you say; not because I think you are likely to confuse them as much as most people do, but because I doubt whether there is any division, just because we cannot get at what is spiritual except through what is material. I doubt if our impulse to distinguish between them is as reverent as we are inclined to suppose—to distinguish, for example, between religious impressions and impressions that certain people or sets of people make on us.'

'You are, no doubt, right,' said Oriane, looking out of the window.

'The inanity of the remark is atoned for by the absent expression of your eyes,' said her aunt.

Oriane laughed. 'But I want to ask you, did you ever realise that, while we hear so much talk about schismatic sects, all those sects can, despite their differences, join each other in the Holy Communion, and that they invite us to join with them while holding our own views. Mr. Ward tells me our clergy are invited to preach in their pulpits, but cannot; we are invited to join in their worship, but we will not. For such occasional union they do not demand of each other or of us any change of belief or practice, but

simply to cross, for the time, the barriers that exist. This has made a great impression on my mind. Unity in diversity is nature's law. Compared with it, the idea of external conformity seems to me so artificial, so paltry. It would appear that we who refuse to say our prayers with them are the only schismatics.'

'Have you travelled so far?' asked her aunt in astonishment.

'Oh,' said Oriane hastily, 'I do not say yet that I have travelled at all. I am only looking over the garden wall and telling you what is outside; but I feel that I should like to begin telling our own set of people what I see.'

'If it is not really against your conscience, I should personally be much obliged to you if you would refrain from addressing audiences this year. By next year you will have made up your mind and must do what you think it your duty to do. Ethel would grieve herself into an illness; Willie would laugh and sketch you with your mouth open; the Browns would attack you with umbrellas; you cannot be quite sure that it is your duty to hurt them so deeply by telling the truth until your new principles are a little older.'

'Would it hurt you, my beautiful?' asked Oriane with intense curiosity. 'Do you care which side I am on?'

'It could not hurt me,' said the aunt; 'for although at present I am extremely loyal to my party, your new mission would necessarily begin at home; until you had convinced me you would

not go further, and after you had convinced me I should agree with you.'

Oriane laughed. 'You are such a dear worm!' she cried. 'I never can get you all out from underground.'

In all this Oriane betrayed nothing of the storm that was raging in her heart. She knew that she had freighted one hope with all possibilities of earthly good, and that the frail barque had in some way suffered wreck. He had said that those hours with her would be his happiest memory. The word 'memory' echoed in her heart; it held no hope. More than once in those days, when she found herself alone, she stretched her arms above her head as if to relieve a sense of suffocation, and said audibly, 'How terrible to be a woman!' It seemed to her that she could face any open grief that she could understand and estimate more easily than this inexpressible desire to question him and explain herself. Whatever he had or had not meant to impart to her, he had given her no right to question or protest. She supposed that some women in her case would have feebly sought occasion to write notes to him on trifling matters, saying smooth things to give him further opportunity. She had no such low opinion of him or of herself. She believed that a sensible man could make his own opportunity. If he did not speak, he must have good reason for silence.

She knew him well enough now to understand how very deeply he could be hurt by an offence that many men would easily recover from.

Having been hurt at first, and shrinking from all that would reopen the wound, how could he have foreseen that she, of her own free will, would wander into his path of life? She did not blame him if meantime he had forged some fetter for himself in a way of life which he could not share with her.

Her greatest pain seemed to her to be, not her lonely fate, but that the strongest emotion of her life found no place for expression. His whole manner had made her think that he did not suppose for a moment that he commanded her interest, still less her affection. She could not rejoice, as many women would have done, that she had kept her secret. Again and again she said to herself, 'If he had only questioned me by look or word, if I could only let him know, just for once, that this sorrow is mine more than his, I should be content.'

Whatever the cause of his present attitude, she was sure that the cruelty, the wickedness from which she suffered, were not his, but bound up in those principles and habits of thought which so far had been her environment. The revolt of her spirit was silent and intense.

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BOOK VI
ETHEL'S SUCCESS



CHAPTER XXXIV

A HOUND ON THE TRACK

So great, so very great, is the power of whole-hearted perseverance on the part of one human being in appealing to the better mind of any community, that, by the time a month had passed, Ethel had created a new soul of generosity and love among the religious women of Mosford. Miss Brown herself had made cheerful music for Mrs. Cole's mothers' meeting, and played the accompaniment when Mrs. Cole sang to the applause of the Anglican mothers. Lady Sarum had given a tea to the children of Mosford, and Mrs. Cole had had the presentation of half the tickets, while Simmons had helped Ethel to cut up the cake.

Old Mr. Ward was as happy as a king, not only because he thought a better day was dawning in his nephew's parish, but because Ethel's children were constantly in his company.

No news came to Mosford of Nathaniel Pye. Oriane ceased to upbraid herself for thinking of him; she succeeded better in turning her mind away from the personal issue to an increasing

interest in his work. She supplied herself with books that bore upon it. Each indication that Ethel was trying to be more friendly to her relatives, and to steer a course that must meet their approval, gave Oriane a sense of stronger and stronger distaste for her friendship. That Mr. Ward should take Ethel's golden repentance so kindly made her feel a little jealous; Oriane had begun to be very fond of the old man, and to regard him as her special friend. Then came an invitation to pay a long visit to some relatives in the north, and Oriane felt the more glad to avail herself of it because she was out of gear with her surroundings.

Oriane went to Dunachan Castle, where there was a large house-party. She took her aunt's maid with her, a concession to fashion, for she never allowed a servant to touch her hair and would have preferred to travel alone. She shot some poor little live things with great gusto; she golfed very badly, but was very keen on it; she tramped over grey moors, feeling a wild joy in the frosty wind. The one thing she found herself quite unable to do was to pretend that a life of pleasure and leisure was a respectable form of existence for the able-bodied. She knew she was expected to amuse one or two quite nice men who had no further aim in life than amusement; she found herself taciturn and scornful of their busy idleness. She had the bad 'ick to be suddenly and greatly admired by an oldish man with lots of money and only a vague connection with borax. She was kind to him because he was one of the

few who did not talk party politics ; she thought he made an ill return. She listened in silence to all the rabid Tory abuse of opponents, and wondered how to sift out the truth that must be in it. While she rejoiced in the Scotch winter and the Dunachan moor, she spent what time she had to herself in reading archæology. She was making up her mind that she could not be happy until Mr. Pye had the money he wanted for his excavations, and wondered if it was in her power to lift any stone under which it might be found. One day, Sir Somebody Borax made some remark to her about her personal beauty and the grace of her carriage, and Oriane gathered together Miss Kennedy's maid and her few possessions and went back to Mosford.

Three weeks had passed. She said she had had a delightful visit. For some days she kept Miss Kennedy laughing as she depicted with graphic humour such amusing situations as she had seen. Then one evening, as she took her work-basket in her hand and was going upstairs for the night, she said :

‘ I am sadly afraid, auntie, that I was what they call “really converted” at those meetings I went to with Mr. Ward. I can't somehow see things as I used to take for granted that they were, and as all our people see them. It's rather a misfortune, but, do my best, I cannot help being convinced that most of our friends look at things through the wrong end of a telescope. Then, too, I feel as though all the people we know could be classed and paired, or put into different boxes ;

but there is no box for me, and I don't pair with anybody; I am left out. Yet I can't be at all good, for I feel so superior that I do not want their society.'

'It doesn't sound like what the good books call "conversion,"' said Miss Kennedy.

'No; that is exactly why I am afraid it is terribly real. I don't want to go away and be a hospital nurse, or a ministering angel to any set of people, or to give jam to the poor, and I'm quite determined to give up my class in Sunday School. I think it's very right to do those things, but just now for me they don't go deep enough or far enough to touch either the terrible pain or the terrible joy of life.'

'So far your grace seems rather negative,' said Miss Kennedy.

'Good and evil seem to me so much more real than ever before, and so terribly different from one another; and the good, you know, is so much greater that if people would only bask in it and take it in and grow in it, they would set about the reform of the whole of life in a different way. They would go about it as gently and effectually as the mushrooms when they lift up stones. Just now we are all running about like ants, and the stones are not rolled away.'

'Ah,' said Miss Kennedy, and the twinkle softened in her eyes.

'I am so little permeated with the sunshine that I must just bask for a good while yet.'

'St. Paul went into the land of sunshine,' said Miss Kennedy.

'Of course I—I am a very small person indeed, and I think the smaller you are, the longer you need the sunshine of Arabia,' said Oriane.

She went away; and the aunt knelt by herself and read psalm after psalm of thanksgiving, for she believed that Oriane had received the true vocation.

Finding that the Wards were interested in every side of human life, Oriane told them about her visit, told it without a comment—all about the Dunachan family, their ancestors and their ghosts, their economies, their extravagance, their rudeness and their sterling worth, their habits and their politics, their servants and their animals, and the habits and notions of their friends.

The old lady asked several astute questions about the order of the household, and how often the servants got out to church on Sundays; and she said she thought Lady Dunachan must be a godly woman and a very nice relation for Oriane to have. When she heard that there was a little blind boy in the Dunachan family, she took him to her motherly heart, blessed him audibly, and was sure that in some way a great happiness would befall him to make up for his pain.

Mr. Ward had the Scotch land laws on his mind. He wanted to know how the law at present worked on the Dunachan estate, what change, if any, would really make things better for landlord and tenant.

'This Dunachan,' he said, 'would seem to be a fair-minded fellow—what does he think about it, now?'

Oriane marvelled. 'It does not appear to me that it makes the least difference what he thinks,' she said. 'He thinks just what his fathers and his neighbours and his party and his class think. To my mind that means that he does not think at all; he just hunts in a pack, as the hounds do. What use are such a man's opinions except to swell the bay of the pack?'

'With a variation,' said Mr. Ward. 'Now, I think if you talked to Lord Dunachan long enough, you'd find that there was a personal factor in his opinion; and it's that, however small it is, that's worth getting at. You would probably see more sense in the Tory contention if you got down to the real man. I believe in getting down to hard facts. You'll always find the working of the Lord behind facts. I don't mean masses or classes of facts; they're good enough in their way, but it's awfully easy to go wrong in totting them up. The best way to check them is to get back to the individual and have a good, long friendly chat with him. Get at him deeper down than the balderdash of his set. Did you try that, now, Miss Oriane? Did you get at anything he really thought for himself?'

'No,' said Oriane slowly. 'You see, I am still rather young, Mr. Ward, and very ignorant, so that if I had begun to talk to him seriously I should have been sure to pour forth volleys of my own opinions at him and omit to listen to what he said—it is the way of ignorance.'

'Eh, but you've come a bit further than that,' said he, 'for, you see, you know a little something

about your own weakness. But I'll not say,' he added, 'but what I might have come to logger-heads with him myself.'

'I haven't told you all the things I thought about them,' said Oriane; 'but I may now say, in a general way, that, although I enjoyed myself very much, I hated some of them and despised the others, and didn't love any one except Lady Dunachan and the dogs. The man I really liked best used sometimes to get drunk at nights—in his own room, you know; nobody was supposed to know—and then he was always horribly sorry the next day at tea-time; and every one felt horribly sorry for him, but was too polite to show it.'

'I'm glad you liked him,' said Mr. Ward, 'for very likely he's going into the Kingdom before us.'

'Oh, I wish,' cried Oriane with sudden feeling, 'that you had been there to tell him that! You see,' she said, trying to laugh at herself, 'I felt in a dull sort of way that that was what was needed to put him on his feet.'

The old man went out to the door to fetch Oriane's overcoat and umbrella, for the day was stormy. Mrs. Ward made a sign to her that she would like to say a word in confidence.

'You will excuse me asking you something, my dear; I would not like the suspicion to enter my husband's mind if it is unfounded.' Then she asked quietly, 'Have you any reason to think that Ethel Compton could in any way have found out that we have money to leave?'

Oriane could not think what she ought to say. It was evident that the old man had not told his wife what Ethel had overheard. If he had not, he must have the strongest reasons for silence. And she, what right had she to tell what he had not told and what she had promised Ethel never to refer to in any way? But something hurt her.

'Surely, Mrs. Ward, you don't think I broke my promise to you?'

'Oh no, my dear; I know you did not. But of course there are a few people in Canada who know about our affairs, and one never knows how such rumour may come round.'

'There is no such rumour in Mosford,' said Oriane. 'My aunt would have heard it.'

'But I think I gather from your silence that you are not sure that Ethel does not suspect?'

'Then judge my silence as you will, dear Mrs. Ward; for have I not sworn never to let myself speak or think of this matter.'

Oriane walked half-way home in a spring storm; then she suddenly put down her umbrella and let the rain beat upon her face as she strode on fiercely. Another thought had come to her—what if Ethel had never told the old man, and had lied to her in order to buy her silence? It was not in Oriane's nature to conceive of anything half-way between truth and a lie.

CHAPTER XXXV

VICTORY IN SIGHT

FOR a little while Ethel was happy in the apparent success of her reconciling activity. Every step she had taken had augmented her faith in her own course of action. Not only had she done nothing but what was right, but the very doing of it had revealed how wrong it would have been to leave so good a work undone. Her husband admitted this and approved; Mr. and Mrs. Ward were deeply pleased.

Ethel explained to them all how far-reaching was the work she had accomplished, because, as she said, the wife and mother in every home, Anglican or Dissenting, was now in a position to see the best, and not the worst, of the other side, and her kindly feeling would soon be communicated to her husband and children. But, in truth, Ethel was in this beginning to do more than even she said or dreamed of. Any thoughtful observer must be aware that the inward sore of our Christianity, especially in rural life, is the partisan rancour of pious women, which hides its ugly deformity under the cloak of principle. Women

who in every other respect are graceful and gracious, harbour the twin demons of wilful ignorance of, and hostility to, their neighbours in the very depths of their religious life. In the atmosphere of this rancour sons are nurtured and husbands live out their domestic life; and when in the larger life of the world these partly realise its absurdity, they are still deeply influenced by it in their serious moments. The circle of circumstance in cause and effect frees the woman from the greatest blame while she remains the cause of the deepest mischief, for all the food of her hatreds she commonly gets from the very men who are afterwards pulled and pushed by her hatreds from the path of justice. It is the alchemy of the religious passion which transforms his more idle prejudices into the intensity of her determined ignorance and party feeling; but unless we are prepared to admit that sustained rancour is a Christian virtue, we cannot suppose that the religion that thus lends itself to be exploited is more than partially or nominally Christian.

Women of Ethel's type have a strange, subconscious cleverness in estimating another's weakness by their own, and thus choosing the best means to accomplish anything on which their hearts are set. The few heart-felt words of enlightenment which she was now continually saying to every woman of her acquaintance were gradually revealing to the best of them the true nature of their own blindness. The outward reconciliation she had effected was but an earnest of the deeper and, in a sense, eternal work she was inaugurating;

but it dazzled her eye, and she almost thought her battle was won, until she discovered that Mr. Ward regarded all that she had done as a mere prelude.

A new Education Bill, dealing with religious teaching in the schools, was brought before Parliament, and the controversy which had long engaged every religious party in the nation gathered to another head. As all political parties were trying to make capital out of the new bill, the battle raged more bitterly than ever. There was hardly a newspaper, religious or secular, that was not engaged in the application of fresh irritants. On each side every one was assured that the bitterness and injustice and evil-doing were all on the other side, that the other side had no real grievance, their imaginary grievance being put into their heads by merely wicked politicians.

Mr. Ward was greatly distressed by the threat, which rose louder and louder from a growing section of practical people, that as Christians could not agree, Christianity would have to be excluded from the school curriculum. The old man was ready to weep when he spoke of this possibility. He was anxious that each religious party should yield part of their supposed rights in order to secure Christian teaching for the children of the nation.

'Poor lambs,' said he; 'what have they done that the teachers to whom they look all day long should not make them familiar with the beautiful stories of the Gospels?'

The matter was a supreme interest to his mind,

and Ethel ruefully began to think that if Cumnor could not be brought to agree with him in the desire for compromise, he would be more likely to endow some scheme of Bible education with his money than to leave it to a man who, as he thought, was, with others of both parties, provoking a great national disaster. Ethel was satisfied that Mr. Ward's age and intensity of feeling combined to make it quite impossible for her by any persuasion to modify his views.

When she entirely realised this she fell for the time into something of that mental distress and physical prostration which had accompanied her first knowledge of his wealth. For a few days she could hardly look at her husband or children without an almost frantic compassion; so near, so very near, had the source of all earthly blessings come to them, that the thought of their continued poverty and narrow, grinding life wrung her heart. Her eyeballs burned; her thoughts were tumultuous and feverish. She sought relief in almost constant prayer, silently entreating Heaven to come to her aid. She did not now repeat her first perplexity and indecision; having made up her mind that her course so far had been right, her only question was how to continue it successfully.

All the religious instruction of her own life had been on the lines of the Anglican doctrine which Mr. Ward and his friends proposed to banish from the very schools built and long supported for the purpose of giving it, and she could only recoil with horror from the thought.

'But,' said Mr. Ward to her, 'why do you

Anglicans not take in hand the support of schools where you could teach what you like?'

'And pay our rates for the Government schools too?' cried Ethel.

'Greater sacrifices than that have been known for a religious cause,' said Mr. Ward.

Ethel became voluble about the sacrifices of Church people in all directions, but she soon saw that an old man who lived with the simplicity of a peasant while in command of a large income was not likely to be impressed by her stories.

It was after this conversation that Ethel's fit of depression came. She was in a slough of despond, but so golden was the country she desired to win that she did not struggle out on the side on which she got in, but reached the opposite side.

One day Ethel said, 'You know, Cumnor, there is something about this education battle that you are fighting that I cannot quite understand. Why is it as bad to teach children part of the truth as to teach them falsehood—provided that they are not taught that the part is the whole?'

'To what do you refer?' he asked. He could not conceive she meant what she seemed to say.

'Well, of course I have always assumed we were entirely in the right; but when the Browns and you were talking the other day, it seemed to be understood that if the Dissenters will not allow us to teach the children the Gospel stories plus the Catechism, we with equal reason object to our children being taught the Gospel stories without the Catechism. Now, I can't quite see that. We admit that our Catechism is

in their opinion positive error; but we don't consider the Gospel stories they want to teach to be positive error. Why do you contend that it is no worse for them in Mosford if we teach their children the Catechism than it would be for us if they taught our children the parables and miracles?'

John Compton simply stared at his wife. 'My dear Ethel, we surely do not need to go over the whole ground of this tiresome controversy together!'

'Well, I suppose, dear, it is tiresome of me to ask you questions. Still, as we are all saying that we want to be just, I should be sorry to find any trace of injustice on our side, because it must tell against the Church more than any blow struck at her from without.'

'Whatever may be said about our contention, it is clear to me that it is just. If I were an atheist or a Jew, I should yet be able to see that a trust deed ought to be respected, and that one party in the nation ought not to thrust its views of religion upon the rest.'

'But I am just asking you what private views they would thrust upon us by teaching half of what we now teach and no more. The trust deeds is a separate question.'

The next day, however, Ethel found the proof-sheets of the page Compton had written for the next month's parish magazine. He was out; she had gone to his study table to leave some accounts for his inspection. When she read it a tremor seized her, and she was obliged to sit down in his

chair and hold her head in both hands until she had steadied herself a little.

The page ran : 'The Government's education proposals threaten the foundations of our national life and character. All who watch the political movements of the day are aware that the members of the new Government are the bitter enemies of the Church. The Bill they have put forward is deliberately aimed at the Church of England, and seeks to force upon the whole country the teaching of the Nonconformist religion, and without regard to the teacher's fitness. It need only be pointed out that their proposals would enable an atheist to be appointed head teacher of our boys' school, a Roman Catholic of our girls' school, and a Baptist of our infants' school. This Bill is being urged on by the Nonconformists, not with a desire to help education, but to cripple the Church.'

Poor Ethel could read no further. 'What shall I do?' she moaned. 'Oh, what shall I do? He will certainly be disinherited for this. Oh, my poor husband! my poor children!'

She looked again at the sheet, and found, among other items of parish information, a paragraph explaining that the vicar had felt obliged to refuse to take the chair or speak at a Temperance meeting on non-sectarian lines, and to avoid misunderstanding he thought it right to state that his views on Temperance were unaltered, but that it was impossible for him to co-operate with the Nonconformists as long as they were the would-be robbers of the Church.

When Cumnor came it happened that he was not alone. Miss Brown came in with him to get some literature pertaining to the Girls' Friendly Society. Cumnor opened his study door and then stopped suddenly in surprise and alarm. Ethel had sunk upon the hearthrug and was weeping bitterly. His heart stood still; nothing less than dire misfortune to one of the children appeared to him to account for such indulgence in grief. He staggered forward with incoherent questions and lifted her to her feet.

Ethel had no desire to exhibit her emotion. Her tears were genuine, and she made some dignified effort to check them and to hide their traces.

'No; it isn't the children; it is only that what you have written for the magazine hurts me so. Some way or other it just breaks my heart. I am sure it is not true or charitable; and oh, Cumnor,'—and again her tears flowed—'I cannot bear to think that you—you of all people—should sin so publicly against truth and love.'

'My dear! my dear!' cried Cumnor, too amazed to remember what he had written, 'I would not for the world print anything that could distress you thus.'

'Dear Anna! don't go away,' cried Ethel. 'I am ashamed that you should find me giving way in this weak fashion, but stay and tell us what you think, for I am not as clever as either of you, and you can help us.'

There are few psychological facts more curious than the swift unerring instinct with which a

excitable woman lays hold of and uses an accidental circumstance to accomplish her purpose. With the swiftness of vision which might almost be called second sight, Ethel foresaw the conversation she was about to have with her husband, and without any train of conscious reasoning she was sure that if Miss Brown were present she would side with him, and that alone would tend to bring him round to his wife's side.

'I can't imagine what offends you,' said Cumnor. He looked about for the leaflet which he had not yet corrected, but it was folded tight in Ethel's hand.

'What have you been writing, Mr. Compton?' asked Miss Brown. 'No attack, I hope, on the Methodists? for Ethel has just persuaded me into eating such an enormous piece of humble-pie for my truculence to them, that I assure you I never want to hear them mentioned again.'

'Dearest,' said Compton to his wife, 'you are looking very ill. Do sit down. You surely are not at variance with what I wrote about the Education Bill?'

'It would be impossible for you to characterise that too strongly,' muttered Miss Brown.

'Don't, Anna!' said Ethel reproachfully. 'Don't! It hurts me so when you talk in that way; because, after all, we are women, and we ought to be loving and gentle even if it is necessary for men to go out to battle.'

Miss Brown was touched, as was natural, by Ethel's tears. 'She really is turning into a saint,' she said to herself; but sainthood in

its first stages, she reflected, was sometimes extravagant.

'Well, Ethel,' said Compton, 'let us hear.'

'You say,' wept Ethel, 'that the new Bill is aimed against the Church—"aimed."'

'Well, so it is. Every Bill is aimed at abolishing some abuse, and this is aimed at abolishing the national power of the Church—it is a first step.'

Miss Brown chimed in. 'It is a first step—and a pretty big one.'

'Then you say that the members of the new Government are the enemies of the Church: but most of them are Churchmen.'

'A wolf in sheep's clothing is the worst kind of wolf. The Bill is inimical to the Church; no one except an enemy could help to bring it in.'

'Oh, my dear,' cried Ethel, 'I cannot tell you how it hurts me to hear you speak so.' Ethel had ceased to weep now. Her cheeks were burning; her eyes were glowing; her voice was high and clear; her mind was marvellously clear. She looked like a woman either mad or inspired. 'You might as well say those who promote an Eight Hours Bill for miners are the enemies of the colliery owners; you might as well say that those who believe in regulating public-houses more strictly are enemies of the brewers. Are you willing to say that in your magazine? You would not dare to say that, therefore you ought not to say this! You cannot honestly say anything against those who bring in this Bill except that they differ from us as to what is good for education.'

In her husband's expression astonishment was only less than tender concern.

Ethel went on. 'O Cumnor, admit that what I am saying is reasonable! Promise to alter these phrases! I can't bear to think that in future years you may look back to this time and read over such remarks as these with bitter regret that you flourished a sword when you ought to have sought peace.'

'I wrote the paragraph very carefully,' he said, 'and I was not alone in approving of it. Briggs of Ducklinghoe and my friend Dinsmore have both seen it, and agreed to put virtually the same thing in their magazines.'

When Miss Brown heard this she was confirmed in her belief that the vicar was entirely in the right, but she regarded Ethel's passionate protest with respect almost mingled with awe.

'You are awfully charitable, Ethel,' she said. 'I really think you have the tenderest heart of any woman I know. But all the same, my dear, the clergy ought to let their people know that the present Government are a pack of canting hypocrites, and that they only got into office by promising the Dissenters to attack us. To do a thing like that is just like selling one's soul to the devil.'

'Nay, I would not go as far as that,' said Cumnor smiling. 'Their intentions are so openly inimical to us that I hardly think we need add the charge of hypocrisy.'

'But they pretend it's all in the cause of education—that's what I call hypocrisy,' said Miss

Brown. 'Indeed, Ethel, if you read *Church Chimes* you would know that Mr. Compton has understated the case.'

Compton could not honestly feel he had understated the case. He had, indeed, intended to state it accurately but very forcibly. 'Perhaps I have said a little too much,' he said.

'I think it's dreadful what you say about the atheist and the Roman Catholic and the Baptist. Can you seriously think for a moment that any decent set of school managers would make the arrangement you picture, unless indeed under the almost impossible condition of those candidates being greatly superior, both in character and attainments, to any others before them? How often have you told me that people do not carry the practice of any rule to a logical issue! And then,' Ethel went on, 'here at the end you advertise the fact that you have refused to take the chair at that Temperance meeting. If that is true, Cumnor, I think we ought to hide it for very shame instead of proclaiming it. How awful the mass of intemperance is! and how powerless we are against it single-handed! And here is an opportunity of standing shoulder to shoulder with men who are making a united effort against it. How often you have preached that when we neglect an opportunity God shuts the door! We cannot enter the door of neglected opportunity when we will. And why have you neglected this one? Simply out of ill-temper, because you attribute to these men motives of which I am sure they are innocent.'

Compton gazed at his wife in amazement. Then, when she said no more, he answered from his own point of view, and said what he had to say ably enough. But when he was warmly seconded by Miss Brown, and Ethel stood before the two like a hunted animal, he repented.

'You know I cannot argue,' cried his wife. 'I am not half as clever as you are, but my heart tells me that this is wrong. I entreat—I implore——'

'There! there!' he said, 'I cannot ignore your strong feeling in the matter. I will alter the paragraph. Your insight may pierce to a truth deeper than my logic.'

Over Ethel's face came a rapt expression. 'O Cumnor, I think your own heart, when you let it speak, will show you a deeper truth which will guide you in this matter. You know,' she added softly, 'we must always remember that without charity we are nothing.'

Miss Brown went home thinking that Ethel was too good for this world, and Compton extracted from his leaflet what his wife disliked.

CHAPTER XXXVI

SECOND THOUGHTS

ETHEL won her victory about the parish leaflet by sheer intensity of will and emotion. This hour of intensity had given her a taste of the brain power often produced by such stimulation. The experience raised her hope still higher. She thought it might not be impossible to change Cumnor's whole conviction concerning the kind of religious instruction essential for the day schools. At first she questioned the righteousness of the attempt. Then she set herself to argue the case impartially before her own judgment. Then the parties in her fancied court imperceptibly shifted, and she found herself in imagination arguing with her husband, he on the one side, she on the other. She mustered every argument she could think of, dwelling most on those which would have most force with him, and her own eloquence soon made a great impression on herself.

Her mind underwent a perfectly genuine change. She could no longer see that Cumnor's position was a rightful one or why he found it so convincing. She began to talk to the Browns in

a tentative way, in order to try her skill and prepare them for her change. The Browns had a real affection for Ethel, but, as was natural, some of her faults had always annoyed them. They had no titled relatives, and disliked Ethel's constant references to Lady Sarum and Lady Alicia. They were lively in conversation and were apt to regard the somewhat purist attitude of the vicarage as 'dear Ethel's airs.' But when a supreme motive takes possession of a human breast it often happens that faults and foibles so long harboured there pass away, and the Browns said to each other that Ethel was greatly improved in these respects. They were therefore inclined to think—although they did not say such a thing aloud—that some gracious reformation had been accomplished in her. When she began to question a position as to which they could not admit that there was room for any doubt, they listened with the respect they felt to be due to her general improvement in Christian character. They were bound to answer, and discussion actually became frequent between Ethel and three women who were at bottom assured that there was nothing to discuss. They ceased to be surprised at what Ethel said, which was one point gained. Ethel was very patient; the very advertisements on the fences taught her that if a thing is said often enough it will carry some weight.

She began the same course of treatment with her husband, but with very different effect. His convictions rested on reason as the Browns' did not; he was therefore much more disturbed to

hear reasoning directed against them. He no sooner suspected that Ethel's doubts were real—she expressed no more than doubt at first—than he threw his whole energy into restoring her mind. His impetuous course brought about a collision for which he was unprepared, which seemed to him at the moment the bitterest pain that earth could offer. So harsh is the commonplace of our life that it chanced they were talking over their dinner when his vehemence forced Ethel's hand, and half-unwittingly she revealed her entire change of mind.

No longer conscious of the presence of the servant or the circumstance of the meal, Compton rose up. 'You think that!' he said. He looked at her, all his pain in his face, and then went out of the house, walking fast, heedless of time and place.

Ethel was not in a mood to conceive the depth of his wound; her little probe was not long enough. She was frightened by his behaviour and greatly annoyed that his dinner had been left uneaten and the servants scandalised. She knew that Cumnor was hurt, and she was sorry; but she had now no thought of giving way to him or even of letting the matter drop.

She met her husband again with consoling affection, but offered no excuses. She immediately renewed the subject he had thought she would never mention again except to recant her opinions.

This was the state of affairs at the vicarage when Miss Brown happened to mention Ethel's new views to Miss Kennedy.

'I like strong language,' said Miss Brown; 'so

does the mater ; so does Theresa. There is something breezy and honest about it. When I say, for instance, that the Radicals are a pack of hypocrites, I don't of course mean they are all Pecksniffs ; and I wouldn't say it where I was not well enough known to be understood. But Ethel comes down on us now for that sort of thing like a thousand of bricks. One has to admit that she is right in theory, so if she said it in her old priggish way she would be intolerable. I don't mind prunes and prisms when they are in the wrong, but when they are right they are simply intolerable.'

'You mean there is nothing prunish and prismatic about Ethel?' There was a slight incredulity in Miss Kennedy's voice.

'There used to be—yes, I agree there,—but there really isn't now. She has come out a strong character, and as sound as a nut in holiness and humility and all that. She's got a bee in her bonnet just now about the Education question ; but, as the mater says, St. Francis and many other saints went off on a wrong tack for a bit. It's one of the "five unmistakable marks"—no, I think that isn't the verse mother quoted!'

Oriane listened eagerly. This was just after the suspicion of Ethel's duplicity had settled upon her mind.

'What is the bee?' she asked. 'Describe the bee.'

'If you will have it——' Then, somewhat against Miss Brown's conscience, but much to her enjoyment, she gave a description of the scene over the magazine leaflet, and went on to reveal,

as a dead secret, Ethel's turnover about the school question. She concluded, 'If the dear vicar were not so thoroughly sound, the mater thinks he might be in danger, for she knows how great a wife's influence may be.'

All this increased Oriane's interest and distress. That Nathaniel Pye should lose the money that Ethel was winning by tricks and deceit, that she herself should be, by ever so little, responsible for this, became an intolerable burden. She could not persuade herself now to inform Mr. Ward of Ethel's overhearing, restrained partly by the shock of grief it would give him and partly by the obligation of her long friendship for Ethel.

She reflected on Ethel's natural way of eluding straight argument on any subject, and her more recent experience of Ethel's hysterical reasoning when she had vainly tried to bring her to book on this particular matter. She was convinced that a direct appeal to Ethel would only produce plausible explanations which had better not be uttered. In any case she felt too angry to reproach Ethel without using the stormy language from which all conventional opinion shrinks.

She sought refuge from her own thoughts in the tranquil conversation of Mrs. Ward, trying to gain information which would define her own position and Ethel's more clearly.

'May I ask you some questions? they are quite impertinent!'

'Go on, dear.'

'Does Mr. Ward think that Ethel——' She paused.

'—knows that he has money?' asked Mrs. Ward. 'No; he feels sure that she does not know. He is convinced that this change of attitude is the last thing that would have happened if she had found out in any way. He is a proud man himself; he can't understand that there are characters that have every quality but pride.'

'I have always thought humility a great Christian virtue,' said Oriane.

'Only when it is put to a purpose of which the Christian may be proud,' returned the old lady.

Oriane did not reply.

'Will you tell me if Mr. Pye has ever asked Mr. Ward for any money for his excavations?'

'No—never. He does not want any, does he?'

'I think he does.'

Her next question seemed to have no connection with the last. 'You told me once that you thought Mr. Pye would not marry. Will you tell me why?'

'He never speaks much about his trouble; I am sure he would not like it spoken about; but of course all his friends know more or less how things are.'

Oriane listened almost breathless.

'His mother, you know—you will have heard, dear, about his mother? No! Ah, as I understand, she was a very fine woman, one in a thousand for gentleness and intelligence. He has described her to me more than once with such reverent admiration. She made him what he is. His father was a good, warm-hearted man; but

this mother—I remember the words he used once, that she opened all the poetry of life to him, and made the common prose of life an epic of heroic deeds.'

Oriane's heart, responding to the glow of affection that could inspire such words, sank at the sadness in the old woman's gentle tones.

'You know, dear, a few years ago, just before he got this post at Oxford, his parents were both in a railway accident. His mother's head was injured; there is some slight lasting injury to the brain—I do not know exactly what. At times she is almost like her old self. He has told me that sometimes she is able to talk to him just in the old way, or if he is away, to write good letters, as she used to do.'

Mrs. Ward paused again. Oriane could well believe that the son, in speaking of this trouble, would dwell first and longest on these bright intervals.

'But that is not always, perhaps not often; but I think he cannot bear that any one should picture her as other than noble and self-controlled.'

'I can understand that.'

'That, I am sure, is why he speaks so little about her, while devoting every spare hour he has to being with her or writing to her. His father died soon after the accident, and Nathaniel took his mother, with his step-sister, to his own house. The mother, I am sure, must have been a rare woman, for her step-daughter—a plain woman much older than Nathaniel—gives up her life to the most tender care of the mother.'

'And of course he must give them a home.'

'No, dear; I don't think it's in a money way that they are dependent on him; I think the mother has enough of her own; but the sister told me once that the poor invalid only knows the peace of self-control when her attention is centred on her son. It is only that which keeps her from sinking into melancholy, and even fits of violence. The notion that she is all in all to him is what she lives on. I am sure he will never disturb this notion of hers as long as she lives.'

Oriane waited. The old lady gently swayed her rocking-chair as she knitted. At length Oriane said, 'Do you think he is right? If it is a great sacrifice to him, as you think, is it necessary?'

'Ah well, dear, no one can tell that but himself. But I can easily see that he may have strong reason. You know what mothers are. He is her only child, and she unable to reason, poor thing. She might, not being quite herself, go wild with jealousy if she thought another woman was put before her. If Nathaniel had married before it happened, the case would have been different.'

'Yes,' said Oriane, 'it would have been very different.'

Oriane had made her inquiry to assure herself that if she sought Mr. Ward's money for the digging she would not be working in her own interest; but now, for a day or two, she did not think directly of Ethel's behaviour, or of the money. She was fully aware that in her girlhood her heart had gone out to her first lover,

that his departure without a word had so piqued her that she had refused to recognise her affection for him until years had taught her his probable motive. The harm to her had been not only the loss of him but an actual loss of heart, in that her nature had habitually crushed down all those emotions which appeared to her despicable because she thought he had despised them. Now her affection, revived with redoubled force, taught her to make a new estimate of the strength of his. But the separation was complete.

Her mind was taken up with the story she had heard from Mrs. Ward. She wondered whether the knowledge of her loyal friendship would help her lover, and concluded drearily that it would not make his life happier to know that he had succeeded in spoiling hers. In any case, if he did not ask for further comradeship, the matter was not hers to decide. Oriane knew herself well enough to know that she had no power to make articulate to him her deepest sentiment except under some strong necessity.

Gradually the question about the money revived in her mind. It was the only channel into which the expression of her affection could legitimately flow. By this time she had thought a good deal about the righteousness of diverting money now spent on directly religious work into such a channel as the Professor proposed. The question of comparative values seemed too difficult for her to decide from the religious point of view; but it also seemed clear that if Mr. Pye, or some one on his behalf, did not engage Mr. Ward's practical

interest in his research work while he lived, he would scarcely be justified in using the old man's wealth in that way should it be bequeathed to him. While this was true, there was, to Oriane's mind, no doubt at all that the money would be better squandered—if squandered it was—in any desert than used to put a golden crown of success on Ethel Compton's trick. She feared to think what Ethel would become if her present deceit, which seemed like temporary madness, should be welded into her character, and that character endowed with the power that wealth gives. Oriane felt assured that if Ethel's course was rooted in deceit it must have a purely evil result upon her character. Like most of her fellows, Oriane, while deeply impressed by the idea that the great machine of physical nature was prolific of beneficent secrets as yet uncalculated by man, assumed that she could easily reckon up God's moral action.

She decided to introduce the subject of Mr. Pye's work to Mr. Ward, and see if he expressed any opinion that would justify her in writing to the Professor and entreating him to ask for what he wanted.

Mr. Ward's time was just now largely shared between the company of the vicarage family and Willie Latimer's studio. Oriane preferred to meet him at the studio, and went there.

'As flowers in May are you welcome,' said Willie. 'In May, I say; had you come when invited at the beginning of our work, I should have said "in January," when they are most desirable. Mr. Ward and I were both stiff and frosty then;

now we are great friends, and you can only add somewhat to our blandness.'

'Not a May flower,' said the old man, 'for they are mostly short and have cool colours. Miss Oriane is like some blush June lilies I had in my garden on the prairie. They were as stately as queens, and held the warm, rosy light of the dawn always in their faces.'

'Make your curtsy, Oriane, and look at my St. Peter—isn't he grand?'

Oriane stood before the easel with a critical air. It was as evident to her that Willie's heart had gone out in affection to the old man as that his picture was a success. It was 'The Raising of Dorcas.' Oriane only said, 'Dorcas is too dead—there are degrees of death.'

'If she could get up after she was dead at all, it wouldn't matter how dead. The theory of it is that the spirit organises its own body out of anything.'

'I don't agree with you, Mr. Painter,' began Mr. Ward; and he went on with a long theory of his about the Christian miracles.

Oriane did not listen. She was disappointed to find that Willie and the old man were so absorbed in their talk with one another. She sat apart and did not interest herself in the point.

Willie broke off to amuse her. 'We're so amiable in Mosford now, nothing can be like it. What do you think? The man with the beard is ill, and I met Ethel this morning taking him soup in quite a caressing-looking tin can.'

“Caressing” is not the adjective to apply to tin.’

‘The whole business is tinny to my mind,’ he said.

‘Don’t say that,’ said the model; ‘it may not go very deep yet, but it’s a “making straight the highway.” I am sure that, if my revered Greek tutor still thinks Compton a Jesuit, he’s quite convinced that his wife is not.’

‘My dear sir,’ said Willie, ‘I think you believe in such amenities because you give people credit for common sense. You see, the real ground of difference between your tutor and the vicarage lies too deep for soup. They each deny each other any participation in what they call “grace.” Now you might think grace was goodness, and could be tested by actions, or what, in a figurative way, is called “fruit.” But no. I talked to Compton years ago on the subject. He says it’s something that comes through the channels of his Church; and if every one outside the Church were more moral and benevolent than the people inside, he would still be quite sure that the people inside had grace and the others had not. That settles Compton; he is not open to the teaching of experience. On the other hand, The man with the beard is convinced that all goodness on the part of a Ritualist is mere craftiness—the bottom’s out of it. Now, how can any passing amenities stuff the mouth of that volcano?’

‘But it’s to their common sense I trust after all,’ said the old man; ‘for when you’ve shaken a man’s hand and looked into his eyes, you can’t be

quite as sure that God hasn't taken him by the hand too as you were when you never saw him nearer than across the street.'

Oriane went away, her heart naturally inflamed with indignation at Ethel's success.

When she had gone Willie said, 'I liked to hear you praise Oriane's looks. She's the finest specimen of that large, fair type that I ever saw. She is strong but not stiff; she is ruddy but not florid; her hair is very light and yet rich in colour. No fairy could have more delicate tints. She walks like Persephone, and smiles as Raphael's Madonnas would if one could fancy any of them with a sense of humour. I've known Oriane since we both wore pinafores, and I always feel rather mad that there are not more people about to admire her; nor does she take as much joy out of the looking-glass as she might—I hate waste.'

'That is not just what you feel.'

'What then?'

'The sort of heart-soreness that you feel looking at her has a deeper meaning.'

'Do you feel it too?'

'She ought to have stalwart sons and daughters rising about her; she ought to be the home and heart's desire of some good man. He loses and she loses, and the world loses more than we can ever tell because this is not so.'

'But I thought you religious folk put that sort of thing down to the will of God?'

'It's odd that the Lord of Life should have gone about changing so many things when He

was in the flesh if men's misfortunes were all according to the will of God!

'If you'll set up a church, I'll come to it,' said Willie. 'It's the dreary idea that the devil isn't in it that I can't stand. When I can say about things, "The devil he did it," I feel a lot more pious.'

'There is a Church that was founded by One who taught that there is a "prince of this world," who interferes in God's plans to do us great harm.' Over the old man's face came a look which Willie always called, 'The Victory of God.' He gave that name to his picture, which afterwards became celebrated.

Oriane came again to Willie's studio to see Mr. Ward, but she gained nothing to her purpose. The third time she came he was not there, and she found he had gone unexpectedly to Oxford to visit Mr. Pye.

'My model is gone; come for a drive!' cried Willie. 'I've got my fairest and most fanciful pony back from grass. I'm longing to see her in harness, and the little lads are pawing for a drive.'

'No,' said Oriane; 'I am not in a good humour.'

Willie looked at her face and was convinced that she was in trouble. True to his principle of trying to eclipse all woe with delight, he insisted upon the drive. 'I can't take the children without you. I've no one else to hold them in when the pony stands on its head.'

Oriane gave grudging consent. She went across

the churchyard to prepare for the drive. The glow of the spring sunshine, the tint of bursting buds, made the square glorious. The clergy, now gathered for the diocesan retreat, were to be seen everywhere, sombre figures, walking dumbly in twos or threes from an afternoon gathering. Oriane scarcely lifted her eyes to recognise any of them. She was now fully determined to write to Professor Pye and withdraw the words she had said in his friend's rooms at Birmingham. What reason could she give for this withdrawal? Her chief reason lay in the character of Ethel's treachery; but that she could not reveal. Perhaps in any case her scruple had been fantastic. Perhaps he had not been influenced by it. Perhaps Mr. Ward had now gone to transfer this money to him. She must throw supposition to the winds and, however briefly, retract her advice.

She wrote a few lines expressing her hope that he would ask for the money; yet this did not for a moment satisfy her heart. If he had not already acted irrespective of her advice, he was not the man to be turned about by apparently unreasoning counsel. She was determined to take some more effectual means to prevent his losing by Ethel's nefarious success.

Oriane posted her letter to Nathaniel Pye before going for the drive, little dreaming that before it could be delivered she would precede it to its destination.

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BOOK VII
THE TOUCH OF GOD



INTRODUCTION TO BOOK VII

IN writing a story of the religious life it is necessary to accept as a working hypothesis the assumption on which that life is based, that the human spirit may undergo many variations in nearness to, or distance from, God—nearness and distance being figures, probably, for the degree in which man invites or repels the inspiration of the Divine mind.

It is evident, however, to the onlooker, whether the subject of the experience realise it or not, that, granting the mind of man to be thus open to inspiration of good from sources in the spiritual world, these inspirations present themselves to the mind inviting them under the conceptions and figures habitual to it, and this coercion, so to say, of the Divine mind into the mould of the human must remain a source of the most lively interest to all students of the drama of life.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE WINGS OF DEATH

ON the evening of the day on which Oriane posted her letter to Nathaniel Pye, about the hour of sunset, she found herself hiding among the bushes in Miss Kennedy's front garden, holding three of Willie's children in shuddering embrace, holding them together there by main force to prevent them seeing what was happening on the road. The air was filled with the shouts of men pursuing a frantic horse, with the sound of hurrying footsteps and the involuntary groans of men who were lifting Willie Latimer from the ground. When strong men moan in pity over the form of another who makes no sound there is dire disaster. Oriane, listening acutely, knew this. Yet she did not rush out to help. She knew that the supreme wish of the father would be that the terrible sight should not be indelibly printed on the children's minds. The awful thing had chanced in the centre of all their happy, neighbourly life. Miss Kennedy had gone out to the road. The doctor, who was everybody's friend, had rushed to the spot. Compton was already

there. Oriane had the strength to kneel on the grass behind the flowering bushes, like a picture of Charity, her arms full of struggling children; and as she soothed them she fought back the chill of horror that would have disfigured her face.

After a time Miss Kennedy was beside her. 'My dear,' she said, 'do you keep the children. I am going over to his house. I shall not be back to-night—at least, not if——'

'I understand,' whispered Oriane.

They had no tears to shed. Their hearts seemed dead within them during the pause. 'As long as he is with us I will stay there,' said Miss Kennedy steadily; 'but, my dear——'

'Yes? I will do whatever you say.'

'I do not know what you ought to do. I only want you to know that he spoke—it was only a few words; he said, "Ernest." They are sending for Ernest. I think he also asked for Mr. Ward, but no one else seemed to understand that. I will leave that to you; if you think well, tell the vicar, or let Mr. Ward know. I must go now.'

When Oriane could at last give the children into the hands of the maids, she had time to think. The trains to Mosford were few; the last that night made no connection by which Mr. Ward could now come. If he got a message that night summoning him to Mosford, he could not arrive till the morrow was well advanced. Oriane made up her mind; she would go herself with the motor and fetch Mr. Ward.

She had no sooner decided this than she heard

flying feet. The doctor, almost breathless, cried, 'Miss Graham, the Hall motor is out of order; I must have your car.'

'I need my car.' She spoke in quick distress.

'I must take it,' he said. 'I must have the Ducklinghoe man at once to help me; and then the car must go on to the junction to meet the midnight express; Sir James and two nurses will come down by it. Mr. Latimer's driver has gone round to your carriage-house.'

'Is there any hope?' she asked.

'None; but he may live a day or two. We must do all we can.'

Oriane stood with him and watched the car disappear down the road over which the sweet spring night had fallen. 'I cannot believe it,' she said. 'I cannot believe that Willie will die.'

The doctor was walking back quickly. Oriane kept pace with him.

'Willie half believed in faith-healing,' she said.

'That's all very well in hysterical cases when it comes off,' said the doctor; 'but in a case like this it doesn't come off. It would be very inconsistent of the Almighty if it did. Mr. Latimer has played with fire driving those wild colts.'

'Oh,' cried Oriane, her mind sharpened by intense feeling, 'we are all convinced that God must work along the line of our rules till we find that He does not. Then we revise our rules. How often do the careless escape and the cautious fall by what we call mere accident! But we religious folk do not challenge God's providence

in these cases till some religious theory we do not like draws our attention to the discrepancy.'

They turned now to cross the churchyard toward the lights in the windows of the House Beautiful that was now the House of Pain. The power of spring was on the old trees overhead, in the grass and flowers springing from the graves; the scent of spring, cool and soothing, sweet with its subtle, irresistible inspiration, assailed the very citadel of hope within them as they walked and talked, spurred on by a feeling that was more like despair.

The doctor was a rough man with a heart of gold. He gave a little snorting answer to her derision.

'You yourself saved the life of a scoundrel last week by a marvellous operation,' retorted Oriane.

'But he had to undergo the operation.'

She sneered, 'You did not give him anæsthetics, and every other possible alleviation for his pain, I suppose?'

'But such powers to heal are won by careful experiment. They do not contradict the fact that man learns by experience.'

'Yes; God teaches us by experience,' she cried, 'and therefore our whole question is whether faith-healing is a fact of experience or not. But you have decided that it ought not to be a fact!'

He had known her many years; he was amazed at the new vehemence in her tone. He could not know that in this excited hour half-forgotten memories were surging within her—the voice of

a Quakeress demanding a Church made visible by the marvels of faith; bitter words that Willie had dropped about the inefficacy of modern Christianity to deal even with imaginary ailments; calm stories old Mrs. Ward had told of men and women raised up from the verge of death by her husband's prayers. And now, just when Willie needed this old man he was away, and the doctor had taken from her the one means of fetching him! As moment by moment she realised the position more clearly, her heart was bursting within her.

'We would both be almost willing to give our own lives to save him,' he said; 'why should we quarrel? I have no hope; but it is my duty to get the most skilful man I know; therefore your car must meet the midnight train.'

'And I have almost no faith; but it is my duty to go for the most God-like man I know. Send the car for me when it returns.'

'At one o'clock in the morning!' he exclaimed. 'It is madness!'

'Yes; and I must take the Latimers' chauffeur.'

'He will be asleep by that time.'

'He may sleep while I drive, but he must come.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AT SPRING AND THE DAWN

NATHANIEL PYE was an early riser, a habit perhaps inherited from generations of working men. As many scholars do their best work at midnight, he did his best work in the cool quiet of the dawn. This is of all hours the most lonely in a well-to-do modern household ; the master worked long before a servant stirred.

This morning was grey, and he was in a long room whose windows looked over meadows. The trees that fringed the meandering water-courses were already tinted with the parti-coloured buds of spring. As the light grew stronger, Pye looked up to see that these delicate but lively tints were brighter than the day before. In the soft folding of the grey cloud above there grew also a many-coloured tinting and brightness, elusive yet clear. Nathaniel Pye laid down his pen and went to the window, which was a glass door leading by steps into the garden. As he reached it on one side, a woman, stepping up from the Easter lilies of the garden, confronted him on the other. He paused with the glass between them.

He was conscious that never since he first knew Oriane Graham had he looked upon the raptures of spring and of morning without thinking of her. Was he now punished for thus unwarrantably carrying her in his heart by the madness which conjures its fancies into apparitions?

But this was not the Oriane of his dreams—serene, satisfied, triumphant as the dawn in youth and beauty. This wan, sad woman had some imperious need. She made a gesture of entreaty, and he opened the door.

‘I have been ringing at your other doors in vain,’ she said. ‘I have come——’ But here her voice ceased; some difficulty of utterance overcame her, perhaps the dust of the road, perhaps the emotion of the night.

He mutely invited her entrance. The thought that his doors had been barred to her, that she had waited before them, made him dumb.

She began again, ‘Mr. Ward—is Mr. Ward well? He is with you?’

‘Oh!’ said Pye; and then he found his voice. ‘It is Mr. Ward you want.’

She told her brief story, and he went to the old man with her sad message.

Even in her great distress about Willie, even in the stern chase she had been pursuing, she had conned some sentences about Mr. Ward’s money which she was determined to say. ‘Have you asked for it? If not, do so. You can take it on my authority that nothing could be worse poison to his nephew’s wife than the acquisition of this money. It is better for the Comptons

as well as for the world that it should go to you.'

But when Nathaniel Pye returned to say that Mr. Ward would be with her as soon as possible, Oriane did not bring forward the subject of the money. She was walking uneasily up and down the plain, carpetless room, looking at his pictures. His pictures were the only beautiful things in the room. She was too restless to care much for them.

He began himself to make a fire in the grate, and put a kettle on the hob.

'My sister will come down as soon as she can,' he said.

'I am sorry to disturb her,' she said.

Then there was an interval, when they both spoke in subdued tones about Willie Latimer, and the dull fact that the chauffeur had taken Oriane's car for petrol. Oriane forgot that it is money makes the modern world go round; she forgot that there were such things as gold or buried cities or scheming and deceitful women.

Then the glow on the clouds of the morning faded into common daylight. The sister came. The moment Oriane saw her she was glad that she was but a half-sister. She was a pathetic-looking person; her attitudes and eyes claimed sympathy; there was the hint of a wail in her voice even when she made her most ordinary remarks.

After Oriane had had some slight breakfast with Mr. Ward, while they stood in the garden waiting for the car, she had another minute alone

with Nathaniel Pye. At their feet tulips and daffodils were lifting dewy heads in the grass of his garden. The grey town lay about them; the tower of Magdalen, the spire of Mary, rose very near. They were not more grey than the mountains of cumulous cloud that were parting and moving and joining again in some strong wind that roamed the upper atmosphere but hardly stirred the ruddy branches of the trees of Holywell.

It was he who took the initiative and chose the subject. 'Mr. Ward tells me that you say you are discontented with your own Church, that you have been partly thinking of joining some other religious body. I have no right to ask whether this is so or not; I would only say that in my opinion it might very likely be a mistake. I have a very strong belief that all that is most worth having can be found in any Christian communion, and that in none is the Master's ideal as yet realised; and most of us do our best work in the environment where we have been trained. A turnover means a denial of something—a harsh denial. The world is always trying to make us believe that we must be very careful about our creeds, but that our negations may be broad and assured. I think the mind of the Master is rather the other way. We must, of course, define at times, which means denying something; but it ought to be the most cautious work of our lives.'

He could not have said anything that showed her more clearly how remote, in his mind, was her future from his own. Yet she was sure he had not spoken with that intent. He did not

dream that, in spite of the schooling she had given herself, his words hurt her cruelly. She was, at least, glad that he did not know; she could imagine his dismay if any reflection of her misery fell upon him.

He, oblivious, added, 'Of course if you could find what would satisfy you better in one of our Free Churches, I should say "Come"; but the eye that is once open to the paltriness of much that is current as Christianity will find admixture of false and true everywhere. It is to the future we must look. We must work, each in our own place, to establish a more truly Christian Church in the future.'

At the moment she hardly took enough interest in his subject to care to reply; yet she fully understood that the man who used the rare delight of speech with the woman he loved to talk of religion, found in religion the supreme interest and joy of life.

As she stood silent, her face half-averted, he spoke the third time, with a touch of disappointment at her silence, 'Many will tell you that this indifference to Christian differences is indifference to Christ.'

She cried in brusque rebellion, 'It is because our Church people are silly enough to say that that I want to leave them.'

The light of a smile came into his eyes. 'I beg of you, whatever happens, do not allow yourself for one moment to sit with the scorner. Believe me, it is far more soul-deadening than to walk with the ungodly or to stand with sinners. Your Church

has this great advantage, it harbours all our differences within itself.'

He was astonished to perceive that she had no voice to speak, and that her face was wet with tears.

She found herself facing the empty morning roads, driving Mr. Ward at full speed over the long, long miles to Mosford. She knew that her dearest friend would blame himself all day, thinking that some mere clumsiness of his speech had wounded her. Well, better that than that he should guess the truth!

The note she had written to him the day before would be delivered to him when the active work of his day began. It seemed years ago—that yesterday in which she had been concerned about a mere question of money.

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CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SILLY LAD

THE man who had made so brave an effort to enjoy the feast of life to the full, to live out his gospel of colour and grace—this man, in the prime of life, strong and healthy and gay, was struck down and stretched in helpless pain, to look death in the face. The surgeons did what they could. They said he might have one or two days to live. Mosford, represented by the crowd which stood in dumb anguish round the scene of the accident for an hour, retired to its ordinary avocations and speedily forgot. Willie's wife, who had always bemoaned herself in every crisis of their domestic affairs, now lay passing from a faint to convulsive grief and again to a faint, absorbing the attention of her maids. The children slept at Miss Kennedy's; and in the great bright room of the house where his last unfinished picture stood on its easel and the walls were hung with such specimens of his past work as he had loved too well to sell—in the centre of the large, gay studio Willie Latimer was stretched on a little trestle bed, a uniformed nurse in attendance,

and Miss Kennedy sitting beside him, holding his hand.

Thus the black night passed, and the day woke; and all the time Willie lay very wide awake, looking out from his immovable body of pain with eager eyes. Nothing was altered that morning in Mosford. The factory hooter raised its voice at the accustomed times, and the clatter of feet in the street rose and fell with it. The shops were all open, and the women went to market. The clergy who had gathered in retreat went to the services marked on their programme. The night before they had all felt the thrill and pain of the accident; this morning in most of their minds it was not uppermost, except while they joined in the prayer offered for the sick man.

When the morning sunlight was at its brightest, Willie's eldest son—the boy of defective understanding—arrived at the Mosford railway station with one of his tutors. Willie had asked for the lad, and the doctor's telegram had directed that he should be told of his father's condition. All the way in the train the tutor had been endeavouring to temper the natural gaiety of the lad's disposition; as they walked up the street at Mosford he was still at intervals saying words suitable to the end in view. But Ernest Latimer walked with the hearty, boyish stride habitual to him, and smiled at the village children and the village dogs he met. He was like what his father had been—strong, handsome, yellow-haired, ruddy-checked, bright-eyed—a boy whom it was always a joy to look at, for to the eye he did not seem to

lack anything of the proper equipment for human life.

Ernest said, 'Yes, yes,' to all the tutor said, and then he looked about him and smiled. The tutor confessed in a whisper to the grandfather, who received them, that he did not know how far Ernest understood his father's fate.

The squire took Ernest's hand, and they went together, a handsome pair, an ideal representation of youth and age, into the bright studio, and stood beside the bed which was so soon to be a bier. The young eyes of unclouded sunshine looked down into his father's eyes, which were so full of eagerness and unspoken longing. The lad looked at the bandaged head, at the awkward shape of the bed-covering raised by the surgical appliances beneath.

'You'll soon be better, father,' he said. 'You'll soon be up and about again.'

Such an eager light of hope shot from the father's eyes, such a look of longing for life, that the grandfather turned away his head. So clear was the passionate cry for life in his son's eyes that, man as he was, his own eyes were scalded by blinding tears. There was no hope—none at all; not one of the three surgeons had whispered hope.

The lad twitched his grandfather's hand and pointed to the picture on the easel—the picture of St. Peter raising the dead.

'Where are they, grand?' he asked. 'Where are the apostles?'

Then smiling down at his father, Ernest said eagerly, 'Yes, father; I'll go and get them. We

learnt about it in our confirmation class. There are some men now who stand for the old Apostles and take their places. Grand will tell me where they live. I will go and get one of them, and he will say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk"; and then you will be quite well again. Come, grand; let's be quick'; and, pulling the old man along, he strode gaily out of the room.

Mr. Latimer went out with him. When they were both in the hall the youth turned with an eager word, 'Where?'

There was not, in the whole of merry England, a more sweet-tempered and just-minded gentleman than Mr. Latimer; but to every man at some time comes the temptation to hate his fellow-man, to be bitter and unjust to him. Mr. Latimer had led a long and blameless life, loyal to the Saviour whom he held divine, punctual every morning with his acts of private devotion. For many years now he had patiently, politely listened to Compton, who by word and deed had teased him to believe doctrines concerning the grace of orders and the necessity of sacraments, which seemed to him but idle tales. He had not complained when the sunny little church that he loved had been darkened by stained glass pictures. He had not fretted when other people liked their religious services and rites muddied, as he thought, with too much ornament and needless performance. But now his long weariness of all this made the yoke seem intolerable in his hour of agony. The belief of the silly youth that the successors of the Apostles could prove their succession by uttering

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the word of faith that brings life from the shadow of death, struck him as forming a derisive comment upon a claim which he had long ignored and now angrily desired to disprove.

He pointed to the church door. 'There, boy; there they are. They are all in there. Go and see if one of them will come.'

CHAPTER XL

THE CLERGY AND THE BISHOP

ERNEST ran to the church, stepped softly to the inner door, and, opening it, looked quickly round. Some score of clergymen were seated listening to an address from the Bishop. From the backs of their heads and shoulders Ernest did not at first discover much by which to choose. He stepped up the aisle and touched the nearest upon the shoulder, and went back again. The vicar of Ducklinghoe, stout and honest, rose and followed the lad, supposing stolidly that some telegram must have come for him, wondering, indeed, whether his wife had been confined before her time. He even got the length of thinking that, if it were so, it would be a comfortable thing to have the trouble over before he got home. Then he stepped through the green baize door and followed the lad out of the old Norman porch into the sunshine.

The lad turned round and spoke in eager excitement. 'My father is very ill,' he said. 'Come.'

'Do you come from Ducklinghoe?'

The lad shook his head.

'Then why do you come for me? Who is it you want?'

'You will do,' said the boy. 'I only want you to come and make him well. It won't take long.'

'My dear fellow, I can't cure your father.'

'Haven't you descended from the disciples?' asked Ernest. 'Please come quickly. Father wants so badly to get well.'

'He's daft,' said the stout vicar to himself; but he answered very kindly, 'I will go with you if your father has asked for some one. But why not get your own vicar? Where do you live?'

The boy pointed to the beautiful house beyond the churchyard palings. Then the good vicar of Ducklinghoe remembered the accident which had befallen, and with hesitating steps and a puzzled face he followed the boy as far as the door of the house.

Mr. Latimer had retired. One of the nurses was resting on a settle in the porch, and when the vicar inquired in an undertone of the patient's condition, she shook her head.

'Did the doctor give leave for a clergyman to be brought?' asked Mr. Briggs.

The boy had darted in and was already holding the handle of the studio door and looking back eagerly. 'Is he quite right in his mind,' asked the vicar of Ducklinghoe of the nurse.

'No, sir,' said the nurse.

The lad came back to see the cause of delay.

'Does your father want me to pray with him?' asked the vicar.

'Oh no, sir; father can do his praying better

after he's well. When I was ill I couldn't say my prayers at all till I was well again, because my head ached so. I only want you to come and make him whole, as Jesus did.'

In spite of his burly aspect and plain, practical ways, the heart of the vicar of Ducklinghoe was a soft one. He was deeply touched, and prayed within himself that God would save the soul of the dying man and comfort the bereaved. At the same time he explained, in a paternal way, that he did not try to imitate the Apostles in the miracles they wrought.

Ernest listened with smiling courtesy; but the moment he understood the purport of the speech he excused himself in haste and ran back to the church.

'Terribly sad! terribly sad!' murmured the vicar of Ducklinghoe; and he too went back to the church, for he was anxious to hear the rest of the Bishop's address.

When Ernest walked up the aisle a second time Compton looked round, and, seeing the lad, rose instantly and went out with him. Since he had been refused admittance to the sick-room the night before, he had sent up a constant inward prayer that the dying man might repent, send for him, and obtain the last comfort of the Christian faith. This prayer had kept him awake during the watches of the night; it had been his first conscious thought at the break of day; his soul was yet in travail with it.

'Did your father send for me?' he asked eagerly.

Ernest smiled. He had always liked Mr. Compton. The spiritual serenity of his face had attracted him from childhood.

'Grand says the successors of the Apostles are in church. Will you please fetch one of them to come and heal father? Father wants so badly to get well.'

'Oh, my poor fellow!' Compton's words came almost like a moan of pain, so acute was the sympathy he felt. Then he set the question of healing aside, returning to what was nearest to his heart. 'Did your father send for me?'

'No, no,' cried the lad; 'not you—I know you don't make people well. Oh, quick, please—it's a disciple that I want—one or two—perhaps two would be better. There were two, you know, when St. Peter and St. Paul made the lame man walk. Please, please, Mr. Compton, fetch them out for me! It hurts father so much to lie there; and he sent for me all the way from school; and I am his eldest son, and it is my business to get him cured at once. He will be wondering what's keeping me.'

Compton was deeply disappointed. His prayer was not yet answered. No doubt it was his own unworthiness which made the dying man think so slightly of his office. Upon this soreness of heart the pathos of the request which Ernest made fell with stinging force. Compton turned where he stood in the niche of a buttress and leaned his head against the wall; a sob shook his frame.

'Oh, my dear fellow!' he moaned. 'If I



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could bring your father back to life, I would gladly give my own unworthy life to do it.'

Ernest Latimer was shocked and sorry to see his good friend in distress, but he had no time now to inquire into the cause. 'Don't cry,' he said wonderingly. 'I'm sorry I made you cry about father. There's no need, because, you know, Jesus Christ can make him well. All that I want is some one to come and say the words rightly.'

Then, because he was far too eager to wait longer, and could not understand Mr. Compton's reluctance to be his messenger, he ran again into the church; and this time he was determined to be satisfied with no futile person, so he walked all the way up the aisle and stood, bareheaded and eager, before the Bishop.

One childlike glance at the faces around him, and then at the gentleness and power of the Bishop's saintly face, satisfied him that he was addressing the greatest man in that assembly.

'I beg your pardon, sir. I'm very sorry indeed to interrupt you.' His clear young voice rang out in happy energy round the old Norman arches, and the Bishop, in his surprise, noticed first that even his own voice, in the instruction he was giving, had become a little artificial and melancholy.

Perhaps no lad in England but Willie Latimer's son could have been so ignorant as to what was conventional in a church. He looked at the Bishop with an air of happy confidence as he swiftly proceeded, 'My father is very ill indeed, and you must come to him. I am sorry I can't

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wait till you have finished what you are saying to these gentlemen; but father is in dreadful pain, and I want you to come quick and make him quite well in Jesus' name.'

A little child could not have gone more simply and quietly with the lad than did the Bishop. Ernest took him by the hand. Across the grass of the sun-flecked churchyard, across the broad, sunny road they hurried, into the House Beautiful, and into the great, bright studio, to where the master lay stretched in agony on the pallet bed.

CHAPTER XLI

THE TWO OLD MEN

ERNEST called out as he approached the bed, 'I've brought him, father. He's going to say the words. He's going to say——' The lad hesitated a moment in the effort to remember a formula. Heaven only knows what influence guided his wayward memory, but he continued joyously, 'He's going to say, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always"; and then you're going to get up, as Lazarus did, bound hand and foot.'

The Bishop stood by the bed and looked down, hardly recognising Willie's familiar face, so drawn it was with continued pain, so white with approaching death. But he did recognise, as clearly as the lad had done, the passionate cry for life—mere physical life—that spoke in the bright, humid eyes which looked up, first at the boy and then at the Bishop. They all saw that while the boy was speaking there was a wild hope in those eyes, and when the sufferer saw that it was only the Bishop who had come, the hope died down as a candle-flame flickers in its socket.

The lad turned to the Bishop, a wholly new

and terrible fear breaking into his heart and voice. 'Can't you make him whole?' he said. 'You—aren't you one of the disciples that Jesus sent out?' He pointed to the picture on the easel. 'Didn't He say that He gave you power to heal the sick? I read it in the Bible. Oh, please, please, be quick and do it, for father's getting worse.'

The Bishop knelt down and lifted up his face and hands in prayer. 'If it be Thy will,' he said, 'life, life for this Thy servant.' His murmured words became inaudible; he was wrapt in silent prayer.

But the lad looked at his father and saw no reanimating glow in his eyes. Hope—the wild, mad hope that the child had inspired—was almost wholly gone, and with it life was ebbing.

Ernest ran from the room and from the house, actuated by nothing but a blind, mad cry for help, and in the street he saw, coming towards the house, the very apostle of his father's picture!

Oriane's motor, hueless with dust, stood near the churchyard gate. Mr. Ward had just alighted and thrown off his dusty coat. Oriane sat still in the car with the tense face of one whose sheer will-power had triumphed over time and space.

Ernest saw nothing but the old man. 'Oh, come,' he cried joyfully. 'You are in time. I was almost afraid that God would not let me find you in time.' The lad's brief agony was again changed into peace. They both turned toward the house, and this time the lad was not leading, for the old man's feet moved even more swiftly than the steps of youth.

'It's all right, father,' cried the boy, flinging his strong voice into the silent studio as if there were no such thing in the world as pain and death.

In Willie Latimer's eyes a spark of the old fire was left, and as they met the old man's smile, hope returned to them; there was even the flicker of a smile upon the white lips.

The Bishop did not move. He seemed unconscious of what went on around him. His face was lifted toward heaven in passionate entreaty. Unconsciously his lips moved with the audible whisper, 'Life, if it be Thy will!'

'It is God's will,' said the old man quietly, joyfully. He laid one large hand gently on the poor bandaged head, and looking down into the sick man's eyes, he said, 'Jesus taught us that pain and sickness, and the death of those who are too young to die, are against God's will. They are evil; they are the work of The Evil.' With his broad, loving smile he looked at the dying man and said, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, bids you believe that life is the will of God, and you shall live.'

In the quiet that followed the look of supplication passed from the Bishop's face; it was lit up with the ecstasy of thanksgiving.

'You shall live,' repeated the old man. 'Believe that life is the will of God and you shall live.'

'Father's better now,' whispered Ernest. 'I see it.'

'Go and bring your mother,' said the old man.

As he waited he repeated to Willie again and again, slowly and joyfully, the burden of the

Gospel for the bodily life as he understood it, 'Believe, and you shall live.'

Diana came, tearful and frightened, dragging her slow steps, and when she stood above him Willie's eyes sought her beautiful face.

Mr. Ward took her hand with great gentleness. 'Look,' said he, 'your husband has nothing to fear; he has taken hold of God and will get quite well. Kneel down with me and let us thank God.'

Diana sank by the bedside, and with one hand upon her head and the other touching Willie's poor, motionless form, the old man knelt and began to pour forth his heart in love and thanksgiving to that Intimate Presence of whom he always seemed aware.

'Thou hast given Thy life for us, passing through the worst that can befall this human body and building it again. Thy power over it is absolute. Thy will is life and strength for every man until his full time comes. We thank Thee. We take life from Thee; we thank Thee.' He relapsed into silent prayer.

On the Bishop's aged face was written for the time the oblivion of ecstasy. His soul seemed to be absent in some far heaven. Then, as he came back to himself, they heard him say 'that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto children.'

The boy knelt beside the Bishop, his hands reverently folded, his eyes closed. He seemed as if listening inwardly to that which was passing in the hearts of the two old men.

Willie Latimer was lying as he had lain all night and all day, his head immovable, his face turned straight upward on his pillow, like an effigy upon a tomb. He knew that he could not move; he had heard the doctors say that he could never move again. But now that those about him were kneeling he could not see their faces; he turned his head to look at his idolised son; then he turned his face to the other side and looked for Diana.

When he made the first movement, Miss Kennedy, sitting backward and watching him keenly, held her breath and waited in amaze. When he moved again she pressed her hands to her eyes to keep back the tears of joy.

The lad, mercurial, unable to be silent long, opened his eyes, and, feeling the need of expression as he caught the joy that radiated from the Bishop's face, began softly to sing. The association of ideas naturally guided to words and music made familiar at the school choir practice. Words and notes were at first confused, then his voice soared distinct and true into the 'Gloria.' He always sang like a bird, easily, joyfully. The father, carried away by the beauty of his son's voice, gave a little laugh of pure pleasure.

The Bishop rose. The boy, seeing that his father was delighted, sang the 'Gloria' over again. When his voice ceased the Bishop lifted a hand trembling with age and gave a benediction.

The lad jumped up. 'Now, father, you must rise up and walk, and I'll get you something to eat.' He looked at Mr. Ward for instruction.

'Hadn't I better get him something to eat?' he asked.

The old man said, 'We won't let father get up to-day, my boy. He needs a long sleep; but he will be much better to-morrow, and he'll get up and walk soon.'

'Shall I bring father something to eat?' persisted the lad. 'In the Bible Jesus always gave them something to eat.'

When the nurse brought the cup the lad snatched it from her hand with the wilfulness of a child, and himself held it to his father's lips. Willie drank eagerly.

Diana stood watching them, her lips parted, a new courage in her face.

The old man still knelt, with his arm under Willie's pillow, and his face was still luminous with the ecstasy of praise. 'I will stay here,' he said.

The Bishop went back to the church. The clergy were grouped about in the churchyard and porch, but there was that in his face which prevented any one speaking to him. The Bishop went up to the altar-rail and knelt in prayer. It was more than an hour before he came out of the church again.

Compton was waiting for the Bishop and kneeling near the door. He supposed him to be praying for a passing soul.

When they both came out, old Mr. Latimer was having great cart-loads of straw strewn thickly upon the road for a long distance. The doctor's trap was stayed at the other side of the church-

yard. The doctor himself was assisting to lay the straw. Compton stared in amazement. Last night they had been told that no sound would again disturb the master of the House Beautiful. Compton went over and spoke sadly to the doctor.

'Do you think there is any hope?'

'Yes, I do,' said the doctor with curt vigour. This curtness surprised Compton. Then he was aware that all about the House Beautiful, and in the gait and attitude of the few persons in sight, there was a change. The oppressive shadow of the wings of the death-angel was gone; yet no one told him of any new feature in the case. He followed the doctor, who was moving briskly about.

'Can you give me any explanation?'

'No, I can't,' said the doctor. 'Am I a fool that I should explain to you what I do not understand myself? Hang me if I care what the explanation is so long as he pulls through! There is nothing miraculous in it. These chaps with genius have a crack somewhere by which mental forces to which most of us are impervious can leak in. We thought his spine was badly injured and that his wounds would not heal. But now it turns out that the spine is not injured; and he's mending all right. But that's no explanation!'

Compton looked startled. The doctor, who did not imagine him to be ignorant of what had passed, made no effort to be more civil.

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CHAPTER XLII

ORIANE'S TALE-BEARING

ORIANE felt keenly that she was set alone in the battle of life, as far as human companionship was concerned. Miss Kennedy was claimed and climbed over every day by the lusty Latimer children. Willie was beginning to drift joyfully back to his old happy life. Diana, holding hard by the old man's hand, was waiting upon him day and night. Ethel was vehemently arguing with her husband and the Browns on behalf of compromise in the school question, disconcerting them with the plausibility of her arguments, and more by the intensity and persistence of her attack.

Miss Brown appealed to Oriane. 'Do speak to her; she has always been your friend. She is making the dear vicar miserable. We think he may yield, and he would never cease to regret so great a sin. We think perhaps she is going mad.'

Oriane knew well that Miss Brown's vision might be highly coloured, but she also knew that the situation was much worse than Miss Brown supposed.

Oriane had received a note from Mr. Pye,

thanking her for her change of advice, but pointing out that he still thought he had been well advised from the first, because he had lately heard of Mr. Ward's increased friendship for the Comptons and satisfaction in all they did. How natural that he should have heard this! How inevitable that the news should have this effect on his mind!

Oriane prepared for a hasty journey. She went to Elminster and sent in a note to the Bishop entreating an hour's interview.

When the hour arrived the little man came briskly into a drawing-room of the palace, where she was waiting for him. 'I can't get an hour for anything *I* want,' he said. 'You say "must" —you must talk to me for an hour. Let us take the "must" first; that will be the point of it.'

Oriane shrewdly suspected that she had been put into a drawing-room because some one else claimed the Bishop in his private room, and he thought to dispose of her quickly. She was not sure that he was conscious of her individuality, or could make a fair estimate of the worth of her words. He stood before her, bright-eyed and alert; but whether his mind was fixed on the work he had left, or on his next engagement, or on her, she could not tell.

She briefly recalled to his mind the Mosford circle—the Comptons, the Latimers, the old man.

'I know; I know,' he said nodding; 'and the last time I saw you you were playing elephant with one of Latimer's small boys. Now, go on.'

'I've come on a very ungracious errand—to tell a sorry tale about another woman.'

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'And you say "must"—must you?'

'Yes.' Then she told him hastily, and with some confusion, about Mr. Ward's money, and Ethel's eavesdropping, and the lie she believed that Ethel had told her, and all in Ethel's conduct in the last two months that had amazed, edified, and disturbed Mosford.

'Is that all?' said the Bishop.

'No; not all. I must tell you something else'; and then she told about Professor Pye, and the advice he had asked of her, and how he had taken it, and her subsequent repentance.

About Pye the Bishop asked several shrewd questions. She could not fail to see that the scholar's heart drew to the work and fortunes of this other scholar, that his interest was keener here than elsewhere in her narrative. She thought with discouragement that, saintly man as he was, a woman's sin weighed less with him in comparison.

'Is that all?' he asked again, and this time she assented.

He took a silent trot about the big, stately room.

'It's bad news for me about Mrs. Compton. I thought there was a fine tone about her. I thought Compton had a prize, and God a good servant, in her. You say she lied—are you sure of it?'

'Yes; but I am sure that I gave her my word not to speak of the affair, and now I have broken my promise in telling you. Perhaps she made for herself the same sort of excuse.'

'It seems to me all you say she has done in the parish was good—quite good. There's no harm

in anything she has done, except perhaps pestering her husband.'

Oriane said nothing.

'I am very sorry for her,' he said. 'Poor woman! She will regret it all so terribly when she sees it in the right light. Poor thing! Poor thing!' He took another turn about the room, but this time she felt he was suffering real anguish in forecast of Ethel's repentance.

'You may think me cold-hearted; but it is her husband and this kind-hearted old man whom she has duped that I feel for most.'

'No, no,' said the Bishop sharply. 'You're wrong there. A woman who has courage and strength of character to do all that will suffer far more for her own sin than any one else can suffer.' After a moment he added, 'I think you ought to have gone to her before coming to me. You might have got her to confess her duplicity to Mr. Ward and to her husband; that is what she must do before she can have a day's real peace. Will you try that now?'

'I tried that first.'

'You have not gone to her since she lied to you. You must try again. If she listens to you, you will have gained your sister.'

'The only result would be that she would weave for herself and me a further tissue of explanations that had better not be woven. I have come here on purpose to entreat you to speak to her. I do not know how far I believe in confession, but I am sure this is a case for a confessor in the best sense.'

'I think it is your first duty to try again.'

'I was going to say, I cannot; but I mean, I will not. My conviction that it would be no use proves to me that I am not the right person to do it.'

'You said "must" to me, and I heard your story; but now when I say "must" you will not obey.'

'Do you think I am all wrong, first to come tale-bearing, and then to reject your advice?'

'I think you have not enough love for her, or enough faith in God's power to change her heart.'

'I almost hate her now; I certainly despise her.'

'We're getting at the truth now,' said he more cheerfully. 'Hatred and scorn—not what we call the meaner vices—were the sins that slew the Lord.'

He was standing before her, his slender legs a little apart, his thumbs in the top of his apron. She looked up to see his keen face and bright, kindly eyes beaming down on her.

'How can I be what I am not?'

'That is just the question on which the salvation of the world depends. How can each of us be what we are not? How can the Church be what it is not? Without charity, without faith, what are we? How can we be filled with a temper we do not even desire? What is the answer?'

'What?' she asked with a lingering look, for his face seemed transfigured with power and dignity.

He recited three fragments of Holy Writ, and there was a cheerfulness in his tone which made the mystic words sound quite practical at the moment. 'If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come to you.' 'What is impossible with man is possible with God.' 'Ye shall be endued with power from on high.'

'I entreat you to see her yourself,' said Oriane. 'I am doing my utmost for her in having courage to make this entreaty.'

'Then,' said he, 'if we can go no further, will you tell me why Professor Pye asked your advice. Is he a personal friend of yours?'

'He asked me because I knew Mr. Ward and the Comptons so well.'

'Do you know that he has just published his view as to the site of these remains in *The Archaeologist*?'

'Then he can never have the joy of discovering them himself!' Her colour heightened.

'The world will be none too quick to do it. He was quite right in supposing he won't get the money from the public. You say you have written to retract your first opinion—is not that enough?'

'No; because if he had asked then he would now have what he wants, and all this warm friendship between the Comptons and Mr. Ward has happened since. What weight I had I have thrown into the wrong balance; I cannot get it out again.'

'You are trying to throw weight into the other balance by telling me, because you know I would

rather this money were thrown into the ground in hope of a new chapter in ancient history, than that it should be spent, as Compton would spend it, on church restoration and church adornment which has no real beauty. We are tricked out far too fine now for true dignity.' The little man moved and spoke with suppressed feeling. Again he came before her and said, 'I know a little about Pye's subject, but I will not be tempted into anything but a strictly judicial attitude. You came to ask me—what?'

'If I might plead Professor Pye's case with Mr. and Mrs. Ward?'

'I'll look into the matter and tell you.'

He walked down the gallery with her, to the head of an old oak stair. 'Remember this,' he said,—she turned, thinking he was going to give her some stern admonition,—'remember this—there's a place and time ahead of us when all our day-dreams will come true.'

'All?' she said.

'Yes—all,' he repeated. 'If you remind yourself of that every morning for the next fifty years, you'll live a more useful life for it.'

'I am sure,' he said to himself as he trotted back, 'there's a tragedy about that woman, but I could not get at it. She did not ask for my blessing.'

CHAPTER XLIII

THE BISHOP'S PALACE

THE next bit of news that went about Mosford was that the vicar and his wife had been invited to Elminster to dine and stay over-night at the palace.

'I suppose he is having us all by turns,' said Compton to his wife.

Ethel was pleased ; for apart from her general predilection for dignitaries and palaces, she thought the Bishop's influence tended to make Cumnor more moderate. The Bishop had taken no belligerent part in the Education controversy.

There was not a large party at dinner. A minor canon was there, a school friend of Compton's, who had been ill and was about to start on a long voyage for his health. This seemed to be the occasion of Compton's invitation ; but Compton's friend Dinsmore with his wife were also there. They lived near Elminster, and the Bishop's wife was said to have quite taken them up.

At dinner the Bishop said, 'I'm coming down to Mosford, Mr. Compton, some day the week after next, if possible.'

'To visit us, my lord, I hope,' said Ethel.

'No ; I am going to call on Mr. Ward.'

Compton smiled. 'If the King announced that he was coming to Mosford, I should expect to hear that my uncle was the cause. I used to think the vicarage was the most frequented house in Mosford, but since my uncle came six months ago I have learned what a nonentity I am. Every one goes to him for sympathy and counsel ; every one quotes him to me as an authority ; our friends desert our house for his.'

Entire sweetness of temper characterised the tone and smile of the man who thus spoke. The Bishop looked keenly and saw that there was not a shade or flicker of personal jealousy in Compton's mind. Yet he did not speak as though he took personal pride in the attractive qualities of his kinsman.

'He must be rather a nice sort of uncle to have,' said Dinsmore ; and the minor canon said something to the same effect.

Compton said, 'My difficulty in liking his widespread influence is that his religious views are quite vague.'

'New Theology ?' asked Dinsmore.

'Not exactly that ; but although a Dissenter, he doesn't see any harm in going to church once a Sunday, or in others belonging to the Church. My people are beginning to think him the model Christian, while, in fact, being neither one thing nor another, he is not definitely anything.'

'I don't see that you have proved your conclusion,' said the Bishop. 'An analogous

argument would be that, because I am neither a dog nor a cat, I can't be a vertebrate—with a strong backbone.'

Compton shook his head gently at his bishop. 'You can't be a mere vertebrate.'

'Even Plato allows that the universal in things must in this world appear particular,' said Dinsmore.

Said the minor canon, who had a liking for science, 'I think the new physiology supports the suggestion that the Bishop's vertebrate may be a higher form of animal life including the organs and functions of lower forms. The stomach of the mammal is practically a jelly-fish, and——'

'Don't descend, like my Platonic universal, to anything more particular,' interrupted Dinsmore.

Compton remarked, 'It is quite in harmony with the laws of physical development that the ideal Christian Church should develop to include all forms of Christian life; but it can't include what is not alive, unless it first convert it into itself. My contention is that we have no right to admit that what is formless may yet be alive.'

'Vagueness consists in refusing to deny the contradictory of what we affirm,' said the Bishop.

'Just so,' said Compton.

'It also consists in supposing that affirmations which appear to oppose one another are contradictory,' said the Bishop.

The minor canon felt amused. He said, 'Which is a case of building half the arch and refusing to join the other half; when the whole falls back formless. Or a truth may be said

to reject its mate, and so return to the dust unperpetuate.'

'I could think of other illustrations,' said Dinsmore, 'but I don't see whither we tend.'

Compton looked at the Bishop. 'What you say is important; but the trouble is——' He paused, diffident, then said, 'I can't see, in the case of which we were speaking, that the opposition is not a contradiction.'

'Yes, I quite agree with you; that is where the trouble lies,' said the Bishop in a tone of finality.

'Exactly so,' said Compton, catching the tone.

There was a flicker of amusement under the eyelids of the minor canon. He admired sarcasm, and thought the Bishop an adept.

Dinsmore, with a truer instinct of heart, was sure that the Bishop had none but the kindest feeling; from this he inferred that the Bishop either agreed with Compton or had forgotten what he was talking about. 'I'm glad the opposition isn't strong in my parish,' he said. 'I've plenty on my hands without it. I'm always sorry for a man like Compton, who has to struggle with Dissent on the top of all other discouragements.'

Next morning the Bishop arranged for Compton to look over the cathedral library. He took Ethel into his own room to show her a new picture.

'I understand that you have been working quite a reformation in Mosford—a very good one,' said he, 'making your church workers and the people who don't come to church friends with one

another. It is the sort of thing we most sadly need all over the diocese. Now, will you tell me exactly what you did, and how you did it? What was the condition of things before you began, and when did you begin?’

Ethel was delighted to sit by his fire and tell her story. She had no sense of wrong concerning all the plans and actions which she laid before him. The amicable result of her deeds and her own recent change of opinion made her conscience perfectly clear. There was something about which it was not wholly at rest, but she had never allowed that item to become confused with all that had sprung from it.

When at last she was beginning to wander from facts into the school quarrel, in the hope of claiming him as an ally in her effort to modify Compton's opinions, the Bishop said, ‘It is only a few weeks since you began. It shows what determination and gentleness combined can effect in the hearts of men. That is the chief lesson we may learn from it.’

‘Yes, my lord,’ said Ethel; ‘I see now how terribly callous and slack I was before.’

‘What a pity that the love of God was not a sufficient motive to make you see and act!’

‘I do not quite understand you,’ said Ethel.

‘If the love of God had been a strong enough motive in your case, I should have been encouraged to think it might have proved so with other vicars' wives. I can't go about the diocese offering each of them some thousands of pounds as an incentive to brotherly love, can I?’

'I do not think I quite recognise my motives as you depict them, my lord.'

'Motives are always mixed. I am only judging of your governing motive as others will naturally do. You have had God always with you, but only the last few months have you had a rich relative with you. As I understand, he is free to leave his money to your husband or not as he chooses, and he greatly desiderates brotherly love!'

'Who has told you that Mr. Ward is rich?'

'Several people. I have been making inquiries about him lately. He gives large sums to many good objects at home and abroad. Men take too keen an interest in money not to track an anonymous donation to its source, unless the donor is a more habitual schemer than Mr. Ward. Then I was talking yesterday to a man who has a friend in Oxford who happened to know Mr. Ward in Canada. Did you not know in January that he was rich?'

'Oh no; I did not know it at all, my lord,' said Ethel.

'You did not know it in the beginning of February—did you not?—for it was then your efforts began.'

Until that moment Ethel had been sitting with a serene exterior. She had overcome so many difficulties of late, she had twisted about so many people's minds, she had made men and women think and do what they were determined not to think and do, that, at the beginning of the Bishop's inquiry into her motive, she had felt that

all she needed was to keep her wits about her, to smooth over any little unpleasantness, and convince him he was mistaken. But now that she was faced with a direct question, she began to realise that she could not tell him a direct lie.

'I do not understand at all why you should think——' she began, and paused, because something else he had said was pushing forward in the plane of her attention; 'as others will naturally judge,' he had said. If Mr. Ward's wealth was becoming known, would every one judge her thus? The Bishop's personal opinion became as nothing to her. Would the Browns judge as he had done? Would her husband detect? Had Ethel been a woman of the world as well as a worldly woman, she would have foreseen this hour of judgment; but she had always lived more or less in the glamour of her own piety. Something in the movement of her heart seemed to tighten. Her face grew pale. Try as she would, she could not check her growing fear. Would Mr. Ward accept the general conclusion as to her motive? In that case all she had done would be in vain. At first the thought of humiliation seemed terrible; a moment later the collapse of her cherished hope caused her still greater distress.

'You did know in the beginning of February that Mr. Ward possessed wealth?' the Bishop gently persisted.

'Yes, I did; but——'

'That is the point we want to get at to make your motive clear, is it not? Up to the end of January you were—the word is yours—"callous"

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as to the ill-feeling, the large misunderstanding, and lack of charity between Christians in your parish. You then learned that there was a fortune to be hoped for and became sensitive. We cannot regard your work as God-serving. Now let us look at the favourable side of it. You have done this good work to serve a good man; that is not wrong, even if he is going to pay you for it.'

In this Ethel felt that she was falsely accused; she began to right herself by indignant denial, and in her haste to do this she lost sight of the issue that had troubled her a minute before.

'I cannot understand, my lord, how you can for a moment have such an opinion of me. Mr. Ward has never offered me money or hinted at reward of any kind; he has never even asked me to do anything that I have done.'

'My language is perhaps rough, but all that I mean is that you expect to get this money, that Mr. Ward has suggested certain conditions to you.'

'Oh no; nothing of the kind.'

'Well, then, tell me how it is.'

'I never even spoke to Mr. Ward about his wealth, nor he to me. He is free to do as he likes.'

'Still, he cannot be blind to the change that has come since he told you he had money.'

'He never told me,' said Ethel.

'And you say that you never told him that you knew! I could not have believed it,' said the Bishop. Such sorrow and compassion were in this brief word that Ethel looked up amazed.

The Bishop walked to the window. Ethel was aware that he could not look at her for very participation in her shame; and yet it was some time before she felt ashamed. Her mind was so accustomed to confusion that nothing but that complete silence and the heart-stricken attitude of the Bishop would have been strong enough to force her to see the points which his mind had seized upon as convicting her of sin.

When he slowly came toward her she saw that he was not aware of the tears upon his face.

'And your husband—was he privy to all this?'

Ethel winced in the sudden searchlight of these words. The thought that her husband was suspected of being what she was, showed her what she was.

Blank misery made her face look grey and drawn. 'My husband!' she stammered; and then she rose up and held out hands of entreaty. 'Oh, where shall I go? where shall I hide? My husband can never have another hour of peace living with such a woman as I!' Then for a moment she forgot even her remorse. 'You know'—she looked eagerly—'you know him well enough to know that when he is told this he can never be happy again?'

The Bishop smiled through his tears: he was wholly unconscious of smile as of tears. 'Does your husband love you as much as that?' he asked tenderly.

'Oh,' she moaned, 'you don't know how he loves me! It will kill him, I think, if at first, at least, you cannot take me out of his sight.'

'You cannot get out of God's sight. God must go on living with you.'

Desperately she said, 'I do not care about that.'

'Yes; now you have got to the root of the whole trouble. You do not realise God's love for you, or God's sorrow over you, because it is not God whom you love.'

She made a gesture as if brushing away some figment. 'But my husband,' she moaned. 'Will you tell him?'

'I will not tell him, nor will I tell Mr. Ward; but you will.'

Something arrested her passion of self-loathing; she lifted heavy eyes. 'How do you know that I shall? How can you trust me to do it?'

'You have told yourself the truth; that is proof that God is restoring your soul.'

All her life Ethel Compton had courted good influences. For ten years she had sought to walk in the light of Compton's high emprise. In the graphic phrase of the early Church, she had 'sown to the spirit'; she had also 'sown to the flesh.' Natural law is not to be fooled, and the reaping in both kinds was certain, as the Bishop knew full well. Nor had he a doubt but that in this hour of storm and drought the harvest of the flesh must fail, choked by the crop of more vital impulses.

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CHAPTER XLIV

THE PALACE GARDEN

SOME hours later Ethel was in the palace garden. There she told her husband the circumstances and motives which had actuated her in the past weeks.

A few minutes before, Compton had sought her where she was sitting under the flickering emerald leaflets of an ancient lime. He had come in a happy humour to tell her that Dinsmore had paid his debt. He was delighted at this, because it evinced the strength of Dinsmore's character in untoward circumstances; and he knew that Ethel would be delighted to have the spending of a few pounds thus reclaimed. He had crossed the sunny lawn with a light step and a smile. He had found her with lifeless look, physically spent.

After she had made her explanation, Compton sat on the rustic bench, haggard and chill. She had at first no further word to say, feeling that it was no longer for her to express solicitude on his account. She had known since the first glimpse she had obtained of her own heart that to her husband the sin she had committed would seem, in her or in any one, more black and awful than it

did to the Bishop. She could not analyse this, but vaguely felt that it was not because the Bishop was less holy.

'How terrible!' whispered Compton with white lips. 'My God, how terrible!' and Ethel saw that in the immediate pain of the blow he knew not what he said or did, but crouched, as it were, only trying to live through these moments. During life's ordeals we are apt to take note of what we call trivial; she observed that he drew back from the light and warmth of the sun, which fell freely through the haze of green, to a part of the bench shadowed by the minster tower. She looked away from his misery.

Compton grew older by that marvellous power the spirit has to mould the outward frame for good or ill. Were those white threads in his dark hair before? Just now they showed for the first time. Had his shoulders drooped before? Now he stooped as with weight of years.

He got up and walked into the further darkness of the trees that stood thickly by the wall of the garden. Now, whether fanaticism be an evil or a good spirit, one thing is certain—it always catches a man at the moment when he thinks that he cares for nothing in the universe but righteousness.

As soon as Compton recalled himself he came back. 'My dear, the sin is wholly mine.'

She looked up in weak wonderment, feeling that any protest would come ill from her lips.

'I see it now,' he said. 'It is a sharp lesson, but God in His mercy shows me my inward sin.'

He put up his hand to shade his eyes, as if the light of heaven blinded him. Again he took a turn on the grass. 'Oh, my love!' he said, 'the sin is wholly mine, but you have suffered so far all alone!' Heedless of the open space around them he bent over her with a passionate caress.

'But, Cumnor,' she said, 'I don't think——'

'You don't know,' he said; 'but I know. I have been untrue to the message delivered to me; I have been false to the faith.'

'Indeed, my dear——' she began again.

'I have been uneasy for a long time,' he said, 'and now I see that my wretched vacillation, my weak indulgence of unworthy sentiment, has been in the sight of God a great sin. I have even doubted the power of the truth.'

'My dearest! my dearest!' she cried, wholly forgetting herself in her desire to draw his attention to the plain fact that she was the sinner.

'Do not interrupt me,' he said with white lips. He stood between her and the sunshine as he denounced himself. 'You do not know how often, in thinking out my sermons, I have allowed myself to deviate from Catholic truth. I have allowed myself to think of Mr. Latimer, and been afraid to offend him. I, God's minister, with God's truth in my heart, have refrained from its clear reiteration, which was my first duty.'

Ethel gazed with eyes quickened by a great tenderness of pity and love, and as she looked her heart sank lower than before; she did not know why; she was beyond all power of connected thought.

'I have even—how hard it will be for you to believe it!—I have even thought of women like Oriane Graham, women who are apt to find God's truth a stumbling-block because they worship the wisdom of this world; and I have been afraid to emphasise the exclusive claim of the Church lest they should stumble—as if I, with my puny finesse, could decide what part of the truth might be spoken when the whole was delivered to me to speak!'

His whole attitude denoted self-abasement. In sheer weariness she looked away from his humiliation. The spring sunshine fell upon the gentle lines of the minster roof and lighted up the old palace with gleam and glint on mossy tile and ivied wall. In the borders the tulips stood like coloured candles lit from the very source of light. Then she looked back at the man she loved, who seemed in such dark contrast to the peace and beauty of that enclosed garden that involuntarily her mind for a moment accused him of lashing himself merely in order to rack her heart.

She cried, 'Cumnor! do you think I do not know how bad it was? If I had not seen my wickedness, I could not have told you; but I have wept all the tears I have strength to weep; I have said to God all that I have strength to say. I am too tired now to think or even feel, except that pity for you is breaking my heart.'

'You do not understand what I am telling you,' he resumed. 'It was only because I have been so faithless that God let this temptation assail you,

that He let you fall, in order that we might both see to the fullest extent that a mistaken charity, a mistaken tolerance, is not true charity, is indeed the very denial of the only truth by which the world can be saved.'

She had no strength to stem the current of his thought, and had she been able to follow him her mind might have been swept into the rapid current of his conclusion. As it was she lost the thread of his words and dumbly waited.

'I have been deterred again and again from clearly proclaiming the authority and power of the Church by my weak affection for my uncle. Ethel, if he died without desiring or receiving the last sacrament, his infinite loss would be my eternal shame.'

The minster chimes rang out the hour at which they had arranged to leave the palace. Compton started; but he was now inspired by new hope. 'It is time to go and put our repentance into practice. Come, dearest; we will root out from our hearts all that has led us to a mistaken weakness in the guise of charity. You remember that not long since you saw the duty far more clearly than I, until my sin obscured the light of God in your heart.' It never occurred to him that Ethel's repentance might not involve her whole-hearted return to her old point of view. Indeed, it was the belief that they were now at one again that had given him a fierce pleasure in taking all the sin to himself.

She only said brokenly, 'I cannot go. Leave me a little while. I will come to you when I can.'

The Bishop kept Ethel for a week at the palace. He watched Compton's hurried departure with a puzzled mind. There was a light of tense purpose in his face, a haste in his carriage, a constraint in his farewell to his wife which gave his host a vague feeling of disappointment.

In Ethel the Bishop was not disappointed. He thought that the next steps of her life could only be made wholesome by some external work of a nature she had shown herself well fitted to do. He took pains to lay before her his hopes and plans for woman's work in the diocese. His hopes were high; his plans, tending to little immediate outward change, carried in them the seeds of deep reformation.

Ethel did not speak much. She sat day after day in the dark minster, absorbed in prayer or listening to the flute-like voices of the choir boys. She found it impossible at first to return in thought to Mosford, and much easier to give her mind to the schemes about which the Bishop asked her advice. By degrees she summoned courage to lay her finger here and there on practical difficulties.

'How many of these high walls which you see are insurmountable?' he asked sharply.

'None; but we might save our strength by going round to the gate in some of them.'

He looked at her keenly. He was aware that he had found in this woman not only a loyal friend but a gifted helper. 'You have given the right answer,' he said briefly. 'Now point out the gates and find the keys to them.'

This exercise of thought and the quiet confidence with which he treated her renewed her strength. Her mind turned more and more to her husband and her own home duties. Cumnor wrote to her every day long letters breathing love and courage, full of reiteration of all he had said in the garden, full of the conviction that she agreed with all he said.

Try as she would, Ethel could no longer see the complexity of life in the proportion in which he saw it; in her mind the emphasis now lay on love, and in his it was on doctrine. In her desire to please the old man whose hand grasped so much gold she had watched his every expression, learned to know when she pleased him deeply, and when moderately, and when she grieved his heart. Thus gazing, thus labouring with single purpose, she had become changed, clothed in part with his spirit. This is the most powerful of all forms of training. She could not, as Cumnor expected, root out Mr. Ward's ideas wholly from her heart. True or false, they had become in some degree her very self, and, as it seemed to her, her own experience of despair and the renewal of faith taught her that the ways of God are more beautiful, and God Himself more accessible, than she had known. Then, too, the Bishop, whose standpoint again was different, had not travailed in vain for the new birth of her soul. The whole eager life of the brisk little man seemed to her like a sunlit spire pointing Godward.

At length, when her home-going approached, she diffidently introduced her personal problems

again to the Bishop's notice. She gave him some of her husband's letters, hoping that he would comment upon their main drift.

As he read he only said, 'There is a mood which God sometimes requires in order that we may hear Him speak—it is self-effacement. Mr. Compton calls it "self-abasement," but I think perhaps that is just a slip.'

It was the sort of remark that made superficial people call the Bishop 'sarcastic.' Ethel did not so interpret it. 'Do you consider that I ought to think just what he thinks?'

'Did you ever think just alike on religious matters?' he asked briskly. 'If you did, one of you was not spiritually alive. It is only an inanimate thing that can be the same as another.'

Ethel received no further advice from him.

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CHAPTER XLV

ORIANE'S BEGGING

No spring was ever more glorious than that in whose long, fragrant days Oriane taught herself to believe that for her there was no more on this earth any springtime of natural joy. She did not mope; she did not exaggerate; she was aware that that which is missed seems perfect, and nothing that is gained can ever be perfect. It was not perfection or any dream-like joy that she really desired, but her whole mental picture of what she wanted was summed up in the thought of one man's lonely life and the sunshine she might have brought into it. Nor was she able to gain comfort from the notion that she could worship God the better and do some better work because her healthy capacity for friendship remained unsatisfied. She was by constitution and training quite unable to believe in the ascetic's God. Something had gone wrong; but she had the faith which believes that somewhere further on there is fulness of life. In the meantime she prayed for a lifework, and studied the record of the home slum and the foreign mission. She

made a point of trying to enjoy herself every day, and was baffled to find that pleasure was not possible.

The day after Mr. Compton returned to the vicarage, Oriane had a note from the Bishop.

'I have seen Professor Pye,' it ran. 'I think the work in which he is specially interested of great importance. There is no reason why you should not show Mr. Ward the article to which I drew your attention. You need not urge the matter. I think you were right in asking me to speak to your friend. I want you to take it on my authority that she is worthy of your utmost affection and needs your friendship. In neither case has your name been mentioned.'

At first Oriane's interest was fixed only on the last line. How much she desired that her action on his behalf might have been told to Nathaniel Pye she only knew when thus assured of the Bishop's most natural discretion. The motherly nature, which was strong in her, went out to the man she loved. She wanted him to have the toy he cried for, for no better reason than that he wanted it; she would also have liked the pleasure of giving it to him, but that might not be.

Next day, under Mr. Ward's direction, she was tying up the superabundant flowers of his little garden.

'I hear,' said he, 'that by degrees you've given every woman and child in Mosford a ride in the motor car, and the new sensation of seeing what banks of clover and fields of mustard look like when they are turned into streaks of coloured

light. You've given them sympathy with the folks inside motor cars as well as with the folks outside. That's all good, you know, for it lessens this class antipathy and makes the inside of their minds larger so that there's more room for God.'

Oriane looked at him with solicitude. He was sitting still in the sunshine where six months ago he would have been working.

His thought responded to hers, often without a word between them. 'Yes; I'm not good for much gardening these warm days. It's twelve years since I was threescore and ten. When a man ceases to work he ought soon to go to a new life where he can work again. I am thinking that I shall be leaving you all pretty soon now. Sally will have Ethel and the children, and she won't be long behind me.'

It needed but a gentle touch to break the fine shell of fortitude that Oriane had so long thrown over her life. She began to weep silently, and her tears fell upon the flowers.

'Nay, now, pretty one,' said the old man gently.

'I lose everything I care for as soon as I care for it,' said she; 'but I know you will think I ought to be quite satisfied.'

'"Satisfied"! he cried with energy. 'Why is it your duty to be satisfied? What have you to satisfy you?'

'I have God, and this beautiful earth—ought not that to be enough?'

He spoke eagerly, 'It's a damnable thing to say an "ought" that God doesn't say, for it

certainly keeps you from hearing some "ought" that He does say. If God had meant you to be satisfied, He'd have made you differently. God's thought of what ought to satisfy you is written in every power He has given you.

'We are all cramped in one way or another. What do you call the quality we ought to have to prevent too much wailing?'

'The determination to make the best of a bad business. It requires a high sort of faith to say, "God's in His heaven though things are wrong in the world"; but that's the only sort of faith that removes mountains.'

'Just to bring it down to here and to me,' said Oriane, 'what mountain can I move?'

He went on, 'It's a most exhilarating business, the moving of mountains. Even if one is cramped in by some wrong condition, it takes away the cramped feeling. For example, Sally and I ought to have our children to be doing their share of work in the world when we are gone. If we'd known what we do now of God's will, they would not have faded away too soon. But the knowledge that their premature going was all wrong has given me the faith to call back many another man's child from the gates of death. Something has gone wrong in your life, and you can't turn the hands of the clock back. You will find that the same sort of wrong is hurting other folks; that's the sort of wrong you will have strength to move.'

The noonday bloom of the old man's garden brimmed over the palings. The air, fresh and warm, was filled with spice.

'It is true,' said Oriane, 'that what stunts me has the same blighting influence on regiments of gentlewomen and the sort of men who, having no originality, are all too stupid to see where the harm lies. It is that we exercise our conceited religion, our twopenny politics, our inane sociabilities—we exercise them all within walls of prejudice; and if we don't we find ourselves outcast. If you only whisper the heresy that the walls do not reach all the way up to heaven, you are suspect. Personally, I think the outcast life more interesting, but it is lonely, it is terribly lonely! because all the people who are not in one set of walls are in another set. It's not a case of caste and pariah at all; it is caste against caste, and each in need of the other all the time.'

'It's not as bad as that.'

'You have never been inside any wall; you don't know how bad it is.'

She leaned gloomily on the spade she had been using, her eyes on the ground. All the warm scents of the garden brought to mind the memories of certain spring days when the only man who, by some mysterious power, was able to enlarge her life, had come and gone again. She was thinking of him intensely, and of the many years in which his prejudices and hers had probably been making mutual understanding more and more difficult.

'It's only love that can pull down the walls,' said the old man dreamily.

She started, but perceived that he had only the general question in mind. 'The most that love can do is to overleap them in some cases,' she said.

'That would be more than half selfishness. Better get some battering engine and set love to work it!'

'Yes!' But her mind reverted to her reverie.

And again he took up her thought as if she had spoken it. It was plain that increasing weakness was laying his sympathetic nature more open to that strong influence we call telepathic; but, true to its most illusive nature, he caught only fragments of her thoughts and remained ignorant of their purport.

'It's the sort of thing, my dear friend, Nathaniel Pye and the Bishop are both working at; but, in my opinion, they neither of them see how far it's going to carry them. The trouble is that our hearts and ideas are much too small, and we can't help fancying that God is small to match. Now, one thing that will help us to get a true Christian tolerance is to steep our minds for a bit in the joys and sorrows, the virtues and worship, of the hordes of folk like us, just as far advanced in body and soul as we are, who lived for centuries and centuries before our Lord came, or before the Jews were Jews. No one can blame them for not accepting our notions. It is this insidious idea that people are to be blamed for not agreeing with us that does the mischief.'

Oriane's heart leaped at the unexpected reference to the work whose utility she had come to advocate, but he seemed to pass too easily from the particular to the general to stay at one thought.

He went on, 'The Christian era so far is only

like a month out of a boy's life when he is about fifteen ; but when you get hold of the idea that our Lord came to be a parable of how God thinks and acts and suffers and saves—has done, will do, always, everywhere—then it's easy to believe both that He was God as well as man, and that it takes the outcome of all religions to interpret Him.'

'I want to stop at one point—you feel we must think from the racial standpoint?'

'Well, I think if we are going to make use of big phrases like "the salvation of the world" or "a universal religion" or "Catholic doctrine," let us have some notion of what they must mean to cover facts.'

'Do you think Mr. Pye's digging contributes to that end?'

'I never see him without saying, "Go on, and God be with you."'

'He will need a great deal of money ; and money seems to be so much needed for mission work at home and abroad. I can't make up my mind whether or not it would be right to take money from mission work to dig with.'

'He is well enough able to decide which is the more important. We must remember God cared for these old deaders as much as for us, and it is our business to find out about them.' In a minute he added, 'Sally told me you were saying my friend Nathaniel wanted money ; but I told her I felt sure you were mistaken. He lives very simply and gives away a lot ; there never was a man who wanted it less.'

'He doesn't care for anything less than a very

big sum,' she said boldly; and then, as her companion turned surprised eyes upon her, she added, 'The Bishop showed me that article Mr. Pye wrote asking for money.'

"Article?" said the old man. 'What article? Could you find the paper for me?'

Oriane found it in the pocket of her gardening apron, and the old man did not express the least surprise at the coincidence. She had been working up the subject for weeks with the hope of this hour. She spread before him a tale every detail of which fascinated her own imagination—the lost pleasure city, the treasures it contained, the wild recess of mountainous desert in which the Professor believed it would be found, the difficulty and expense of the excavation, the important results.

'I think,' said the old man, 'he ought to have told me himself. It wasn't quite friendly of Nathaniel.'

'Oh, don't say that. He wanted to tell you; it was my fault.'

'Nay, now, my pretty one!' It was his favourite way of chiding her.

'But indeed it is true'; and to pass over this point quickly Oriane returned to her plea for the ruined palaces so long hidden in drifted sand. 'He was a good prince,' she said; 'as we should say, a serious-minded youth in an age of pleasure. He married an Israelitish princess; we do not know why—perhaps for purposes of state, perhaps only because she was beautiful and he loved her. He built this treasure palace—perhaps to retire there with her from the world, perhaps to get

time for thought and study. Perhaps he learned to worship her God. He certainly had Hebrew scholars at his court. There are three letters, and a fragment of another, which he wrote; and in one of them he speaks of his wife and of two Hebrew sages who had come to instruct her in matters concerning her nation. Two other letters give orders to his steward for the purchase of wood and stone for the building of these palaces. He also speaks of commanding the scribes to make copies of many books—that is the point of intense interest; if these copies are found——'

“‘If,’” said the old man gently. “‘If,” my pretty one, what then?’

‘Then, of course, we don’t know in the least what they might be, but they might be tremendously important.’

‘It’s a great speculation,’ said the old man shrewdly.

‘Yes,’ she said sadly; ‘yes, it is.’

‘But there never was any great thing done in this world that was not a speculation to begin with,’ said he.

‘Mission work is a speculation too—a magnificent speculation, and one can’t invest in one thing without taking money out of another,’ she rejoined.

‘Don’t be too sure of that. There’s a way of tapping the resources of the universe at the main. I don’t exactly understand it, but it’s like the pansies and sweet-peas—the more you pluck them, the more they grow. They fetch themselves out of the light and the air and the earth. And I’ve

often noticed that it's the men who give most to one thing who give most to another, and have most left. But, mind you, it isn't always the case. There were many widows in Israel who had given poor men cakes and were the poorer for giving; but Elijah and a heathen woman managed together to tap the unfailing supply. It's only an old story, but there's a tremendous truth at the bottom of it. There's some law of life that governs, and we haven't just caught it yet.'

His amazing mental energy was rushing into this channel of thought; it was only by an effort that she recalled the subject of the digging. 'I don't know in the least how much money you have, Mr. Ward,' she added.

'No more do I,' he said with a sober twinkle.

'You must know!'

'It has a hilarious way of accumulating if one stops baling.' He paused; his face grew sober. 'I get tired of baling; I am too old to serve tables; I must ordain some younger man soon.'

She did not feel that she could say more. There was a curious sacredness about the reserve the old man sometimes threw into his manner, usually as open as a child's.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE BURDEN OF WEALTH

EVERY one in Mosford made some remark about the vicar's appearance in the first few days after his return. He did not look ill or tired. His step was quicker, his manner more decided; there was more light in his eyes; peace had taken the place of a certain manifest anxiety that before had characterised his expression. Yet the people said that he had seen trouble. The poor opined that he had 'had words' with the Bishop. Mrs. Brown and her daughters were in distress lest some point of ritual might have been forbidden. Never before had Compton got through so much parish business in a few days.

He was experiencing the relief of a mind at unity with itself. Compton had never forgotten the accusation of uncharitableness which his uncle had brought against him. It had troubled him much; but now, although the controversy raised by the Education Bill was raging with increased rather than abated heat, Compton felt no uneasiness: again the duty of war seemed clear.

Besides this self-unity, the anticipation of unity

in his house gave him relief. He never doubted that with her confession of sin Ethel had abjured her new ideas.

The vicar had fallen into the way of announcing his sermons under more or less interesting titles, a method of attracting working men to church which had been recommended by a guild of parish priests to which he belonged. The factories of new Mosford were employing more and more labour, and it was becoming painfully apparent that the Church congregation did not reflect the growth of the place. John Compton had a fastidious taste and disliked sensational methods, but he was more than willing to play the fool if so men might be won. His announcement this week was, 'The Duties of Christian Love.'

Mr. Ward saw the announcement. How much he longed that this one kinsman of his should be worthy of his calling no words could say. His heart was a deep, strong well of paternal love, and although it embraced the whole generation to which his own children, had they lived, would have belonged, it was only natural that, since he had come to know his sister's son, it should centre most intensely on him. This strength of natural affection had enabled the old man to bridge over all minor differences between them. He had at first felt shocked, felt almost disgusted, at certain fantastic vestments, gestures, and genuflexions which seemed to him to belittle Divine majesty and travesty human dignity. But he swiftly amassed some good books on Christian ritual and read himself, if not into sympathy with his nephew,

into some understanding of his point of view. He often argued the case with his wife, who remained to the last lovingly obdurate on this point.

'You see, Sally,' he said, 'it isn't that he thinks that the Heavenly Father cares about embroideries and bob-curtsies, but that sinful men and women like us need all the reminders we can have of what our attitude must be in coming to God, and all the helps we can have to get into the right attitude.'

'Nothing could help me less than to see a man make a bob-curtsy. Ethel, in the pew, can do it with more grace, although even then it looks foolish. When I see John do it, standing sideways in the singing seat, I feel about as far away from thoughts of God as I can get.'

'You are wrong, Sally. The customs of all nations show that the outward expression of reverence, like modesty, depends upon the association of ideas. Whatever people are accustomed to do when they feel reverent seems to them to express reverence. You know very well how our old Scotch neighbour used to think it so wickedly irreverent of the English folk to gabble through the psalms as quick as they could go; and they thought he was irreverent because he prayed sitting in his pew. As far as reverence goes, I think what John thinks is, that if you must associate reverence with some outward actions, you should bring your actions into line with those that some part of the Church has practised all along. You see, all this acting and these bright-coloured dresses make a

sort of living picture, done to teach the people ; and in times when they couldn't read they might need to get hold of spiritual truth that way.'

'But they can read now,' said she.

'Part of it is very pretty, you know, Sally—very pretty indeed—especially when the sun shines in a long ray through the side window. And whatever is pretty must be pleasing to the Lord.'

'Nothing can make a man doing a bob-curtsey look pretty,' said the old lady ; 'but I just shut my eyes and try not to look. I daresay by the time the children are grown up John may have been brought out into a larger place.'

'I don't know,' said the old man ; 'I don't know that we can reckon on that ; but our question is, whether, if Johnnie remains what he is now, he would help on the coming of the Kingdom as well in his way as we should in ours. We all have the spirit of God in earthen vessels ; the whole question is, how much of the spirit of God John has got.'

'As to that,' said the old lady placidly, 'I don't see that John's child's-play does much harm. It seems to me innocent enough, but silly. But, you know, I always say Nathaniel will do more good with the money.'

The old man leaned back in his chair ; he did not feel inclined to go into the sacerdotal question. In his affection for his nephew he had learned that ritual may be looked at in two ways—as making certain spiritual ideas more material by giving them material expression, or as making all material things spiritual by linking material expression inseparably to man's most spiritual experiences.

He was willing enough to believe that the majority of ritualists might hold an almost divine conception of the sacredness of the common things of life. Never having been brought into that antagonism toward any religious sect commonly induced by the strivings of opposing religious beliefs in the small, crowded spaces of old countries, he came to the consideration of religious ideas hitherto foreign to his mind without that inherited bias which makes our neighbours' religion a cause of offence to most of us.

Thus, before the last days of his life came, he had lost all scruple about odd points of form or doctrine. His whole mind was centred upon having some plain indication that, in what seemed to him the essential point of the larger charity, John Compton was whole-heartedly making straight the way of the Lord. It was with intense eagerness that he looked forward to hearing this sermon on the duties of Christian love ; but when the end of the week came he was no longer able to go to church.

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CHAPTER XLVII

THE LAST TESTAMENT

ETHEL was to return on the Monday morning. She wrote to her husband that she would make her confession to Mr. Ward before she got home, going to the cottage on her way from the station.

When Compton had prepared his sermon on the Saturday it occurred to him that he might save his wife a painful duty, and discharge his own soul of a sacred obligation, if he told the old man himself of Ethel's temptation and fall and of his own unworthy weakness and repentance. He went to the cottage early in the evening, but the old man had felt weary and gone to bed. Compton was not to be put off; he found time on his busiest day to go in for an hour before matins.

His uncle was sitting in an easy chair drawn up before the window which was open to the garden. His wife had arranged specimens of all his favourite flowers in a little row of vases on the narrow sill. They fairly sparkled and glowed in the flood of sunshine.

He was not ill; he would not admit feeling any special weakness; he was only tired and must rest.

Compton sat before him and told his story, too full of the shame which he took to himself to perceive how the recital fell on his hearers' hearts. Neither of them spoke till it was finished.

'Well, Johnnie, your wife's trouble, I am sure, reflects on me. Concealment was an old man's folly.'

Compton knelt by the old man's side, and, taking the aged hand, pressed it to his lips. The morning sunlight fell in broad ray upon them. There was a certain family resemblance between the two, but the face of the younger man was like a fine carving in its beauty of outline, and it formed a strange contrast to the massive strength of the older face.

'I cannot take your money,' said Compton. 'It is because I love you I will not. Bequeath it to whom you will; my blessing shall go to those whom you enrich. But I want to tell you now, and I have not had courage to tell you before, what it is that has kept us apart. It is the idea of what is worth living for about which we differ. It is my lifework to preach the Gospel of God's grace and I have received it; and you—whatever sympathy you may have with me—reject the only means offered, as far as I know, whereby that grace comes to sinful men. Look beyond me and my imperfections to the wonderful condescension of God in coming to men in ways which they can apprehend, making the very limitations of human nature the means by which He reveals Himself. You have been taught to listen to your own heart instead of to the voice of the Church, by which God speaks

by which alone His grace is conveyed. If you, with all your longing for holiness and rightness, will only submit your mind to the teaching of Holy Church, you will see the beautiful economy of it.'

'Say on,' said the old man. 'All that you say of God's loving grace toward human limitations can only err by falling short of the reality, never by exceeding it.'

'Do not speak as if you agreed with me; you do not,' continued the priest faithfully. 'The teaching of the Church, the voice of the saints through all the ages, is that by the hands of men as imperfect as the rest, but endowed with power from on high, God waits to give His blessing and His grace; and whoever refuses to put himself in the channel of that grace has no right to claim it. To get the Father's blessing we must become little children; to share the life of our Lord we must partake of Him, remembering His own words, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life." This sacred mystery is the charge of the Church. She exists to show it forth, to set forth Christ on the altar—the only source of life to a dying world. But you have so far set aside this assured means of grace. It is the assurance that comes only from submission to the Church, and acceptance of Divine pardon and strength at her hands, that I come to press upon you.'

Compton had bowed his head in speaking, and the old man, looking at him with great affection, murmured a blessing.

'You will think about it?' said Compton eagerly. 'As you cannot come to church to-day, I will leave you the sermon I am going to preach. I know it by heart. Do you read it while I preach.'

Compton went immediately into the church. The congregation was gathered. That morning he preached, with eloquence as never before, an impassioned plea for the recognition of the Catholic Church as the only certain channel of God's grace.

He put before his hearers that their first and supreme duty was love to God, and that its supreme and all-important expression must be their frequent and reverent presence at the Holy Eucharist. The second great duty, love to their fellow-man, was inoperative until it found expression in leading him also to share the blessing of the great Sacrifice of the altar, or at least warning him of the terrible danger incurred by neglect. This led the preacher to a confession that he had failed in his love to them and an expression of his deep repentance for that failure. 'There are some of you,' he went on, 'who hold it no sin to join with schismatic bodies in their worship. I am here to tell you, by the authority of the historic Church, nay, by the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, that to do so is a grievous sin. There is a living Body of the living Christ in the world, and in this country the Church of England is that Body. There are more of you, perhaps, who hold lightly the privilege your Church offers, and would seek God apart. The daily Sacrifice does not draw you; you are content to live receiving your Lord only at long

intervals, and then coming with but perfunctory notions of the significance of your act. There are those among you who think we can preach Christ to our youngest children ignoring His supreme revelation of Himself in the Holy Eucharist. Listen to God's voice speaking through me and telling you that the mystery of redemption set forth in that simple rite must be the earliest lesson of childhood, as it is the only hope and stay of the mature saint. The Church's ministers (although unworthy) are Christ's ministers; their acts are His acts, and their teaching His teaching. If it were not for this conviction, I should feel that there was no certainty in any form of religion; and when everything is indefinite and vague there cannot be truly either faith or hope.'

When Compton had left the old couple alone together, Mr. Ward said, 'You're inclined to be angry with Johnnie.'

'How do you know that?' asked she, for she was sitting behind him.

'Oh, I can see you, my dear; my heart sees you, even though you're hiding. There's nothing to be angry about. Do you think I am too old to learn anything?'

Mrs. Ward did not deny that she resented the idea that her husband had yet to learn the essentials of Christianity. She said nothing.

'Now,' said he gently, 'you're not angry with Ethel, although you know she has tried to deceive us.'

'Poor thing! How much she must have wanted the money!' said Mrs. Ward.

'Yes, I know you have forgiven her; and you're not angry with me, although you suspected long ago what was in her mind, and I wouldn't believe you: you said I was leading her on, but I wouldn't be warned. We have both done wrong—Ethel and I—and you don't resent it. But Johnnie has only done his best—what he thinks his highest duty—and you are angry!'

'Well,' said the old lady, 'and any one else would feel as I do.'

'Ay,' said he, 'and there's something deep at the bottom of the feeling, but I can't get at the rights and the wrongs of it to-day, Sally.' He passed his hand over his brow.

They read the sermon sitting hand in hand and turning over the leaves together.

Afterwards she said, 'You will write your will to-day, John, and then it will be off your mind and you can enjoy yourself; for now we know all there is to know.'

He knew it to be his wife's most earnest wish that she should not have more than the joint annuity on which they both now lived, and which he had worked so hard for many a year to obtain for her.

'Very well,' he said; 'bring me a bit of paper—a little bit will do.'

She placed pen and paper before him.

'You'll give John what Ethel's been wanting so much, my dear, won't you? You noticed John said she thought you had only £500 a month.'

'What was it Johnnie said?' he asked dreamily; '—that I might bequeath the money to whom

I would and his blessing would go with it, but he wouldn't have it himself? We'll give that much straight to Ethel, my dear, and she'll use it for him and the children. It's commonly God's way to give people what they'll risk their souls to get. God is more merciful than that nephew of mine; he'd want her to face poverty with him all her life because of this sin. It isn't God's way.'

That morning the old man had not eaten his breakfast, and his wife now left him to make ready a nourishing drink. When she came back he had written a few clear lines on a piece of notepaper and appended his signature in a firm hand. Then he had fallen into a happy sleep. She did not wake him, but sat by him a while, and before she was aware, he passed quietly and unconsciously into the spirit world, smiling as if his last breath had brought him a happy dream.

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CHAPTER XLVIII

LINES THAT MEET IN INFINITY

AFTER the sermon Oriane walked home with Mr. Latimer. He was always alone in his pew, but he commonly went to his son's house for luncheon on Sunday. At this time Willie with his wife and children were at the sea. The squire, who, since his wife died, had never cared to drive on Sunday, had a long, hot walk to take over the fields to the Hall. Oriane went with him because she knew that he would be lonely and distressed.

'It isn't for myself that I care,' he said at length.

'I care for myself,' said Oriane. 'It's the only church within four miles. I do not feel that it is honest to appear to approve that sort of thing.'

'It's about Willie and Diana and the lads that I am concerned. At my time of life it doesn't matter much what a man preaches; but I had hoped——'

'Yes; I know,' said Oriane.

'I thought Willie might begin to take his lads to church now. It may be an old-fashioned

notion, but I'd like to see Willie and Diana and the children sitting in church on Sunday morning; and I thought, now that Diana is getting so strong——

There was again a pause. With the reticence of his race the squire would have found it as hard to suggest that his son had begun to say his prayers again as he would have found it to breathe a word concerning his own private devotions.

'I understand,' said Oriane. And then she said, 'I suppose you wouldn't want them to go to the chapel?'

'No; certainly not.'

'Then you agree with the vicar so far, that that would be wrong?'

'Not at all. It's not wrong for the lower classes, as long as it isn't political—and Ethel Compton told me herself that the tales against the Coles were exaggerated. I'd sooner the lower classes were Methodists than Catholics; but Dissent isn't for educated people.'

Oriane sighed and turned home again. The ox-eyed daisies stood in warm, silent crowds; the late wreaths of May on the hedges were turning pink, the laburnums dropping gold.

In a meadow by the river she found Miss Brown sitting under a tree conning a lesson for her afternoon class. She rose when she saw Oriane to give an affectionate greeting. She spoke of the exquisite weather in a glow of unusual happiness.

'I hope,' she said gently—Oriane noticed that there was uncommon gentleness in her tone—

'that you liked the vicar this morning. We liked him so much. Mother feels he is advancing. Oh, Miss Graham, if we could only bring the church life of Mosford up to the level he desires!'

'But I could not accept the vicar's dogmatic assertions to-day,' said Oriane.

'I don't see what there is for plain people, especially women, that can compare with Catholic doctrine. I, for instance, have no head for metaphysics; I don't understand abstract things. How can any one feel at home in the world unless they can feel that God Himself is on the altar in the church, and that we can go to Him there just as children go to a mother? It's something so very simple that we need—just to know that He is there, and that we can speak to Him there every day. It makes the whole joy and sacredness of life; and we feel that the dear vicar has never before felt with us so entirely as he does now.'

Oriane passed on and asked herself if she had any valid reason for preferring that the Latimers should be satisfied at the expense of the Browns. It seemed to her so clear that what the church and its ceremonies would always be to the Browns, sky and sunshine would always be to the Latimers. They could never think alike.

When she neared home Miss Kennedy was looking out for her. Miss Kennedy had doffed her soft-hued Sunday summer finery, and was dressed in black. She was going to sit with Mrs. Ward at the cottage, but must see Oriane first.

The marks of tears and the sober garb arrested Oriane. 'Is it Mr. Ward?' she asked.

Oriane stood on the house steps and looked over the heaping snowberry shrubs to the west, where she had once seen the moon set.

After a while disappointment intruded upon pure grief. She had hoped to talk to the old man many times more about his friend Nathaniel and his work. She had only broken the ground; she had meant to say so much more. Now that hope, like others, perhaps was gone.

'I am sure we ought to be glad,' she said. 'The vicar would have misunderstood him more and more, and that was his greatest grief.'

In a little while the aunt said: 'My dear, a strange thing has happened. I may as well tell you at once, for every one is talking of it. It seems that he was a very rich man—very rich. He had more money than we are accustomed to think about. He passed away just after making his will, and those who went in to help Mrs. Ward saw it. The vicar tells me he knew that he had something to bequeath, but he had no idea it was so much.'

Oriane held her breath. 'I suppose,' she said, 'that it all goes to Mr. Compton?'

'That is what is so strange. He has left a considerable sum to Ethel—quite enough to make them easy; but—much more strange—the rest all goes to Professor Pye. Did you know that they were such close friends?'

Oriane turned away to hide the pleasure she felt. 'It is not exactly for himself,' said Miss

Kennedy, 'and yet he has it unreservedly. The phrase is, "satisfied that he will use it for the welfare of the world."'

Nathaniel Pye came down to Mosford. He spent three days with Mrs. Ward. No doubt his every hour was occupied in gathering up the many threads of the old man's benevolence. No doubt every moment he could spare from his work as executor it was his pleasure as well as his duty to devote wholly to the sorrowing wife. Miss Kennedy, guarding ^{for} the hour the simple *menage* of the cottage, saw him frequently. Oriane did not see him, except across the grave at the simple funeral.

There was only one other guest at the grave. The Bishop happened to hear the appointed hour in a broken-hearted letter from Ethel; he came trotting up from the station without a word to any one, to stand in silent respect while the old man's body was laid away under the flower of the grass.

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CHAPTER XLIX

ORIANE'S PARABLES

WHEN summer was again passing into autumn, Compton came early one morning into Miss Kennedy's house on an errand to Oriane.

Outside, the garden was fading. The roses had strewn all their petals on the ground, and here and there the first sere leaves were falling from shrub and tree. Inside, the room was full of light and beauty. With its white chintzes and rose-coloured hangings, and its small but exquisite pictures, it suggested the feminine side of life at its fairest. Oriane came in to see him, stately in her white summer gown. She sat among pink cushions to hear his errand.

'I had a letter from Professor Pye this morning,' Compton began. 'He has gone to the East; he writes just before leaving. He says that, as my uncle's executor, he wishes you to have a gift in memory of him, and he asks me to beg your acceptance of it. He supposes that Mrs. Ward may have already given you a small personal remembrance; but my uncle's belongings were few and simple, and as so much was confided to

his own discretion, he judges that my uncle would like you to have something of value as a small acknowledgment of your many kindnesses to him.'

Compton handed her a packet. It was addressed to him, but he had not had the curiosity to investigate it further after taking out the letter.

Oriane opened it, and was startled by the flash of jewels in a costly ornament.

'You need not be disturbed,' said Compton, smiling kindly. 'He regards the money as not his own, but to be given away. In my uncle's name I think this is well done.'

She looked at him for a moment. His face showed entire satisfaction. Never had the most critical eye in Mosford detected in Compton the slightest regret that so much wealth had passed him.

'You do not care in the very least for either jewels or gold, Mr. Compton?' said Oriane. 'Why should it give you, apparently, such pleasure that I should receive this?'

'Oh,' said he, 'I like to see them on Ethel; and the children will have their share by and by. All women should have their share.'

'I am glad you are pleased,' she said. 'Did Mr. Pye give any address to which I can send my thanks?'

'No; he did not. He asked me to acknowledge its receipt to his bankers. He has made some arrangement about his work and is posting away to the North Syrian desert.'

Compton rose to go. He was looking thin and worn. He had not had an easy summer, as

Mosford people knew. He had met with some opposition to the more pronounced doctrine he had lately been teaching. The Latimers were repulsed, the working men indifferent, and he had not as yet found any enthusiastic support except from a few, chiefly women.

Oriane saw how worn he looked. Her resolve was made. 'I wish you would wait and hear something that I have to say.'

As a long familiar friend, he rested against the window-sill while he waited.

'What I am going to say is a warning which I feel is given me to utter. I must say it, because I have suffered so much; and you must hear it, because you were the cause of my suffering. You will realise how painful it is to me to speak, because my speech involves a confession.'

He looked at her in great surprise. About her all the beautiful things in the room gleamed or glowed, repeating the outer summer. The jewel she held lightly in her finger-tips flashed, a focus of light. Oriane herself, tall and strong and vigorous, with her crown of golden hair, seemed to him as far removed from suffering and aught that could cause her shame as a human being might be. The flush of youth was still on her cheek. Yet stay! He had never noticed before, though now he knew, that Oriane was no longer young. The summer of her life was almost gone; the laughter he always associated with her grey eyes was no longer there.

Oriane went on quickly, 'It is part of your vocation to bury confessions in your own breast.'

He bowed. His figure assumed a less shrunken air as he thought of his vocation.

'I am not going to confess my sins, but something much harder to speak of, although wholly right. When I was young the man of whom we have been speaking loved me—and I loved him.'

Compton started visibly. 'I never guessed that you cared, Oriane. I am very sorry—very sorry indeed!'

'You are sorry that I loved him—I can believe that; but you are not sorry that you sent him away.'

'Your aunt—'

'My aunt may have wished to do it, but she would never have done it—you know that very well. Her gentleness, her native politeness, was far stronger than her theories. If she had tried she would never have hurt him, as you did, so that he could not return. You would not have acted as you did if you had thought her capable of acting.' Oriane went on, 'It has taken years—all these years—to teach me, by slow and sad degrees, that he still remains the standard of all that I like, that I can never care in that way for any other man. I have lately heard him say what has convinced me that this separation was as hard for him as it was for me, that just as he had a stronger nature than mine, so he has suffered more than I have. I feel sure that what you did is irrevocable. Not only have the best years of our lives gone, but all that they might have given us has been lost, and we are no longer within reach of one another. My life has gone round and round

one little centre ; he has gone far on ; I do not think now that there will be a meeting-place.'

'No one could fail to feel the utmost sympathy with trouble such as you describe,' cried Compton. His face was full of concern ; his voice faltered.

'Yet I am sure you know that I——'

'What you would say is just what I want to talk to you about. This thing that you did was done as a duty. You did it in your service of God !'

'I tried to put before him the privilege and duty of taking Holy Orders,' said Compton.

'I have not told you that you have spoiled my life in order to reproach you on so small a matter, but in the hope of persuading you to reconsider a much greater thing. You felt sure that you were doing right in separating us. You knew that he would suffer ; you thought that he would lose his best chance in life in losing me ; but you thought he deserved that because he was perverse. Tell me, Mr. Compton—had you been able to foresee that it was my life that would be spoiled, that Fate or Providence would comfort him with such large compensation of knowledge, wealth, and personal power as he has, while I live on with little power, little influence, little heart for life—could you have seen all that, would you have been equally sure that you were right?'

'What you have told me requires time for reflection. The fact that you have suffered——' What he himself was suffering at that moment was most evident. He turned from her with a gesture of pity and looked out where the garden drooped in the autumn drought.

'Yes,' she said eagerly. 'Pity me! You have always been a tender-hearted man; and now I, a proud woman, am asking for your pity. I have suffered, and shall always suffer; but more than that, all that I might have done and been is lost. I am not self-contained, as some women are. I have no striking talent, no satisfying occupation, no special aptitude except to love, and to help those I love. You have condemned me to a life smaller in usefulness than it would have been had your notion of God's sheepfold been larger. It seems worth while to ask yourself whether the principle on which you acted was right or wrong?'

'The picture you put before me moves me so that I cannot think.'

'I want to move you. Think of your wife; if she wears a jewel like this, there is some one to take pleasure in it. But who will ever care whether I wear this or not?'

'What is it you would say to me, Oriane? There is no hard thing that you have not the right to say of my proneness to mistake, my personal unworthiness.'

'Are you not doing for the Church you love just what you have done for me? You think you are serving God by cutting a deep division between what you call the Church and those who will not conform to her doctrine. In preaching that it is a sin to worship with Dissenters you cut them off from the one real means of understanding and sympathy. You are training a race of people who do not even seek to understand their nearest

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neighbours in that deep region of thought and feeling which underlies all tastes, prejudices, and actions. 'Love cannot exist without understanding. Without understanding, efforts at kindness can only produce a series of stupid insults and blunders, which cause them to misunderstand you in return. You instigate this entire religious separation in the full conviction that it is only those who perversely refuse to be united to your Church on your own terms who will suffer. But I am sure that it is your Church that is suffering, and will suffer most, by this separation, and that they are not cut off from you by their own perversity so much as by your fault. They are not perverse in refusing to accept wilful ignorance and misunderstanding as the right fruits of Christianity, nor in testing your teaching by its fruits, for that is the command of Christ. And if your doctrine does not produce the right fruits, is it not time for you to consider whether the hearty acceptance of diversities which hitherto you condemn, is not needed to establish that real unity of love which can alone vitalise the world? It may be the very union of what is radically and permanently different in a common religious life that God requires in order to people His Kingdom.'

He looked across the garden to the blue above the trees. The very principle that she sought to assail was for him part of that eternal truth which seems to rest above the challenge of reason and experience, as the distant sky rests above all earth-born change.

Men called him perverse, but no man was less perverse than John Compton. He was far too true at heart to reject light. He saw a vision that Oriane did not see, and he was blind to almost all that she saw. His mind moved slowly, but now one glimmering ray reflected from her vision came to him. He bravely turned his heart to it.

He spoke. 'You think some people are kept out of the Church by my fault, not their own?'

'Look at what has happened in this small place! Mosford may mirror Christendom as we tell the children that the dewdrop mirrors the universe. I could not like you so well, and respect you as deeply as I do, Mr. Compton, if I did not say, this once, what it hurts you to hear.'

'Yes; I understand. Go on.'

'We began the year in a state of fierce anger with half our neighbours, and they with us. Did the healing of that most unneighbourly strife proceed from your teaching?'

Compton winced visibly.

'Look at Willie and his wife. Even if you regard his return to life as a happy accident, who was it that taught Diana that the very king of all those terrors that enslaved her was vanquished long ago in the Resurrection? If Diana and Willie live now in the most child-like and happy form of Christian faith, and teach it to their children, is that your doing?'

'My dear uncle was a very remarkable man.'

'No; do not rest in that explanation, because the same thing goes on in other places. Take another

instance. Years ago you and Nathaniel Pye were young preachers together, and all external advantage was on your side. Do you realise what his religious influence is now? I do not know enough to speak of his influence with scholars, of the firm hand of Christian faith which he is said to have laid on critical questions——'

'You forget,' he cried, 'that while he is a genius I am a dullard.'

'I said I would not take his scholarship into account. Nor will I speak of the influence of his daily life of self-denial, for we know little of that. I want to tell you that I heard him speak once at a devotional meeting. There were thousands there of all sects. Those crowds did not go away without a stronger hold upon a faith that no convulsion of theology can shake. I know that from what they said as they went out. He spoke so easily; I could see that both he and they were accustomed to such occasions. His position and power in every way is another parable. The Church from whom you have inherited your doctrine used to stand beside the sects with every outward advantage on her side, just as you once stood beside him; but fate has given numbers and power and wealth and holy influence to these sects. Probably they come no nearer to grasping eternal truth than you do, but they hold the gate of heaven open for those whom you shut out; and I want you to open your heart, and ask if God may not be taking from you and giving to them for that reason.'

'We do not grudge them their prosperity We

stand aside ; we have our own work. We do not deny that God, in His mercy, may work by these means.'

'If some one came to Mosford with introductions from the Glynnes, and you went about saying, "I do not deny that these introductions are valid," and yet took care never to be seen in his company, you would be denying in the most emphatic way that he was a friend of the Glynnes, and your vague words would be mere cant. Just in that positive way you are denying that the Dissenters are friends of God, and that their good work is His. But common people like myself are not perverse when we recognise them because they produce the fruits of Christianity. We do not deny that you also are His ministers ; we do not want to leave you. Your sin is in bidding us choose between them and you. You bar us out. In this great English nation, which we love so much, you and such as you are separating one half the Christian aggregate from the other—just as you once separated two lovers in the case I have told you about.'

He stood before her gazing intensely at her face ; but she saw that he had lost sight of her in trying to pierce through the veil of circumstance and see if there could be any vestige of truth in the description she had forced upon him.

She rose up. 'I would not reproach you with this personal sorrow were it not that I think you are just now busy depriving the Church of the children who might be hers in the future, and lessening her national usefulness by cutting her off

from those who believe in Christ as much as you do, though they do not seek Him by your road.' Laying her hand in his with lingering confidence, she added, 'If truth does require it, then be staunch to your principle ; but for once I entreat you, open-heartedly, to reconsider your doctrine. Truth comes first ; but a teachable heart is needed to arrive at truth. I am no theologian ; I am only a disappointed woman. My assertions cannot weigh much with you. Yet I beg you to consider my parables.'

CHAPTER L

'NOW MINE EYE SEETH THREE'

COMPTON went out into the village street feeling dazed under disappointment. He had hoped, by his staunch preaching of the great doctrine that possessed him, to have produced a different result on the mind of a woman like Oriane Graham. If this hope was so far fallacious, who should say that Oriane's version of the results of his work in the parish was wholly untrue?

To the Christian the pains of physical hardship, or of human persecution by violence or neglect, are but the light afflictions of a moment, bringing even present compensation in the privilege of bearing God's blessing to mankind. But to hear that the enemy is distributing blessings, to hear that one's own power to bless the world is failing, to look about with keener glance and see much that corroborates the heartrending taunt—this does not seem to be one of those legitimate pains for which there is certain reward.

Compton's mind naturally reverted to the obvious good which on all sides in the parish had resulted from his years of labour, and to the

evident impetus given to the religious life of some by the advanced doctrine he taught. He looked across to where the street widened out to embrace the church and churchyard in its broad triangle, and there, on one side, ivy-hung among its trees, stood Mosford Chapel. As far as he knew, the steady work there carried on could also show as good a moral result. He had spoken quite truly when he said that he did not grudge the Methodists their success; but at this moment it seemed to deprive his own success of the argument he would have derived from it.

Compton mounted the familiar steps from the old street to the raised turf of the churchyard. Many causes of discouragement—which, firm in faith and hope, he had till now refused to take into his calculations—obtruded themselves on his notice. Especially his wife's sentiments rose now in his mind with depressing force because, most illogically as he thought, she had remained silently loyal to his uncle's point of view.

He had to transact some business in the vestry. His inner pain did not change as he attended mechanically to the details in hand. He was still thinking, or trying to think, how far Oriane's accusation might be true.

The great strength of his character lay in his constant willingness to see that he personally might be at fault. It was here that he saw now the gleam of new truth to which he turned eagerly. Not for one instant did he doubt the doctrine upon which his order of life was based, or the order based upon it. How should he?

Every thought from boyhood had been adapted to that conception of the Divine society which he upheld. He had so learned to read the Bible that every text was pregnant with this plan of God's salvation; every detail of human history or art was, as he interpreted it, a witness to his belief. To him, as to most men, what was most familiar seemed simple and self-evident. If it was true that the dews of heaven rested all about him while his own lot was parched, it must be from causes outside the great articles of the Catholic creed.

His business finished, he sat in reverie, trying to hold his gaze to the glimpse Oriane had given him of a great beneficent spiritual outflow from sectarian life and of himself as deflecting its flood from what ought to be a common channel. He would not let it go, but gazed and gazed. He had no great range of vision, but he had never yet blinked any light or shadow that came within his range. What could be the secret by which the sects blessed men whom he, and perhaps others such as he within the same fold of God, were shutting out?

Compton was in a small, rudely furnished vestry. The door into the church was shut; a narrow door into the churchyard stood half open to let in the autumn warmth. Now and then a leaf dropped, telling of the passing of life.

It was no wonder that Compton was moved. Whatever be the truth of any theory of intelligible vibrations in the ether set agoing by the motion of thought in the brain, it is certain that one man's

force of thought and feeling knocks at the door of another man's brain in many ways that are not perceptible to conscious sense. The whole great force of his uncle's life in Mosford—his prayers, his kindness, and all the current of feeling he had directed in other hearts—had been slowly but surely appealing to the latent power of brotherly love in Compton's heart. Some direct result was bound to come in reaction from the vigorous opposition to which he had, till now, been roused. To the onlooker in human affairs the only question must be, what form his religion would give to the uprush of volcanic feeling when some accident loosened the stern crust of repression. There is the universalism of the mystic always underlying the separatism of the saint.

The very serenity of this man's intellectual belief had been half his weakness. He had never divested himself of the underlying conviction that those who rejected the claim of the Church were guilty of neglecting opportunity. He had thought that a revelation so plain and so well-attested must commend itself to any really candid seeker after truth. But he was also quite familiar with the notion that unfaithfulness in preaching Catholic doctrine on the part of Churchmen might withhold from the world its opportunity; he had already regulated his life by that possibility.

Now, for the first time, he was on the track of a variation of this idea; what if some infidelity on the part of Churchmen, not to doctrine, but to the Divine Type of Love, kept earnest souls outside the fold. Perhaps Churchmen had made a

large mistake as to their duty of love, and thus barred the door. In such case what would God do? Compton almost laughed when he put it to himself in this way; the answer seemed so simple. God would leave the righteous Churchmen and go out to the lost sheep. Had God not always proclaimed this to be His way? The harassed mind of this poor priest leaped to meet a possible explanation of much that had long disturbed his peace. 'When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, the Lord will make the wilderness a pool and the dry land springs of water.' Was not that God's revelation of Himself all through the Bible? Did He not always run to meet the absent, to seek the lost? and if false shepherds could beat back the wanderers when He would bring them home, would He not certainly stay outside with them? Would He not pour out superabundant grace upon the outcast? Perhaps, then, it was all true—that the grace of God was flowing in channels that he had thought dry.

Whatever the truth of his premisses, however faulty the logic of his reasoning, his heart by this way entered into a new vision of the Divine activity in the world. So great was his real love to God and man that the accompanying thought of his own sin—perhaps the sin of his whole caste—did not hinder his heart's delight in picturing a close fellowship between God and those masses of men who had before appeared to him to call upon Heaven without reasonable hope of response.

He went into the empty church, and as he

knelt rapt, the crilly Norman arches became filled with the glory of God. His new thought grew into belief; the belief filled him with an unutterable joy—joy such as the worldling cannot dream, such as the heart that harbours a worldly taint may never know. In the mystic's true vision of God all earthly loves become as shadows of one Reality, and there is nothing real but Love.

The burden he had borne in the thought that multitudes of good men were allowed to suffer loss by lack of God's grace had been greater than he knew. The lifting of it was like relief from some suffocating gas which had well-nigh stolen his life unawares. He went out from under his burden with a gaiety of heart he could neither control or understand. He fixed his attention on his new joy, giving thanks to God for one and another Dissenter whom he chanced personally to know. As his praise became intense the very vision of these men rose before his closed eyes, and in a dim glory of light, the vision of God encircling them with irresistible tenderness of love. With the true self-despite of the ascetic, he had never thought of himself as thus embraced—no, it was theirs as compensation for the sins by which he had shut them out from their proper home. This vision of God was a joy containing all joys for him. In its light, like Job, he gladly abhorred himself.

Compton's was a very simple and a very tenacious mind. Having thanked God with jubilant heart for setting aside all barriers in His eagerness to bless the unfortunate, and with incon-

sistent delight acknowledged himself a fool for not knowing that God must act thus, he set himself to discover how to amend his own way and cooperate with God.

Firm in his view of the true fold, he did not for a moment dream that God could be satisfied till the erring were brought in; he only began to examine in what ways he had made the fold inaccessible when the Shepherd who held the lost in His arms would have passed in. Clearly, to have thought of them as otherwise than in the Shepherd's arms must have been a conception fruitful of many mistakes.

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CHAPTER LI

THE WINE OF THE KINGDOM

LATER Compton had occasion to seek his wife on behalf of one of the many who were always calling for her help. She was not at home, and he naturally sought her in Mrs. Ward's cottage. The small garden was still gay; flowers of the old man's planting were making their last gorgeous effort before turning to their winter sleep.

Compton lifted the latch of the gate and went up the path. Dahlias and phlox and golden-rod stood like a forest level with his shoulder. The forest was peopled; Diana Latimer, her younger children, and two of his own, were playing hide-and-seek in it. Within the house Willie was painting the old lady's picture; Compton's black-eyed daughter was on her knee. Ethel, in apron clad, was soberly doing such household work as the old lady usually did for herself.

Diana and the children were playing their game with unfeigned delight. Compton had always thought that Diana's singular beauty had a soulless look. He now paused, seeking to revise this impression. Diana stood behind a clump of

dahlias, holding her skirts back. Supple and slight as a wood nymph hiding from Apollo, she stood, her dark head bowed behind the scarlet clusters.

'If I do not interrupt——' he began.

Diana came out from her hiding, and the sobered children gathered round her. He became aware that she did not like his interruption.

He asked a friendly question about one of her nursemaids.

'She has plenty of time to go to church, Mr. Compton. How can I help it if she doesn't?' said Diana.

There was nothing flippant in her tone, but no response in it to his solicitude. He reflected that he would be the last man to whom Diana would show her better side.

'To tell the truth, Mr. Compton, I believe she has been going to the Methodists; but now, don't scold her, because if you do I shan't tell you another time.' And the eager faces of her children, looking up at him, by their expression repeated, 'Don't scold her.'

Compton had never been a scold, but he saw that was what these thought him. He felt the full pain of it, but as of something already passed. He had begun a new life, although it was not yet articulate. He had arrived at no mental solution of any of his problems, but he had a renewed heart. Diana looked at him, and a sudden reverence rose in her, not for him personally but for mankind. She felt a new liking for him. When he entered the house she carried the memory

of his smile into the game, and felt her heart lighter.

'Cumnor,' said Ethel, 'auntie has serious news from Mr. Pye. He did not get further than Paris. His mother had a stroke after he left her; he was called back. He is evidently feeling his mother's illness terribly.'

Compton threw back his head. 'I will go to him at once,' he said. The new purpose broke joyfully into its first action; in his heart he caught at the hope of righting a wrong, and he knew how he might try to do it.

'To Oxford! O Cumnor, what good could you do? and at this time of day you could not get back in time for early service to-morrow.'

'I must just leave it. I am going to some one outside. Is his mother dying?'

'No, not at all—at least, he doesn't say so. Are you sure you ought to go? I do not see why.'

That evening he walked into the Professor's study.

Nathaniel Pye had all the remoteness from extraneous detail common to the scholar's temperament, but he also had the extreme sensitiveness of a man whose passion for humanity springs from the power of intense personal affection. The complexity of such a nature is not easily understood. It is perhaps more rich in result to the world than in happiness to the man thus endowed. Many of the sorrows of such a man arise from the fact that he has little power of self-revelation compared with his insight into the common mind. Only to his mother had Nathaniel Pye, so far, been able to

make himself fully understood, hence his absorption in her love. She was lying now, half-unconscious, and he was stunned by the real, if not final, loss of her.

He was undergoing one of life's dreariest phases, when the thread of personal purpose seems to be snapped and no design can be traced in the resulting chaos. He was heavy from loss of sleep. He was not glad to see Compton, and when he learned that he had come so far on his behalf, the real gratitude he felt was hardly expressed.

Every one who knew Compton knew that when he was in the right mood he could make himself very winning. In the next half-hour he himself learned that this right mood had never before been upon him except in hours of personal pleasure. Now it possessed him, because he was possessed with a vision of divine love which did not wait to be rightly met, but pushed its glad insistent way over all obstacles.

It was some time before he could even draw from Pye the slightest account of his affairs. It seemed that he had always hoped against hope for his mother's entire recovery. This attack not only blighted hope but deprived him of any further communication with her. This was the focus of his trouble. He blamed himself because the seizure seemed to have been brought on by his recent departure, and his return had done no good; she lay only partially conscious. He was afraid to leave her lest fuller consciousness should recur in his absence; yet there was no reason to expect

any change. Having planned for a half-term away from Oxford, he had not the relief of present duties. He had plenty of friends; from the look in his eyes when he mentioned their unremitting kindness, Compton gathered that he felt rather oppressed by it, and only wanted to brood over the memory of his mother in her brilliant youth.

By the time this had passed between them, partly in words, partly revealed without telling, Compton had been made to feel that he ranked with those who marred grief's privacy; but Nathaniel Pye at last observed, what Diana Latimer had more quickly seen, that there was something new in Compton's manner, something that made a man the happier for his presence.

'Is there nothing I can do?' asked Compton.

'I will stay, or come back again.'

'There is nothing to be done, thank you.'

'And yet, since my uncle adopted you, you are in that sense my nearest kinsman,—in fact I have no other.'

Pye looked in sheer astonishment at a man who could make excuse for family affection out of the loss of the major part of a fortune. He suddenly said, in a kinder tone, 'You are like your uncle.'

'No; I have not his unworldliness. What a man had made no difference to him. But I may as well confess that after his death I did not like to be too friendly with you, fearing you might think that your good fortune enhanced your worth in our eyes. I have got beyond that now; I have come to ask for your friendship for myself and my wife and my children. There are many

things you can teach us all. I am not going to let my uncle's friend pass out of my life if I can help it.'

'You are very kind. I will not forget such hospitality.'

'You cannot wait here, sitting alone with sorrow day after day, and suppose that we are indifferent. You have many friends in Mosford. If in a week's time there should seem to be no change approaching, will you not come down to us, if only for a few hours?'

'Thank you, but I must not leave Oxford again.'

Compton felt that he was dismissed and rose perforce. But he was still determined. 'I ought to thank you, as far as I may add my own thanks, for that gift to Miss Graham. We all thought it appropriate.'

'Did she like it?' Not a shade of interest was expressed in the tone.

'She did not tell me whether she liked it or not.' Compton stopped short, and then he said, 'I wish I might unburden my mind of one folly of my youth. I was impertinent when, as a young man, I overstepped my duty in interfering between you and Miss Graham. Her affairs were really no business of mine.'

The other simply turned his back, moving a few steps slowly to his desk, as if absorbed in his own affairs. He said, 'I have a letter here Mrs. Ward might like to see; will you carry it to her?'

'I am not speaking of this old matter merely in order to ease my own mind,' said Compton; 'but

because it has occurred to me that you may have thought at that time I knew Miss Graham's mind—I did not.'

The other said nothing, but Compton saw a certain change in the subtle outline of the broad shoulders and pose of the head, an attitude of eager listening.

'Of course,' continued Compton, 'with regard to Miss Graham I can say nothing; but it is right that I should make it clear that at that time I did not express her inclination. I did not know what she felt.'

Compton saw that this missive had struck home.

Pye turned, but his voice was formal. 'I am obliged to you. At the time I assumed—but the past is passed. Will you give this letter to Mrs. Ward?'

'You naturally assumed that I spoke with her consent. Otherwise, perhaps you would not have felt justified in leaving her without an explanation.' Compton had carefully chosen this stone for his sling.

Pye's whole attitude stiffened. He was exceedingly angry, and the breeze of temper did him good. His eyes shone fiercely under heavy, black brows. 'And now, do you mean to reproach me with having played a dishonourable part?—you!'

'Yes, I own that at that time I wanted to send you away. In that, according to my lights, I suppose I was right. But perhaps the source of the wish was brackish, because in examining this action, which I had almost forgotten, I find that I

had no right to act at all, and also that in assuming, as I certainly did, that Miss Graham must in her heart agree with me, I probably gave you the impression that I knew her wishes.

'Any way, I must say you have extraordinary courage to come here and accuse me of acting ill.'

The force of this anger assured Compton that he had given a conscience prick that would urge this man to action. He lingered, talking a little on other matters to show that he had finally dismissed the painful subject, and Nathaniel Pye emerged from his sudden gust of ill temper in a more frank and human mood. Compton's kindness won upon him by degrees.

'I wish you would come to see Mrs. Ward. She thinks of you always, and now is grieving over you. Isn't it your duty to come and see for yourself whether my wife makes her happy?'

'That is not necessary. Her letters are full of Mrs. Compton's goodness.'

'But I want you to promise me to come—I will not go till you promise.'

Because of his importunity the promise was given.

That evening there was a meeting held in Oxford on one side or the other about the Education question. As Compton passed the hall little groups of undergraduates who had been listening at doors and windows came suddenly shouting into the street, blocking the way in loud quarrel. In the dispute he heard the rival war-cries, 'Trust deeds,' 'parental rights,' 'public control,' 'religious tests'—such terms were bandied about. Compton

heard, but they woke no note of answering disquiet in his mind. The vision which he thought had been his that day taught him the power of peace.

As the white ray holds in itself all the colours of the prism, so to this man his sight of God held all that could be of delight—in beauty, physical and moral; in pleasure, temporal and eternal; in love without doubting, and life without shadowing fear. This treasure was a lifelong possession, and whenever he let his thought dwell upon it he felt like a child who is secure in the might of right, and like a king who, in joy of accession, must set all prisoners free.

THE END

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AUTUMN 1908

The Last Novel of Ouida

HELIANTHUS

THIS is the last work of the gifted writer who was so widely known during her lifetime under the *nom de plume* of "Ouida." At her death it was found to be still incomplete, but fortunately the first twenty-nine chapters had been set up in type as they were written; and as these chapters (which occupy over four hundred pages) would clearly have constituted by far the larger portion of the completed book, it has been judged best to publish them, without alteration or addition, exactly in the form in which they were left by their author after having been revised by her in proof.

Helianthus is a romance of the present time, in which many of the makers of modern Europe appear under a thin disguise. The novel forms a striking commentary on the political and social conditions of the day. It is written with all the author's freedom of expression, and glows with her hatred of injustice and oppression.

By B. L. Putnam Weale

THE FORBIDDEN BOUNDARY

THAT Mr. Putnam Weale should appear as the writer of fiction will come as no surprise to the readers of the vivid and dramatic pages of his well-known series of Treatises on the Far East which began with the publication of *Manchu and Muscovite*. It is the East, too, which he knows so intimately, that has furnished the writer with material for the eight striking and unconventional tales that make up his new book. *The Forbidden Boundary* refers to the line of demarcation between white and coloured races, and describes what happened to an Englishman and a Japanese maiden; and *The Story of the Adventurous Frenchman*, who becomes a contrabandist and makes a large fortune during the Russo-Japanese War, and who, for more romantic reasons, enters Port Arthur in spite of the jealous guard of the Japanese, is full of exciting reading. Among the other stories are *The Fever Bed*, a grim story of attempted poisoning by a native servant in China; *A Missionary of Empire*, with a setting in a Christian missionary settlement, and a picture of an educated Chinese gentleman; *Drugs and the Man*, a realistic description of an opium den; and *Loot*, which recounts an exciting and successful hunt for treasure in a Peking palace by European troops.

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Marion Crawford's New Novel

THE DIVA'S RUBY

This volume concludes the trilogy of novels in all of which Margaret Donne, the queen of lyrical opera singers, is the heroine. Delightful as were *Soprano* and *The Primadonna*, *The Diva's Ruby* excels them in excitement and interest.

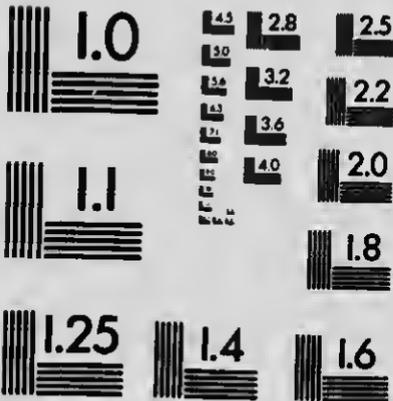
It opens with a chapter, the scene of which is "in the heart of the mountains near a remote little city of Central Asia," where is hidden a rubymine. The secret road to this source of wealth is divulged by a Tartar maideo to the European traveller who has been staying in the town, and with whom she has fallen in love. He manages to secure a supply of the precious stones and makes off with them, leaving Baraka to get out of the terrible position in which her action has placed her as best she can. In this way the glamour of the East is made to pervade the story, for the girl, dressed in male attire, follows her lover in Europe, and in her search for him she comes into contact with the Greek financier, Logotheti, to whom Margaret has oogaged herself, and also with Van Torp the American millioaire, who, on hearing that the Primadonna was actually betrothed, had sold the great Nickel Trust (of which he had been the head) and had come to England with the fixed determination not ooly to prevent Margaret's marriage with Logotheti, but to marry her himself. The reader of *The Primadonna* is aware of the interesting personality of this character, and how the aversion with which his acquaintence is made changes to respect and liking. Margaret is moved in the same way, although in the first instance her feeling towards him had been nothing short of loathing and fear. Then, step by step, patiently, doggedly, and with great skill, Van Torp sets himself to rise in Margaret's good opinion. In this he succeeds, and as he ascends Logotheti falls. That this rival's overthrow is mainly owing to Van Torp goes without saying. Yet, with ooe exception, which after all was "only precious like low-down" as he himself expresses it, the American never acts dishonourably. In all his planning and scheming Baraka unconsciously acts as his good angel, for through her Logotheti so implicates himself that in anger and wounded vanity Margaret decides to break off her engagement with him. After this it is easy sailing for Van Torp, and the story ends with justice meted out to the man for whom Baraka has risked an much, and a happy straightening out of all tangles.

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Miss Dougall's New Novel

PATHS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A NEW novel by the author of *Beggars All* and *The Madonna of a Day* may count on a welcome from a large circle of readers. Miss Dougall's new story is a frankly serious book, bringing before the reader the startling difference between the ideal and the actual relations of Christians who differ in forms of worship; and at the same time presenting a vivid picture of life and character in an English rural parish, drawn with subtle truth and unobtrusive humor.

The scene is laid at the time of the last General Election. An old man from Canada, of fine spirit and broad sympathies, who has unexpectedly come into a fortune, desires to know whether his only relative, an English country vicar, would be a satisfactory heir; so he and his wife come to England, and settle down in the parish beside the vicar and his family and a typical set of village "society," keeping their wealth a secret. The vicar's wife dislikes these homely relatives, until she accidentally discovers that they are rich. The mental process by which she then persuades herself into trying to please them is described with subtle insight.

The other leading character in the book is Oriane Graham, a well-bred, well-educated woman. In early youth Oriane had been loved by a young Methodist minister, who, however, had been given to understand by the vicar that his love-making could not be acceptable to a Churchwoman, and had left the place. When the story begins he is a distinguished Oxford professor. Oriane had been, and still is, attached to him, but betrays it to no one. Their love-story runs through the book, but Miss Dougall, as is her wont, makes it no conventional one, and their lives continue to run apart.

The climax of the book is reached when Oriane, whose outlook has been much widened by friendship with the old man from Canada, reproaches the vicar with having highlighted her life by interfering to keep her apart from the man she loved, also with keeping apart Christian people, who ought to be essentially one, by his harsh view of those outside the Church. There are other and varied characters in the book, in particular the artist who makes the worship of beauty and happiness his religion, and the Anglican bishop who, as a Churchman, represents the more saintly type of Christian seen also in the old Canadian.

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Miss Broughton's New Novel

MAMMA

ANNEXAS of that old favourite, *Cometh Up as a Flower*, will find that in her new novel Miss Broughton has lost none of her old power to fascinate and charm. *Mamma* is a skilfully drawn character, and though from the beginning the reader is taken behind the scenes and shown the selfishness and vanity by which she is dominated, it is easily understood (so adroitly does this clever old lady work upon the divergent temperaments of her relatives) how it is that she is regarded by most of them as worthy of nothing but the highest esteem and most admiring devotion.

The story opens on her seventieth birthday when her three married daughters come from their respective homes to bring gifts and do homage. An event of this occasion is the conversation that centres round Mr. Hatton, "a young artist with a curious talent for catching a likeness," who has offered to paint Mamma's portrait. That he has asked her to sit to him "for nothing but his own pleasure" is the chief reason for Mamma's acceptance. On his first visit he explains to Lucia (the unmarried daughter who is privileged to devote her life to Mamma to such an extent that she even shares that lady's bedroom in order to be within easy call by night as well as by day) that she is no stranger to him as he has already heard much about her from a certain Tommy Carruthers to whom, fourteen years before, when Lucia was seventeen, she had been engaged for exactly four days.

From Hatton Lucia learns that Carruthers is "not doing well," and had gradually gone down hill till he had become a waiter in a hotel. There is worse behind, but Hatton, who is himself falling in love with Lucia, will not tell her this. The whole story then comes to the knowledge of Gwen Baskerville, a niece of Lucia, and a very up-to-date and advanced young woman, who is fired with the desire of bringing the at-one-time lovers together again. This, of course, she cannot do without Hatton's help. He enters reluctantly into the plot and Carruthers, who has unexpectedly inherited a fortune, is found, just as he is celebrating his wedding with the harmaid of his favourite tavern. Meanwhile Lucia has discovered that her feelings towards the artist, whose uncultured manners had at first disgusted her, have undermined the secret tenderness which she had always entertained for her old lover.

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Miss Carey's New Novel

THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE HILL

MISS CAREY's new book will probably become one of the most popular of her stories, for it lacks none of the attraction that distinguishes the long list of well-known novels by the same author. Readers of every age, too, will find it interesting, for though it relates the love-stories of a brother and sister who are both under twenty-five, its dominant theme is the love-story of a lady who has lived very nearly half a century. Miss Brydon is the aunt of Harold and Maureen, a "love-spinster" as she calls herself, and the possessor of a picturesque old house surrounded by a beautiful garden in a little village near the Kentish coast. Her character is drawn with loving care, and is as fragrant and delightful as the flowers she tends with such assiduous activity.

At the opening of the story Aunt Margaret has not long inherited the house and a sufficient income to maintain it from an old lady with whom she lived as companion for several years. To her home she invites Maureen, a girl of nineteen, one of the many children of Miss Brydon's only brother. Maureen understands that the invitation is intended as a lasting one, and that in going to her aunt it is as an adopted daughter rather than as a mere visitor. She does not like parting from her brothers and sisters, but when she has once settled down in her new home she is happy enough.

Among the neighbours is the crippled owner of Marsh Hall, a Mr. Romney Chaytor, who in saving the life of his half-sister had met with the injury that had resulted in incurable lameness. He had made up his mind never to marry, but Miss Brydon succeeds in changing his ideas on the subject, though nobody is more surprised than herself that his choice of a wife should be her own niece, Maureen. Harold's love for Ruth Chaytor has finally also a satisfactory realisation. But Miss Brydon's story is too sacred and unusual to be told. It should be learnt at first hand, and on reaching the end the reader will be as admiring of the real heroine of the story as are any of her own little circle of relatives and friends. Not only in its title should *The Sunny Side of the Hill* prove an enjoyable companion.

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