

# Thomas Wingfold, Curate V3

George MacDonald

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Title: Thomas Wingfold, Curate V3

Author: George MacDonald

Release Date: June, 2004 [EBook #5975]  
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]  
[This file was first posted on October 2, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

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THOMAS WINGFOLD, CURATE.

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By George MacDonald, LL.D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL III.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE SERMON.

As the sermon drew to a close, and the mist of his emotion began to disperse, individual faces of his audience again dawned out on the preacher's ken. Mr. Drew's head was down. As I have always said, certain things he had been taught in his youth, and had practised in his manhood, certain mean ways counted honest enough in the trade, had become to him, regarded from the ideal point of the divine in merchandize--such a merchandize, namely, as the share the son of man might have taken in buying and selling, had his reputed father been a shop-keeper instead of a carpenter--absolutely hateful, and the memory of them intolerable. Nor did it relieve him much to remind himself of the fact, that he knew not to the full the nature of the advantages he took, for he knew that he had known them such as shrunk from the light, not coming thereto to be made manifest. He was now doing his best to banish them from his business, and yet they were a painful presence to his spirit--so grievous to be borne, that the prospect held out by the preacher of an absolute and final deliverance from them by the indwelling presence of the God of all living men and true merchants, was a blessedness unspeakable. Small was the suspicion in the Abbey Church of Olaston that morning, that the well-known successful man of business was weeping. Who could once have imagined another reason for the laying of that round, good-humoured, contented face down on the book-board, than pure drowsiness from lack of work-day interest! Yet there was a human soul crying out after its birthright. Oh, to be clean as a mountain-river! clean as the air above the clouds, or on the middle seas! as the throbbing aether that fills the gulf betwixt star and star!--nay, as the thought of the Son of Man himself, who, to make all things new and clean, stood up against the old battery of sin-sprung suffering, withstanding and enduring and stilling the recoil of the awful force wherewith his Father had launched the worlds, and given birth to human souls with wills that might become free as his own!

While Wingfold had been speaking in general terms, with the race in his mind's, and the congregation in his body's eye, he had yet thought more of one soul, with its one crime and its intolerable burden, than all the rest: Leopold was ever present to him, and while he strove to avoid absorption in a personal interest however justifiable, it was of necessity that the thought of the most burdened sinner he knew should colour the whole of his utterance. At

times indeed he felt as if he were speaking to him immediately--and to him only; at others, although then he saw her no more than him, that he was comforting the sister individually, in holding out to her brother the mighty hope of a restored purity. And when once more his mind could receive the messages brought home by his eyes, he saw upon Helen's face the red sunset of a rapt listening. True it was already fading away, but the eyes had wept, the glow yet hung about cheek and forehead, and the firm mouth had forgotten itself into a tremulous form, which the stillness of absorption had there for the moment fixed.

But even already, although he could not yet read it upon her countenance, a snake had begun to lift its head from the chaotic swamp which runs a creek at least into every soul, the rudimentary desolation, a remnant of the time when the world was without form and void. And the snake said: "Why, then, did he not speak like that to my Leopold? Why did he not comfort him with such a good hope, well-becoming a priest of the gentle Jesus? Or, if he fancied he must speak of confession, why did he not speak of it in plain honest terms, instead of suggesting the idea of it so that the poor boy imagined it came from his own spirit, and must therefore be obeyed as the will of God?"

So said the snake, and by the time Helen had walked home with her aunt, the glow had sunk from her soul, and a gray wintry mist had settled down upon her spirit. And she said to herself that if this last hope in George should fail her, she would not allow the matter to trouble her any farther; she was a free woman, and as Leopold had chosen other counsellors, had thus declared her unworthy of confidence, and, after all that she had suffered and done for love of him, had turned away from her, she would put money in her purse, set out for France or Italy, and leave him to the fate, whatever it might be, which his new advisers and his own obstinacy might bring upon him. Was the innocent bound to share the shame of the guilty? Had she not done enough? Would even her father require more of her than she had already done and endured?

When, therefore, she went into Leopold's room, and his eyes sought her from the couch, she took no notice that he had got up and dressed while she was at church; and he knew that a cloud had come between them, and that after all she had borne and done for him, he and his sister were now farther apart, for the time at least, than when oceans lay betwixt their birth and their meeting; and he found himself looking back with vague longing even to the terrible old house of Glaston, and the sharing of their agony therein. His eyes followed her as she walked across to the dressing-room, and the tears rose and filled them, but he said nothing. And the sister who, all the time of the sermon, had been filled with wave upon wave of wishing--that Poldie could hear this, could hear that, could have such a thought to comfort him, such a lovely word to drive the horror from his soul, now cast on him a chilly glance, and said never a word of the things to which she had listened with such heavings of the spirit-ocean; for she felt, with an instinct more righteous than her will, that they would but strengthen him in his determination to do whatever the teacher of them might approve. As she repassed him to go to the drawing-room, she did indeed say a word of kindness; but it was in a forced tone, and was only about his dinner! His eyes over-flowed, but he shut his lips so tight that his mouth grew grim with determination, and no more tears came.

To the friend who joined her at the church-door, and, in George Bascombe's absence, walked with them along Pine Street, Mrs. Ramshorn remarked that the curate was certainly a most dangerous man--particularly for young people to hear--he so confounded all the landmarks of right and wrong, representing the honest man as no better than the thief, and the murderer as no worse than anybody else--teaching people in fact that the best thing they could do was to commit some terrible crime, in order thereby to attain to a better innocence than without it could ever be theirs. How far she mistook, or how far she knew or suspected that she spoke falsely, I will not pretend to know. But although she spoke as she did, there was something, either in the curate or in the sermon, that had quieted her a little, and she was less contemptuous in her condemnation of him than usual.

Happily both for himself and others, the curate was not one of those who cripple the truth and blind their own souls by

some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on the event--

A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom,

And ever three parts coward;

and hence, in proportion as he roused the honest, he gave occasion to the dishonest to cavil and condemn. Imagine St. Paul having a prevision of how he would be misunderstood, AND HEEDING IT!--what would then have become of all those his most magnificent outbursts? And would any amount of apostolic carefulness have protected him? I suspect it would only have given rise to more vulgar misunderstandings and misrepresentations still. To explain to him who loves not, is but to give him the more plentiful material for misinterpretation. Let a man have truth in the inward parts, and out of the abundance of his heart let his mouth speak. If then he should have ground to fear honest misunderstanding, let him preach again to enforce the truth for which he is jealous, and if it should seem to any that the two utterances need reconciling, let those who would have them consistent reconcile them for themselves.

The reason of George Bascombe's absence from church that morning was, that, after an early breakfast, he had mounted Helen's mare, and set out to call on Mr. Hooker before he should have gone to church. Helen expected him back to dinner, and was anxiously looking for him. So also was Leopold, but the hopes of the two were different.

At length the mare's hoofs echoed through all Sunday Glaston, and presently George rode up. The groom took his horse in the street, and he came into the drawing-room. Helen hastened to meet him.

"Well, George?" she said, anxiously.

"Oh, it's all right!--will be at least, I am sure. I will tell you all about it in the garden after dinner.--Aunt has the good sense never to interrupt us there," he added. "I'll just run and show myself to Leopold: he must not suspect that I am of your party and playing him false. Not that it is false, you know! for two negatives make a positive, and to fool a mad-man is to give him fair play."

The words jarred sorely on Helen's ear.

Bascombe hurried to Leopold, and informed him that he had seen Mr. Hooker, and that all was arranged for taking him over to his place on Tuesday morning, if by that time he should be able for the journey.

"Why not to-morrow?" said Leopold. "I am quite able."

"Oh! I told him you were not very strong. And he wanted a run after the hounds to-morrow. So we judged it better put off till Tuesday."

Leopold gave a sigh, and said no more.

## CHAPTER II.

### BASCOMBE AND THE MAGISTRATE.

After dinner, the cousins went to the summer-house, and there George gave Helen his report, revealing his plan and hope for Leopold.

"Such fancies must be humoured, you know, Helen. There is nothing to be gained by opposing them," he said.

Helen looked at him with keen eyes, and he returned the gaze. The confidence betwixt them was not perfect: each was doubtful as to the thought of the other, and neither asked what it was.

"A fine old cock is Mr. Hooker!" said George; "a jolly, good-natured, brick-faced squire; a tory of course, and a sound church-man; as simple as a baby, and took everything I told him without a hint of doubt or objection;--just the sort of man I expected to find him! When I mentioned my name, &c., he found he had known my father, and that gave me a good start. Then I lauded his avenue, and apologized for troubling him so early and on Sunday too, but said it was a pure work of mercy in which I begged his assistance--as a magistrate, I added, lest he should fancy I had come after a subscription. It was a very delicate case, I said, in which were concerned the children of a man of whom he had, I believed, at one time known something--General Lingard. 'To be sure!' he cried; 'knew him very well; a fine fellow--but hasty, sir--hasty in his temper!' I said I had never known him myself, but one of his children was my cousin; the other was the child of his second wife, a Hindoo lady unfortunately, and it was about him I presumed to trouble him. Then I plunged into the matter at once, telling him that Leopold had had violent brain-fever, brought on by a horrible drug, the use of which, if use I dare call it, he had learnt in India; and that, although he had recovered from the fever, it was very doubtful if ever he would recover from the consequences of it, for that he had become the prey of a fixed idea, the hard

deposit from a heated imagination. 'And pray what is the idea?' he asked. 'Neither more nor less,' I answered, 'than that he is a murderer!'--'God bless me!' he cried, somewhat to my alarm, for I had been making all this preamble to prejudice the old gentleman in the right direction, lest afterwards Leopold's plausibility might be too much for him. So I echoed the spirit of his exclamation, declaring it was one of the saddest things I had ever known, that a fellow of such sweet and gentle nature, one utterly incapable of unkindness, not to say violence, should be so possessed by misery and remorse for a phantom-deed, no more his than if he had dreamed it, a thing he not only did not do, but never could have done. I had not yet however told him, I said, what was perhaps the saddest point in the whole sad story--namely, that the attack had been brought on by the news of the actual murder of a lady to whom he had been passionately attached; the horror of it had unhinged his reason, then turned and fastened upon his imagination; so that he was now convinced beyond the reach of argument or even the clearest proof, that it was his own hand that drove the knife to her heart. Then I recalled to his memory the case as reported, adding that the fact of the murderer's prolonged evasion of justice, appeared, by some curious legerdemain of his excited fancy, if not to have suggested--of that I was doubtful--yet to have ripened his conviction of guilt. Now nothing would serve him but he must give himself up, confess--no, that was not a true word in his case!--accuse himself of the crime, and meet his fate on the gallows,--'in the hope, observe, my dear sir,' I said, 'of finding her in the other world, and there making it up with her!'--'God bless me!' he cried again, in a tone of absolute horror. And every now and then, while I spoke, he would ejaculate something; and still as he listened his eyes grew more and more bloodshot with interest and compassion. 'Ah, I see!' he said then; 'you want to send him to a madhouse?--Don't do it,' he continued, in a tone of expostulation, almost entreaty. 'Poor boy! He may get over it. Let his friends look to him. He has a sister, you say?' I quickly reassured him, telling him such was no one's desire, and saying I would come to the point in a moment, only there was one thing more which had interested me greatly, as revealing how a brain in such a condition will befool itself, all but generating two individualities.--There I am afraid I put my foot in it, but he was far too simple to see it was cloven--ha! ha! and I hastened to remark that, as a magistrate, he must have numberless opportunities of noting similar phenomena. He waved his hand in deprecation, and I hastened to remark that, up to a certain point, whatever hint the newspapers had given, Leopold had expanded and connected with every other, but that at one part of the story I had found him entirely at fault: he could not tell what he did, where he went, or how he had felt, first after the deed was done. He confessed all after that was a blank until he found himself in bed. But when I told him something he had not seen--which his worship might remember--the testimony namely of the coast-guardsmen--about the fishing-boat with the two men in it--I had here to refresh his memory as to the whole of that circumstance--and did so by handing him the newspaper containing it--that was what I made you give me the paper for--I have lost the thread of my sentence, but never mind. I told him then something I have not told you yet, Helen, namely, that when I happened to allude to that portion of the story, Leopold started up with flashing eyes, and exclaimed, 'Now I remember! It all comes back to me as clear as day. I remember running down the hill, and jumping into the boat just as they shoved off. I was exhausted, and fell down in the stern. When I came to myself, the two men were forward: I saw their

legs beneath the sails. I thought they would be sure to give me up, and at once I slipped overboard. The water revived me, but when I reached the shore, I fell down again, and lay there I don't know how long. Indeed I don't remember anything more except very confusedly.' That is what Leopold said, and what I now told Mr. Hooker. Then at last I opened my mind to him as to wherein I ventured to ask his assistance; and my petition was, that he would allow me to bring Leopold, and would let him go through the form of giving himself up to justice. Especially I begged that he would listen to all he had to say, and give no sign that he doubted his story. 'And then, sir,' I concluded, 'I would leave it to you to do what we cannot--reconcile him to going home instead of to prison.'

"He sat with his head on his hand for a while, as if pondering some weighty question of law. Then he said suddenly: 'It is now almost church-time. I will think the matter over. You may rely upon me. Will you take a seat in my pew and dine with us after?' I excused myself on the ground that I must return at once to poor Leopold, who was anxiously looking for me. And you must forgive me, Helen, and not fancy me misusing Fanny, if I did yield to the temptation of a little longer ride. I have scarcely more than walked her, with a canter now and then when we had the chance of a bit of turf."

Helen assured him with grateful eyes that she knew Fanny was as safe with him as with herself; and she felt such a gush of gratitude follow the revival of hope, that she was nearer being in love with her cousin to ever before. Her gratitude inwardly delighted George, and he thought the light in her blue eyes lovelier than ever; but although strougly tempted, he judged it better to delay a formal confession until circumstances should be more comfortable.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CONFESSION.

All that and the following day Leopold was in spirits for him wonderful. On Monday night there came a considerable reaction; he was dejected, worn, and weary. Twelve o'clock the next day was the hour appointed for their visit to Mr. Hooker, and at eleven he was dressed and ready--restless, agitated, and very pale, but not a whit less determined than at first. A drive was the pretext for borrowing Mrs. Ramshorn's carriage.

"Why is Mr. Wingfold not coming?" asked Lingard, anxiously, when it began to move.

"I fancy we shall be quite as comfortable without him, Poldie," said Helen. "Did you expect him?"

"He promised to go with me. But he hasn't called since the time was



fixed."--Here Helen looked out of the window.--"I can't think why it is. I can do my duty without him though," continued Leopold, "and perhaps it is just as well.--Do you know, George, since I made up my mind, I have seen her but once, and that was last night, and only in a dream."

"A state of irresolution is one peculiarly open to unhealthy impressions," said George, good-naturedly disposing of his long legs so that they should be out of the way.

Leopold turned from him to his sister.

"The strange thing, Helen," he said, "was that I did not feel the least afraid of her, or even abashed before her. 'I see you,' I said. 'Be at peace. I am coming; and you shall do to me what you will.' And then--what do you think?--O my God! she smiled one of her own old smiles, only sad too, very sad, and vanished. I woke, and she seemed only to have just left the room, for there was a stir in the darkness.--Do you believe in ghosts, George?"

Leopold was not one of George's initiated, I need hardly say.

"No," answered Bascombe.

"I don't wonder. I can't blame you, for neither did I once. But just wait till you have made one, George!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Bascombe, a second time forgetting himself.

"Amen!" said Leopold: "for after that there's no help but be one yourself, you know."

"If he would only talk like that to old Hooker!" thought George. "It would go a long way to forestall any possible misconception of the case."

"I can't think why Mr. Wingfold did not come yesterday," resumed Leopold. "I made sure he would."

"Now, Poldie, you mustn't talk," said Helen, "or you'll be exhausted before we get to Mr. Hooker's."

"She did not wish the non-appearance of the curate on Monday to be closely inquired into. His company at the magistrate's was by all possible means to be avoided. George had easily persuaded Helen, more easily than he expected, to wait their return in the carriage, and the two men were shown into the library, where the magistrate presently joined them. He would have shaken hands with Leopold as well as George, but the conscious felon drew back.

"No, sir; excuse me," he said. "Hear what I have to tell you first; and if after that you will shake hands with me, it will be a kindness indeed. But you will not! you will not!"

Worthy Mr. Hooker was overwhelmed with pity at sight of the worn sallow face with the great eyes, in which he found every appearance confirmatory of the tale wherewith Bascombe had filled and prejudiced every fibre of his judgment. He listened in the kindest way while the poor boy forced the words of his confession from his

throat. But Leopold never dreamed of attributing his emotion to any other cause than compassion for one who had been betrayed into such a crime. It was against his will, for he seemed now bent, even to unreason, on fighting every weakness, that he was prevailed upon to take a little wine. Having ended, he sat silent, in the posture of one whose wrists are already clasped by the double bracelet of steel.

Now Mr. Hooker had thought the thing out in church on the Sunday; and after a hard run at the tail of a strong fox over a rough country on the Monday, and a good sleep well into the morning of the Tuesday, could see no better way. His device was simple enough.

"My dear young gentleman," he said, "I am very sorry for you, but I must do my duty."

"That, sir, is what I came to you for," answered Leopold, humbly.

"Then you must consider yourself my prisoner. The moment you are gone, I shall make notes of your deposition, and proceed to arrange for the necessary formalities. As a mere matter of form, I shall take your own bail in a thousand pounds to surrender when called upon."

"But I am not of age, and haven't got a thousand pounds," said Leopold.

"Perhaps Mr. Hooker will accept my recognizance in the amount?" said Bascombe.

"Certainly," answered Mr. Hooker, and wrote something, which Bascombe signed.

"You are very good, George," said Leopold. "But you know I can't run away if I would," he added with a pitiful attempt at a smile.

"I hope you will soon be better," said the magistrate kindly.

"Why such a wish, sir?" returned Leopold, almost reproachfully, and the good man stood abashed before him.

He thought of it afterwards, and was puzzled to know how it was.

"You must hold yourself in readiness," he said, recovering himself with an effort, "to give yourself up at any moment. And, remember, I shall call upon you when I please, every week, perhaps, or oftener, to see that you are safe. Your aunt is an old friend of mine, and there will be no need of explanations. This turns out to be no common case, and after hearing the whole, I do not hesitate to offer you my hand."

Leopold was overcome by his kindness, and withdrew speechless, but greatly relieved.

Several times during the course of his narrative, its apparent truthfulness and its circumstantiality went nigh to stagger Mr. Hooker; but a glance at Bascombe's face, with its half-amused smile, instantly set him right again, and he thought with dismay how near he had been to letting himself be fooled by a madman.

Again in the carriage, Leopold laid his head on Helen's shoulder, and looked up in her face with such a smile as she had never seen on his before. Certainly there was something in confession--if only enthusiasts like Mr. Wingfold would not spoil all by pushing things to extremes and turning good into bad!

Leopold was yet such a child, had so little occupied himself with things about him, and had been so entirely taken up with his passion, and the poetry of existence unlawfully forced, that if his knowledge of the circumstances of Emmeline's murder had depended on the newspapers, he would have remained in utter ignorance concerning them. From the same causes he was so entirely unacquainted with the modes of criminal procedure, that the conduct of the magistrate never struck him as strange, not to say illegal. And so strongly did he feel the good man's kindness and sympathy, that his comfort from making a clean breast of it was even greater than he expected. Before they reached home he was fast asleep. When laid on his couch, he almost fell asleep again, and Helen saw him smile as he slept.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE MASK.

But although such was George Bascombe's judgment of Leopold, and such his conduct of his affair, he could not prevent the recurrent intrusion of the flickering doubt which had showed itself when first he listened to the story. Amid all the wildness of the tale there was yet a certain air, not merely of truthfulness in the narrator--that was not to be questioned--but of verisimilitude in the narration, which had its effect, although it gave rise to no conscious exercise of discriminating or ponderating faculty. Leopold's air of conviction also, although of course that might well accompany the merest invention rooted in madness, yet had its force, persistently as George pooh-poohed it--which he did the more strenuously from the intense, even morbid abhorrence of his nature to being taken in, and having to confess himself of unstable intellectual equilibrium. Possibly this was not the only kind of thing in which the sensitiveness of a vanity he would himself have disowned, had rendered him unfit for perceiving the truth. Nor do I know how much there may be to choose between the two shames--that of accepting what is untrue, and that of refusing what is true.

The second time he listened to Leopold's continuous narrative, the doubt returned with more clearness and less flicker: there was such a thing as being over-wise: might he not be taking himself in with his own incredulity? Ought he not to apply some test? And did Leopold's story offer any means of doing so?--One thing, he then found, had been dimly haunting his thoughts ever since he heard it: Leopold affirmed that he had thrown his cloak and mask down an old

pit-shaft, close by the place of murder: if there was such a shaft, could it be searched?--Recurring doubt at length so wrought upon his mind, that he resolved to make his holiday excursion to that neighbourhood, and there endeavour to gain what assurance of any sort might be to be had. What end beyond his own possible satisfaction the inquiry was to answer he did not ask himself. The restless spirit of the detective, so often conjoined with indifference to what is in its own nature true, was at work in him--but that was not all: he must know the very facts, if possible, of whatever concerned Helen. I shall not follow his proceedings closely: it is with their reaction upon Leopold that I have to do.

The house where the terrible thing took place was not far from a little moorland village. There Bascombe found a small inn, where he took up his quarters, pretending to be a geologist out for a holiday. He soon came upon the disused shaft.

The inn was a good deal frequented in the evenings by the colliers of the district--a rough race, but not beyond the influences of such an address, mingled of self-assertion and good fellowship, as Bascombe brought to bear upon them, for he had soon perceived that amongst them he might find the assistance he wanted. In the course of conversation, therefore, he mentioned the shaft, on which he pretended to have come in his rambles. Remarking on the danger of such places, he learned that this one served for ventilation, and was still accessible below from other workings. Thereafter he begged permission to go down one of the pits, on pretext of examining the coal-strata, and having secured for his guide one of the most intelligent of those whose acquaintance he had made at the inn, persuaded him, partly by expressions of incredulity because of the distance between, to guide him to the bottom of the shaft whose accessibility he maintained. That they were going in the right direction, he had the testimony of the little compass he carried at his watch-chain, and at length he saw a faint gleam before him. When at last he raised his head, wearily bent beneath the low roofs of the passages, and looked upwards, there was a star looking down at him out of the sky of day! But George never wasted time in staring at what was above his head, and so began instantly to search about as if examining the indications of the strata. Was it possible? Could it be? There was a piece of black something that was not coal, and seemed textile! It was a half-mask, for there were the eye-holes in it! He caught it up and hurried it into his bag--not so quickly but that the haste set his guide speculating. And Bascombe saw that the action was noted. The man afterwards offered to carry his bag, but he would not allow him.

The next morning he left the place and returned to London, taking Glaston, by a detour, on his way. A few questions to Leopold drew from him a description of the mask he had worn, entirely corresponding with the one George had found; and at length he was satisfied that there was truth more than a little in Leopold's confession. It was not his business, however, he now said to himself, to set magistrates right. True, he had set Mr. Hooker wrong in the first place, but he had done it in good faith, and how could he turn traitor to Helen and her brother? Besides, he was sure the magistrate himself would be anything but obliged to him for opening his eyes! At the same time Leopold's fanatic eagerness after confession might drive the matter further, and if so, it might become awkward for him. He might be looked to for the defence, and

were he not certain that his guide had marked his concealment of what he had picked up, he might have ventured to undertake it, for certainly it would have been a rare chance for a display of the forensic talent he believed himself to possess; but as it was, the moment he was called to the bar--which would be within a fortnight--he would go abroad, say to Paris, and there, for twelve months or so, await events.

When he disclosed to Helen his evil success in the coalpit, it was but the merest film of a hope it destroyed, for she KNEW that her brother was guilty. George and she now felt that they were linked by the possession of a common, secret.

But the cloak had been found a short time before, and was in the possession of Emmeline's mother. That mother was a woman of strong passions and determined character. The first shock of the catastrophe over, her grief was almost supplanted by a rage for vengeance, in the compassing of which no doubt she vaguely imagined she would be doing something to right her daughter. Hence the protracted concealment of the murderer was bitterness to her soul, and she vowed herself to discovery and revenge as the one business of her life. In this her husband, a good deal broken by the fearful event, but still more by misfortunes of another kind which had begun to threaten him, offered her no assistance, and indeed felt neither her passion urge him, nor her perseverance hold him to the pursuit.

In the neighbourhood her mind was well known, and not a few found their advantage in supplying her passion with the fuel of hope. Any hint of evidence, however small, the remotest suggestion even towards discovery, they would carry at once to her, for she was an open-handed woman, and in such case would give with a profusion that, but for the feeling concerned, would have been absurd, and did expose her to the greed of every lying mendicant within reach of her. Not unnaturally, therefore, it had occurred to a certain collier to make his way to the bottom of the shaft, on the chance--hardly of finding, but of being enabled to invent something worth reporting; and there, to the very fooling of his barren expectation, he had found the cloak.

The mother had been over to Holland, where she had instituted unavailing inquiries in the villages along the coast and among the islands, and had been home but a few days when the cloak was carried to her. In her mind it immediately associated itself with the costumes of the horrible ball, and at once she sought the list of her guests thereat. It was before her at the very moment when the man, who had been Bascombe's guide, sent in to request an interview, the result of which was to turn her attention for the time in another direction.--Who might the visitor to the mine have been?

Little was to be gathered in the neighbourhood beyond the facts that the letters G. B. were on his carpet-bag, and that a scrap of torn envelope bore what seemed the letters mple. She despatched the poor indications to an inquiry-office in London.

## CHAPTER V.

### FURTHER DECISION.

The day after his confession to Mr. Hooker, a considerable re-action took place in Lingard. He did not propose to leave his bed, and lay exhausted. He said he had caught cold. He coughed a little; wondered why Mr. Wingfold did not come to see him, dozed a good deal, and often woke with a start. Mrs. Ramshorn thought Helen ought to make him get up: nothing, she said, could be worse for him than lying in bed; but Helen thought, even if her aunt were right, he must be humoured. The following day Mr. Hooker called, inquired after him, and went up to his room to see him. There he said all he could think of to make him comfortable; repeated that certain preliminaries had to be gone through before the commencement of the prosecution; said that while these went on, it was better he should be in his sister's care than in prison, where, if he went at once, he most probably would die before the trial came on; that in the meantime he was responsible for him; that, although he had done quite right in giving himself up, he must not let what was done and could no more be helped, prey too much upon his mind, lest it should render him unable to give his evidence with proper clearness, and he should be judged insane and sent to Broadmoor, which would be frightful. He ended by saying that he had had great provocation, and that he was certain the judge would consider it in passing sentence, only he must satisfy the jury there had been no premeditation.

"I will not utter a word to excuse myself, Mr. Hooker," replied Leopold.

The worthy magistrate smiled sadly, and went away, if possible, more convinced of the poor lad's insanity.

The visit helped Leopold over that day, but when the next also passed, and neither did Wingfold appear, nor any explanation of his absence reach him, he made up his mind to act again for himself.

The cause of the curate's apparent neglect, though ill to find, was not far to seek.

On the Monday, he had, upon some pretext or other, been turned away; on the Tuesday, he had been told that Mr. Lingard had gone for a drive; on the Wednesday, that he was much too tired to be seen; and thereupon had at length judged it better to leave things to right themselves. If Leopold did not want to see him, it would be of no use by persistence to force his way to him; while on the other hand, if he did want to see him, he felt convinced the poor fellow would manage to have his own way somehow.

The next morning after he had thus resolved, Leopold declared himself better, and got up and dressed. He then lay on the sofa and waited as quietly as he could until Helen went out--Mr. Faber insisting she should do so every day. It was no madness, but a burning desire for life, coupled with an utter carelessness of that which is commonly called life, that now ruled his behaviour. He tied

his slippers on his feet, put on his smoking-cap, crept unseen from the house, and took the direction, of the Abbey. The influence of the air--by his weakness rendered intoxicating, the strange look of everything around him, the nervous excitement of every human approach, kept him up until he reached the churchyard, across which he was crawling, to find the curate's lodging, when suddenly his brain seemed to go swimming away into regions beyond the senses. He attempted to seat himself on a grave-stone, but lost consciousness, and fell at full length between that and the next one.

When Helen returned, she was horrified to find that he had gone--when, or whither nobody knew: no one had missed him. Her first fear was the river, but her conscience enlightened her, and her shame could not prevent her from seeking him at the curate's. In her haste she passed him where he lay.

Shown into the curate's study, she gave a hurried glance around, and her anxiety became terror again.

"Oh! Mr. Wingfold," she cried, "where is Leopold?"

"I have not seen him," replied the curate, turning pale.

"Then he has thrown himself in the river!" cried Helen, and sank on a chair.

The curate caught up his hat.

"You wait here," he said. "I will go and look for him."

But Helen rose, and, without another word, they set off together, and again entered the churchyard. As they hurried across it, the curate caught sight of something on the ground, and, springing forward, found Leopold.

"He is dead!" cried Helen, in an agony, when she saw him stop and stoop.

He looked dead indeed; but what appalled her the most reassured Wingfold a little: blood had flowed freely from a cut on his eyebrow.

The curate lifted him, no hard task, out of the damp shadow, and laid him on the stone, which was warm in the sun, with his head on Helen's lap, then ran to order the carriage, and hastened back with brandy. They got a little into his mouth, but he could not swallow it. Still it seemed to do him good, for presently he gave a deep sigh; and just then they heard the carriage stop at the gate. Wingfold took him up, carried him to it, got in with him in his arms, and held him on his knees until he reached the manor house, when he carried him upstairs and laid him on the sofa. When they had brought him round a little, he undressed him and put him to bed.

"Do not leave me," murmured Leopold, just as Helen entered the room, and she heard it.

Wingfold looked to her for the answer he was to make. Her bearing was much altered: she was both ashamed and humbled.

"Yes, Leopold," she said, "Mr. Wingfold will, I am sure, stay with you as long as he can."

"Indeed I will," assented the curate. "But I must run for Mr. Faber first."

"How did I come here?" asked Leopold, opening his eyes large upon Helen after swallowing a spoonful of the broth she held to his lips.

But, before she could answer him, he turned sick, and by the time the doctor came was very feverish. Faber gave the necessary directions, and Wingfold walked back with him to get his prescription made up.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CURATE AND THE DOCTOR.

"There is something strange about that young man's illness," said Faber, as soon as they had left the house. "I fancy you know more than you can tell, and if so, then I have committed no indiscretion in saying as much."

"Perhaps it might be an indiscretion to acknowledge as much however," said the curate with a smile.

"You are right. I have not been long in the place," returned Faber, "and you had no opportunity of testing me. But I am indifferent honest as well as you, though I don't go you in everything."

"People would have me believe you don't go with me in anything."

"They say as much--do they?" returned Faber with some annoyance. "I thought I had been careful not to trespass on your preserves."

"As for preserves, I don't know of any," answered the curate. "There is no true bird in the grounds that won't manage somehow to escape the snare of the fowler."

"Well," said the doctor, "I know nothing about God and all that kind of thing, but, though I don't think I'm a coward exactly either, I know I should like to have your pluck."

"I haven't got any pluck," said the curate.

"Tell that to the marines," said Faber. "I daren't go and say what I think or don't think, even in the bedroom of my least orthodox patient--at least, if I do, I instantly repent it--while you go on saying what you really believe Sunday after Sunday!--How you can believe it, I don't know, and it's no business of mine."



"Oh yes, it is!" returned Wingfold. "But as to the pluck, it may be a man's duty to say in the pulpit what he would be just as wrong to say by a sick-bed."

"That has nothing to do with the pluck! That's all I care about."

"It has everything to do with what you take for pluck. My pluck is only Don Worm."

"I don't know what you mean by that."

"It's Benedick's name, in Much Ado about Nothing, for the conscience. MY pluck is nothing but my conscience."

"It's a damned fine thing to have anyhow, whatever name you put upon it!" said Faber.

"Excuse me if I find your epithet more amusing than apt," said Wingfold, laughing.

"You are quite right," said Faber. "I apologize."

"As to the pluck again," Wingfold resumed, "--if you think of this one fact--that my whole desire is to believe in God, and that the only thing I can be sure of sometimes is that, if there be a God, none but an honest man will ever find him, you will not then say there is much pluck in my speaking the truth?"

"I don't see that that makes it a hair easier, in the face of such a set of gaping noodles as--"

"I beg your pardon:--there is more lack of conscience than of brains in the Abbey of a Sunday, I fear."

"Well, all I have to say is, I can't for the life of me see what you want to believe in a God for! It seems to me the world would go rather better without any such fancy. Look here now: there is young Spenser--out there at Harwood--a patient of mine. His wife died yesterday--one of the loveliest young creatures you ever saw. The poor fellow is as bad about it as fellow can be. Well, he's one of your sort, and said to me the other day, just as you would have him, 'It's the will of God,' he said, 'and we must hold our peace.'--'Don't talk to me about God,' I said, for I couldn't stand it. 'Do you mean to tell me that, if there was a God, he would have taken such a lovely creature as that away from her husband and her helpless infant, at the age of two and twenty? I scorn to believe it.'"

"What did he say to that?"

"He turned as white as death, and said never a word."

"Ah, you forgot that you were taking from him his only hope of seeing her again!"

"I certainly did not think of that," said Faber.

"Even then," resumed Wingfold, "I should not say you were wrong, if you were prepared to add that you had searched every possible region

of existence, and had found no God; or that you had tried every theory man had invented, or even that you were able to invent yourself, and had found none of them consistent with the being of a God. I do not say that then you would be right in your judgment, for another man, of equal weight, might have had a different experience. I only say, I would not then blame you. But you must allow it a very serious thing to assert as a conviction, without such grounds as the assertor has pretty fully satisfied himself concerning, what COULD only drive the sting of death ten times deeper."

The doctor was silent.

"I doubt not you spoke in a burst of indignation; but it seems to me the indignation of a man unaccustomed to ponder the things concerning which he expresses such a positive conviction."

"You are wrong there," returned Faber; "for I was brought up in the straitest sect of the Pharisees, and know what I am saying."

"The straitest sect of the Pharisees can hardly be the school in which to gather any such idea of a God as one could wish to be a reality."

"They profess to know."

"Is that any argument of weight, they and their opinions being what they are?--If there be a God, do you imagine he would choose any strait sect under the sun to be his interpreters?"

"But the question is not of the idea of a God, but of the existence of any, seeing, if he exists, he must be such as the human heart could never accept as God, inasmuch as he at least permits, if not himself enacts cruelty. My argument to poor Spenser remains--however unwise or indeed cruel it may have been."

"I grant it a certain amount of force--as much exactly as had gone to satisfy the children whom I heard the other day agreeing that Dr. Faber was a very cruel man, for he pulled out nurse's tooth, and gave poor little baby such a nasty, nasty powder!"

"Is that a fair parallel? I must look at it."

"I think it is. What you do is often unpleasant, sometimes most painful, but it does not follow that you are a cruel man, and a hurter instead of a healer of men."

"I think there is a fault in the analogy," said Faber. "For here am I nothing but a slave to laws already existing, and compelled to work according to them. It is not my fault therefore that the remedies I have to use are unpleasant. But if there be a God, he has the matter in his own hands."

"There is weight and justice in your argument, which may well make the analogy appear at first sight false. But is there no theory possible that should make it perfect?"

"I do not see how there should be any. For, if you say God is under any such compulsion as I am under, then surely the house is divided against itself, and God is not God any more."

"For my part," said the curate, "I think I COULD believe in a God who did but his imperfect best: in one all power, and not all goodness, I could not believe. But suppose that the design of God involved the perfecting of men as the CHILDREN OF GOD--'I said ye are gods,'--that he would have them partakers of his own blessedness in kind--be as himself;--suppose his grand idea could not be contented with creatures perfect ONLY by his gift, so far as that should reach, and having no willing causal share in the perfection, that is, partaking not at all of God's individuality and free-will and choice of good; then suppose that suffering were the only way through which the individual could be set, in separate and self-individuality, so far apart from God, that it might WILL, and so become a partaker of his singleness and freedom;--and suppose that this suffering must be and had been initiated by God's taking his share, and that the infinitely greater share;--suppose next, that God saw the germ of a pure affection, say in your friend and his wife, but saw also that it was a germ so imperfect and weak that it could not encounter the coming frosts and winds of the world without loss and decay, while, if they were parted now for a few years, it would grow and strengthen and expand, to the certainty of an infinitely higher and deeper and keener love through the endless ages to follow--so that by suffering should come, in place of contented decline, abortion, and death, a troubled birth of joyous result in health and immortality;--suppose all this, and what then?"

Faber was silent a moment, then answered,

"Your theory has but one fault: it is too good to be true."

"My theory leaves plenty of difficulty, but has no such fault as that. Why, what sort of a God would content you, Mr. Faber? The one idea is too bad, the other too good to be true. Must you expand and pare until you get one exactly to the measure of yourself ere you can accept it as thinkable or possible? Why, a less God than that would not rest your soul a week. The only possibility of believing in a God seems to me to lie in finding an idea of a God large enough, grand enough, pure enough, lovely enough to be fit to believe in."

"And have you found such--may I ask?"

"I think I am finding such."

"Where?"

"In the man of the New Testament. I have thought a little more about these things, I fancy, than you have, Mr. Faber. I may come to be sure of something; I don't see how a man can ever be sure of NOTHING."

"Don't suppose me quite dumbfounded, though I can't answer you off hand," said Mr. Faber, as they reached his door.--"Come in with me, and I will make up the medicine myself; it will save time. There are a thousand difficulties," he resumed in the surgery, "some of them springing from peculiar points that come before one of my profession, which I doubt if you would be able to meet so readily. But about this poor fellow, Lingard. You know Glaston gossip says he is out of his mind."

"If I were you, Mr. Faber, I would not take pains to contradict it. He is not out of his mind, but has such trouble in it as might well drive him out.--Don't you even hint at that, though."

"I understand," said Faber.

"If doctor and minister did understand each other and work together," said Wingfold, "I fancy a good deal more might be done."

"I don't doubt it.--What sort of fellow is that cousin of theirs--Bascombe is his name, I believe?"

"A man to suit you, I should think," said the curate; "a man with a most tremendous power of believing in nothing."

"Come, come!" returned the doctor, "you don't know half enough about me to tell what sort of man I should like or dislike."

"Well, all I will say more of Bascombe is, that if he were not conceited he would be honest; and if he were as honest as he believes himself, he would not be so ready to judge every one dishonest who does not agree with him."

"I hope we may have another talk soon," said the doctor, searching for a cork. "Some day I will tell you a few things that may stagger you."

"Likely enough: I am only learning to walk yet," said Wingfold. "But a man may stagger and not fall, and I am ready to hear anything you choose to tell me."

Faber handed him the bottle, and he took his leave.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HELEN AND THE CURATE.

Before the morning Leopold lay wound in the net of a low fever, almost as ill as ever, but with this difference, that his mind was far less troubled, and that even his most restless dreams no longer scared him awake to a still nearer assurance of misery. And yet, many a time, as she watched by his side, it was excruciatingly plain to Helen that the stuff of which his dreams were made was the last process to the final execution of the law. She thought she could follow it all in his movements and the expressions of his countenance. At a certain point, the cold dew always appeared on his forehead, after which invariably came a smile, and he would be quiet until near morning, when the same signs again appeared. Sometimes he would murmur prayers, and sometimes it seemed to Helen that he must

fancy himself talking face to face with Jesus, for the look of blessed and trustful awe upon his countenance was amazing in its beauty.

For Helen herself, she was prey to a host of changeful emotions. At one time she accused herself bitterly of having been the cause of the return of his illness; the next a gush of gladness would swell her heart at the thought that now she had him at least safer for a while, and that he might die and so escape the whole crowd of horrible possibilities. For George's manipulation of the magistrate could but delay the disclosure of the truth; even should no discovery be made, Leopold must at length suspect a trick, and that would at once drive him to fresh action.

But amongst the rest, a feeling which had but lately begun to indicate its far-off presence now threatened to bring with it a deeper and more permanent sorrow: it became more and more plain to her that she had taken the evil part against the one she loved best in the world; that she had been as a Satan to him; had driven him back, stood almost bodily in the way to turn him from the path of peace. Whether the path he had sought to follow was the only one or not, it was the only one he knew; and that it was at least a true one, was proved by the fact that he had already found in it the beginnings of the peace he sought; while she, for the avoidance of shame and pity, for the sake of the family, as she had said to herself, had pursued a course which if successful, would at best have resulted in shutting him up, as in a madhouse, with his own inborn horrors, with vain remorse, and equally vain longing. Her conscience, now that her mind was quieter, from the greater distance to which the threatening peril had again withdrawn, had taken the opportunity of speaking louder. And she listened--but still with one question ever presented: Why might he not appropriate the consolations of the gospel without committing the suicide of surrender? She could not see that confession was the very door of refuge and safety, towards which he must press.

George's absence was now again a relief, and while she feared and shrank from the severity of Wingfold, she could not help a certain indelible sense of safety in his presence--at least so long as Leopold was too ill to talk.

For the curate, he became more and more interested in the woman who could love so strongly, and yet not entirely, who suffered and must still suffer so much, and who a faith even no greater than his own might render comparatively blessed. The desire to help her grew and grew in him, but he could see no way of reaching her. And then he began to discover one peculiar advantage belonging to the little open chamber of the pulpit--open not only or specially to heaven above, but to so many of the secret chambers of the souls of the congregation. For what a man dares not, could not if he dared, and dared not if he could, say to another, even at the time and in the place fittest of all, he can say thence, open-faced before the whole congregation; and the person in need thereof may hear it without umbrage, or the choking husk of individual application, irritating to the rejection of what truth may lie in it for him. Would that our pulpits were all in the power of such men as by suffering know the human, and by obedience the divine heart! Then would the office of instruction be no more mainly occupied by the press, but the faces of true men would everywhere be windows for the light of the Spirit

to enter other men's souls, and the voice of their words would follow with the forms of what truth they saw, and the power of the Lord would speed from heart to heart. Then would men soon understand that not the form of even soundest words availeth anything, but a new creature.

When Wingfold was in the pulpit, then, he could speak as from the secret to the secret; but elsewhere he felt, in regard to Helen, like a transport-ship filled with troops, which must go sailing around the shores of an invaded ally, in frustrate search for a landing. Oh, to help that woman, that the light of life might go up in her heart, and her cheek bloom again with the rose of peace! But not a word could he speak in her presence, for he heard everything he would have said as he thought it would sound to her, and therefore he had no utterance. Is it an infirmity of certain kinds of men, or a wise provision for their protection, that the brightest forms the truth takes in their private cogitations seem to lose half their lustre and all their grace when uttered in the presence of an unreceptive nature, and they hear, as it were, their own voice reflected in a poor, dull, inharmonious echo, and are disgusted?

But, on the other hand, ever in the pauses of the rushing, ever in the watery gleams of life that broke through the clouds and drifts of the fever, Leopold sought his friend, and, finding him, shone into a brief radiance, or, missing him, gloomed back into the land of visions. The tenderness of the curate's service, the heart that showed itself in everything he did, even in the turn and expression of the ministering hand, was a kind of revelation to Helen. For while his intellect was hanging about the door, asking questions, and uneasily shifting hither and thither in its unloved perplexities, the spirit of the master had gone by it unseen, and entered into the chamber of his heart.

After preaching the sermon last recorded, there came a reaction of doubt and depression on the mind of the curate, greater than usual. Had he not gone farther than his right? Had he not implied more conviction than was his? Words could not go beyond his satisfaction with what he found in the gospel, or the hopes for the range of his conscious life springing therefrom; but was he not now making people suppose him more certain of the FACT of these things than he was? He was driven to console himself with the reflection that so long as he had had no such intention, even if he had been so carried away by the delight of his heart as to give such an impression, it mattered little: what was it to other people what he believed or how he believed? If he had not been untrue to himself, no harm would follow. Was a man never to talk from the highest in him to the forgetting of the lower? Was a man never to be carried beyond himself and the regions of his knowledge? If so, then farewell poetry and prophecy--yea, all grand discovery!--for things must be foreseen ere they can be realized--apprehended ere they be comprehended. This much he could say for himself, and no more, that he was ready to lay down his life for the mere CHANCE, if he might so use the word, of these things being true; nor did he argue any devotion in that, seeing life without them would be to him a waste of unreality. He could bear witness to no facts--but to the truth, to the loveliness and harmony and righteousness and safety that he saw in the idea of the Son of Man--as he read it in the story. He dared not say what, in a time of persecution, torture might work upon him, but he felt right hopeful that, even were he base enough

to deny him, any cock might crow him back to repentance. At the same time he saw plain enough that even if he gave his body to be burned, it were no sufficing assurance of his Christianity: nothing could satisfy him of that less than the conscious presence of the perfect charity. Without that he was still outside the kingdom, wandering in a dream around its walls.

Difficulties went on presenting themselves; at times he would be overwhelmed in the tossing waves of contradiction and impossibility; but still his head would come up into the air and he would get a breath before he went down again. And with every fresh conflict, every fresh gleam of doubtful victory, the essential idea of the master looked more and more lovely. And he began to see the working of his doubts on the growth of his heart and soul--both widening and realizing his faith, and preventing it from becoming faith in an idea of God instead of in the living God--the God beyond as well as in the heart that thought and willed and imagined.

He had much time for reflection as he sat silent by the bedside of Leopold. Sometimes Helen would be sitting near, though generally when he arrived she went out for her walk, but never anything came to him he could utter to her. And she was one of those who learn little from other people. A change must pass upon her ere she could be rightly receptive. Some vapour or other that clouded her being must be driven to the winds first.

Mrs. Ramshorn had become at least reconciled to the frequent presence of the curate, partly from the testimony of Helen, partly from the witness of her own eyes to the quality of his ministrations. She was by no means one of the loveliest among women, yet she had a heart, and could appreciate some kinds of goodness which the arrogance of her relation to the church did not interfere to hide--for nothing is so deadening to the divine as an habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things--and she became half-friendly and quite courteous when she met the curate on the stair, and would now and then, when she thought of it, bring him a glass of wine as he sat by the bedside.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN EXAMINATION.

The acquaintance between the draper and the gate-keeper rapidly ripened into friendship. Very generally, as soon as he had shut his shop, Drew would walk to the park-gate to see Polwarth; and three times a week at least, the curate made one of the party. Much was then talked, more was thought, and I venture to say, more yet was understood.

One evening the curate went earlier than usual, and had tea with the

Polwarths.

"Do you remember," he asked of his host, "once putting to me the question what our Lord came into this world for?"

"I do," answered Polwarth.

"And you remember I answered you wrong: I said it was to save the world."

"I do. But remember, I said primarily, for of course he did come to save the world."

"Yes, just so you put it. Well, I think I can answer the question correctly now, and in learning the true answer I have learned much. Did he not come first of all to do the will of his Father? Was not his Father first with him always and in everything--his fellow-men next--for they were his Father's?"

"I need not say it--you know that you are right. Jesus is tenfold a real person to you--is he not--since you discovered that truth?"

"I think so; I hope so. It does seem as if a grand simple reality had begun to dawn upon me out of the fog--the form as of a man pure and simple, because the eternal son of the Father."

"And now, may I not ask--are you able to accept the miracles, things in themselves so improbable?"

"If we suppose the question settled as to whether the man was what he said, then all that remains is to ask whether the works reported of him are consistent with what you can see of the character of the man."

"And to you they seem--?"

"Some consistent, others not. Concerning the latter I look for more light."

"Meantime let me ask you a question about them. What was the main object of miracles?"

"One thing at least I have learned, Mr. Polwarth and that is, not to answer any question of yours in a hurry," said Wingfold. "I will, if you please, take this one home with me, and hold the light to it."

"Do," said Polwarth, "and you will find it return you the light threefold.--One word more, ere Mr. Drew comes: do you still think of giving up your curacy?"

"I have almost forgotten I ever thought of such a thing. Whatever energies I may or may not have, I know one thing for certain, that I could not devote them to anything else I should think entirely worth doing. Indeed nothing else seems interesting enough--nothing to repay the labour, but the telling of my fellow-men about the one man who is the truth, and to know whom is the life. Even if there be no hereafter, I would live my time believing in a grand thing that ought to be true if it is not. No facts can take the place of truths, and if these be not truths, then is the loftiest part of our



nature a waste. Let me hold by the better than the actual, and fall into nothingness off the same precipice with Jesus and John and Paul and a thousand more, who were lovely in their lives, and with their death make even the nothingness into which they have passed like the garden of the Lord. I will go further, Polwarth, and say, I would rather die for evermore believing as Jesus believed, than live for evermore believing as those that deny him. If there be no God, I feel assured that existence is and could be but a chaos of contradictions, whence can emerge nothing worthy to be called a truth, nothing worth living for.--No, I will not give up my curacy. I will teach that which IS good, even if there should be no God to make a fact of it, and I will spend my life on it, in the growing hope, which MAY become assurance, that there is indeed a perfect God, worthy of being the Father of Jesus Christ, and that it was BECAUSE they are true, that these things were lovely to me and to so many men and women, of whom some have died for them, and some would be yet ready to die."

"I thank my God to hear you say so. Nor will you stand still there," said Polwarth. "But here comes Mr. Drew!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### IMMORTALITY.

"How goes business?" said Polwarth, when the new-comer had seated himself.

"That is hardly a question I look for from you, sir," returned the draper, smiling all over his round face, which looked more than ever like a moon of superior intelligence. "For me, I am glad to leave it behind me in the shop."

"True business can never be left in any shop. It is a care, white or black, that sits behind every horseman."

"That is fact; and with me it has just taken a new shape," said Drew, "for I have come with quite a fresh difficulty. Since I saw you last, Mr. Polwarth, a strange and very uncomfortable doubt has rushed in upon me, and I find myself altogether unfit to tackle it. I have no weapons--not a single argument of the least weight. I wonder if it be a law of nature that no sooner shall a man get into a muddle with one thing, than a thousand other muddles shall come pouring in upon him, as if Muddle itself were going to swallow him up! Here am I just beginning to get a little start in honest ways, when up comes the ugly head of the said doubt, swelling itself more and more to look like a fact--namely, that after this world there is nothing for us--nothing at all to be had anyhow--that as we came so we go--into life, out of life--that, having been nothing before, we shall be nothing after! The flowers come back in the spring, and the

corn in the autumn, but they ain't the same flowers or the same corn. They're just as different as the new generations of men."

"There's no pretence that we come back either. We only think we don't go into the ground, but away somewhere else."

"You can't prove that."

"No."

"And you don't know anything about it!"

"Not much--but enough, I think."

"Why, even those that profess to believe it, scoff at the idea of an apparition--a ghost!"

"That's the fault of the ghosts, I suspect--or their reporters. I don't care about them myself. I prefer the tale of one who, they say, rose again, and brought his body with him."

"Yes; but he was only one!"

"Except two or three whom, they say, he brought to life."

"Still there are but three or four."

"To tell you the truth, I do not care much to argue the point with you.--It is by no means a matter of the FIRST importance whether we live for ever or not."

"Mr. Polwarth!" exclaimed the draper in such astonishment mingled with horror, as proved he was not in immediate danger of becoming an advocate of the doctrine of extinction.

The gate-keeper smiled what, but for a peculiar expression of undefinable good in it, might have been called a knowing smile.

"Suppose a thing were in itself not worth having," he said, "would it be any great enhancement of it as a gift to add the assurance that the possession of it was eternal! Most people think it a fine thing to have a bit of land to call their own and leave to their children; but suppose a stinking and undrainable swamp, full of foul springs--what consolation would it be to the proprietor of that to know, while the world lasted, not a human being would once dispute its possession with any fortunate descendant holding it?"

The draper only stared, but his stare was a thorough one. The curate sat waiting, with both amusement and interest, for what would follow: he saw the direction in which the little man was driving.

"You astonish me!" said Mr. Drew, recovering his mental breath. "How can you compare God's gift to such a horrible thing! Where should we be without life?"

Rachel burst out laughing, and the curate could not help joining her.

"Mr. Drew," said Polwarth, half merrily, "are you going to help me

drag my chain out of its weary length, or are you too much shocked at the doubtful condition of its links to touch them? I promise you the last shall be of bright gold."

"I beg your pardon," said the draper; "I might have known you didn't mean it."

"On the contrary, I mean everything I say and that literally. Perhaps I don't mean everything you fancy I mean.--Tell me then, would life be worth having on any and every possible condition?"

"Certainly not."

"You know some, I dare say, who would be glad to be rid of life such as it is, and such as they suppose it must continue?"

"I don't."

"I do."

"I have already understood that everybody clung to life."

"Most people do; everybody certainly does not: Job, for instance."

"They say that is but a poem."

"BUT a poem! EVEN a poem--a representation true not of this or that individual, but of the race! There ARE such persons as would gladly be rid of life, and in their condition all would feel the same. Somewhat similar is the state of those who profess unbelief in the existence of God: none of them expect, and few of them seem to wish to live for ever!--At least, so I am told."

"That is no wonder," said the draper; "--if they don't believe in God, I mean."

"Then there I have you! There you allow life to be not worth having, if on certain evil conditions."

"I admit it, then."

"And I repeat that to prove life endless is a matter of the FIRST importance. And I will go a little farther.--Does it follow that life is worth having because a man would like to have it for ever?"

"I should say so; who should be a better judge than the man himself?"

"Let us look at it a moment. Suppose--we will take a strong case--suppose a man whose whole delight is in cruelty, and who has such plentiful opportunity of indulging the passion that he finds it well with him--such a man would of course desire such a life to endure for ever: is such a life worth having? were it well that man should be immortally cruel?"

"Not for others."

"Still less, I say, for himself."

"In the judgment of others, doubtless; but to himself he would be happy."

"Call his horrible satisfaction happiness then, and leave aside the fact that in its own nature it is a horror, and not a bliss: a time must come, when, in the exercise of his delight, he shall have destroyed all life besides, and made himself alone with himself in an empty world: will he then find life worth having?"

"Then he ought to live for punishment."

"With that we have nothing to do now, but there you have given me an answer to my question, whether a man's judgment that his life is worth having, proves immortality a thing to be desired."

"I have. I understand now."

"It follows that there is something of prior importance to the possession of immortality:--what is that something?"

"I suppose that the immortality itself should be worth possessing."

"Yes; that the life should be such that it were well it should be endless.--And what then if it be not such?"

"The question then would be whether it could not be made such."

"You are right.--And wherein consists the essential inherent worthiness of a life as life?--The only perfect idea of life is--a unit, self-existent, and creative. That is God, the only one. But to this idea, in its kind, must every life, to be complete as life, correspond; and the human correspondence to self-existence is, that the man should round and complete himself by taking into himself that origin; by going back and in his own will adopting his origin, rooting therein afresh in the exercise of his own freedom and in all the energy of his own self-roused will; in other words--that the man say "I will be after the will of the creating \_I\_;" that he see and say with his whole being that to will the will of God in himself and for himself and concerning himself, is the highest possible condition of a man. Then has he completed his cycle by turning back upon his history, laying hold of his cause, and willing his own being in the will of the only I AM. This is the rounding, re-creating, unifying of the man. This is religion, and all that gathers not with this, scatters abroad."

"And then," said Drew, with some eagerness, "lawfully comes the question, 'Shall I, or shall I not live for ever?'"

"Pardon me; I think not," returned the little prophet. "I think rather we have done with it for ever. The man with life so in himself, will not dream of asking whether he shall live. It is only in the twilight of a half-life, holding in it at once much wherefore it should desire its own continuance, and much that renders it unworthy of continuance, that the doubtful desire of immortality can arise.--Do you remember"--here Polwarth turned to Wingfold--"my mentioning to you once a certain manuscript of strange interest--to me at least and Rachel--which a brother of mine left behind him?"

"I remember it perfectly," answered the curate."

"It seems so to mingle with all I ever think on this question, that I should much like, if you gentlemen would allow me, to read some extracts from it."

Nothing could have been heartier than the assurance of both the men that they could but be delighted to listen to anything he chose to give them.

"I must first tell you, however," said Polwarth, "merely to protect you from certain disturbing speculations, otherwise sure to present themselves, that my poor brother was mad, and that what I now read portions of seemed to him no play of the imagination, but a record of absolute fact. Some parts are stranger and less intelligible than others, but through it all there is abundance of intellectual movement, and what seems to me a wonderful keenness to perceive the movements and arrest the indications of an imagined consciousness."

As he spoke, the little man was opening a cabinet in which he kept his precious things. He brought from it a good-sized quarto volume, neatly bound in morocco, with gilt edges, which he seemed to handle not merely with respect but with tenderness.

The heading of the next chapter is my own, and does not belong to the manuscript.

## CHAPTER X.

### PASSAGES FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE WANDERING JEW.

"I have at length been ill, very ill, once more, and for many reasons foreign to the weightiest, which I had forgotten, I had hoped that I was going to die. But therein I am as usual deceived and disappointed. That I have been out of my mind I know, by having returned to the real knowledge of what I am. The conscious present has again fallen together and made a whole with the past, and that whole is my personal identity.

"How I broke loose from the bonds of a madness, which, after so many and heavy years of uninterrupted sanity, had at length laid hold upon me, I will now relate.

"I had, as I have said, been very ill--with some sort of fever that had found fit rooting in a brain overwearied, from not having been originally constructed to last so long. Whether it came not of an indwelling demon, or a legion of demons, I cannot tell--God knows. Surely I was as one possessed. I was mad, whether for years, or but for moments--who can tell? I cannot. Verily it seems for many years; but, knowing well the truth concerning the relations of time in him

that dreameth and waketh from his dream, I place no confidence in the testimony of the impressions left upon my seeming memory. I can however trust it sufficiently as to the character of the illusions that then possessed me. I imagined myself an Englishman called Polwarth, of an ancient Cornish family. Indeed, I had in my imagination, as Polwarth, gone through the history, every day of it, with its sunrise and sunset, of more than half a lifetime. I had a brother who was deformed and a dwarf, and a daughter who was like him; and the only thing, throughout the madness, that approached a consciousness of my real being and history, was the impression that these things had come upon me because of a certain grievous wrong I had at one time committed, which wrong, however, I had quite forgotten--and could ill have imagined in its native hideousness.

"But one morning, just as I woke, after a restless night filled with dreams, I was aware of a half-embodied shadow in my mind--whether thought or memory or imagination, I could not tell: and the strange thing was, that it darkly radiated from it the conviction that I must hold and identify it, or be for ever lost to myself. Therefore, with all the might of my will to retain the shadow, and all the energy of my recollection to recall that of which it was the vague shadow, I concentrated the whole power of my spiritual man upon the phantom thought, to fix and retain it.

"Everyone knows what it is to hunt such a formless fact. Evanescent as a rainbow, its whole appearance, from the first, is that of a thing in the act of vanishing. It is a thing that was known, but, from the moment consciousness turned its lantern upon it, began to become invisible. For a time, during the close pursuit that follows, it seems only to be turning corner after corner to evade the mind's eye, but behind every corner it leaves a portion of itself; until at length, although when finally cannot be told, it is gone so utterly that the mind remains aghast in the perplexity of the doubt whether ever there was a thought there at all.

"Throughout my delusion of an English existence, I had been tormented in my wakings with such thought-phantoms, and ever had I followed them, as an idle man may follow a flitting marsh-fire. Indeed, I had grown so much interested in the phenomenon and its possible indications that I had invented various theories to account for them, some of which seemed to myself original and ingenious, while the common idea that they are vague reminiscences of a former state of being, I had again and again examined, and as often entirely rejected, as in no way tenable or verisimilar.

"But upon the morning to which I have referred, I succeeded, for the first time, in fixing, capturing, identifying the haunting, fluttering thing. That moment the bonds of my madness were broken. My past returned upon me. I had but to think in any direction, and every occurrence, with time and place and all its circumstance, rose again before me. The awful fact of my own being once more stood bare--awful always--tenfold more awful after such a period of blissful oblivion thereof: I was, I had been, I am now, as I write, the man so mysterious in crime, so unlike all other men in his punishment, known by various names in various lands--here in England as the Wandering Jew. Ahasuerus was himself again, alas!--himself and no other. Wife, daughter, brother vanished, and returned only in dreams. I was and remain the wanderer, the undying, the repentant, the unforgiven. O heart! O weary feet! O eyes that have seen and

never more shall see, until they see once and are blinded for ever!  
Back upon my soul rushes the memory of my deed, like a storm of hail mingled with fire, flashing through every old dry channel, that it throbs and writhes anew, scorched at once and torn with the poisonous burning."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WANDERING JEW.

"It was a fair summer-morning in holy Jerusalem, and I sat and wrought at my trade, for I sewed a pair of sandals for the feet of the high priest Caiaphas. And I wrought diligently, for it behoved me to cease an hour ere set of sun, for it was the day of preparation for the eating of the Passover.

"Now all that night there had been a going to and fro in the city, for the chief priests and their followers had at length laid hands upon him that was called Jesus, whom some believed to be the Messiah, and others, with my fool-self amongst them, an arch-impostor and blasphemor. For I was of the house of Caiaphas, and heartily did desire that the man my lord declared a deceiver of the people, should meet with the just reward of his doings. Thus I sat and worked, and thought and rejoiced; and the morning passed and the noon came.

"It was a day of sultry summer, and the street burned beneath the sun, and I sat in the shadow and looked out upon the glare; and ever I wrought at the sandals of my lord, with many fine stitches, in cunning workmanship. All had been for some time very still, when suddenly I thought I heard a far-off tumult. And soon came the idle children, who ever run first that they be not swallowed up of the crowd; and they ran and looked behind as they ran. And after them came the crowd, crying and shouting, and swaying hither and thither; and in the midst of it arose the one arm of a cross, beneath the weight of which that same Jesus bent so low that I saw him not. Truly, said I, he hath not seldom borne heavier burdens in the workshop of his father the Galilean, but now his sins and his idleness have found him, and taken from him his vigour; for he that despiseth the law shall perish, while they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. For I was wroth with the man who taught the people to despise the great ones that administered the law, and give honour to the small ones who only kept it. Besides, he had driven my father's brother from the court of the Gentiles with a whip, which truly hurt him not outwardly, but stung him to the soul; and yet that very temple which he pretended thus to honour, he had threatened to destroy and build again in three days! Such were the thoughts of my heart; and when I learned from the boys that it was in truth Jesus of Nazareth who passed on his way to Calvary to be crucified, my heart leaped within me at the thought that the law had

at length overtaken the malefactor. I laid down the sandal and my awl, and rose and went forth and stood in the front of my shop. And Jesus drew nigh, and as he passed, lo, the end of the cross dragged upon the street. And one in the crowd came behind, and lifted it up and pushed therewith, so that Jesus staggered and had nigh fallen. Then would he fain have rested the arm of the cross on the stone by which I was wont to go up into my shop from the street. But I cried out, and drove him thence, saying scornfully, "Go on Jesus; go on. Truly thou retest not on stone of mine!" Then turned he his eyes upon me, and said, "I go indeed, but thou goest not;" and therewith he rose again under the weight of the cross, and staggered on,

"And I followed in the crowd to Calvary."

Here the reader paused and said,

"I can give you but a few passages now. You see it is a large manuscript. I will therefore choose some of those that bear upon the subject of which we have been talking. A detailed account of the crucifixion follows here, which I could not bring myself to read aloud. The eclipse is in it, and the earthquake, and the white faces of the risen dead gleaming through the darkness about the cross. It ends thus:

"And all the time, I stood not far from the foot of the cross, nor dared go nearer, for around it were his mother and they that were with her, and my heart was sore for her also. And I would have withdrawn my foot from the place where I stood, and gone home to weep, but something, I know not what, held me there as it were rooted to the ground. At length the end was drawing near. He opened his mouth and spake to his mother and the disciple who stood by her, but truly I know not what he said, for as his eyes turned from them, they looked upon me, and my heart died within me. He said nought, but his eyes had that in them that would have slain me with sorrow, had not death, although I knew it not, already shrunk from my presence, daring no more come nigh such a malefactor.--Oh Death, how gladly would I build thee a temple, set thee in a lofty place, and worship thee with the sacrifice of vultures on a fire of dead men's bones, wouldst thou but hear my cry!--But I rave again in my folly! God forgive me. All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come.--With that look--a well of everlasting tears in my throbbing brain--my feet were unrooted, and I fled."

Here the reader paused again, and turned over many leaves.

"And ever as I passed at night through the lands, when I came to a cross by the wayside, thereon would I climb, and, winding my arms about its arms and my feet about its stem, would there hang in the darkness or the moon, in rain or hail, in wind or snow or frost, until my sinews gave way, and my body dropped, and I knew no more until I found myself lying at its foot in the morning. For, ever in such case, I lay without sense until again the sun shone upon me.

"... And if ever the memory of that look passed from me, then, straightway I began to long for death, and so longed until the memory and the power of the look came again, and with the sorrow in my soul came the patience to live. And truly, although I speak of forgetting and remembering, such motions of my spirit in me were not as those of another man; in me they are not measured by the scale of



men's lives; they are not of years, but of centuries; for the seconds of my life are ticked by a clock whose pendulum swings through an arc of motionless stars.

"... Once I had a vision of Death. Methinks it must have been a precursive vapour of the madness that afterwards infolded me, for I know well that there is not one called Death, that he is but a word needful to the weakness of human thought and the poverty of human speech; that he is a no-being, and but a change from that which is.--I had a vision of Death, I say. And it was on this wise:

"I was walking over a wide plain of sand, like Egypt, so that ever and anon I looked around me to see if nowhere, from the base of the horizon, the pyramids cut their triangle out of the blue night of heaven; but I saw none. The stars came down and sparkled on the dry sands, and all was waste, and wide desolation. The air also was still as the air of a walled-up tomb, where there are but dry bones, and not even the wind of an evil vapour that rises from decay. And through the dead air came ever the low moaning of a distant sea, towards which my feet did bear me. I had been journeying thus for years, and in their lapse it had grown but a little louder.--Suddenly I was aware that I was not alone. A dim figure strode beside me, vague, but certain of presence. And I feared him not, seeing that which men fear the most was itself that which by me was the most desired. So I stood and turned and would have spoken. But the shade that seemed not a shadow, went on and regarded me not. Then I also turned again towards the moaning of the sea and went on. And lo! the shade which had gone before until it seemed but as a vapour among the stars, was again by my side walking. And I said, and stood not, but walked on: Thou shade that art not a shadow, seeing there shineth no sun or moon, and the stars are many, and the one slayeth the shadow of the other, what art thou, and wherefore goest thou by my side? Think not to make me afraid, for I fear nothing in the universe but that which I love the best.--I spake of the eyes of the Lord Jesus.--Then the shade that seemed no shadow answered me and spake and said: Little knowest thou what I am, seeing the very thing thou sayest I am not, that I am, and nought else, and there is no other but me. I am Shadow, the shadow, the only shadow--none such as those from which the light hideth in terror, yet like them, for life hideth from me and turneth away, yet if life were not, neither were I, for I am nothing; and yet again, as soon as anything is, there am I, and needed no maker, but came of myself, for I am Death.--Ha! Death! I cried, and would have cast myself before him with outstretched arms of worshipful entreaty; but lo, there was a shadow upon the belt of Orion, and no shadow by my side! and I sighed, and walked on towards the ever moaning sea. Then again the shadow was by my side. And again I spake and said: Thou thing of flitting and return, I despise thee, for thou wilt not abide the conflict. And I would have cast myself upon him and wrestled with him there, for defeat and not for victory. But I could not lay hold upon him. Thou art a powerless nothing, I cried; I will not even defy thee.--Thou wouldst provoke me, said the shadow; but it availeth not. I cannot be provoked. Truly, I am but a shadow, yet know I my own worth, for I am the Shadow of the Almighty, and where he is, there am I--Thou art nothing, I said.--Nay, nay, I am not Nothing. Thou, nor any man--God only knoweth what that word meaneth. I am but the shadow of Nothing, and when THOU sayest NOTHING, thou meanest only me; but what God meaneth when he sayeth NOTHING--the nothing without him, that nothing which is no shadow but the very substance of Unbeing--no created soul can know.--Then

art thou not Death? I asked.--I am what thou thinkest of when thou sayest Death, he answered, but I am not Death.--Alas, then! why comest thou to me in the desert places, for I did think thou wast Death indeed, and couldst take me unto thee so that I should be no more.--That is what death cannot do for thee, said the shadow; none but he that created thee can cause that thou shouldst be no more. Thou art until he will that thou be not. I have heard it said amongst the wise that, hard as it is to create, it is harder still to uncreate. Truly I cannot tell. But wouldst thou be uncreated by the hand of Death? Wouldst thou have thy no-being the gift of a shadow?--Then I thought of the eyes of the Lord Jesus, and the look he cast upon me, and I said, No: I would not be carried away of Death. I would be fulfilled of Life, and stand before God for ever. Then once again the belt of Orion grew dim, and I saw the shadow no more. And yet did I long for Death, for I thought he might bring me to those eyes, and the pardon that lay in them.

"But again, as the years went on, and each brought less hope than that before it, I forgot the look the Lord had cast upon me, and in the weariness of the life that was mortal and yet would not cease, in the longing after the natural end of that which against nature endured, I began to long even for the end of being itself. And in a city of the Germans, I found certain men of my own nation who said unto me: Fear not, Ahasuerus; there is no life beyond the grave. Live on until thy end come, and cease thy complaints. Who is there among us who would not gladly take upon him thy judgment, and live until he was weary of living?--Yea, but to live after thou art weary? I said. But they heeded me not, answering me and saying: Search thou the Scriptures, even the Book of the Law, and see if thou find there one leaf of this gourd of a faith that hath sprung up in a night. Verily, this immortality is but a flash in the brain of men that would rise above their fate. Sayeth Moses, or sayeth Job, or sayeth David or Daniel a word of the matter? And I listened unto them, and became of their mind. But therewithal the longing after death returned with tenfold force and I rose up and girt my garment about me, and went forth once more to search for him whom I now took for the porter of the gate of eternal silence and unfelt repose. And I said unto myself as I walked: What in the old days was sweeter when I was weary with my labour at making of shoes, than to find myself dropping into the death of sleep! how much sweeter then must it not be to sink into the sleepest of sleeps, the father-sleep, the mother-bosomed death of nothingness and unawaking rest! Then shall all this endless whirl of the wheels of thought and desire be over; then welcome the night whose darkness doth not seethe, and which no morning shall ever stir!

"And wherever armies were drawing nigh, each to the other, and the day of battle was near, thither I flew in hot haste, that I might be first upon the field, and ready to welcome hottest peril. I fought not, for I would not slay those that counted it not the good thing to be slain, as I counted it. But had the armies been of men that loved death like me, how had I raged among them then, even as the angel Azrael to give them their sore-desired rest! for I loved and hated not my kind, and would diligently have mown them down out of the stinging air of life into the soft balm of the sepulchre. But what they sought not, and I therefore would not give, that searched I after the more eagerly for myself. And my sight grew so keen that, when yet no bigger than a mote in the sunbeam, I could always descry the vulture-scout, hanging aloft over the field of destiny. Then

would I hasten on and on, until a swoop would have brought him straight on my head.

"And with that a troop of horsemen, horses and men mad with living fear, came with a level rush towards the spot where I sat, faint with woe. And I sprang up, and bounded to meet them, throwing my arms aloft and shouting, as one who would turn a herd. And like a wave of the rising tide before a swift wind, a wave that sweeps on and breaks not, they came hard-buffeting over my head. Ah! that was a torrent indeed!--a thunderous succession of solid billows, alive, hurled along by the hurricane-fear in the heart of them! For one moment only I felt and knew what I lay beneath, and then for a time there was nothing.--I woke in silence, and thought I was dying, that I had all but passed across the invisible line between, and in a moment there would be for evermore nothing and nothing. Then followed again an empty space as it seemed. And now I am dead and gone, I said, and shall wander no more. And with that came the agony of hell, for, lo, still \_I\_ THOUGHT! And I said to myself, Alas! O God! for, notwithstanding I no more see or hear or taste or smell or touch, and my body hath dropped from me, still am I Ahasuerus, the Wanderer, and must go on and on and on, blind and deaf, through the unutterable wastes that know not the senses of man--nevermore to find rest! Alas! death is not death, seeing he slayeth but the leathern bottle, and spilleth not the wine of life upon the earth. Alas! alas! for I cannot die! And with that a finger twitched, and I shouted aloud for joy: I was yet in the body! And I sprang to my feet jubilant, and, lame and bruised and broken-armed, tottered away after Death, who yet might hold the secret of eternal repose. I was alive, but yet there was hope, for Death was yet before me! I was alive, but I had not died, and who could tell but I might yet find the lovely night that hath neither clouds nor stars! I had not passed into the land of the dead and found myself yet living! The wise men of my nation in the city of the Almains might yet be wise! And for an hour I rejoiced, and was glad greatly."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WANDERING JEW.

"It was midnight, and sultry as hell. All day not a breath had stirred. The country through which I passed was level as the sea that had once flowed above it. My heart had almost ceased to beat, and I was weary as the man who is too weary to sleep outright, and labours in his dreams. I slumbered and yet walked on. My blood flowed scarce faster than the sluggish water in the many canals I crossed on my weary way. And ever I thought to meet the shadow that was and was not death. But this was no dream. Just on the stroke of midnight, I came to the gate of a large city, and the watchers let me pass. Through many an ancient and lofty street I wandered, like a ghost in a dream, knowing no one, and caring not for myself, and at

length reached an open space where stood a great church, the cross upon whose spire seemed bejewelled with the stars upon which it dwelt. And in my soul I said, O Lord Jesus! and went up to the base of the tower, and found the door thereof open to my hand. Then with my staff I ascended the winding stairs, until I reached the open sky. And the stairs went still winding, on and on, up towards the stars. And with my staff I ascended, and arose into the sky, until I stood at the foot of the cross of stone.

"Ay me! how the centuries without haste, without rest, had glided along since I stood by the cross of dishonour and pain! And God had not grown weary of his life yet, but I had grown so weary in my very bones that weariness was my element, and I had ceased almost to note it. And now, high-uptifted in honour and worship over every populous city, stood the cross among the stars! I scrambled up the pinnacles, and up on the carven stem of the cross, for my sinews were as steel, and my muscles had dried and hardened until they were as those of the tiger or the great serpent. So I climbed, and lifted up myself until I reached the great arms of the cross, and over them I flung my arms, as was my wont, and entwined the stem with my legs, and there hung, three hundred feet above the roofs of the houses. And as I hung the moon rose and cast the shadow of me Ahasuerus upon the cross, up against the Pleiades. And as if dull Nature were offended thereat, nor understood the offering of my poor sacrifice, the clouds began to gather, like the vultures--no one could have told whence. From all sides around they rose, and the moon was blotted out, and they gathered and rose until they met right over the cross. And when they closed, then the lightning brake forth, and the thunder with it, and it flashed and thundered above and around and beneath me, so that I could not tell which voice belonged to which arrow, for all were mingled in one great confusion and uproar. And the people in the houses below heard the sound of the thunder, and they looked from their windows, and they saw the storm raving and flashing about the spire, which stood the heart of the agony, and they saw something hang there, even upon its cross, in the form of a man, and they came from their houses, and the whole space beneath was filled with people, who stood gazing up at the marvel. A MIRACLE! A MIRACLE! they cried; and truly it was no miracle--it was only me Ahasuerus, the wanderer taking thought concerning his crime against the crucified. Then came a great light all about me, such light for shining as I had never before beheld, and indeed I saw it not all with my eyes, but the greater part with my soul, which surely is the light of the eyes themselves. And I said to myself, Doubtless the Lord is at hand, and he cometh to me as late to the blessed Saul of Tarsus, who was NOT the chief of sinners, but I--Ahasuerus, the accursed. And the thunder burst like the bursting of a world in the furnace of the sun; and whether it was that the lightning struck me, or that I dropped, as was my custom, outweared from the cross, I know not, but thereafter I lay at its foot among the pinnacles, and when the people looked again, the miracle was over, and they returned to their houses and slept. And the next day, when I sought the comfort of the bath, I found upon my side the figure of a cross, and the form of a man hanging thereupon as I had hung, depainted in a dark colour as of lead plain upon the flesh of my side over my heart. Here was a miracle indeed! but verily I knew not whether therefrom to gather comfort or despair.

"And it was night as I went into a village among the mountains, through the desert places of which I had all that day been

wandering. And never before had my condition seemed to me so hopeless. There was not one left upon the earth who had ever seen me knowing me, and although there went a tale of such a man as I, yet faith had so far vanished from the earth that for a thing to be marvellous, however just, was sufficient reason wherefore no man, to be counted wise, should believe the same. For the last fifty years I had found not one that would receive my testimony. For when I told them the truth concerning myself, saying as I now say, and knowing the thing for true--that I was Ahasuerus whom the Word had banished from his home in the regions governed of Death, shutting against him the door of the tomb that he should not go in, every man said I was mad, and would hold with me no manner of communication, more than if I had been possessed with a legion of swine-loving demons. Therefore was I cold at heart, and lonely to the very root of my being. And thus it was with me that midnight as I entered the village among the mountains.--Now all therein slept, so even that not a dog barked at the sound of my footsteps. But suddenly, and my soul yet quivers with dismay at the remembrance, a yell of horror tore its way from the throat of every sleeper at once, and shot into every cranny of the many-folded mountains, that my soul knocked shaking against the sides of my body, and I also shrieked aloud with the keen terror of the cry. For surely there was no sleeper there, man, woman, or child, who yelled not aloud in an agony of fear. And I knew that it could only be because of the unseen presence in their street of the outcast, the homeless, the loveless, the wanderer for ever, who had refused a stone to his maker whereon to rest his cross. Truly I know not whence else could have come that cry. And I looked to see that all the inhabitants of the village should rush out upon me, and go for to slay the unslayable in their agony. But the cry passed, and after the cry came again the stillness. And for very dread lest yet another such cry should enter my ears, and turn my heart to a jelly, I did hasten my steps to leave the dwellings of the children of the world, and pass out upon the pathless hills again. But as I turned and would have departed, the door of a house opened over against where I stood; and as it opened, lo! a sharp gust of wind from the mountains swept along the street, and out into the wind came running a girl, clothed only in the garment of the night. And the wind blew upon her, and by the light of the moon I saw that her hands and her feet were rough and brown, as of one that knew labour and hardship, but yet her body was dainty and fair, and moulded in loveliness. Her hair blew around her like a rain cloud, so that it almost blinded her, and truly she had much ado to clear it from her face, as a half-drowned man would clear from his face the waters whence he hath been lifted; and like two stars of light from amidst the cloud gazed forth the eyes of the girl. And she looked upon me with the courage of a child, and she said unto me, Stranger, knowest thou wherefore was that cry? Was it thou who did so cry in our street in the night? And I answered her and said, Verily not I, maiden, but I too heard the cry, and it shook my soul within me.--What seemed it unto thee like, she asked, for truly I slept, and know only the terror thereof and not the sound? And I said, It seemed unto me that every soul in the village cried out at once in some dream of horror.--I cried not out, she said; for I slept and dreamed, and my dream was such that I know verily I cried not out. And the maiden was lovely in her innocence. And I said: And was thy dream such, maiden, that thou wouldst not refuse but wouldst tell it to an old man like me? And with that the wind came down from the mountain like a torrent of wolves, and it laid hold upon me and swept me from the village, and I fled before it, and could not stay my steps until I

got me into the covert of a hollow rock.

"And scarce had I turned in thither when, lo! thither came the maiden also, flying in my footsteps, and driven of the self-same mighty wind. And I turned in pity and said, Fear not, my child. Here is but an old man with a sore and withered heart, and he will not harm thee.--I fear thee not, she answered, else would I not have followed thee.--Thou didst not follow me of thine own inclining, I said, but the wind that came from the mountains and swept me before it, did bear thee after me.--Truly I know of no wind, she said, but the wind of my own following of thee. Wherefore didst thou flee from me?--Nay! but wherefore didst thou follow me, maiden?--That I might tell thee my dream to the which thou didst desire to hearken. For, lo! as I slept I dreamed that a man came unto me and said, Behold, I am the unresting and undying one, and my burden is greater than I can bear, for Death who befriendeth all is my enemy, and will not look upon me in peace. And with that came the cry, and I awoke, and ran out to see whence came the cry, and found thee alone in the street. And as God liveth, such as was the man in my dream, such art thou in my waking sight.--Not the less must I ask thee again, I said, wherefore didst thou follow me?--That I may comfort thee, she answered.--And how thinkest thou to comfort one whom God hath forsaken?--That cannot be, she said, seeing that in a vision of the night he sent thee unto me, and so now hath sent me unto thee. Therefore will I go with thee, and minister unto thee.--Bethink thee well what thou doest, I said; and before thou art fully resolved, sit thee down by me in this cave, that I may tell thee my tale. And straightway she sat down, and I told her all. And ere I had finished the sun had risen.--Then art thou now alone, said the maiden, and hast no one to love thee?--No one, I answered, man, woman, or child.--Then will I go with thee, for I know neither father nor mother, and no one hath power over me, for I keep goats on the mountains for wages, and if thou wilt but give me bread to eat I will serve thee. And a great love arose in my heart to the maiden. And I left her in the cave, and went to the nearest city, and returned thence with garments and victuals. And I loved the maiden greatly. And although my age was then marvellous being over and above a thousand and seven hundred years, yet found she my person neither pitiful nor uncomely, for I was still in body even such as when the Lord Jesus spake the word of my doom. And the damsel loved me, and was mine. And she was as the apple of mine eye. And the world was no more unto me as a desert, but it blossomed as the rose of Sharon. And although I knew every city upon it, and every highway and navigable sea, yet did all become to me fresh and new because of the joy which the damsel had in beholding its kingdoms and the glories thereof.

"And it came to pass that my heart grew proud within me, and I said to myself that I was all-superior to other men, for Death could not touch me; that I was a marvel upon the face of the world; and in this yet more above all men that had ever lived, that at such an age as mine I could yet gain the love, yea, the absolute devotion, of such an one as my wife, who never wearied of my company and conversation. So I took to me even the free grace of love as my merit unto pride, and laid it not to the great gift of God and the tenderness of the heart of my beloved. Like Satan in Heaven I was uplifted in the strength and worthiness and honour of my demon-self, and my pride went not forth in thanks, for I gloried not in my God, but in Ahasuerus. Then the thought smote me like an arrow of

lightning: She will die, and thou shalt live--live--live--and as he hath delayed, so will he yet delay his coming. And as Satan from the seventh heaven, I fell prone.

"Then my spirit began again to revive within me, and I said, Lo! I have yet many years of her love ere she dieth, and when she is gone, I shall yet have the memory of my beloved to be with me, and cheer me, and bear me up, for I may never again despise that which she hath loved as she hath loved me. And yet again a thought smote me, and it was as an arrow of the lightning, and its barb was the truth: But she will grow old, it said, and will wither before thy face, and be as the waning moon in the heavens. And my heart cried out in an agony. But my will sought to comfort my heart, and said, Cry not out, for, in spite of old age as in spite of death, I will love her still. Then something began to writhe within me, and to hiss out words that gathered themselves unto this purpose: But she will grow unlovely, and wrinkled, and dark of hue, and the shape of her body will vanish, and her form be unformed, and her eyes will grow small and dim, and creep back into her head, and her hair will fall from her, and she shall be as the unsightly figure of Death with a skin drawn over his unseemly bones; and the damsel of thy love, with the round limbs and the flying hair, and the clear eyes out of which looketh a soul clear as they, will be nowhere--nowhere, for evermore, for thou wilt not be able to believe that she it is who standeth before thee: how will it be with thee then? And what mercy is his who hath sent thee a growing loss in the company of this woman? Thereupon I rose in the strength of my agony and went forth. And I said nothing unto my wife, but strode to the foot of the great mountain, whose entrails were all aglow, and on whose sides grew the palm and the tree-bread and the nut of milk. And I climbed the mountain, nor once looked behind me, but climbed to the top. And there for one moment I stood in the stock-dullness of despair. And beneath me was the great fiery gulf, outstretched like a red lake skinned over with black ice, through the cracks wherein shone the blinding fire. Every moment here and there a great liquid bubbling would break through the crust, and make a wallowing heap upon the flat, then sink again, leaving an open red well-pool of fire whence the rays shot up like flame, although flame there was none. It lay like the back of some huge animal upheaved out of hell, which was wounded and bled fire.--Now, in the last year of my long sojourn, life had again, because of the woman that loved me, become precious unto me, and more than once had I laughed as I caught myself starting back from some danger in a crowded street, for the thing was new to me, so utterly had the care of my life fallen into disuse with me. But now again in my misery I thought no more of danger, but went stalking and sliding down the sindery slope of the huge fire-cup, and out upon the lake of molten earth--molten as when first it shot from the womb of the sun, of whose ardour, through all the millions of years, it had not yet cooled. And as once St. Peter on the stormy water to find the Lord of Life, so walked I on the still lake of fire, caring neither for life nor death. For my heart was withered to the roots by the thought of the decay of her whom I had loved; for would not then her very presence every hour be causing me to forget the beauty that had once made me glad?--I had walked some ten furlongs, and passed the middle of the lake, when suddenly I bethought me that she would marvel whither I had gone, and set out to seek me, and something might befall her, and I should lose my rose ere its leaves had begun to drop. And I turned and strode again in haste across the floor of black heat, broken and

seamed with red light. And lo! as I neared the midst of the lake, a form came towards me, walking in the very footsteps I had left behind me, nor had I to look again to know the gracious motion of my beloved. And the black ice broke at her foot, and the fire shone up on her face, and it was lovely as an angel of God, and the glow of her love outshone the glow of the nether fire. And I called not to stay her foot, for I judged that the sooner she was with me, the sooner would she be in safety, for I knew how to walk thereon better than she. And my heart sang a song within me in praise of the love of woman, but I thought only of the love of my woman to me, whom the fires of hell could not hold back from him who was worthy of her love; and my heart sent the song up to my lips; but, as the first word arose, sure itself a red bubble from the pit of glowing hell, the black crust burst up between us, and a great hillock of seething, slow-spouting, slow-falling, mad red fire arose. For a moment or two the molten mound bubbled and wallowed, then sank--and I saw not my wife. Headlong I plunged into the fiery pool at my feet, and the clinging torture hurt me not, and I caught her in my arms, and rose to the surface, and crept forth, and shook the fire from mine eyes, and lo! I held to my bosom but as the fragment of a cinder of the furnace. And I laughed aloud in my madness, and the devils below heard me, and laughed yet again. O Age! O Decay! I cried, see how I triumph over thee: what canst thou do to this? And I flung the cinder from me into the pool, and plunged again into the grinning fire. But it cast me out seven times, and the seventh time I turned from it, and rushed out of the valley of burning, and threw myself on the mountain-side in the moonlight, and awoke mad.

"And what I had then said in despair, I said yet again in thankfulness. O Age! O Decay! I cried, what canst thou now do to destroy the image of her which I bear nested in my heart of hearts? That at least is safe, I thank God. And from that hour I never more believed that I should die when at length my body dropped from me. If the thought came, it came as a fear, and not as a thing concerning which a man may say I would or I would not. For a mighty hope had arisen within me that yet I should stand forgiven in the eyes of him that was crucified, and that in token of his forgiveness he would grant me to look again, but in peace, upon the face of her that had loved me. O mighty Love, who can tell to what heights of perfection thou mayest yet rise in the bosom of the meanest who followeth the Crucified!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### REMARKS.

Polwarth closed the manuscript, and for a time no one spoke.

"The man who wrote that book," said Wingfold, "could not have been all out of his right mind."



"I must confess to you," returned Polwarth, "that I have chosen some of the more striking passages--only some of them however. One thing is pretty clear--that, granted the imagined conditions, within that circle the writer is sane enough--as sane at least as the Wandering Jew himself could well have been."

"Could you trust me with the manuscript, Mr. Polwarth?" said the curate.

"Willingly," said Polwarth, handing it to him.

"And I may carry it home with me?"

"Certainly."

"I shall take right good care of it. Are there any further memorials of struggle with unbelief?"

"Yes, there are some; for mood and not conviction must, in such a mind, often rule the hour. Sometimes he can believe; sometimes he cannot: he is a great man indeed who can always rise above his own moods! There is one passage I specially remember in which after his own fashion he treats of the existence of a God. You will know the one I mean when you come to it."

"It is indeed a treasure!" said the curate, taking the book and regarding it with prizing eyes. In his heart he was thinking of Leopold and Helen. And while he thus regarded the book, he was himself regarded of the gray luminous eyes of Rachel. What shone from those eyes may have been her delight at hearing him so speak of the book, for the hand that wrote it was that of her father; but there was a lingering in her gaze, not unmixed with questioning, and a certain indescribable liquidity in its light, reminding one of the stars as seen through a clear air from which the dew settles thick, that might have made a mother anxious. Alas for many a woman whose outward form is ungainly--she has a full round heart under the twisted ribs!

Why then should I say alas? Were it better that the heart were like the shape? or are such as Rachel forgotten before the God of the sparrows? No, surely; but he who most distinctly believes that from before the face of God every sorrow shall vanish, that they that sow in tears shall reap in joy, that death is but a mist that for a season swathes the spirit, and that, ever as the self-seeking vanishes from love, it groweth more full of delight--even he who with all his heart believes this, may be mournful over the aching of another heart while yet it lasts; and he who looks for his own death as his resurrection, may yet be sorrowful at every pale sunset that reminds him of the departure of the beloved before him.

The curate rose and took his departure, but the light of the gaze that had rested upon him lingered yet on the countenance of Rachel, and a sad half-smile hung over the motions of the baby-like fingers that knitted so busily.

The draper followed the curate, and Polwarth went up to his own room: he never could keep off his knees for long together. And as soon as she was alone, Rachel's hands dropped on her lap, her eyes

closed, and her lips moved with solemn sweet motions. If there was a hearing ear open to that little house, oh surely those two were blessed! If not, then kind death was yet for a certainty drawing nigh--only, what if in deep hell there should be yet a deeper hell? And until slow Death arrive, what loving heart can bear the load that stupid Chance or still more stupid Fate has heaped upon it? Yet had I rather be crushed beneath the weight of mine, and die with my friends in the moaning of eternal farewells, than live like George Bascombe to carry lightly his little bag of content. A cursed confusion indeed is the universe, if it be no creation, but the helpless unhelpable thing such men would have us believe it--the hotbed mother of the children of an iron Necessity. Can any damnation be worse than this damning into an existence from which there is no refuge but a doubtful death?

Drew overtook Wingfold, and they walked together into Glaston.

"Wasn't that splendid?" said the draper.

"Hath not God chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty?" returned the curate. "Even through the play of a mad-man's imagination, the spirit of a sound mind may speak. Did you not find in it some stuff that would shape into answers to your questions?"

"I ought to have done so, I dare say," answered the draper, "but to tell the truth, I was so taken up with the wild story, and the style of the thing, and the little man's way of reading it, that I never thought of what I was full of when I came."

They parted at the shop, and the curate went on.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### STRUGGLES.

He stopped at the Manor House, for it was only beginning to be late, to inquire after Leopold. Helen received him with her usual coldness--a manner which was in part assumed for self-protection, for in his presence she always felt rebuked, and which had the effect of a veil between them to hide from her much of the curate's character that might otherwise have been intelligible to her. Leopold, she said, was a little better, but Wingfold walked home thinking what a happy thing it would be if God were to take him away.

His interest in Helen deepened and deepened. He could not help admiring her strength of character even when he saw it spent for worse than nought; and her devotion to her brother was lovely, notwithstanding the stains of selfishness that spotted it. Her moral standard was indeed far from lofty, and as to her spiritual nature,

that as yet appeared nowhere. And yet the growth in her was marvellous when he thought of what she had seemed before this trouble came. One evening as he left Leopold, he heard her singing, and stood on the stair to listen. And to listen was to marvel. For her voice, instead of being hard and dry, as when he heard it before, was, without any loss of elasticity, now liquid and mellifluous, and full of feeling. Its tones were borne along like the leaves on the wild west wind of Shelley's sonnet. And the longing of the curate to help her from that moment took a fresh departure, and grew and grew. But as the hours and days and weeks passed, and the longing found no outlet, it turned to an almost hopeless brooding upon the face and the form, yea the heart and soul of the woman he so fain would help, until ere long he loved her with the passion of a man mingled with the compassion of a prophet. He saw that something had to be done IN her--perhaps that some saving shock in the guise of ruin had to visit her; that some door had to be burst open, some roof blown away, some rock blasted, that light and air might have free course through her soul's house, without which that soul could never grow stately like the house it inhabited. Whatever might be destined to effect this, for the chance of rendering poorest and most servile aid, he would watch and did watch, in silence and self-restraint, lest he should be betrayed into any presumptuous word that might breathe frost instead of balm upon the buds of her delaying Spring. If he might but be allowed to minister when at length the sleeping soul should stir! If its waking glance--ah! if it might fall on him! As often as the thought intruded, his heart would give one delirious bound, then couch ashamed of its presumption. He would not, he dared not look in that direction. He accused himself of mingling earthly motives and feelings with the unselfish and true, and scorned himself because of it. And was not Bascombe already the favoured friend of her heart?

Yet how could it be of her heart? for what concern had hearts in a common unbelief? None; but there were the hearts--the man and the woman--notwithstanding, who might yet well be drawn together by the unknown divine which they also shared; and that Helen, whose foot seemed now to approach and now to shun the line betwixt the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven, should retire with such a guide into the deserts of denial and chosen godlessness, was to Wingfold a thought of torture almost unendurable. The thought of its possibility, nay, probability--for were not such unfitnesses continually becoming facts?--threatened sometimes to upset the whole fabric of his faith, although reared in spite of theology, adverse philosophy, and the most honest and bewildering doubt. That such a thing should be possible seemed at those times to bear more against the existence of a God than all the other grounds of question together. Then a shudder would go to the very deeps of his heart, and he would lay himself silent before the presence for a time; or make haste into the solitudes--not where the sun shone and the water ran, but where the light was dim and the wind low in the pine woods. There, where the sombre green vaults were upheld by a hundred slender columns, and the far-receding aisles seemed to lead to the ancestral home of shadows, there, his own soul a shadow of grief and fear among the shades of the gloomy temple, he bowed his heart before the Eternal, gathered together all the might of his being, and groaned forth in deepest effort of a will that struggled to be: "Thy will be done, and not mine." Then would his spirit again walk erect, and carry its burden as a cross and not as a gravestone.

Sometimes he was sorely perplexed to think how the weakness, as he called it, had begun, and how it had grown upon him. He could not say it was his doing, and what had he ever been aware of in it against which he ought to have striven? Came not the whole thing of his nature, a nature that was not of his design, and was beyond him and his control--a nature that either sprung from a God, or grew out of an unconscious Fate? If from the latter, how was such as he to encounter and reduce to a constrained and self-rejecting reason a Self unreasonable, being an issue of the Unreasoning, which Self was yet greater than he, its vagaries the source of his intensest consciousness and brightest glimpses of the ideal and all-desirable. If on the other hand it was born of a God, then let that God look to it, for, sure, that which belonged to his nature could not be evil or of small account in the eyes of him who made him in his own image. But alas! that image had, no matter how, been so defaced, that the will of the man might even now be setting itself up against the will of the God! Did his love then spring from the God-will or the man-will? Must there not be some God-way of the thing, all right and nothing wrong?--But he could not compass it, and the marvel to himself was that all the time he was able to go on preaching, and that with some sense of honesty and joy in his work.

In this trouble more than ever Wingfold felt that if there was no God, his soul was but a thing of rags and patches out in the masterless pitiless storm and hail of a chaotic universe. Often would he rush into the dark, as it were, crying for God, and ever he would emerge therefrom with some tincture of the light, enough to keep him alive and send him to his work. And there, in her own seat, Sunday after Sunday, sat the woman whom he had seen ten times, and that for no hasty moments, during the week, by the bedside of her brother, yet to whom only now, in the open secrecy of the pulpit, did he dare utter the words of might he would so fain have poured direct into her suffering heart. And there, Sunday after Sunday, the face he loved bore witness to the trouble of the heart he loved yet more: that heart was not yet redeemed! oh, might it be granted him to set some little wind a blowing for its revival and hope! As often as he stood up to preach, his heart swelled with the message he bore--a message of no private interpretation, but for the healing of the nations, yet a message for her, and for the healing of every individual heart that would hear and take, and he spoke with the freedom and dignity of a prophet. But when he saw her afterwards, he scarcely dared let his eyes rest a moment on her face, would only pluck the flower of a glance flying, or steal it at such moments when he thought she would not see. She caught his glance however far oftener than he knew, and was sometimes aware of it without seeing it at all. And there was that in the curate's behaviour, in his absolute avoidance of self-assertion, or the least possible intrusion upon her mental privacy--in the wrapping of his garments around him as it were, that his presence might offend as little as might be, while at the same time he was full of simple direct ministration to her brother, without one side-glance that sought approval of her, which the nobility of the woman could not fail to note, and seek to understand.

It was altogether a time of great struggle with Wingfold. He seemed to be assailed in every direction, and to feel the strong house of life giving way in every part, and yet he held on--lived, which he thought was all, and, without knowing it, grew. Perhaps it may be this period that the following verses which I found among his papers

belong: he could not himself tell me.--

Out of my door I run to do the thing  
That calls upon me. Straight the wind of words  
Whoops from mine ears the sounds of them that sing  
About their work--My God! my Father-King.

I turn in haste to see thy blessed door,  
But lo! a cloud of flies and bats and birds,  
And stalking vapours, and vague monster herds,  
Have risen and lighted, rushed and swollen between.

Ah me! the house of peace is there no more.  
Was it a dream then? Walls, fireside, and floor,  
And sweet obedience, loving, calm, and free,  
Are vanished--gone as they had never been.

I labour groaning. Comes a sudden sheen!--  
And I am kneeling at my Father's knee,  
Sighing with joy, and hoping utterly.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LAWN.

Leopold had begun to cough, and the fever continued. Every afternoon came the red flush to his cheek, and the hard glitter into his eye. His talk was then excited, and mostly about his coming trial. To Helen it was terribly painful, and she confessed to herself that but for Wingfold she must have given way. Leopold insisted on seeing Mr. Hooker every time he called, and every time expressed the hope that he would not allow pity for his weak state to prevent him from applying the severe remedy of the law to his moral condition. But in truth it began to look doubtful whether disease would not run a race with law for his life, even if the latter should at once proceed to justify a claim. From the first Faber doubted if he would ever recover from the consequences of that exposure in the churchyard, and it soon became evident that his lungs were more than affected. His cough increased, and he began to lose what little flesh he had.

One day Faber expressed his conviction to Wingfold that he was fighting the disease at the great disadvantage of having an unknown enemy to contend with.

"The fellow is unhappy," he said, "and if that lasts another month, I shall throw up the sponge. He has a good deal of vitality, but it is yielding, and by that time he will be in a galloping consumption."

"You must do your best for him," said Wingfold, but in his heart he

wished, with an honest affection, that he might not succeed.

Leopold, however, seemed to have no idea of his condition, and the curate wondered what he would think or do were he to learn that he was dying. Would he insist on completing his confession, and urging on a trial? He had himself told him all that had passed with the magistrate, and how things now were as he understood them, but it was plain that he had begun to be uneasy about the affair, and was doubtful at times whether all was as it seemed. The curate was not deceived. He had been present during a visit from Mr. Hooker, and nothing could be plainer than the impression out of which the good man spoke. Nor could he fail to suspect the cunning kindness of George Bascombe in the affair. But he did not judge that he had now the least call to interfere. The poor boy had done as much as lay either in or out of him in the direction of duty, and was daily becoming more and more unfit either to originate or carry out a further course of action. If he was in himself capable of anything more, he was, in his present state of weakness, utterly unable to cope with the will of those around him.

Faber would have had him leave the country for some southern climate, but he would not hear of it, and Helen, knowing to what extremities it might drive him, would not insist. Nor, indeed, was he now in a condition to be moved. Also the weather had grown colder, and he was sensitive to atmospheric changes as any creature of the elements.

But after a fortnight, when it was now the middle of the autumn, it grew quite warm again, and he revived and made such progress that he was able to be carried into the garden every day. There he sat in a chair on the lawn, with his feet on a sheepskin, and a fur cloak about him. And for all the pain at his heart, for all the misery in which no one could share, for all the pangs of a helpless jealousy, checked only by a gnawing remorse, both of which took refuge in the thought of following through the spheres until he found her, cast himself at her feet, spoke the truth, and became, if he might, her slave for ever, failing which he could but turn and go wandering through the spheres, seeking rest and finding none, save indeed there were some salvation even for him in the bosom of his God--I say that, somehow, with all this on the brain and in the heart of him, the sunshine was yet pleasant to his eyes, while it stung him to the soul; the soft breathing of the wind was pleasant to his cheek, while he cursed himself for the pleasure it gave him; the few flowers that were left looked up at him mournfully and he let them look, nor turned his eyes away, but let the tears gather and flow. The first agonies of the encounter of life and death were over, and life was slowly wasting away. Oh what might not a little joy do for him! But where was the joy to be found that could irradiate such a darkness even for one fair memorial moment?

One hot noon Wingfold lay beside him on the grass. Neither had spoken for some time: the curate more and more shrunk from speech to which his heart was not directly moved. As to what might be in season or out of season, he never would pretend to judge, he said, but even Balaam's ass knew when he had a call to speak. He plucked a pale red pimpernel and handed it

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