

The Seaboard Parish Vol. 2

George MacDonald

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THE SEABOARD PARISH

BY GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

ANOTHER SUNDAY EVENING.

In the evening we met in Connie's room, as usual, to have our talk. And this is what came out of it.

The window was open. The sun was in the west. We sat a little aside out of the course of his radiance, and let him look full into the room. Only Wynnie sat back in a dark corner, as if she would get out of his way. Below him the sea lay bluer than you could believe even when you saw it--blue with a delicate yet deep silky blue, the exquisiteness of which was thrown up by the brilliant white lines of its lapping on the high coast, to the northward. We had just sat down, when Dora broke out with--

"I saw Niceboots at church. He did stare at you, papa, as if he had never heard a sermon before."

"I daresay he never heard such a sermon before!" said Connie, with the

perfect confidence of inexperience and partiality--not to say ignorance, seeing she had not heard the sermon herself.

Here Wynnie spoke from her dark corner, apparently forcing herself to speak, and thereby giving what seemed an unpleasant tone to what she said.

"Well, papa, I don't know what to think. You are always telling us to trust in Him; but how can we, if we are not good?"

"The first good thing you can do is to look up to him. That is the beginning of trust in him, and the most sensible thing that it is possible for us to do. That is faith."

"But it's no use sometimes."

"How do you know that?"

"Because you--I mean I--can't feel good, or care about it at all."

"But is that any ground for saying that it is no use--that he does not heed you? that he disregards the look cast up to him? that, till the heart goes with the will, he who made himself strong to be the helper of the weak, who pities most those who are most destitute--and who so destitute as those who do not love what they want to love--except, indeed, those who don't want to love?--that, till you are well on towards all right by earnestly seeking it, he won't help you? You are to judge him from yourself, are you?--forgetting that all the misery in you is just because you have not got his grand presence with you?"

I spoke so earnestly as to be somewhat incoherent in words. But my reader will understand. Wynnie was silent. Connie, as if partly to help her sister, followed on the same side.

"I don't know exactly how to say what I mean, papa, but I wish I could get this lovely afternoon, all full of sunshine and blue, into unity with all that you teach us about Jesus Christ. I wish this beautiful day came in with my thought of him, like the frame--gold and red and blue--that you have to that picture of him at home. Why doesn't it?"

"Just because you have not enough of faith in him, my dear. You do not know him well enough yet. You do not yet believe that he means you all gladness, heartily, honestly, thoroughly."

"And no suffering, papa?"

"I did not say that, my dear. There you are on your couch and can't move. But he does mean you such gladness, such a full sunny air and blue sea of blessedness that this suffering shall count for little in it; nay more, shall be taken in for part, and, like the rocks that interfere with the roll of the sea, flash out the white that glorifies and intensifies the whole--to pass away by and by, I trust, none the less. What a chance you have, my Connie, of believing in him, of offering upon his altar!"

"But," said my wife, "are not these feelings in a great measure dependent upon the state of one's health? I find it so different when the sunshine is inside me as well as outside me."

"Not a doubt of it, my dear. But that is only the more reason for rising above all that. From the way some people speak of physical difficulties--I

don't mean you, wife--you would think that they were not merely the inevitable which they are, but the insurmountable which they are not. That they are physical and not spiritual is not only a great consolation, but a strong argument for overcoming them. For all that is physical is put, or is in the process of being put, under the feet of the spiritual. Do not mistake me. I do not say you can make yourself feel merry or happy when you are in a physical condition which is contrary to such mental condition. But you can withdraw from it--not all at once; but by practice and effort you can learn to withdraw from it, refusing to allow your judgments and actions to be ruled by it. You can climb up out of the fogs, and sit quiet in the sunlight on the hillside of faith. You cannot be merry down below in the fog, for there is the fog; but you can every now and then fly with the dove-wings of the soul up into the clear, to remind yourself that all this passes away, is but an accident, and that the sun shines always, although it may not at any given moment be shining on you. 'What does that matter?' you will learn to say. 'It is enough for me to know that the sun does shine, and that this is only a weary fog that is round about me for the moment. I shall come out into the light beyond presently.' This is faith--faith in God, who is the light, and is all in all. I believe that the most glorious instances of calmness in suffering are thus achieved; that the sufferers really do not suffer what one of us would if thrown into their physical condition without the refuge of their spiritual condition as well; for they have taken refuge in the inner chamber. Out of the spring of their life a power goes forth that quenches the flames of the furnace of their suffering, so far at least that it does not touch the deep life, cannot make them miserable, does not drive them from the possession of their soul in patience, which is the divine citadel of the suffering. Do you understand me, Connie?"

"I do, papa. I think perfectly."

"Still less, then, is the fact that the difficulty is physical to be used as an excuse for giving way to ill-temper, and, in fact, leaving ourselves to be tossed and shaken by every tremble of our nerves. That is as if a man should give himself into the hands and will and caprice of an organ-grinder, to work upon him, not with the music of the spheres, but with the wretched growling of the streets."

"But," said Wynnie, "I have heard you yourself, papa, make excuse for people's ill-temper on this very ground, that they were out of health. Indeed," she went on, half-crying, "I have heard you do so for myself, when you did not know that I was within hearing."

"Yes, my dear, most assuredly. It is no fiction, but a real difference that lies between excusing ourselves and excusing other people. No doubt the same excuse is just for ourselves that is just for other people. But we can do something to put ourselves right upon a higher principle, and therefore we should not waste our time in excusing, or even in condemning ourselves, but make haste up the hill. Where we cannot work--that is, in the life of another--we have time to make all the excuse we can. Nay more; it is only justice there. We are not bound to insist on our own rights, even of excuse; the wisest thing often is to forego them. But we are bound by heaven, earth, and hell to give them to other people. And, besides, what a comfort to ourselves to be able to say, 'It is true So-and-so was cross to-day. But it wasn't in the least that he wasn't friendly, or didn't like me; it was only that he had eaten something that hadn't agreed with him. I could see it in his eye. He had one of his headaches.' Thus, you see, justice to our neighbour, and comfort to ourselves, is one and the same thing. But it would be a sad thing to have to think that when we found

ourselves in the same ungracious condition, from whatever cause, we had only to submit to it, saying, 'It is a law of nature,' as even those who talk most about laws will not do, when those laws come between them and their own comfort. They are ready enough then to call in the aid of higher laws, which, so far from being contradictory, overrule the lower to get things into something like habitable, endurable condition. It may be a law of nature; but what has the Law of the Spirit of Life to _propound anent_ it? as the Scotch lawyers would say."

A little pause followed, during which I hope some of us were thinking. That Wynnie, at least, was, her next question made evident.

"What you say about a law of nature and a law of the Spirit makes me think again how that walking on the water has always been a puzzle to me."

"It could hardly be other, seeing that we cannot possibly understand it," I answered.

"But I find it so hard to believe. Can't you say something, papa, to help me to believe it?"

"I think if you admit what goes before, you will find there is nothing against reason in the story."

"Tell me, please, what you mean."

"If all things were made by Jesus, the Word of God, would it be reasonable that the water that he had created should be able to drown him?"

"It might drown his body."

"It would if he had not the power over it still, to prevent it from laying hold of him. But just think for a moment. God is a Spirit. Spirit is greater than matter. Spirit makes matter. Think what it was for a human body to have such a divine creative power dwelling in it as that which dwelt in the human form of Jesus! What power, and influence, and utter rule that spirit must have over the body in which it dwells! We cannot imagine how much; but if we have so much power over our bodies, how much more must the pure, divine Jesus, have had over his! I suspect this miracle was wrought, not through anything done to the water, but through the power of the spirit over the body of Jesus, which was all obedient thereto. I am not explaining the miracle, for that I cannot do. One day I think it will be plain common sense to us. But now I am only showing you what seems to me to bring us a step nearer to the essential region of the miracle, and so far make it easier to believe. If we look at the history of our Lord, we shall find that, true real human body as his was, it was yet used by his spirit after a fashion in which we cannot yet use our bodies. And this is only reasonable. Let me give you an instance. You remember how, on the Mount of Transfiguration, that body shone so that the light of it illuminated all his garments. You do not surely suppose that this shine was external--physical light, as we say, _merely?_ No doubt it was physical light, for how else would their eyes have seen it? But where did it come from? What was its source? I think it was a natural outburst of glory from the mind of Jesus, filled with the perfect life of communion with his Father--the light of his divine blessedness taking form in physical radiance that permeated and glorified all that surrounded him. As the body is the expression of the soul, as the face of Jesus himself was the expression of the being, the thought, the love of Jesus in like manner this radiance was the natural expression of his gladness, even in the face of

that of which they had been talking--Moses, Elias, and he--namely, the decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Again, after his resurrection, he convinced the hands, as well as eyes, of doubting Thomas, that he was indeed there in the body; and yet that body could appear and disappear as the Lord willed. All this is full of marvel, I grant you; but probably far more intelligible to us in a further state of existence than some of the most simple facts with regard to our own bodies are to us now, only that we are so used to them that we never think how unintelligible they really are."

"But then about Peter, papa? What you have been saying will not apply to Peter's body, you know."

"I confess there is more difficulty there. But if you can suppose that such power were indwelling in Jesus, you cannot limit the sphere of its action. As he is the head of the body, his church, in all spiritual things, so I firmly believe, however little we can understand about it, is he in all natural things as well. Peter's faith in him brought even Peter's body within the sphere of the outgoing power of the Master. Do you suppose that because Peter ceased to be brave and trusting, therefore Jesus withdrew from him some sustaining power, and allowed him to sink? I do not believe it. I believe Peter's sinking followed naturally upon his loss of confidence. Thus he fell away from the life of the Master; was no longer, in that way I mean, connected with the Head, was instantly under the dominion of the natural law of gravitation, as we call it, and began to sink. Therefore the Lord must take other means to save him. He must draw nigh to him in a bodily manner. The pride of Peter had withdrawn him from the immediate spiritual influence of Christ, conquering his matter; and therefore the Lord must come over the stormy space between, come nearer to him in the body, and from his own height of safety above the sphere of the natural law, stretch out to him the arm of physical aid, lift him up, lead him to the boat. The whole salvation of the human race is figured in this story. It is all Christ, my love.--Does this help you to believe at all?"

"I think it does, papa. But it wants thinking over a good deal. I always find as I think, that lighter bits shine out here and there in a thing I have no hope of understanding altogether. That always helps me to believe that the rest might be understood too, if I were only clever enough."

"Simple enough, not clever enough, my dear."

"But there's one thing," said my wife, "that is more interesting to me than what you have been talking about. It is the other instances in the life of St. Peter in which you said he failed in a similar manner from pride or self-satisfaction."

"One, at least, seems to me very clear. You have often remarked to me, Ethel, how little praise servants can stand; how almost invariably after you have commended the diligence or skill of any of your household, as you felt bound to do, one of the first visible results was either a falling away in the performance by which she had gained the praise, or a more or less violent access, according to the nature of the individual, of self-conceit, soon breaking out in bad temper or impertinence. Now you will see precisely the same kind of thing in Peter."

Here I opened my New Testament, and read fragmentarily, "But whom say ye that I am?... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.... Blessed art thou, Simon.... My Father hath revealed that unto thee. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.... I must suffer many things,

and be killed, and be raised again the third day.... Be it far from thee, Lord. This shall not be unto thee.... Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me.' Just contemplate the change here in the words of our Lord. 'Blessed art thou.' 'Thou art an offence unto me.' Think what change has passed on Peter's mood before the second of these words could be addressed to him to whom the first had just been spoken. The Lord had praised him. Peter grew self-sufficient, even to the rebuking of him whose praise had so uplifted him. But it is ever so. A man will gain a great moral victory: glad first, then uplifted, he will fall before a paltry temptation. I have sometimes wondered, too, whether his denial of our Lord had anything to do with his satisfaction with himself for making that onslaught upon the high priest's servant. It was a brave thing and a faithful to draw a single sword against a multitude. In his fiery eagerness and inexperience, the blow, well meant to cleave Malchus's head, missed, and only cut off his ear; but Peter had herein justified his confident saying that he would not deny him. He was not one to deny his Lord who had been the first to confess him! Yet ere the cock had crowed, ere the morning had dawned, the vulgar grandeur of the palace of the high priest (for let it be art itself, it was vulgar grandeur beside that grandeur which it caused Peter to deny), and the accusing tone of a maid-servant, were enough to make him quail whom the crowd with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, had only roused to fight. True, he was excited then, and now he was cold in the middle of the night, with Jesus gone from his sight a prisoner, and for the faces of friends that had there surrounded him and strengthened him with their sympathy, now only the faces of those who were, or whom at least Peter thought to be on the other side, looking at him curiously, as a strange intruder into their domains. Alas, that the courage which led him to follow the Lord should have thus led him, not to deny him, but into the denial of him! Yet why should I say _alas?_ If the denial of our Lord lay in his heart a possible thing, only prevented by his being kept in favourable circumstances for confessing him, it was a thousand times better that he should deny him, and thus know what a poor weak thing that heart of his was, trust it no more, and give it up to the Master to make it strong, and pure, and grand. For such an end the Lord was willing to bear all the pain of Peter's denial. O, the love of that Son of Man, who in the midst of all the wretched weaknesses of those who surrounded him, loved the best in them, and looked forward to his own victory for them that they might become all that they were meant to be--like him; that the lovely glimmerings of truth and love that were in them now--the breakings forth of the light that lighteneth every man--might grow into the perfect human day; loving them even the more that they were so helpless, so oppressed, so far from that ideal which was their life, and which all their dim desires were reaching after!"

Here I ceased, and a little overcome with the great picture in my soul to which I had been able only to give the poorest expression, rose, and retired to my own room. There I could only fall on my knees and pray that the Lord Christ, who had died for me, might have his own way with me--that it might be worth his while to have done what he did and what he was doing now for me. To my Elder Brother, my Lord, and my God, I gave myself yet again, confidently, because he cared to have me, and my very breath was his. I _would_ be what he wanted, who knew all about it, and had done everything that I might be a son of God--a living glory of gladness.

CHAPTER II.

NICEBOOTS.

The next morning the captain of the lost vessel called upon me early to thank me for himself and his men. He was a fine honest-looking burly fellow, dressed in blue from head to heel. He might have sat for a portrait of Chaucer's shipman, as far as his hue and the first look of him went. It was clear that "in many a tempest had his beard be shake," and certainly "the hote somer had made his hew all broun;" but farther the likeness would hardly go, for the "good fellow" which Chaucer applies with such irony to the shipman of his time, who would filch wine, and drown all the captives he made in a sea-fight, was clearly applicable in good earnest to this shipman. Still, I thought I had something to bring against him, and therefore before we parted I said to him--

"They tell me, captain, that your vessel was not seaworthy, and that you could not but have known that."

"She was my own craft, sir, and I judged her fit for several voyages more. If she had been A 1 she couldn't have been mine; and a man must do what he can for his family."

"But you were risking your life, you know."

"A few chances more or less don't much signify to a sailor, sir. There ain't nothing to be done without risk. You'll find an old tub go voyage after voyage, and she beyond bail, and a clipper fresh off the stocks go down in the harbour. It's all in the luck, sir, I assure you."

"Well, if it were your own life I should have nothing to say, seeing you have a family to look after; but what about the poor fellows who made the voyage with you? Did they know what kind of a vessel they were embarking in?"

"Wherever the captain's ready to go he'll always find men ready to follow him. Bless you, sir, they never asks no questions. If a sailor was always to be thinking of the chances, he'd never set his foot off shore."

"Still, I don't think it's right they shouldn't know."

"I daresay they knowed all about the old brig as well as I did myself. You gets to know all about a craft just as you do about her captain. She's got a character of her own, and she can't hide it long, any more than you can hide yours, sir, begging your pardon."

"I daresay that's all correct, but still I shouldn't like anyone to say to me, 'You ought to have told me, captain.' Therefore, you see, I'm telling you, captain, and now I'm clear.--Have a glass of wine before you go," I concluded, ringing the bell.

"Thank you, sir. I'll turn over what you've been saying, and anyhow I take it kind of you."

So we parted. I have never seen him since, and shall not, most likely,

in this world. But he looked like a man that could understand why and wherefore I spoke as I did. And I had the advantage of having had a chance of doing something for him first of all. Let no man who wants to do anything for the soul of a man lose a chance of doing something for his body. He ought to be willing, and ready, which is more than willing, to do that whether or not; but there are those who need this reminder. Of many a soul Jesus laid hold by healing the suffering the body brought upon it. No one but himself can tell how much the nucleus of the church was composed of and by those who had received health from his hands, loving-kindness from the word of his mouth. My own opinion is that herein lay the very germ of the kernel of what is now the ancient, was then the infant church; that from them, next to the disciples themselves, went forth the chief power of life in love, for they too had seen the Lord, and in their own humble way could preach and teach concerning him. What memories of him theirs must have been!

Things went on very quietly, that is, as I mean now, from the view-point of a historian, without much to record bearing notably upon after events, for the greater part of the next week. I wandered about my parish, making acquaintance with different people in an outside sort of way, only now and then finding an opportunity of seeing into their souls except by conclusion. But I enjoyed endlessly the aspects of the country. It was not picturesque except in parts. There was little wood and there were no hills, only undulations, though many of them were steep enough even from a pedestrian's point of view. Neither, however, were there any plains except high moorland tracts. But the impression of the whole country was large, airy, sunshiny, and it was clasped in the arms of the infinite, awful, yet how bountiful sea--if one will look at the ocean in its world-wide, not to say its eternal aspects, and not out of the fears of a hidebound love of life! The sea and the sky, I must confess, dwarfed the earth, made it of small account beside them; but who could complain of such an influence? At least, not I.

My children bathed in this sea every day, and gathered strength and knowledge from it. It was, as I have indicated, a dangerous coast to bathe upon. The sweep of the tides varied with the varying sands that were cast up. There was now in one place, now in another, a strong undertow, as they called it--a reflux, that is, of the inflowing waters, which was quite sufficient to carry those who could not swim out into the great deep, and rendered much exertion necessary, even in those who could, to regain the shore. But there was a fine strong Cornish woman to take charge of the ladies and the little boys, and she, watching the ways of the wild monster, knew the when and the where, and all about it.

Connie got out upon the downs every day. She improved in health certainly, and we thought a little even in her powers of motion. The weather continued superb. What rain there was fell at night, just enough for Nature to wash her face with and so look quite fresh in the morning. We contrived a dinner on the sands on the other side of the bay, for the Friday of this same week.

The morning rose gloriously. Harry and Charlie were turning the house upside down, to judge by their noise, long before I was in the humour to get up, for I had been reading late the night before. I never made much objection to mere noise, knowing that I could stop it the moment I pleased, and knowing, which was of more consequence, that so far from there being anything wrong in making a noise, the sea would make noise enough in our ears before we left Kilkhaven. The moment, however, that I heard a thread of whining or a burst of anger in the noise, I would interfere at

once--treating these just as things that must be dismissed at once. Harry and Charlie were, I say, to use their own form of speech, making such a row that morning, however, that I was afraid of some injury to the house or furniture, which were not our own. So I opened my door and called out--

"Harry! Charlie! What on earth are you about?"

"Nothing, papa," answered Charlie. "Only it's so jolly!"

"What is jolly, my boy?" I asked.

"O, I don't know, papa! It's so jolly!"

"Is it the sunshine?" thought I; "and the wind? God's world all over? The God of gladness in the hearts of the lads? Is it that? No wonder, then, that they cannot tell yet what it is!"

I withdrew into my room; and so far from seeking to put an end to the noise--I knew Connie did not mind it--listened to it with a kind of reverence, as the outcome of a gladness which the God of joy had kindled in their hearts. Soon after, however, I heard certain dim growls of expostulation from Harry, and having, from experience, ground for believing that the elder was tyrannising over the younger, I stopped that and the noise together, sending Charlie to find out where the tide would be between one and two o'clock, and Harry to run to the top of the hill, and find out the direction of the wind. Before I was dressed, Charlie was knocking at my door with the news that it would be half-tide about one; and Harry speedily followed with the discovery that the wind was north-east by south-west, which of course determined that the sun would shine all day.

As the dinner-hour drew near, the servants went over, with Walter at their head, to choose a rock convenient for a table, under the shelter of the rocks on the sands across the bay. Thither, when Walter returned, we bore our Connie, carrying her litter close by the edge of the retreating tide, which sometimes broke in a ripple of music under her, wetting our feet with innocuous rush. The child's delight was extreme, as she thus skimmed the edge of the ocean, with the little ones gambolling about her, and her mamma and Wynn timer walking quietly on the landward side, for she wished to have no one between her and the sea.

After scrambling with difficulty over some rocky ledges, and stopping at Connie's request, to let her look into a deep pool in the sand, which somehow or other retained the water after the rest had retreated, we set her down near the mouth of a cave, in the shadow of a rock. And there was our dinner nicely laid for us on a flat rock in front of the cave. The cliffs rose behind us, with curiously curved and variously angled strata. The sun in his full splendour threw dark shadows on the brilliant yellow sand, more and more of which appeared as the bright blue water withdrew itself, now rippling over it as if it meant to hide it all up again, now uncovering more as it withdrew for another rush. Before we had finished our dinner, the foremost wavelets appeared so far away over the plain of the sand, that it seemed a long walk to the edge that had been almost at our feet a little while ago. Between us and it lay a lovely desert of glittering sand.

When even Charlie and Harry had arrived at the conclusion that it was time to stop eating, we left the shadow and went out into the sun, carrying Connie and laying her down in the midst of "the ribbed sea-sand," which was very ribby to-day. On a shawl a little way off from her lay her baby,

crowding and kicking with the same jollity that had possessed the boys ever since the morning. I wandered about with Wynn timer on the sands, picking up amongst other things strange creatures in thin shells ending in vegetable-like tufts, if I remember rightly. My wife sat on the end of Connie's litter, and Dora and the boys, a little way off, were trying how far the full force of three wooden spades could, in digging a hole, keep ahead of the water which was ever tumbling in the sand from the sides of the same. Behind, the servants were busy washing the plates in a pool, and burying the fragments of the feast; for I made it a rule wherever we went that the fair face of nature was not to be defiled. I have always taken the part of excursionists in these latter days of running to and fro, against those who complain that the loveliest places are being destroyed by their inroads. But there is one most offensive, even disgusting habit amongst them--that of leaving bones, fragments of meat pies, and worse than all, pieces of greasy paper about the place, which I cannot excuse, or at least defend. Even the surface of Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes will be defiled with these floating abominations--not abominations at all if they are decently burned or buried when done with, but certainly abominations when left to be cast hither and thither in the wind, over the grass, or on the eddy and ripple of the pure water, for days after those who have thus left their shame behind them have returned to their shops or factories. I forgive them for trampling down the grass and the ferns. That cannot be helped, and in comparison of the good they get, is not to be considered at all. But why should they leave such a savage trail behind them as this, forgetting too that though they have done with the spot, there are others coming after them to whom these remnants must be an offence?

At length in our roaming, Wynn timer and I approached a long low ridge of rock, rising towards the sea into which it ran. Crossing this, we came suddenly upon the painter whom Dora had called Niceboots, sitting with a small easel before him. We were right above him ere we knew. He had his back towards us, so that we saw at once what he was painting.

"O, papa!" cried Wynn timer involuntarily, and the painter looked round.

"I beg your pardon," I said. "We came over from the other side, and did not see you before. I hope we have not disturbed you much."

"Not in the least," he answered courteously, and rose as he spoke.

I saw that the subject on his easel suggested that of which Wynn timer had been making a sketch at the same time, on the day when Connie first lay on the top of the opposite cliff. But he was not even looking in the same direction now.

"Do you mind having your work seen before it is finished?"

"Not in the least, if the spectators will do me the favour to remember that most processes have to go through a seemingly chaotic stage," he answered.

I was struck with the mode and tone of the remark.

"Here is no common man," I said to myself, and responded to him in something of a similar style.

"I wish we could always keep that in mind with regard to human beings themselves, as well as their works," I said aloud.

The painter looked at me, and I looked at him.

"We speak each from the experience of his own profession, I presume," he said.

"But," I returned, glancing at the little picture in oils upon his easel, "your work here, though my knowledge of painting is next to nothing--perhaps I ought to say nothing at all--this picture must have long ago passed the chaotic stage."

"It is nearly as much finished as I care to make it," he returned. "I hardly count this work at all. I am chiefly amusing, or rather pleasing, my own fancy at present."

"Apparently," I remarked, "you had the conical rock outside the hay for your model, and now you are finishing it with your back turned towards it. How is that?"

"I will soon explain," he answered. "The moment I saw this rock, it reminded me of Dante's Purgatory."

"Ah, you are a reader of Dante?" I said. "In the original, I hope."

"Yes. A friend of mine, a brother painter, an Italian, set me going with that, and once going with Dante, nobody could well stop. I never knew what intensity *_per se_* was till I began to read Dante."

"That is quite my own feeling. Now, to return to your picture."

"Without departing at all from natural forms, I thought to make it suggest the Purgatorio to anyone who remembered the description given of the place *_ab extra_* by Ulysses, in the end of the twenty-sixth canto of the Inferno. Of course, that thing there is a mere rock, yet it has certain mountain forms about it. I have put it at a much greater distance, you see, and have sought to make it look a solitary mountain in the midst of a great water. You will discover even now that the circles of the Purgatory are suggested without any approach, I think, to artificial structure; and there are occasional hints at figures, which you cannot definitely detach from the rocks--which, by the way, you must remember, were in one part full of sculptures. I have kept the mountain near enough, however, to indicate the great expanse of wild flowers on the top, which Matilda was so busy gathering. I want to indicate too the wind up there in the terrestrial paradise, ever and always blowing one way. You remember, Mr. Walton?"--for the young man, getting animated, began to talk as if we had known each other for some time--and here he repeated the purport of Dante's words in English:

"An air of sweetness, changeless in its flow,
With no more strength than in a soft wind lies,
Smote peacefully against me on the brow.
By which the leaves all trembling, level-wise,
Did every one bend thitherward to where
The high mount throws its shadow at sunrise."

"I thought you said you did not use translations?"

"I thought it possible that--Miss Walton (?)" interrogatively this--"might not follow the Italian so easily, and I feared to seem pedantic."

"She won't lag far behind, I flatter myself," I returned. "Whose

translation do you quote?"

He hesitated a moment; then said carelessly:

"I have cobbled a few passages after that fashion myself."

"It has the merit of being near the original at least," I returned; "and that seems to me one of the chief merits a translation can possess."

"Then," the painter resumed, rather hastily, as if to avoid any further remark upon his verses, "you see those white things in the air above?" Here he turned to Wynn timer. "Miss Walton will remember--I think she was making a drawing of the rock at the same time I was--how the seagulls, or some such birds--only two or three of them--kept flitting about the top of it?"

"I remember quite well," answered Wynn timer, with a look of appeal to me.

"Yes," I interposed; "my daughter, in describing what she had been attempting to draw, spoke especially of the birds over the rock. For she said the white lapping of the waves looked like spirits trying to get loose, and the white birds like foam that had broken its chains, and risen in triumph into the air."

Here Mr. Niceboots, for as yet I did not know what else to call him, looked at Wynn timer almost with a start.

"How wonderfully that falls in with my fancy about the rock!" he said. "Purgatory indeed! with imprisoned souls lapping at its foot, and the free souls winging their way aloft in ether. Well, this world is a kind of purgatory anyhow--is it not, Mr. Walton?"

"Certainly it is. We are here tried as by fire, to see what our work is--whether wood, hay, and stubble, or gold and silver and precious stones."

"You see," resumed the painter, "if anybody only glanced at my little picture, he would take those for sea-birds; but if he looked into it, and began to suspect me, he would find out that they were Dante and Beatrice on their way to the sphere of the moon."

"In one respect at least, then, your picture has the merit of corresponding to fact; for what thing is there in the world, or what group of things, in which the natural man will not see merely the things of nature, but the spiritual man the things of the spirit?"

"I am no theologian," said the painter, turning away, I thought somewhat coldly.

But I could see that Wynn timer was greatly interested in him. Perhaps she thought that here was some enlightenment of the riddle of the world for her, if she could but get at what he was thinking. She was used to my way of it: here might be something new.

"If I can be of any service to Miss Walton with her drawing, I shall be happy," he said, turning again towards me.

But his last gesture had made me a little distrustful of him, and I received his advances on this point with a coldness which I did not wish to make more marked than his own towards my last observation.

"You are very kind," I said; "but Miss Walton does not presume to be an artist."

I saw a slight shade pass over Wynnies countenance. When I turned to Mr. Niceboots, a shade of a different sort was on his. Surely I had said something wrong to cast a gloom on two young faces. I made haste to make amends.

"We are just going to have some coffee," I said, "for my servants, I see, have managed to kindle a fire. Will you come and allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Walton?"

"With much pleasure," he answered, rising from the rock whereon, as he spoke about his picture, he had again seated himself. He was a fine-built, black-bearded, sunburnt fellow, with clear gray eyes notwithstanding, a rather Roman nose, and good features generally. But there was an air of suppression, if not of sadness, about him, however, did not in the least interfere with the manliness of his countenance, or of its expression.

"But," I said, "how am I to effect an introduction, seeing I do not yet know your name."

I had had to keep a sharp look-out on myself lest I should call him Mr. Niceboots. He smiled very graciously and replied,

"My name is Percivale--Charles Percivale."

"A descendant of Sir Percivale of King Arthur's Round Table?"

"I cannot count quite so far back," he answered, "as that--not quite to the Conquest," he added, with a slight deepening of his sunburnt hue. "I do come of a fighting race, but I cannot claim Sir Percivale."

We were now walking along the edge of the still retreating waves towards the group upon the sands, Mr. Percivale and I foremost, and Wynnies lingering behind.

"O, do look here papa!" she cried, from some little distance.

We turned and saw her gazing at something on the sand at her feet. Hastening back, we found it to be a little narrow line of foam-bubbles, which the water had left behind it on the sand, slowly breaking and passing out of sight. Why there should be foam-bubbles there then, and not always, I do not know. But there they were--and such colours! deep rose and grassy green and ultramarine blue; and, above all, one dark, yet brilliant and intensely-burnished, metallic gold. All of them were of a solid-looking burnished colour, like opaque body-colour laid on behind translucent crystal. Those little ocean bubbles were well worth turning to see; and so I said to Wynnies. But, as we gazed, they went on vanishing, one by one. Every moment a heavenly glory of hue burst, and was nowhere.

We walked away again towards the rest of our party.

"Don't you think those bubbles more beautiful than any precious stones you ever saw, papa?"

"Yes, my love, I think they are, except it be the opal. In the opal, God seems to have fixed the evanescent and made the vanishing eternal."

"And flowers are more beautiful things than jewels?' she said interrogatively.

"Many--perhaps most flowers are," I granted. "And did you ever see such curves and delicate textures anywhere else as in the clouds, papa?"

"I think not--in the cirrhous clouds at least--the frozen ones. But what are you putting me to my catechism for in this way, my child?"

"O, papa, I could go on a long time with that catechism; but I will end with one question more, which you will perhaps find a little harder to answer. Only I daresay you have had an answer ready for years lest one of us should ask you some day."

"No, my love. I never got an answer ready for anything lest one of my children should ask me. But it is not surprising either that children should be puzzled about the things that have puzzled their father, or that by the time they are able to put the questions, he should have found out some sort of an answer to most of them. Go on with your catechism, Wynnie. Now for your puzzle!"

"It's not a funny question, papa; it's a very serious one. I can't think why the unchanging God should have made all the most beautiful things wither and grow ugly, or burst and vanish, or die somehow and be no more. Mamma is not so beautiful as she once was, is she?"

"In one way, no; but in another and better way, much more so. But we will not talk about her kind of beauty just now; we will keep to the more material loveliness of which you have been speaking--though, in truth, no loveliness can be only material. Well, then, for my answer; it is, I think, because God loves the beauty so much that he makes all beautiful things vanish quickly."

"I do not understand you, papa."

"I daresay not, my dear. But I will explain to you a little, if Mr. Percivale will excuse me."

"On the contrary, I am greatly interested, both in the question and the answer."

"Well, then, Wynnie; everything has a soul and a body, or something like them. By the body we know the soul. But we are always ready to love the body instead of the soul. Therefore, God makes the body die continually, that we may learn to love the soul indeed. The world is full of beautiful things, but God has saved many men from loving the mere bodies of them, by making them poor; and more still by reminding them that if they be as rich as Croesus all their lives, they will be as poor as Diogenes--poorer, without even a tub--when this world, with all its pictures, scenery, books, and--alas for some Christians!--bibles even, shall have vanished away."

"Why do you say _alas_, papa--if they are Christians especially?"

"I say _alas_ only from their point of view, not from mine. I mean such as are always talking and arguing from the Bible, and never giving themselves any trouble to do what it tells them. They insist on the anise and cummin, and forget the judgment, mercy, and faith. These worship the body of the truth, and forget the soul of it. If the flowers were not perishable, we

should cease to contemplate their beauty, either blinded by the passion for hoarding the bodies of them, or dulled by the hebetude of commonplaceness that the constant presence of them would occasion. To compare great things with small, the flowers wither, the bubbles break, the clouds and sunsets pass, for the very same holy reason, in the degree of its application to them, for which the Lord withdrew from his disciples and ascended again to his Father--that the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Soul of things, might come to them and abide with them, and so the Son return, and the Father be revealed. The flower is not its loveliness, and its loveliness we must love, else we shall only treat them as flower-greedy children, who gather and gather, and fill hands and baskets, from a mere desire of acquisition, excusable enough in them, but the same in kind, however harmless in mode, and degree, and object, as the avarice of the miser. Therefore God, that we may always have them, and ever learn to love their beauty, and yet more their truth, sends the beneficent winter that we may think about what we have lost, and welcome them when they come again with greater tenderness and love, with clearer eyes to see, and purer hearts to understand, the spirit that dwells in them. We cannot do without the 'winter of our discontent.' Shakspeare surely saw that when he makes Titania say, in _A Midsummer Night's Dream_:

'The human mortals want their winter here'--

namely, to set things right; and none of those editors who would alter the line seem to have been capable of understanding its import."

"I think I understand you a little," answered Wynnie. Then, changing her tone, "I told you, papa, you would have an answer ready; didn't I?"

"Yes, my child; but with this difference--I found the answer to meet my own necessities, not yours."

"And so you had it ready for me when I wanted it."

"Just so. That is the only certainty you have in regard to what you give away. No one who has not tasted it and found it good has a right to offer any spiritual dish to his neighbour."

Mr. Percivale took no part in our conversation. The moment I had presented him to Mrs. Walton and Connie, and he had paid his respects by a somewhat stately old-world obeisance, he merged the salutation into a farewell, and, either forgetting my offer of coffee, or having changed his mind, withdrew, a little to my disappointment, for, notwithstanding his lack of response where some things he said would have led me to expect it, I had begun to feel much interested in him.

He was scarcely beyond hearing, when Dora came up to me from her digging, with an eager look on her sunny face.

"Hasn't he got nice boots, papa?"

"Indeed, my dear, I am unable to support you in that assertion, for I never saw his boots."

"I did, then," returned the child; "and I never saw such nice boots."

"I accept the statement willingly," I replied; and we heard no more of the boots, for his name was now substituted for his nickname. Nor did I see himself again for some days--not in fact till next Sunday--though why he

should come to church at all was something of a puzzle to me, especially when I knew him better.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLACKSMITH.

The next day I set out after breakfast to inquire about a blacksmith. It was not every or any blacksmith that would do. I must not fix on the first to do my work because he was the first. There was one in the village, I soon learned; but I found him an ordinary man, who, I have no doubt, could shoe a horse and avoid the quick, but from whom any greater delicacy of touch was not to be expected. Inquiring further, I heard of a young smith who had lately settled in a hamlet a couple of miles distant, but still within the parish. In the afternoon I set out to find him. To my surprise, he was a pale-faced, thoughtful-looking man, with a huge frame, which appeared worn rather than naturally thin, and large eyes that looked at the anvil as if it was the horizon of the world. He had got a horse-shoe in his tongs when I entered. Notwithstanding the fire that glowed on the hearth, and the sparks that flew like a nimbus in eruption from about his person, the place looked very dark to me entering from the glorious blaze of the almost noontide sun, and felt cool after the deep lane through which I had come, and which had seemed a very reservoir of sunbeams. I could see the smith by the glow of his horse-shoe; but all between me and the shoe was dark.

"Good-morning," I said. "It is a good thing to find a man by his work. I heard you half a mile off or so, and now I see you, but only by the glow of your work. It is a grand thing to work in fire."

He lifted his hammered hand to his forehead courteously, and as lightly as if the hammer had been the butt-end of a whip.

"I don't know if you would say the same if you had to work at it in weather like this," he answered.

"If I did not," I returned, "that would be the fault of my weakness, and would not affect the assertion I have just made, that it is a fine thing to work in fire."

"Well, you may be right," he rejoined with a sigh, as, throwing the horse-shoe he had been fashioning from the tongs on the ground, he next let the hammer drop beside the anvil, and leaning against it held his head for a moment between his hands, and regarded the floor. "It does not much matter to me," he went on, "if I only get through my work and have done with it. No man shall say I shirked what I'd got to do. And then when it's over there won't be a word to say agen me, or--"

He did not finish the sentence. And now I could see the sunlight lying in a somewhat dreary patch, if the word _dreary_ can be truly used with respect

to any manifestation of sunlight, on the dark clay floor.

"I hope you are not ill," I said.

He made no answer, but taking up his tongs caught with it from a beam one of a number of roughly-finished horse-shoes which hung there, and put it on the fire to be fashioned to a certain fit. While he turned it in the fire, and blew the bellows, I stood regarding him. "This man will do for my work," I said to myself; "though I should not wonder from the look of him if it was the last piece of work he ever did under the New Jerusalem." The smith's words broke in on my meditations.

"When I was a little boy," he said, "I once wanted to stay at home from school. I had, I believe, a little headache, but nothing worth minding. I told my mother that I had a headache, and she kept me, and I helped her at her spinning, which was what I liked best of anything. But in the afternoon the Methodist preacher came in to see my mother, and he asked me what was the matter with me, and my mother answered for me that I had a bad head, and he looked at me; and as my head was quite well by this time, I could not help feeling guilty. And he saw my look, I suppose, sir, for I can't account for what he said any other way; and he turned to me, and he said to me, solemn-like, 'Is your head bad enough to send you to the Lord Jesus to make you whole?' I could not speak a word, partly from bashfulness, I suppose, for I was but ten years old. So he followed it up, as they say: 'Then you ought to be at school,' says he. I said nothing, because I couldn't. But never since then have I given in as long as I could stand. And I can stand now, and lift my hammer, too," he said, as he took the horse-shoe from the forge, laid it on the anvil, and again made a nimbus of coruscating iron.

"You are just the man I want," I said. "I've got a job for you, down to Kilkhaven, as you say in these parts."

"What is it, sir? Something about the church? I should ha' thought the church was all spick and span by this time."

"I see you know who I am," I said.

"Of course I do," he answered. "I don't go to church myself, being brought up a Methodist; but anything that happens in the parish is known the next day all over it."

"You won't mind doing my job though you are a Methodist, will you?" I asked.

"Not I, sir. If I've read right, it's the fault of the Church that we don't pull all alongside. You turned us out, sir; we didn't go out of ourselves. At least, if all they say is true, which I can't be sure of, you know, in this world."

"You are quite right there though," I answered. "And in doing so, the Church had the worst of it--as all that judge and punish their neighbours have. But you have been the worse for it, too: all of which is to be laid to the charge of the Church. For there is not one clergyman I know--mind, I say, that I know--who would have made such a cruel speech to a boy as that the Methodist parson made to you."

"But it did me good, sir?"

"Are you sure of that? I am not. Are you sure, first of all, it did not make you proud? Are you sure it has not made you work beyond your strength--I don't mean your strength of arm, for clearly that is all that could be wished, but of your chest, your lungs? Is there not some danger of your leaving someone who is dependent on you too soon unprovided for? Is there not some danger of your having worked as if God were a hard master? --of your having worked fiercely, indignantly, as if he wronged you by not caring for you, not understanding you?"

He returned me no answer, but hammered momentarily on his anvil. Whether he felt what I meant, or was offended at my remark, I could not then tell. I thought it best to conclude the interview with business.

"I have a delicate little job that wants nice handling, and I fancy you are just the man to do it to my mind," I said.

"What is it, sir?" he asked, in a friendly manner enough.

"If you will excuse me, I would rather show it to you than talk about it," I returned.

"As you please, sir. When do you want me?"

"The first hour you can come."

"To-morrow morning?"

"If you feel inclined."

"For that matter, I'd rather go to bed."

"Come to me instead: it's light work."

"I will, sir--at ten o'clock."

"If you please."

And so it was arranged.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LIFE-BOAT.

The next day rose glorious. Indeed, early as the sun rose, I saw him rise--saw him, from the down above the house, over the land to the east and north, ascend triumphant into his own light, which had prepared the way for him; while the clouds that hung over the sea glowed out with a faint flush, as anticipating the hour when the west should clasp the declining glory in a richer though less dazzling splendour, and shine out the bride of the bridegroom east, which behold each other from afar across the intervening

world, and never mingle but in the sight of the eyes. The clear pure light of the morning made me long for the truth in my heart, which alone could make me pure and clear as the morning, tune me up to the concert-pitch of the nature around me. And the wind that blew from the sunrise made me hope in the God who had first breathed into my nostrils the breath of life, that he would at length so fill me with his breath, his wind, his spirit, that I should think only his thoughts and live his life, finding therein my own life, only glorified infinitely.

After breakfast and prayers, I would go to the church to await the arrival of my new acquaintance the smith. In order to obtain entrance, I had, however, to go to the cottage of the sexton. This was not my first visit there, so that I may now venture to take my reader with me. To reach the door, I had to cross a hollow by a bridge, built, for the sake of the road, over what had once been the course of a rivulet from the heights above. Now it was a kind of little glen, or what would in Scotland be called a den, I think, grown with grass and wild flowers and ferns, some of them, rare and fine. The roof of the cottage came down to the road, and, until you came quite near, you could not but wonder where the body that supported this head could be. But you soon saw that the ground fell suddenly away, leaving a bank against which the cottage was built. Crossing a garden of the smallest, the principal flowers of which were the stonecrop on its walls, by a flag-paved path, you entered the building, and, to your surprise, found yourself, not in a little cottage kitchen, as you expected, but in a waste-looking space, that seemed to have forgotten the use for which it had been built. There was a sort of loft along one side of it, and it was heaped with indescribable lumber-looking stuff with here and there a hint at possible machinery. The place had been a mill for grinding corn, and its wheel had been driven by the stream which had run for ages in the hollow of which I have already spoken. But when the canal came to be constructed, the stream had to be turned aside from its former course, and indeed was now employed upon occasion to feed the canal; so that the mill of necessity had fallen into disuse and decay. Crossing this floor, you entered another door, and turning sharp to the left, went down a few steps of a ladder-sort of stair, and after knocking your hat against a beam, emerged in the comfortable quaint little cottage kitchen you had expected earlier. A cheerful though small fire burns in the grate--for even here the hearth-fire has vanished from the records of cottage-life--and is pleasant here even in the height of summer, though it is counted needful only for cooking purposes. The ceiling, which consists only of the joists and the boards that floor the bedroom above, is so low, that necessity, if not politeness, would compel you to take off your already-bruised hat. Some of these joists, you will find, are made further useful by supporting each a shelf, before which hangs a little curtain of printed cotton, concealing the few stores and postponed eatables of the house--forming, in fact, both store-room and larder of the family. On the walls hang several coloured prints, and within a deep glazed frame the figure of a ship in full dress, carved in rather high relief in sycamore.

As I now entered, Mrs. Coombes rose from a high-backed settle near the fire, and bade me good-morning with a courtesy.

"What a lovely day it is, Mrs. Coombes! It is so bright over the sea," I said, going to the one little window which looked out on the great Atlantic, "that one almost expects a great merchant navy to come sailing into Kilkhaven--sunk to the water's edge with silks, and ivory, and spices, and apes, and peacocks, like the ships of Solomon that we read about--just as the sun gets up to the noonstead."

Before I record her answer, I turn to my reader, who in the spirit accompanies me, and have a little talk with him. I always make it a rule to speak freely with the less as with the more educated of my friends. I never talk down to them, except I be expressly explaining something to them. The law of the world is as the law of the family. Those children grow much the faster who hear all that is going on in the house. Reaching ever above themselves, they arrive at an understanding at fifteen, which, in the usual way of things, they would not reach before five-and-twenty or thirty; and this in a natural way, and without any necessary priggishness, except such as may belong to their parents. Therefore I always spoke to the poor and uneducated as to my own people,--freely, not much caring whether I should be quite understood or not; for I believed in influences not to be measured by the measure of the understanding.

But what was the old woman's answer? It was this:

"I know, sir. And when I was as young as you"--I was not so very young, my reader may well think--"I thought like that about the sea myself. Everything come from the sea. For my boy Willie he du bring me home the beautifulest parrot and the talkingest you ever see, and the red shawl all worked over with flowers: I'll show it to you some day, sir, when you have time. He made that ship you see in the frame there, sir, all with his own knife, out on a bit o' wood that he got at the Marishes, as they calls it, sir--a bit of an island somewheres in the great sea. But the parrot's gone dead like the rest of them, sir.--Where am I? and what am I talking about?" she added, looking down at her knitting as if she had dropped a stitch, or rather as if she had forgotten what she was making, and therefore what was to come next.

"You were telling me how you used to think of the sea--"

"When I was as young as you. I remember, sir. Well, that lasted a long time--lasted till my third boy fell asleep in the wide water; for it du call it falling asleep, don't it, sir?"

"The Bible certainly does," I answered.

"It's the Bible I be meaning, of course," she returned. "Well, after that, but I don't know what began it, only I did begin to think about the sea as something that took away things and didn't bring them no more. And somehow or other she never look so blue after that, and she give me the shivers. But now, sir, she always looks to me like one o' the shining ones that come to fetch the pilgrims. You've heard tell of the Pilgrim's Progress, I daresay, sir, among the poor people; for they du say it was written by a tinker, though there be a power o' good things in it that I think the gentlefolk would like if they knowed it."

"I do know the book--nearly as well as I know the Bible," I answered; "and the shining ones are very beautiful in it. I am glad you can think of the sea that way."

"It's looking in at the window all day as I go about the house," she answered, "and all night too when I'm asleep; and if I hadn't learned to think of it that way, it would have driven me mad, I du believe. I was forced to think that way about it, or not think at all. And that wouldn't be easy, with the sound of it in your ears the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning."

"The truth of things is indeed the only refuge from the look of things," I

replied. "But now I want the key of the church, if you will trust me with it, for I have something to do there this morning; and the key of the tower as well, if you please."

With her old smile, ripened only by age, she reached the ponderous keys from the nail where they hung, and gave them into my hand. I left her in the shadow of her dwelling, and stepped forth into the sunlight. The first thing I observed was the blacksmith waiting for me at the church door.

Now that I saw him in the full light of day, and now that he wore his morning face upon which the blackness of labour had not yet gathered, I could see more plainly how far he was from well. There was a flush on his thin cheek by which the less used exercise of walking revealed his inward weakness, and the light in his eyes had something of the far-country in them--"the light that never was on sea or shore." But his speech was cheerful, for he had been walking in the light of this world, and that had done something to make the light within him shine a little more freely.

"How do you find yourself to-day?" I asked.

"Quite well, sir, I thank you," he answered. "A day like this does a man good. But," he added, and his countenance fell, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness."

"It may know it too much," I returned, "just because it refuses to let a stranger intermeddle therewith."

He made no reply. I turned the key in the great lock, and the iron-studded oak opened and let us into the solemn gloom.

It did not require many minutes to make the man understand what I wanted of him.

"We must begin at the bells and work down," he said.

So we went up into the tower, where, with the help of a candle I fetched for him from the cottage, he made a good many minute measurements; found that carpenter's work was necessary for the adjustment of the hammers and cranks and the leading of the rods, undertook the management of the whole, and in the course of an hour and a half went home to do what had to be done before any fixing could be commenced, assuring me that he had no doubt of bringing the job to a satisfactory conclusion, although the force of the blow on the bell would doubtless have to be regulated afterwards by repeated trials.

"In a fortnight, I hope you will be able to play a tune to the parish, sir," he added, as he took his leave.

I resolved, if possible, to know more of the man, and find out his trouble, if haply I might be able to give him any comfort, for I was all but certain that there was a deeper cause for his gloom than the state of his health.

When he was gone I stood with the key of the church in my hand, and looked about me. Nature at least was in glorious health--sunshine in her eyes, light fantastic cloud-images passing through her brain, her breath coming and going in soft breezes perfumed with the scents of meadows and wild flowers, and her green robe shining in the motions of her gladness. I turned to lock the church door, though in my heart I greatly disapproved of locking the doors of churches, and only did so now because it was not my

church, and I had no business to force my opinions upon other customs. But when I turned I received a kind of questioning shock. There was the fallen world, as men call it, shining in glory and gladness, because God was there; here was the way into the lost Paradise, yea, the door into an infinitely higher Eden than that ever had or ever could have been, iron-clamped and riveted, gloomy and low-browed like the entrance to a sepulchre, and surrounded with the grim heads of grotesque monsters of the deep. What did it mean? Here was contrast enough to require harmonising, or if that might not be, then accounting for. Perhaps it was enough to say that although God made both the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace, yet the symbol of the latter was the work of man, and might not altogether correspond to God's idea of the matter. I turned away thoughtful, and went through the churchyard with my eye on the graves.

As I left the churchyard, still looking to the earth, the sound of voices reached my ear. I looked up. There, down below me, at the foot of the high bank on which I stood, lay a gorgeous shining thing upon the bosom of the canal, full of men, and surrounded by men, women, and children, delighting in its beauty. I had never seen such a thing before, but I knew at once, as by instinct, which of course it could not have been, that it was the life-boat. But in its gorgeous colours, red and white and green, it looked more like the galley that bore Cleopatra to Actium. Nor, floating so light on the top of the water, and broad in the beam withal, curved upward and ornamented at stern and stem, did it look at all like a creature formed to battle with the fierce elements. A pleasure-boat for floating between river banks it seemed, drawn by swans mayhap, and regarded in its course by fair eyes from green terrace-walks, or oriel windows of ancient houses on verdant lawns. Ten men sat on the thwarts, and one in the stern by the yet useless rudder, while men and boys drew the showy thing by a rope downward to the lock-gates. The men in the boat, wore blue jerseys, but you could see little of the colour for strange unshapely things that they wore above them, like an armour cut out of a row of organ pipes. They were their cork-jackets; for every man had to be made into a life-boat himself. I descended the bank, and stood on the edge of the canal as it drew near. Then I saw that every oar was loosely but firmly fastened to the rowlock, so that it could be dropped and caught again in a moment; and that the gay sides of the unwieldy-looking creature were festooned with ropes from the gunwale, for the men to lay hold of when she capsized, for the earlier custom of fastening the men to their seats had been quite given up, because their weight under the water might prevent the boat from righting itself again, and the men could not come to the surface. Now they had a better chance in their freedom, though why they should not be loosely attached to the boat, I do not quite see.

They towed the shining thing through the upper gate of the lock, and slowly she sank from my sight, and for some moments was no more to be seen, for I had remained standing where first she passed me. All at once there she was beyond the covert of the lock-head, abroad and free, fleeing from the strokes of ten swift oars over the still waters of the bay towards the waves that roared further out where the ground-swell was broken by the rise of the sandy coast. There was no vessel in danger now, as the talk of the spectators informed me; it was only for exercise and show that they went out. It seemed all child's play for a time; but when they got among the broken waves, then it looked quite another thing. The motion of the waters laid hold upon her, and soon tossed her fearfully, now revealing the whole of her capacity on the near side of one of their slopes, now hiding her whole bulk in one of their hollows beyond. She, careless as a child in the troubles of the world, floated about amongst them with what appeared too much buoyancy for the promise of a safe return. Again and again she was

driven from her course towards the low rocks on the other side of the bay, and again and again, returned to disport herself, like a sea-animal, as it seemed, upon the backs of the wild, rolling, and bursting billows.

"Can she go no further?" I asked of the captain of the coastguard, whom I found standing by my side.

"Not without some danger," he answered.

"What, then, must it be in a storm!" I remarked.

"Then of course," he returned, "they must take their chance. But there is no good in running risks for nothing. That swell is quite enough for exercise."

"But is it enough to accustom them to face the danger that will come?" I asked.

"With danger comes courage," said the old sailor.

"Were you ever afraid?"

"No, sir. I don't think I ever was afraid. Yes, I believe I was once for one moment, no more, when I fell from the maintop-gallant yard, and felt myself falling. But it was soon over, for I only fell into the maintop. I was expecting the smash on deck when I was brought up there. But," he resumed, "I don't care much about the life-boat. My rockets are worth a good deal more, as you may see, sir, before the winter is over; for seldom does a winter pass without at least two or three wrecks close by here on this coast. The full force of the Atlantic breaks here, sir. I have seen a life-boat--not that one--she's done nothing yet--pitched stern over stem; not capsized, you know, sir, in the ordinary way, but struck by a wave behind while she was just hanging in the balance on the knife-edge of a wave, and flung a somerset, as I say, stern over stem, and four of her men lost."

While we spoke I saw on the pier-head the tall figure of the painter looking earnestly at the boat. I thought he was regarding it chiefly from an artistic point of view, but I became aware before long that that would not have been consistent with the character of Charles Percivale. He had been, I learned afterwards, a crack oarsman at Oxford, and had belonged to the University boat, so that he had some almost class-sympathy with the doings of the crew.

In a little while the boat sped swiftly back, entered the lock, was lifted above the level of the storm-heaved ocean, and floated up the smooth canal calmly as if she had never known what trouble was. Away up to the pretty little Tudor-fashioned house in which she lay--one could almost fancy dreaming of storms to come--she went, as softly as if moved only by her "own sweet will," in the calm consolation for her imprisonment of having tried her strength, and found therein good hope of success for the time when she should rush to the rescue of men from that to which, as a monster that begets monsters, she a watching Perseis, lay ready to offer battle. The poor little boat lying in her little house watching the ocean, was something signified in my eyes, and not less so after what came in the course of changing seasons and gathered storms.

All this time I had the keys in my hand, and now went back to the cottage to restore them to their place upon the wall. When I entered there was a

young woman of a sweet interesting countenance talking to Mrs. Coombes. Now as it happened, I had never yet seen the daughter who lived with her, and thought this was she.

"I've found your daughter at last then?" I said, approaching them.

"Not yet, sir. She goes out to work, and her hands be pretty full at present. But this be almost my daughter, sir," she added. "This is my next daughter, Mary Trehern, from the south. She's got a place near by, to be near her mother that is to be, that's me."

Mary was hanging her head and blushing, as the old woman spoke.

"I understand," I said. "And when are you going to get your new mother, Mary? Soon I hope."

But she gave me no reply--only hung her head lower and blushed deeper.

Mrs. Coombes spoke for her.

"She's shy, you see, sir. But if she was to speak her mind, she would ask you whether you wouldn't marry her and Willie when he comes home from his next voyage."

Mary's hands were trembling now, and she turned half away.

"With all my heart," I said.

The girl tried to turn towards me, but could not. I looked at her face a little more closely. Through all its tremor, there was a look of constancy that greatly pleased me. I tried to make her speak.

"When do you expect Willie home?" I said.

She made a little gasp and murmur, but no articulate words came.

"Don't be frightened, Mary," said her mother, as I found she always called her. "The gentleman won't be sharp with you."

She lifted a pair of soft brown eyes with one glance and a smile, and then sank them again.

"He'll be home in about a month, we think," answered the mother. "She's a good ship he's aboard of, and makes good voyages."

"It is time to think about the bans, then," I said.

"If you please, sir," said the mother.

"Just come to me about it, and I will attend to it--when you think proper."

I thought I could hear a murmured "Thank you, sir," from the girl, but I could not be certain that she spoke. I shook hands with them, and went for a stroll on the other side of the bay.

CHAPTER V.

MR. PERCIVALE.

When I reached home I found that Connie was already on her watch-tower. For while I was away, they had carried her out that she might see the life-boat. I followed her, and found the whole family about her couch, and with them Mr. Percivale, who was showing her some sketches that he had made in the neighbourhood. Connie knew nothing of drawing; but she seemed to me always to catch the feeling of a thing. Her remarks therefore were generally worth listening to, and Mr. Percivale was evidently interested in them. Wynnie stood behind Connie, looking over her shoulder at the drawing in her hand.

"How do you get that shade of green?" I heard her ask as I came up.

And then Mr. Percivale proceeded to tell her; from which beginning they went on to other things, till Mr. Percivale said--

"But it is hardly fair, Miss Walton; to criticise my work while you keep your own under cover."

"I wasn't criticising, Mr. Percivale; was I, Connie?"

"I didn't hear her make a single remark, Mr. Percivale," said Connie, taking her sister's side.

To my surprise they were talking away with the young man as if they had known him for years, and my wife was seated at the foot of the couch, apparently taking no exception to the suddenness of the intimacy. I am afraid, when I think of it, that a good many springs would be missing from the world's history if they might not flow till the papas gave their wise consideration to everything about the course they were to take.

"I think, though," added Connie, "it is only fair that Mr. Percivale should see your work, Wynnie."

"Then I will fetch my portfolio, if Mr. Percivale will promise to remember that I have no opinion of it. At the same time, if I could do what I wanted to do, I think I should not be ashamed of showing my drawings even to him."

And now I was surprised to find how like grown women my daughters could talk. To me they always spoke like the children they were; but when I heard them now it seemed as if they had started all at once into ladies experienced in the ways of society. There they were chatting lightly, airily, and yet decidedly, a slight tone of badinage interwoven, with a young man of grace and dignity, whom they had only seen once before, and who had advanced no farther, with Connie at least, than a stately bow. They had, however, been a whole hour together before I arrived, and their mother had been with them all the while, which gives great courage to good girls, while, I am told, it shuts the mouths of those who are sly. But then it must be remembered that there are as great differences in mothers as in girls. And besides, I believe wise girls have an instinct about men that all the experience of other men cannot overtake. But yet again, there are

many girls foolish enough to mistake a mere impulse for instinct, and vanity for insight.

As Wynnie spoke, she turned and went back to the house to fetch some of her work. Now, had she been going a message for me, she would have gone like the wind; but on this occasion she stepped along in a stately manner, far from devoid of grace, but equally free from frolic or eagerness. And I could not help noting as well that Mr. Percivale's eyes followed her. What I felt or fancied is of no consequence to anybody. I do not think, even if I were writing an autobiography, I should be forced to tell all about myself. But an autobiography is further from my fancy, however much I may have trenched upon its limits, than any other form of literature with which I am acquainted.

She was not long in returning, however, though she came back with the same dignified motion.

"There is nothing really worth either showing or concealing," she said to Mr. Percivale, as she handed him the portfolio, to help himself, as it were. She then turned away, as if a little feeling of shyness had come over her, and began to look for something to do about Connie. I could see that, although she had hitherto been almost indifferent about the merit of her drawings, she had a new-born wish that they might not appear altogether contemptible in the eyes of Mr. Percivale. And I saw, too, that Connie's wide eyes were taking in everything. It was wonderful how Connie's deprivations had made her keen in observing. Now she hastened to her sister's rescue even from such a slight inconvenience as the shadow of embarrassment in which she found herself--perhaps from having seen some unusual expression in my face, of which I was unconscious, though conscious enough of what might have occasioned such.

"Give me your hand, Wynnie," said Connie, "and help me to move one inch further on my side.--I may move just that much on my side, mayn't I, papa?"

"I think you had better not, my dear, if you can do without it," I answered; for the doctor's injunctions had been strong.

"Very well, papa; but I feel as if it would do me good."

"Mr. Turner will be here next week, you know; and you must try to stick to his rules till he comes to see you. Perhaps he will let you relax a little."

Connie smiled very sweetly and lay still, while Wynnie stood holding her hand.

Meantime Mr. Percivale, having received the drawings, had walked away with them towards what they called the storm tower--a little building standing square to the points of the compass, from little windows, in which the coastguard could see with their telescopes along the coast on both sides and far out to sea. This tower stood on the very edge of the cliff, but behind it there was a steep descent, to reach which apparently he went round the tower and disappeared. He evidently wanted to make a leisurely examination of the drawings--somewhat formidable for Wynnie, I thought. At the same time, it impressed me favourably with regard to the young man that he was not inclined to pay a set of stupid and untrue compliments the instant the portfolio was opened, but, on the contrary, in order to speak what was real about them, would take the trouble to make himself in some adequate measure acquainted with them. I therefore, to Wynnie's relief, I

fear, strolled after him, seeing no harm in taking a peep at his person, while he was taking a peep at my daughter's mind. I went round the tower to the other side, and there saw him at a little distance below me, but further out on a great rock that overhung the sea, connected with the cliff by a long narrow isthmus, a few yards lower than the cliff itself, only just broad enough to admit of a footpath along its top, and on one side going sheer down with a smooth hard rock-face to the sands below. The other side was less steep, and had some grass upon it. But the path was too narrow, and the precipice too steep, for me to trust my head with the business of guiding my feet along it. So I stood and saw him from the mainland--saw his head at least bent over the drawings; saw how slowly he turned from one to the other; saw how, after having gone over them once, he turned to the beginning and went over them again, even more slowly than before; saw how he turned the third time to the first. Then, getting tired, I went back to the group on the down; caught sight of Charlie and Harry turning heels over head down the slope toward the house; found that my wife had gone home--in fact, that only Connie and Wynn timer were left. The sun had disappeared under a cloud, and the sea had turned a little slaty; the yellow flowers in the short down-grass no longer caught the eye with their gold, and the wind that bent their tops had just the suspicion of an edge in it. And Wynn timer's face looked a little cloudy too, I thought, and I feared that it was my fault. I fancied there was just a tinge of beseeching in Connie's eye, as I looked at her, thinking there might be danger for her in the sunlessness of the wind. But I do not know that all this, even the clouding of the sun, may not have come out of my own mind, the result of my not being quite satisfied with myself because of the mood I had been in. My feeling had altered considerably in the mean time.

"Run, Wynn timer, and ask Mr. Percivale, with my compliments, to come and lunch with us," I said--more to let her see I was not displeased, however I might have looked, than for any other reason. She went--sedately as before.

Almost as soon as she was gone, I saw that I had put her in a difficulty. For I had discovered, very soon after coming into these parts, that her head was no more steady than my own on high places, for she up had never been used to such in our own level country, except, indeed, on the stair that led down to the old quarry and the well, where, I can remember now, she always laid her hand on the balustrade with some degree of tremor, although she had been in the way of going up and down from childhood. But if she could not cross that narrow and really dangerous isthmus, still less could she call to a man she had never seen but once, across the intervening chasm. I therefore set off after her, leaving Connie lying there in loneliness, between the sea and the sky. But when I got to the other side of the little tower, instead of finding her standing hesitating on the brink of action, there she was on the rock beyond. Mr. Percivale had risen, and was evidently giving an answer to my invitation; at least, the next moment she turned to come back, and he followed. I stood trembling almost to see her cross the knife-back of that ledge. If I had not been almost fascinated, I should have turned and left them to come together, lest the evil fancy should cross her mind that I was watching them, for it was one thing to watch him with her drawings, and quite another to watch him with herself. But I stood and stared as she crossed. In the middle of the path, however--up to which point she had been walking with perfect steadiness and composure--she lifted her eyes--by what influence I cannot tell--saw me, looked as if she saw ghost, half lifted her arms, swayed as if she would fall, and, indeed, was falling over the precipice when Percivale, who was close behind her caught her in his arms, almost too late for both of them. So nearly down was she already, that her weight bent him over the rocky side, till it seemed as if he must yield, or his body snap. For he bent

from the waist, and looked as if his feet only kept a hold on the ground. It was all over in a moment, but in that moment it made a sun-picture on my brain, which returns, ever and again, with such vivid agony that I cannot hope to get rid of it till I get rid of the brain itself in which lies the impress. In another moment they were at my side--she with a wan, terrified smile, he in a ruddy alarm. I was unable to speak, and could only, with trembling steps, lead the way from the dreadful spot. I reproached myself afterwards for my want of faith in God; but I had not had time to correct myself yet. Without a word on their side either, they followed me. Before we reached Connie, I recovered myself sufficiently to say, "Not a word to Connie," and they understood me. I told Wynnie to run to the house, and send Walter to help me to carry Connie home. She went, and, until Walter came, I talked to Mr. Percivale as if nothing had happened. And what made me feel yet more friendly towards him was, that he did not do as some young men wishing to ingratiate themselves would have done: he did not offer to help me to carry Connie home. I saw that the offer rose in his mind, and that he repressed it. He understood that I must consider such a permission as a privilege not to be accorded to the acquaintance of a day; that I must know him better before I could allow the weight of my child to rest on his strength. I was even grateful to him for this knowledge of human nature. But he responded cordially to my invitation to lunch with us, and walked by my side as Walter and I bore the precious burden home.

During our meal, he made himself quite agreeable; talked well on the topics of the day, not altogether as a man who had made up his mind, but not the less, rather the more, as a man who had thought about them, and one who did not find it so easy to come to a conclusion as most people do--or possibly as not feeling the necessity of coming to a conclusion, and therefore preferring to allow the conclusion to grow instead of constructing one for immediate use. This I rather liked than otherwise. His behaviour, I need hardly say, after what I have told of him already, was entirely that of a gentleman; and his education was good. But what I did not like was, that as often as the conversation made a bend in the direction of religious matters, he was sure to bend it away in some other direction as soon as ever he laid his next hold upon it. This, however, might have various reasons to account for it, and I would wait.

After lunch, as we rose from the table, he took Wynnie's portfolio from the side-table where he had laid it, and with no more than a bow and thanks returned it to her. She, I thought, looked a little disappointed, though she said as lightly as she could:

"I am afraid you have not found anything worthy of criticism in my poor attempts, Mr. Percivale?"

"On the contrary, I shall be most happy to tell you what I think of them if you would like to hear the impression they have made upon me," he replied, holding out his hand to take the portfolio again.

"I shall be greatly obliged to you," she said, returning it, "for I have had no one to help me since I left school, except a book called Modern Painters, which I think has the most beautiful things in it I ever read, but which I lay down every now and then with a kind of despair, as if I never could do anything worth doing. How long the next volume is in coming! Do you know the author, Mr. Percivale?"

"I wish I did. He has given me much help. I do not say I can agree with everything he writes; but when I do not, I have such a respect for him that I always feel as if he must be right whether he seems to me to be right or

not. And if he is severe, it is with the severity of love that will speak only the truth."

This last speech fell on my ear like the tone of a church bell. "That will do, my friend" thought I. But I said nothing to interrupt.

By this time he had laid the portfolio open on the side-table, and placed a chair in front of it for my daughter. Then seating himself by her side, but without the least approach to familiarity, he began to talk to her about her drawings, praising, in general, the feeling, but finding fault with the want of nicety in the execution--at least so it appeared to me from what I could understand of the conversation.

"But," said my daughter, "it seems to me that if you get the feeling right, that is the main thing."

"No doubt," returned Mr. Percivale; "so much the main thing that any imperfection or coarseness or untruth which interferes with it becomes of the greatest consequence."

"But can it really interfere with the feeling?"

"Perhaps not with most people, simply because most people observe so badly that their recollections of nature are all blurred and blotted and indistinct, and therefore the imperfections we are speaking of do not affect them. But with the more cultivated it is otherwise. It is for them you ought to work, for you do not thereby lose the others. Besides, the feeling is always intensified by the finish, for that belongs to the feeling too, and must, I should think, have some influence even where it is not noted."

"But is it not a hopeless thing to attempt the finish of nature?"

"Not at all; to the degree, that is, in which you can represent anything else of nature. But in this drawing now you have no representative of, nothing to hint at or recall the feeling of the exquisiteness of nature's finish. Why should you not at least have drawn a true horizon-line there? Has the absolute truth of the meeting of sea and sky nothing to do with the feeling which such a landscape produces? I should have thought you would have learned that, if anything, from Mr. Ruskin."

Mr. Percivale spoke earnestly. Wynnie, either from disappointment or despair, probably from a mixture of both, apparently fancied that, or rather felt as if, he was scolding her, and got cross. This was anything but dignified, especially with a stranger, and one who was doing his best to help her. And yet, somehow, I must with shame confess I was not altogether sorry to see it. In fact, my reader, I must just uncover my sin, and say that I felt a little jealous of Mr. Percivale. The negative reason was that I had not yet learned to love him. The only cure for jealousy is love. But I was ashamed too of Wynnie's behaving so childishly. Her face flushed, the tears came in her eyes, and she rose, saying, with a little choke in her voice--

"I see it's no use trying. I won't intrude any more into things I am incapable of. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Percivale, for showing me how presumptuous I have been."

The painter rose as she rose, looking greatly concerned. But he did not attempt to answer her. Indeed she gave him no time. He could only spring

after her to open the door for her. A more than respectful bow as she left the room was his only adieu. But when he turned his face again towards me, it expressed even a degree of consternation.

"I fear," he said, approaching me with an almost military step, much at variance with the shadow upon his countenance, "I fear I have been rude to Miss Walton, but nothing was farther--"

"You mistake entirely, Mr. Percivale. I heard all you were saying, and you were not in the least rude. On the contrary, I consider you were very kind to take the trouble with her you did. Allow me to make the apology for my daughter which I am sure she will wish made when she recovers from the disappointment of finding more obstacles in the way of her favourite pursuit than she had previously supposed. She is only too ready to lose heart, and she paid too little attention to your approbation and too much--in proportion, I mean--to your--criticism. She felt discouraged and lost her temper, but more with herself and her poor attempts, I venture to assure you, than with your remarks upon them. She is too much given to despising her own efforts."

"But I must have been to blame if I caused any such feeling with regard to those drawings, for I assure you they contain great promise."

"I am glad you think so. That I should myself be of the same opinion can be of no consequence."

"Miss Walton at least sees what ought to be represented. All she needs is greater severity in the quality of representation. And that would have grown without any remark from onlookers. Only a friendly criticism is sometimes a great help. It opens the eyes a little sooner than they would have opened of themselves. And time," he added, with a half sigh and with an appeal in his tone, as if he would justify himself to my conscience, "is half the battle in this world. It is over so soon."

"No sooner than it ought to be," I rejoined.

"So it may appear to you," he returned; "for you, I presume to conjecture, have worked hard and done much. I may or may not have worked hard--sometimes I think I have, sometimes I think I have not--but I certainly have done little. Here I am nearly thirty, and have made no mark on the world yet."

"I don't know that that is of so much consequence," I said. "I have never hoped for more than to rub out a few of the marks already made."

"Perhaps you are right," he returned. "Every man has something he can do, and more, I suppose, that he can't do. But I have no right to turn a visit into a visitation. Will you please tell Miss Walton that I am very sorry I presumed on the privileges of a drawing-master, and gave her pain. It was so far from my intention that it will be a lesson to me for the future."

With these words he took his leave, and I could not help being greatly pleased both with them and with his bearing. He was clearly anything but a common man.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

When Wynn timer appeared at dinner she looked ashamed of herself, and her face betrayed that she had been crying. But I said nothing, for I had confidence that all she needed was time to come to herself, that the voice that speaks louder than any thunder might make its stillness heard. And when I came home from my walk the next morning I found Mr. Percivale once more in the group about Connie, and evidently on the best possible terms with all. The same afternoon Wynn timer went out sketching with Dora. I had no doubt that she had made some sort of apology to Mr. Percivale; but I did not make the slightest attempt to discover what had passed between them, for though it is of all things desirable that children should be quite open with their parents, I was most anxious to lay upon them no burden of obligation. For such burden lies against the door of utterance, and makes it the more difficult to open. It paralyses the speech of the soul. What I desired was that they should trust me so that faith should overcome all difficulty that might lie in the way of their being open with me. That end is not to be gained by any urging of admonition. Against such, growing years at least, if nothing else, will bring a strong reaction. Nor even, if so gained would the gain be at all of the right sort. The openness would not be faith. Besides, a parent must respect the spiritual person of his child, and approach it with reverence, for that too looks the Father in the face, and has an audience with him into which no earthly parent can enter even if he dared to desire it. Therefore I trusted my child. And when I saw that she looked at me a little shyly when we next met, I only sought to show her the more tenderness and confidence, telling her all about my plans with the bells, and my talks with the smith and Mrs. Coombes. She listened with just such interest as I had always been accustomed to see in her, asking such questions, and making such remarks as I might have expected, but I still felt that there was the thread of a little uneasiness through the web of our intercourse,—such a thread of a false colour as one may sometimes find wandering through the labour of the loom, and seek with pains to draw from the woven stuff. But it was for Wynn timer to take it out, not for me. And she did not leave it long. For as she bade me good-night in my study, she said suddenly, yet with hesitating openness,

"Papa, I told Mr. Percivale that I was sorry I had behaved so badly about the drawings."

"You did right, my child," I replied. At the same moment a pang of anxiety passed through me lest under the influence of her repentance she should have said anything more than becoming. But I banished the doubt instantly as faithlessness in the womanly instincts of my child. For we men are always so ready and anxious to keep women right, like the wretched creature, Laertes, in *Hamlet*, who reads his sister such a lesson on her maidenly duties, but declines almost with contempt to listen to a word from her as to any co-relative obligation on his side!

And here I may remark in regard to one of the vexed questions of the day—the rights of women—that what women demand it is not for men to withhold. It is not their business to lay the law for women. That women must lay down for themselves. I confess that, although I must herein seem

to many of my readers old-fashioned and conservative, I should not like to see any woman I cared much for either in parliament or in an anatomical class-room; but on the other hand I feel that women must be left free to settle that matter. If it is not good, good women will find it out and recoil from it. If it is good then God give them good speed. One thing they have a right to--a far wider and more valuable education than they have been in the way of receiving. When the mothers are well taught the generations will grow in knowledge at a fourfold rate. But still the teaching of life is better than all the schools, and common sense than all learning. This common sense is a rare gift, scantier in none than in those who lay claim to it on the ground of following commonplace, worldly, and prudential maxims. But I must return to my Wynnie.

"And what did Mr. Percivale say?" I resumed, for she was silent.

"He took the blame all on himself, papa."

"Like a gentleman," I said.

"But I could not leave it so, you know, papa, because that was not the truth."

"Well?"

"I told him that I had lost my temper from disappointment; that I had thought I did not care for my drawings because I was so far from satisfied with them, but when he made me feel that they were worth nothing, then I found from the vexation I felt that I had cared for them. But I do think, papa, I was more ashamed of having shown them, and vexed with myself, than cross with him. But I was very silly."

"Well, and what did he say?"

"He began to praise them then. But you know I could not take much of that, for what could he do?"

"You might give him credit for a little honesty, at least."

"Yes; but things may be true in a way, you know, and not mean much."

"He seems to have succeeded in reconciling you to the prosecution of your efforts, however; for I saw you go out with your sketching apparatus this afternoon."

"Yes," she answered shyly. "He was so kind that somehow I got heart to try again. He's very nice, isn't he?"

My answer was not quite ready.

"Don't you like him, papa?"

"Well--I like him--yes. But we must not be in haste with our judgments, you know. I have had very little opportunity of seeing into him. There is much in him that I like, but--"

"But what? please, papa."

"To tell the truth then, Wynnie, for I can speak my mind to you, my child, there is a certain shyness of approaching the subject of religion; so that

I have my fears lest he should belong to any of these new schools of a fragmentary philosophy which acknowledge no source of truth but the testimony of the senses and the deductions made therefrom by the intellect."

"But is not that a hasty conclusion, papa?"

"That is a hasty question, my dear. I have come to no conclusion. I was only speaking confidentially about my fears."

"Perhaps, papa, it's only that he's not sure enough, and is afraid of appearing to profess more than he believes. I'm sure, if that's it, I have the greatest sympathy with him."

I looked at her, and saw the tears gathering fast in her eyes.

"Pray to God on the chance of his hearing you, my darling, and go to sleep," I said. "I will not think hardly of you because you cannot be so sure as I am. How could you be? You have not had my experience. Perhaps you are right about Mr. Percivale too. But it would be an awkward thing to get intimate with him, you know, and then find out that we did not like him after all. You couldn't like a man much, could you, who did not believe in anything greater than himself, anything marvellous, grand, beyond our understanding--who thought that he had come out of the dirt and was going back to the dirt?"

"I could, papa, if he tried to do his duty notwithstanding--for I'm sure I couldn't. I should cry myself to death."

"You are right, my child. I should honour him too. But I should be very sorry for him. For he would be so disappointed in himself."

I do not know whether this was the best answer to make, but I had little time to think.

"But you don't know that he's like that."

"I do not, my dear. And more, I will not associate the idea with him till I know for certain. We will leave it to ignorant old ladies who lay claim to an instinct for theology to jump at conclusions, and reserve ours--as even such a man as we have been supposing might well teach us--till we have sufficient facts from which to draw them. Now go to bed, my child."

"Good-night then, dear papa," she said, and left me with a kiss.

I was not altogether comfortable after this conversation. I had tried to be fair to the young man both in word and thought, but I could not relish the idea of my daughter falling in love with him, which looked likely enough, before I knew more about him, and found that more good and hope-giving. There was but one rational thing left to do, and that was to cast my care on him that careth for us--on the Father who loved my child more than even I could love her--and loved the young man too, and regarded my anxiety, and would take its cause upon himself. After I had lifted up my heart to him I was at ease, read a canto of Dante's Paradise, and then went to bed. The prematurity of a conversation with my wife, in which I found that she was very favourably impressed with Mr. Percivale, must be pardoned to the forecasting hearts of fathers and mothers.

As I went out for my walk the next morning, I caught sight of the sexton,

with whom as yet I had had but little communication, busily trimming some of the newer graves in the churchyard. I turned in through the nearer gate, which was fashioned like a lych-gate, with seats on the sides and a stone table in the centre, but had no roof. The one on the other side of the church was roofed, but probably they had found that here no roof could resist the sea-blasts in winter. The top of the wall where the roof should have rested, was simply covered with flat slates to protect it from the rain.

"Good-morning, Coombes," I said.

He turned up a wizened, humorous old face, the very type of a gravedigger's, and with one hand leaning on the edge of the green mound, upon which he had been cropping with a pair of shears the too long and too thin grass, touched his cap with the other, and bade me a cheerful good-morning in return.

"You're making things tidy," I said.

"It take time to make them all comfortable, you see, sir," he returned, taking up his shears again and clipping away at the top and sides of the mound.

"You mean the dead, Coombes?"

"Yes, sir; to be sure, sir."

"You don't think it makes much difference to their comfort, do you, whether the grass is one length or another upon their graves?"

"Well no, sir. I don't suppose it makes much difference to them. But it look more comfortable, you know. And I like things to look comfortable. Don't you, sir?"

"To be sure I do, Coombes. And you are quite right. The resting-place of the body, although the person it belonged to be far away, should be respected."

"That's what I think, though I don't get no credit for it. I du believe the people hereabouts thinks me only a single hair better than a Jack Ketch. But I'm sure I du my best to make the poor things comfortable."

He seemed unable to rid his mind of the idea that the comfort of the departed was dependent upon his ministrations.

"The trouble I have with them sometimes! There's now this same one as lies here, old Jonathan Giles. He have the gout so bad! and just as I come within a couple o' inches o' the right depth, out come the edge of a great stone in the near corner at the foot of the bed. Thinks I, he'll never lie comfortable with that same under his gouty toe. But the trouble I had to get out that stone! I du assure you, sir, it took me nigh half the day.--But this be one of the nicest places to lie in all up and down the coast--a nice gravelly soil, you see, sir; dry, and warm, and comfortable. Them poor things as comes out of the sea must quite enjoy the change, sir."

There was something grotesque in the man's persistence in regarding the objects of his interest from this point of view. It was a curious way for the humanity that was in him to find expression; but I did not like to let him go on thus. It was so much opposed to all that I believed and felt

about the change from this world to the next!

"But, Coombes," I said, "why will you go on talking as if it made an atom of difference to the dead bodies where they were buried? They care no more about it than your old coat would care where it was thrown after you had done with it."

He turned and regarded his coat where it hung beside him on the headstone of the same grave at which he was working, shook his head with a smile that seemed to hint a doubt whether the said old coat would be altogether so indifferent to its treatment when, it was past use as I had implied. Then he turned again to his work, and after a moment's silence began to approach me from another side. I confess he had the better of me before I was aware of what he was about.

"The church of Boscastle stands high on the cliff. You've been to Boscastle, sir?"

I told him I had not yet, but hoped to go before the summer was over.

"Ah, you should see Boscastle, sir. It's a wonderful place. That's where I was born, sir. When I was a boy that church was haunted, sir. It's a damp place, and the wind in it awful. I do believe it stand higher than any church in the country, and have got more wind in it of a stormy night than any church whatsoever. Well, they said it was haunted; and sure enough every now and then there was a knocking heard down below. And this always took place of a stormy night, as if there was some poor thing down in the low wouts (_vaults_), and he wasn't comfortable and wanted to get out. Well, one night it was so plain and so fearful it was that the sexton he went and took the blacksmith and a ship's carpenter down to the harbour, and they go up together, and they hearken all over the floor, and they open one of the old family wouts that belongs to the Penhaligans, and they go down with a light. Now the wind it was a-blowing all as usual, only worse than common. And there to be sure what do they see but the wout half-full of sea-water, and nows and thens a great spout coming in through a hole in the rock; for it was high-water and a wind off the sea, as I tell you. And there was a coffin afloat on the water, and every time the spout come through, it set it knocking agen the side o' the wout, and that was the ghost."

"What a horrible idea!" I said, with a half-shudder at the unrest of the dead.

The old man uttered a queer long-drawn sound,--neither a chuckle, a crow, nor a laugh, but a mixture of all three,--and turned himself yet again to the work which, as he approached the end of his narration, he had suspended, that he might make his story _tell_, I suppose, by looking me in the face. And as he turned he said, "I thought you would like to be comfortable then as well as other people, sir."

I could not help laughing to see how the cunning old fellow had caught me. I have not yet been able to find out how much of truth there was in his story. From the twinkle of his eye I cannot help suspecting that if he did not invent the tale, he embellished it, at least, in order to produce the effect which he certainly did produce. Humour was clearly his predominant disposition, the reflex of which was to be seen, after a mild lunar fashion, on the countenance of his wife. Neither could I help thinking with pleasure, as I turned away, how the merry little old man would enjoy telling his companions how he had posed the new parson. Very welcome was

he to his laugh for my part. Yet I gladly left the churchyard, with its sunshine above and its darkness below. Indeed I had to look up to the glittering vanes on the four pinnacles of the church-tower, dwelling aloft in the clean sunny air, to get the feeling of the dark vault, and the floating coffin, and the knocking heard in the windy church, out of my brain. But the thing that did free me was the reflection with what supreme disregard the disincarcerated spirit would look upon any possible vicissitudes of its abandoned vault. For in proportion as the body of man's revelation ceases to be in harmony with the spirit that dwells therein, it becomes a vault, a prison, from which it must be freedom to escape at length. The house we like best would be a prison of awful sort if doors and windows were built up. Man's abode, as age begins to draw nigh, fares thus. Age is in fact the mason that builds up the doors and the windows, and death is the angel that breaks the prison-house and lets the captives free. Thus I got something out of the sexton's horrible story.

But before the week was over, death came near indeed--in far other fashion than any funereal tale could have brought it.

One day, after lunch, I had retired to my study, and was dozing in my chair, for the day was hot, when I was waked by Charlie rushing into the room with the cry, "Papa, papa, there's a man drowning."

I started up, and hurried down to the drawing-room, which looked out over the bay. I could see nothing but people running about on the edge of the quiet waves. No sign of human being was on--the water. But the one boat belonging to the pilot was coming out from the shelter of the lock of the canal where it usually lay, and my friend of the coastguard was running down from the tower on the cliff with ropes in his hand. He would not stop the boat even for the moment it would need to take him on board, but threw them in and urged to haste. I stood at the window and watched. Every now and then I fancied I saw something white heaved up on the swell of a wave, and as often was satisfied that I had but fancied it. The boat seemed to be floating about lazily, if not idly. The eagerness to help made it appear as if nothing was going on. Could it, after all, have been a false alarm? Was there, after all, no insensible form swinging about in the sweep of those waves, with life gradually oozing away? Long, long as it seemed to me, I watched, and still the boat kept moving from place to place, so far out that I could see nothing distinctly of the motions of its crew. At length I saw something. Yes; a long white thing rose from the water slowly, and was drawn into the boat. It rowed swiftly to the shore. There was but one place fit to land upon,--a little patch of sand, nearly covered at high-water, but now lying yellow in the sun, under the window at which I stood, and immediately under our garden-wall. Thither the boat shot along; and there my friend of the coastguard, earnest and sad, was waiting to use, though without hope, every appliance so well known to him from the frequent occurrence of such necessity in the course of his watchful duties along miles and miles of stormy coast.

I will not linger over the sad details of vain endeavour. The honoured head of a family, he had departed and left a good name behind him. But even in the midst of my poor attentions to the quiet, speechless, pale-faced wife, who sat at the head of the corpse, I could not help feeling anxious about the effect on my Connie. It was impossible to keep the matter concealed from her. The undoubted concern on the faces of the two boys was enough to reveal that something serious and painful had occurred; while my wife and Wynnie, and indeed the whole household, were busy in attending to every remotest suggestion of aid that reached them from the little crowd gathered about the body. At length it was concluded, on the verdict of the medical

man who had been sent for, that all further effort was useless. The body was borne away, and I led the poor lady to her lodging, and remained there with her till I found that, as she lay on the sofa, the sleep that so often dogs the steps of sorrow had at length thrown its veil over her consciousness, and put her for the time to rest. There is a gentle consolation in the firmness of the grasp of the inevitable, known but to those who are led through the valley of the shadow. I left her with her son and daughter, and returned to my own family. They too were of course in the skirts of the cloud. Had they only heard of the occurrence, it would have had little effect; but death had appeared to them. Everyone but Connie had seen the dead lying there; and before the day was over, I wished that she too had seen the dead. For I found from what she said at intervals, and from the shudder that now and then passed through her, that her imagination was at work, showing but the horrors that belong to death; for the enfolding peace that accompanies it can be known but by sight of the dead. When I spoke to her, she seemed, and I suppose for the time felt tolerably quiet and comfortable; but I could see that the words she had heard fall in the going and coming, and the communications of Charlie and Harry to each other, had made as it were an excoriation on her fancy, to which her consciousness was ever returning. And now I became more grateful than I had yet been for the gift of that gipsy-child. For I felt no anxiety about Connie so long as she was with her. The presence even of her mother could not relieve her, for she and Wynnie were both clouded with the same awe, and its reflex in Connie was distorted by her fancy. But the sweet ignorance of the baby, which rightly considered is more than a type or symbol of faith, operated most healingly; for she appeared in her sweet merry ways--no baby was ever more filled with the mere gladness of life than Connie's baby--to the mood in which they all were, like a little sunny window in a cathedral crypt, telling of a whole universe of sunshine and motion beyond those oppressed pillars and low-voiced arches. And why should not the baby know best? I believe the babies do know best. I therefore favoured her having the child more than I might otherwise have thought good for her, being anxious to get the dreary, unhealthy impression healed as soon as possible, lest it should, in the delicate physical condition in which she was, turn to a sore.

But my wife suffered for a time nearly as much as Connie. As long as she was going about the house or attending to the wants of her family, she was free; but no sooner did she lay her head on the pillow than in rushed the cry of the sea, fierce, unkind, craving like a wild beast. Again and again she spoke of it to me, for it came to her mingled with the voice of the tempter, saying, "Cruel chance," over and over again. For although the two words contradict each other when put together thus, each in its turn would assert itself.

A great part of the doubt in the world comes from the fact that there are in it so many more of the impressible as compared with the originating minds. Where the openness to impression is balanced by the power of production, the painful questions of the world are speedily met by their answers; where such is not the case, there are often long periods of suffering till the child-answer of truth is brought to the birth. Hence the need for every impressible mind to be, by reading or speech, held in living association with an original mind able to combat those suggestions of doubt and even unbelief, which the look of things must often occasion--a look which comes from our inability to gain other than fragmentary visions of the work that the Father worketh hitherto. When the kingdom of heaven is at hand, one sign thereof will be that all clergymen will be more or less of the latter sort, and mere receptive goodness, no more than education and moral character, will be considered sufficient reason for a man's occupying

the high position of an instructor of his fellows. But even now this possession of original power is not by any means to be limited to those who make public show of the same. In many a humble parish priest it shows itself at the bedside of the suffering, or in the admonition of the closet, although as yet there are many of the clergy who, so far from being able to console wisely, are incapable of understanding the condition of those that need consolation.

"It is all a fancy, my dear," I said to her. "There is nothing more terrible in this than in any other death. On the contrary, I can hardly imagine a less fearful one. A big wave falls on the man's head and stuns him, and without further suffering he floats gently out on the sea of the unknown."

"But it is so terrible for those left behind!"

"Had you seen the face of his widow, so gentle, so loving, so resigned in its pallor, you would not have thought it so _terrible_."

But though she always seemed satisfied, and no doubt felt nearly so, after any conversation of the sort, yet every night she would call out once and again, "O, that sea, out there!" I was very glad indeed when Mr. Turner, who had arranged to spend a short holiday with us, arrived.

He was concerned at the news I gave him of the shock both Connie and her mother had received, and counselled an immediate change, that time might, in the absence of surrounding associations, obliterate something of the impression that had been made. The consequence was, that we resolved to remove our household, for a short time, to some place not too far off to permit of my attending to my duties at Kilkhaven, but out of the sight and sound of the sea. It was Thursday when Mr. Turner arrived, and he spent the next two days in inquiring and looking about for a suitable spot to which we might repair as early in the week as possible.

On the Saturday the blacksmith was busy in the church-tower, and I went in to see how he was getting on.

"You had a sad business here the last week, sir," he said, after we had done talking about the repairs.

"A very sad business indeed," I answered.

"It was a warning to us all," he said.

"We may well take it so," I returned. "But it seems to me that we are too ready to think of such remarkable things only by themselves, instead of being roused by them to regard everything, common and uncommon, as ordered by the same care and wisdom."

"One of our local preachers made a grand use of it."

I made no reply. He resumed.

"They tell me you took no notice of it last Sunday, sir."

"I made no immediate allusion to it, certainly. But I preached under the influence of it. And I thought it better that those who could reflect on the matter should be thus led to think for themselves than that they should be subjected to the reception of my thoughts and feelings about it; for in

the main it is life and not death that we have to preach."

"I don't quite understand you, sir. But then you don't care much for preaching in your church."

"I confess," I answered, "that there has been much indifference on that point. I could, however, mention to you many and grand exceptions. Still there is, even in some of the best in the church, a great amount of disbelief in the efficacy of preaching. And I allow that a great deal of what is called preaching, partakes of its nature only in the remotest degree. But, while I hold a strong opinion of its value--that is, where it is genuine--I venture just to suggest that the nature of the preaching to which the body you belong to has resorted, has had something to do, by way of a reaction, in driving the church to the other extreme."

"How do you mean that, sir?"

"You try to work upon people's feelings without reference to their judgment. Anyone who can preach what you call rousing sermons is considered a grand preacher amongst you, and there is a great danger of his being led thereby to talk more nonsense than sense. And then when the excitement goes off, there is no seed left in the soil to grow in peace, and they are always craving after more excitement."

"Well, there is the preacher to rouse them up again."

"And the consequence is that they continue like children--the good ones, I mean--and have hardly a chance of making a calm, deliberate choice of that which is good; while those who have been only excited and nothing more, are hardened and seared by the recurrence of such feeling as is neither aroused by truth nor followed by action."

"You daren't talk like that if you knew the kind of people in this country that the Methodists, as you call them, have got a hold of. They tell me it was like hell itself down in those mines before Wesley come among them."

"I should be a fool or a bigot to doubt that the Wesleyans have done incalculable good in the country. And that not alone to the people who never went to church. The whole Church of England is under obligations to Methodism such as no words can overstate."

"I wonder you can say such things against them, then."

"Now there you show the evil of thinking too much about the party you belong to. It makes a man touchy; and then he fancies when another is merely, it may be, analysing a difference, or insisting strongly on some great truth, that he is talking against his party."

"But you said, sir, that our clergy don't care about moving our judgments, only our feelings. Now I know preachers amongst us of whom that would be anything but true."

"Of course there must be. But there is what I say--your party-feeling makes you touchy. A man can't always be saying in the press of utterance, 'Of course there are exceptions_.' That is understood. I confess I do not know much about your clergy, for I have not had the opportunity. But I do know this, that some of the best and most liberal people I have ever known have belonged to your community."

"They do gather a deal of money for good purposes."

"Yes. But that was not what I meant by _liberal_. It is far easier to give money than to be generous in judgment. I meant by _liberal_, able to see the good and true in people that differ from you--glad to be roused to the reception of truth in God's name from whatever quarter it may come, and not readily finding offence where a remark may have chanced to be too sweeping or unguarded. But I see that I ought to be more careful, for I have made you, who certainly are not one of the quarrelsome people I have been speaking of, misunderstand me."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I was hasty. But I do think I am more ready to lose my temper since--"

Here he stopped. A fit of coughing came on, and, to my concern, was followed by what I saw plainly could be the result only of a rupture in the lungs. I insisted on his dropping his work and coming home with me, where I made him rest the remainder of the day and all Sunday, sending word to his mother that I could not let him go home. When we left on the Monday morning, we took him with us in the carriage hired for the journey, and set him down at his mother's, apparently no worse than usual.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE FARM.

Leaving the younger members of the family at home with the servants, we set out for a farmhouse, some twenty miles off, which Turner had discovered for us. Connie had stood the journey down so well, and was now so much stronger, that we had no anxiety about her so far as regarded the travelling. Through deep lanes with many cottages, and here and there a very ugly little chapel, over steep hills, up which Turner and Wynn timer and I walked, and along sterile moors we drove, stopping at roadside inns, and often besides to raise Connie and let her look about upon the extended prospect, so that it was drawing towards evening before we arrived at our destination. On the way Turner had warned us that we were not to expect a beautiful country, although the place was within reach of much that was remarkable. Therefore we were not surprised when we drew up at the door of a bare-looking, shelterless house, with scarcely a tree in sight, and a stretch of undulating fields on every side.

"A dreary place in winter, Turner," I said, after we had seen Connie comfortably deposited in the nice white-curtained parlour, smelling of dried roses even in the height of the fresh ones, and had strolled out while our tea--dinner was being got ready for us.

"Not a doubt of it; but just the place I wanted for Miss Connie," he replied. "We are high above the sea, and the air is very bracing, and not, at this season, too cold. A month later I should not on any account have brought her here."

"I think even now there is a certain freshness in the wind that calls up a kind of will in the nerves to meet it."

"That is precisely what I wanted for you all. You observe there is no rasp in its touch, however. There are regions in this island of ours where even in the hottest day in summer you would frequently discover a certain unfriendly edge in the air, that would set you wondering whether the seasons had not changed since you were a boy, and used to lie on the grass half the idle day."

"I often do wonder whether it may not be so, but I always come to the conclusion that even this is but an example of the involuntary tendency of the mind of man towards the ideal. He forgets all that comes between and divides the hints of perfection scattered here and there along the scope of his experience. I especially remember one summer day in my childhood, which has coloured all my ideas of summer and bliss and fulfilment of content. It is made up of only mossy grass, and the scent of the earth and wild flowers, and hot sun, and perfect sky--deep and blue, and traversed by blinding white clouds. I could not have been more than five or six, I think, from the kind of dress I wore, the very pearl buttons of which, encircled on their face with a ring of half-spherical hollows, have their undeniable relation in my memory to the heavens and the earth, to the march of the glorious clouds, and the tender scent of the rooted flowers; and, indeed, when I think of it, must, by the delight they gave me, have opened my mind the more to the enjoyment of the eternal paradise around me. What a thing it is to please a child!"

"I know what you mean perfectly," answered Turner. "It is as I get older that I understand what Wordsworth says about childhood. It is indeed a mercy that we were not born grown men, with what we consider our wits about us. They are blinding things those wits we gather. I fancy that the single thread by which God sometimes keeps hold of a man is such an impression of his childhood as that of which you have been speaking."

"I do not doubt it; for conscience is so near in all those memories to which you refer. The whole surrounding of them is so at variance with sin! A sense of purity, not in himself, for the child is not feeling that he is pure, is all about him; and when afterwards the condition returns upon him,--returns when he is conscious of so much that is evil and so much that is unsatisfied in him,--it brings with it a longing after the high clear air of moral well-being."

"Do you think, then, that it is only by association that nature thus impresses us? that she has no power of meaning these things?"

"Not at all. No doubt there is something in the recollection of the associations of childhood to strengthen the power of nature upon us; but the power is in nature herself, else it would be but a poor weak thing to what it is. There is purity and state in that sky. There is a peace now in this wide still earth--not so very beautiful, you own--and in that overhanging blue, which my heart cries out that it needs and cannot be well till it gains--gains in the truth, gains in God, who is the power of truth, the living and causing truth. There is indeed a rest that remaineth, a rest pictured out even here this night, to rouse my dull heart to desire it and follow after it, a rest that consists in thinking the thoughts of Him who is the Peace because the Unity, in being filled with that spirit which now pictures itself forth in this repose of the heavens and the earth."

"True," said Turner, after a pause. "I must think more about such things. The science the present day is going wild about will not give us that rest."

"No; but that rest will do much to give you that science. A man with this repose in his heart will do more by far, other capabilities being equal, to find out the laws that govern things. For all law is living rest."

"What you have been saying," resumed Turner, after another pause, "reminds me much of one of Wordsworth's poems. I do not mean the famous ode."

"You mean the 'Ninth Evening Voluntary,' I know--one of his finest and truest and deepest poems. It begins, 'Had this effulgence disappeared.'"

"Yes, that is the one I mean. I shall read it again when I go home. But you don't agree with Wordsworth, do you, about our having had an existence previous to this?"

He gave a little laugh as he asked the question.

"Not in the least. But an opinion held by such men as Plato, Origen, and Wordsworth, is not to be laughed at, Mr. Turner. It cannot be in its nature absurd. I might have mentioned Shelley as holding it, too, had his opinion been worth anything."

"Then you don't think much of Shelley?"

"I think his feeling most valuable; his opinion nearly worthless."

"Well, perhaps I had no business to laugh, at it; but--"

"Do not suppose for a moment that I even lean to it. I dislike it. It would make me unhappy to think there was the least of sound argument for it. But I respect the men who have held it, and know there must be something good in it, else they could not have held it."

"Are you able then to sympathise with that ode of Wordsworth's? Does it not depend for all its worth on the admission of this theory?"

"Not in the least. Is it necessary to admit that we must have had a conscious life before this life to find meaning in the words,--

'But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home?'

Is not all the good in us his image? Imperfect and sinful as we are, is not all the foundation of our being his image? Is not the sin all ours, and the life in us all God's? We cannot be the creatures of God without partaking of his nature. Every motion of our conscience, every admiration of what is pure and noble, is a sign and a result of this. Is not every self-accusation a proof of the presence of his spirit? That comes not of ourselves--that is not without him. These are the clouds of glory we come trailing from him. All feelings of beauty and peace and loveliness and right and goodness, we trail with us from our home. God is the only home of the human soul. To interpret in this manner what Wordsworth says, will enable us to enter into perfect sympathy with all that grandest of his poems. I do not say this is what he meant; but I think it includes what he meant by being greater and wider than what he meant. Nor am I guilty of presumption in saying so, for surely the idea that we are born of God is a

greater idea than that we have lived with him a life before this life. But Wordsworth is not the first among our religious poets to give us at least what is valuable in the notion. I came upon a volume amongst my friend Shepherd's books, with which I had made no acquaintance before--Henry Vaughan's poems. I brought it with me, for it has finer lines, I almost think, than any in George Herbert, though not so fine poems by any means as his best. When we go into the house I will read one of them to you."

"Thank you," said Turner. "I wish I could have such talk once a week. The shades of the prison-house, you know, Mr. Walton, are always trying to close about us, and shut out the vision of the glories we have come from, as Wordsworth says."

"A man," I answered, "who ministers to the miserable necessities of his fellows has even more need than another to believe in the light and the gladness--else a poor Job's comforter will he be. I don't want to be treated like a musical snuff-box."

The doctor laughed.

"No man can prove," he said, "that there is not a being inside the snuff-box, existing in virtue of the harmony of its parts, comfortable when they go well, sick when they go badly, and dying when it is dismembered, or even when it stops."

"No," I answered. "No man can prove it. But no man can convince a human being of it. And just as little can anyone convince me that my conscience, making me do sometimes what I don't like, comes from a harmonious action of the particles of my brain. But it is time we went in, for by the law of things in general, I being ready for my dinner, my dinner ought to be ready for me."

"A law with more exceptions than instances, I fear," said Turner.

"I doubt that," I answered. "The readiness is everything, and that we constantly blunder in. But we had better see whether we are really ready for it, by trying whether it is ready for us."

Connie went to bed early, as indeed we all did, and she was rather better than worse the next morning. My wife, for the first time for many nights, said nothing about the crying of the sea. The following day Turner and I set out to explore the neighbourhood. The rest remained quietly at home.

It was, as I have said, a high bare country. The fields lay side by side, parted from each other chiefly, as so often in Scotland, by stone walls; and these stones being of a laminated nature, the walls were not unfrequently built by laying thin plates on their edges, which gave a neatness to them not found in other parts of the country as far as I am aware. In the middle of the fields came here and there patches of yet unreclaimed moorland.

Now in a region like this, beauty must be looked for below the surface. There is a probability of finding hollows of repose, sunken spots of loveliness, hidden away altogether from the general aspect of sternness, or perhaps sterility, that meets the eye in glancing over the outspread landscape; just as in the natures of stern men you may expect to find, if opportunity should be afforded you, sunny spots of tender verdure, kept ever green by that very sternness which is turned towards the common gaze--thus existent because they are below the surface, and not laid bare

to the sweep of the cold winds that roam the world. How often have not men started with amaze at the discovery of some feminine sweetness, some grace of protection in the man whom they had judged cold and hard and rugged, inaccessible to the more genial influences of humanity! It may be that such men are only fighting against the wind, and keep their hearts open to the sun.

I knew this; and when Turner and I set out that morning to explore, I expected to light upon some instance of it--some mine or other in which nature had hidden away rare jewels; but I was not prepared to find such as I did find. With our hearts full of a glad secret we returned home, but we said nothing about it, in order that Ethelwyn and Wynn timeright might enjoy the discovery even as we had enjoyed it.

There was another grand fact with regard to the neighbourhood about which we judged it better to be silent for a few days, that the inland influences might be free to work. We were considerably nearer the ocean than my wife and daughters supposed, for we had made a great round in order to arrive from the land-side. We were, however, out of the sound of its waves, which broke all along the shore, in this part, at the foot of tremendous cliffs. What cliffs they were we shall soon find.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KEEVE.

"Now, my dear! now, Wynn timeright!" I said, after prayers the next morning, "you must come out for a walk as soon as ever you can get your bonnets on."

"But we can't leave Connie, papa," objected Wynn timeright.

"O, yes, you can, quite well. There's nursie to look after her. What do you say, Connie?"

For, for some time now, Connie had been able to get up so early, that it was no unusual thing to have prayers in her room.

"I am entirely independent of help from my family," returned Connie grandiloquently. "I am a woman of independent means," she added. "If you say another word, I will rise and leave the room."

And she made a movement as if she would actually do as she had said. Seized with an involuntary terror, I rushed towards her, and the impertinent girl burst out laughing in my face--threw herself back on her pillows, and laughed delightedly.

"Take care, papa," she said. "I carry a terrible club for rebellious people." Then, her mood changing, she added, as if to suppress the tears gathering in her eyes, "I am the queen--of luxury and self-will--and I won't have anybody come near me till dinner-time. I mean to enjoy myself."

So the matter was settled, and we went out for our walk. Ethelwyn was not such a good walker as she had been; but even if she had retained the strength of her youth, we should not have got on much the better for it--so often did she and Wynnie stop to grub ferns out of the chinks and roots of the stone-walls. Now, I admire ferns as much as anybody--that is, not, I fear, so much as my wife and daughter, but quite enough notwithstanding--but I do not quite enjoy being pulled up like a fern at every turn.

"Now, my dear, what is the use of stopping to torture that harmless vegetable?" I say, but say in vain. "It is much more beautiful where it is than it will be anywhere where you can put it. Besides, you know they never come to anything with you. They always die."

Thereupon my wife reminds me of this fern and that fern, gathered in such and such places, and now in such and such corners of the garden or the greenhouse, or under glass-shades in this or that room, of the very existence of which I am ignorant, whether from original inattention, or merely from forgetfulness, I do not know. Certainly, out of their own place I do not care much for them.

At length, partly by the inducement I held out to them of a much greater variety of ferns where we were bound, I succeeded in getting them over the two miles in little more than two hours. After passing from the lanes into the fields, our way led downwards till we reached a very steep large slope, with a delightful southern exposure, and covered with the sweetest down-grasses. It was just the place to lie in, as on the edge of the earth, and look abroad upon the universe of air and floating worlds.

"Let us have a rest here, Ethel," I said. "I am sure this is much more delightful than uprooting ferns. What an awful thing to think that here we are on this great round tumbling ball of a world, held by the feet, and lifting up the head into infinite space--without choice or wish of our own--compelled to think and to be, whether we will or not! Just God must know it to be very good, or he would not have taken it in his hands to make individual lives without a possible will of theirs. He must be our Father, or we are wretched creatures--the slaves of a fatal necessity! Did it ever strike you, Turner, that each one of us stands on the apex of the world? With a sphere, you know, it must be so. And thus is typified, as it seems to me, that each one of us must look up for himself to find God, and then look abroad to find his fellows."

"I think I know what you mean," was all Turner's reply.

"No doubt," I resumed, "the apprehension of this truth has, in otherwise ill-ordered minds, given rise to all sorts of fierce and grotesque fanaticism. But the minds which have thus conceived the truth, would have been immeasurably worse without it; nay, this truth affords at last the only possible door out of the miseries of their own chaos, whether inherited or the result of their own misconduct."

"What's that in the grass?" cried Wynnie, in a tone of alarm.

I looked where she indicated, and saw a slow-worm, or blind-worm, lying basking in the sun. I rose and went towards it.

"Here's your stick," said Turner.

"What for?" I asked. "Why should I kill it? It is perfectly harmless, and, to my mind, beautiful."

I took it in my hands, and brought it to my wife. She gave an involuntary shudder as it came near her.

"I assure you it is harmless," I said, "though it has a forked tongue." And I opened its mouth as I spoke. "I do not think the serpent form is essentially ugly."

"It makes me feel ugly," said Wynnie.

"I allow I do not quite understand the mystery of it," I said. "But you never saw lovelier ornamentation than these silvery scales, with all the neatness of what you ladies call a set pattern, and none of the stiffness, for there are not two of them the same in form. And you never saw lovelier curves than this little patient creature, which does not even try to get away from me, makes with the queer long thin body of him."

"I wonder how it can look after its tail, it is so far off," said Wynnie.

"It does though--better than you ladies look after your long dresses. I wonder whether it is descended from creatures that once had feet, and did not make a good use of them. Perhaps they had wings even, and would not use them at all, and so lost them. Its ancestors may have had poison-fangs; it is innocent enough. But it is a terrible thing to be all feet, is it not? There is an awful significance in the condemnation of the serpent--'On thy belly shalt thou go, and eat dust.' But it is better to talk of beautiful things. My soul at least has dropped from its world apex. Let us go on. Come, wife. Come, Turner."

They did not seem willing to rise. But the glen drew me. I rose, and my wife followed my example with the help of my hand. She returned to the subject, however, as we descended the slope.

"Is it possible that in the course of ever so many ages wings and feet should be both lost?" she said.

"The most presumptuous thing in the world is to pronounce on the possible and the impossible. I do not know what is possible and what is impossible. I can only tell a little of what is true and what is untrue. But I do say this, that between the condition of many decent members of society and that for the sake of which God made them, there is a gulf quite as vast as that between a serpent and a bird. I get peeps now and then into the condition of my own heart, which, for the moment, make it seem impossible that I should ever rise into a true state of nature--that is, into the simplicity of God's will concerning me. The only hope for ourselves and for others lies in him--in the power the creating spirit has over the spirits he has made."

By this time the descent on the grass was getting too steep and slippery to admit of our continuing to advance in that direction. We turned, therefore, down the valley in the direction of the sea. It was but a narrow cleft, and narrowed much towards a deeper cleft, in which we now saw the tops of trees, and from which we heard the rush of water. Nor had we gone far in this direction before we came upon a gate in a stone wall, which led into what seemed a neglected garden. We entered, and found a path turning and winding, among small trees, and luxuriant ferns, and great stones, and fragments of ruins down towards the bottom of the chasm. The noise of

falling water increased as we went on, and at length, after some scrambling and several sharp turns, we found ourselves with a nearly precipitous wall on each side, clothed with shrubs and ivy, and creeping things of the vegetable world. Up this cleft there was no advance. The head of it was a precipice down which shot the stream from the vale above, pouring out of a deep slit it had itself cut in the rock as with a knife. Halfway down, it tumbled into a great basin of hollowed stone, and flowing from a chasm in its side, which left part of the lip of the basin standing like the arch of a vanished bridge, it fell into a black pool below, whence it crept as if half-stunned or weary down the gentle decline of the ravine. It was a perfect little picture. I, for my part, had never seen such a picturesque fall. It was a little gem of nature, complete in effect. The ladies were full of pleasure. Wynnie, forgetting her usual reserve, broke out in frantic exclamations of delight.

We stood for a while regarding the ceaseless pour of the water down the precipice, here shot slanting in a little trough of the rock, full of force and purpose, here falling in great curls of green and gray, with an expression of absolute helplessness and conscious perdition, as if sheer to the centre, but rejoicing the next moment to find itself brought up boiling and bubbling in the basin, to issue in the gathered hope of experience. Then we turned down the stream a little way, crossed it by a plank, and stood again to regard it from the opposite side. Small as the whole affair was--not more than about a hundred and fifty feet in height--it was so full of variety that I saw it was all my memory could do, if it carried away anything like a correct picture of its aspect. I was contemplating it fixedly, when a little stifled cry from Wynnie made me start and look round. Her face was flushed, yet she was trying to look unconcerned.

"I thought we were quite alone, papa," she said; "but I see a gentleman sketching."

I looked whither she indicated. A little way down, the bed of the ravine widened considerably, and was no doubt filled with water in rainy weather. Now it was swampy--full of reeds and willow bushes. But on the opposite side of the stream, with a little canal from it going all around it, lay a great flat rectangular stone, not more than a foot above the level of the water, and upon a camp-stool in the centre of this stone sat a gentleman sketching. I had no doubt that Wynnie had recognised him at once. And I was annoyed, and indeed angry, to think that Mr. Percivale had followed us here. But while I regarded him, he looked up, rose very quietly, and, with his pencil in his hand, came towards us. With no nearer approach to familiarity than a bow, and no expression of either much pleasure or any surprise, he said--

"I have seen your party for some time, Mr. Walton--since you crossed the stream; but I would not break in upon your enjoyment with the surprise which my presence here must cause you."

I suppose I answered with a bow of some sort; for I could not say with truth that I was glad to see him. He resumed, doubtless penetrating my suspicion--

"I have been here almost a week. I certainly had no expectation of the pleasure of seeing you."

This he said lightly, though no doubt with the object of clearing himself. And I was, if not reassured, yet disarmed, by his statement; for I could not believe, from what I knew of him, that he would be guilty of such

a white lie as many a gentleman would have thought justifiable on the occasion. Still, I suppose he found me a little stiff, for presently he said--

"If you will excuse me, I will return to my work."

Then I felt as if I must say something, for I had shown him no courtesy during the interview.

"It must be a great pleasure to carry away such talismans with you--capable of bringing the place back to your mental vision at any moment."

"To tell the truth," he answered, "I am a little ashamed of being found sketching here. Such bits of scenery are not of my favourite studies. But it is a change."

"It is very beautiful here," I said, in a tone of contravention.

"It is very pretty," he answered--"very lovely, if you will--not very beautiful, I think. I would keep that word for things of larger regard. Beauty requires width, and here is none. I had almost said this place was fanciful--the work of imagination in her play-hours, not in her large serious moods. It affects me like the face of a woman only pretty, about which boys and guardsmen will rave--to me not very interesting, save for its single lines."

"Why, then, do you sketch the place?"

"A very fair question," he returned, with a smile. "Just because it is soothing from the very absence of beauty. I would far rather, however, if I were only following my taste, take the barest bit of the moor above, with a streak of the cold sky over it. That gives room."

"You would like to put a skylark in it, wouldn't you?"

"That I would if I knew how. I see you know what I mean. But the mere romantic I never had much taste for; though if you saw the kind of pictures I try to paint, you would not wonder that I take sketches of places like this, while in my heart of hearts I do not care much for them. They are so different, and just _therefore_ they are good for me. I am not working now; I am only playing."

"With a view to working better afterwards, I have no doubt," I answered.

"You are right there, I hope," was his quiet reply, as he turned and walked back to the island.

He had not made a step towards joining us. He had only taken his hat off to the ladies. He was gaining ground upon me rapidly.

"Have you quarrelled with our new friend, Harry?" said my wife, as I came up to her.

She was sitting on a stone. Turner and Wynn timer were farther off towards the foot of the fall.

"Not in the least," I answered, slightly outraged--I did not at first know why--by the question. "He is only gone to his work, which is a duty belonging both to the first and second tables of the law."

"I hope you have asked him to come home to our early dinner, then," she rejoined.

"I have not. That remains for you to do. Come, I will take you to him."

Ethelwyn rose at once, put her hand in mine, and with a little help soon reached the table-rock. When Percivale saw that she was really on a visit to him on his island-perch, he rose, and when she came near enough, held out his hand. It was but a step, and she was beside him in a moment. After the usual greetings, which on her part, although very quiet, like every motion and word of hers, were yet indubitably cordial and kind, she said, "When you get back to London, Mr. Percivale, might I ask you to allow some friends of mine to call at your studio, and see your paintings?"

"With all my heart," answered Percivale. "I must warn you, however, that I have not much they will care to see. They will perhaps go away less happy than they entered. Not many people care to see my pictures twice."

"I would not send you anyone I thought unworthy of the honour," answered my wife.

Percivale bowed--one of his stately, old-world bows, which I greatly liked.

"Any friend of yours--that is guarantee sufficient," he answered.

There was this peculiarity about any compliment that Percivale paid, that you had not a doubt of its being genuine.

"Will you come and take an early dinner with us?" said my wife. "My invalid daughter will be very pleased to see you."

"I will with pleasure," he answered, but in a tone of some hesitation, as he glanced from Ethelwyn to me.

"My wife speaks for us all," I said. "It will give us all pleasure."

"I am only afraid it will break in upon your morning's work," remarked Ethelwyn.

"O, that is not of the least consequence," he rejoined. "In fact, as I have just been saying to Mr. Walton, I am not working at all at present. This is pure recreation."

As he spoke he turned towards his easel, and began hastily to bundle up his things.

"We're not quite ready to go yet," said my wife, loath to leave the lovely spot. "What a curious flat stone this is!" she added.

"It is," said Percivale. "The man to whom the place belongs, a worthy yeoman of the old school, says that this wider part of the channel must have been the fish-pond, and that the portly monks stood on this stone and fished in the pond."

"Then was there a monastery here?" I asked.

"Certainly. The ruins of the chapel, one of the smallest, are on the top, just above the fall--rather a fearful place to look down from. I wonder

you did not observe them as you came. They say it had a silver bell in the days of its glory, which now lies in a deep hole under the basin, half-way between the top and bottom of the fall. But the old man says that nothing will make him look, or let anyone else lift the huge stone; for he is much better pleased to believe that it may be there, than he would be to know it was not there; for certainly, if it were found, it would not be left there long."

As he spoke Percivale had continued packing his gear. He now led our party up to the chapel, and thence down a few yards to the edge of the chasm, where the water fell headlong. I turned away with that fear of high places which is one of my many weaknesses; and when I turned again towards the spot, there was Wynnie on the very edge, looking over into the flash and tumult of the water below, but with a nervous grasp of the hand of Percivale, who stood a little farther back.

In going home, the painter led us by an easier way out of the valley, left his little easel and other things at a cottage, and then walked on in front between my wife and daughter, while Turner and I followed. He seemed quite at his ease with them, and plenty of talk and laughter rose on the way. I, however, was chiefly occupied with finding out Turner's impression of Connie's condition.

"She is certainly better," he said. "I wonder you do not see it as plainly as I do. The pain is nearly gone from her spine, and she can move herself a good deal more, I am certain, than she could when she left. She asked me yesterday if she might not turn upon one side. 'Do you think you could?' I asked.--'I think so,' she answered. 'At any rate, I have often a great inclination to try; only papa said I had better wait till you came.' I do think she might be allowed a little more change of posture now."

"Then you have really some hope of her final recovery?"

"I have hope most certainly. But what is hope in me, you must not allow to become certainty in you. I am nearly sure, though, that she can never be other than an invalid; that is, if I am to judge by what I know of such cases."

"I am thankful for the hope," I answered. "You need not be afraid of my turning upon you, should the hope never pass into sight. I should do so only if I found that you had been treating me irrationally--inspiring me with hope which you knew to be false. The element of uncertainty is essential to hope, and for all true hope, even as hope, man has to be unspeakably thankful."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WALK TO CHURCH.

I was glad to be able to arrange with a young clergyman who was on a visit

to Kilkhaven, that he should take my duty for me the next Sunday, for that was the only one Turner could spend with us. He and I and Wynn timer walked together two miles to church. It was a lovely morning, with just a tint of autumn in the air. But even that tint, though all else was of the summer, brought a shadow, I could see, on Wynn timer's face.

"You said you would show me a poem of--Vaughan, I think you said, was the name of the writer. I am too ignorant of our older literature," said Turner.

"I have only just made acquaintance with him," I answered. "But I think I can repeat the poem. You shall judge whether it is not like Wordsworth's Ode.

'Happy those early days, when I
Shined in my angel infancy;
Before I understood the place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And looking back, at that short space,
Could see a glimpse of his bright face;
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.
O how I long to travel back----'"

But here I broke down, for I could not remember the rest with even approximate accuracy.

"When did this Vaughan live?" asked Turner.

"He was born, I find, in 1621--five years, that is, after Shakspeare's death, and when Milton was about thirteen years old. He lived to the age of seventy-three, but seems to have been little known. In politics he was on the Cavalier side. By the way, he was a medical man, like you, Turner--an M.D. We'll have a glance at the little book when we go back. Don't let me forget to show it you. A good many of your profession have distinguished themselves in literature, and as profound believers too."

"I should have thought the profession had been chiefly remarkable for such as believe only in the evidence of the senses."

"As if having searched into the innermost recesses of the body, and not having found a soul, they considered themselves justified in declaring there was none."

"Just so."

"Well, that is true of the commonplace amongst them, I do believe. You will find the exceptions have been men of fine minds and characters--not such as he of whom Chaucer says,

'His study was but little on the Bible;'

for if you look at the rest of the description of the man, you will find that he was in alliance with his apothecary for their mutual advantage, that he was a money-loving man, and that some of Chaucer's keenest irony is spent on him in an off-hand, quiet manner. Compare the tone in which he writes of the doctor of physic, with the profound reverence wherewith he bows himself before the poor country-parson."

Here Wynn timer spoke, though with some tremor in her voice.

"I never know, papa, what people mean by talking about childhood in that way. I never seem to have been a bit younger and more innocent than I am."

"Don't you remember a time, Wynn timer, when the things about you--the sky and the earth, say--seemed to you much grander than they seem now? You are old enough to have lost something."

She thought for a little while before she answered.

"My dreams were, I know. I cannot say so of anything else."

I in my turn had to be silent, for I did not see the true answer, though I was sure there was one somewhere, if I could only find it. All I could reply, however, even after I had meditated a good while, was--and perhaps, after all, it was the best thing I could have said:

"Then you must make a good use of your dreams, my child."

"Why, papa?"

"Because they are the only memorials of childhood you have left."

"How am I to make a good use of them? I don't know what to do with my silly old dreams."

But she gave a sigh as she spoke that testified her silly old dreams had a charm for her still.

"If your dreams, my child, have ever testified to you of a condition of things beyond that which you see around you, if they have been to you the hints of a wonder and glory beyond what visits you now, you must not call them silly, for they are just what the scents of Paradise borne on the air were to Adam and Eve as they delved and spun, reminding them that they must aspire yet again through labour into that childhood of obedience which is the only paradise of humanity--into that oneness with the will of the Father, which our race, our individual selves, need just as much as if we had personally fallen with Adam, and from which we fall every time we are disobedient to the voice of the Father within our souls--to the conscience which is his making and his witness. If you have had no childhood, my Wynn timer, yet permit your old father to say that everything I see in you indicates more strongly in you than in most people that it is this childhood after which you are blindly longing, without which you find that life is hardly to be endured. Thank God for your dreams, my child. In him you will find that the essence of those dreams is fulfilled. We are saved by hope, Turner. Never man hoped too much, or repented that he had hoped. The plague is that we don't hope in God half enough. The very fact that hope is strength, and strength the outcome, the body of life, shows that

hope is at one with life, with the very essence of what says 'I am'--yea, of what doubts and says 'Am I?' and therefore is reasonable to creatures who cannot even doubt save in that they live."

By this time, for I have, of course, only given the outlines, or rather salient points, of our conversation, we had reached the church, where, if I found the sermon neither healing nor inspiring, I found the prayers full of hope and consolation. They at least are safe beyond human caprice, conceit, or incapacity. Upon them, too, the man who is distressed at the thought of how little of the needful food he had been able to provide for his people, may fall back for comfort, in the thought that there at least was what ought to have done them good, what it was well worth their while to go to church for. But I did think they were too long for any individual Christian soul, to sympathise with from beginning to end, that is, to respond to, like organ-tube to the fingered key, in every touch of the utterance of the general Christian soul. For my reader must remember that it is one thing to read prayers and another to respond; and that I had had very few opportunities of being in the position of the latter duty. I had had suspicions before, and now they were confirmed--that the present crowding of services was most inexpedient. And as I pondered on the matter, instead of trying to go on praying after I had already uttered my soul, which is but a heathenish attempt after much speaking, I thought how our Lord had given us such a short prayer to pray, and I began to wonder when or how the services came to be so heaped the one on the back of the other as they now were. No doubt many people defended them; no doubt many people could sit them out; but how many people could pray from beginning to end of them I On this point we had some talk as we went home. Wynn timer was opposed to any change of the present use on the ground that we should only have the longer sermons.

"Still," I said, "I do not think even that so great an evil. A sensitive conscience will not reproach itself so much for not listening to the whole of a sermon, as for kneeling in prayer and not praying. I think myself, however, that after the prayers are over, everyone should be at liberty to go out and leave the sermon unheard, if he pleases. I think the result would be in the end a good one both for parson and people. It would break through the deadness of this custom, this use and wont. Many a young mind is turned for life against the influences of church-going--one of the most sacred influences when pure, that is, un-mingled with non-essentials--just by the feeling that he must do so and so, that he must go through a certain round of duty. It is a willing service that the Lord wants; no forced devotions are either acceptable to him, or other than injurious to the worshipper, if such he can be called."

After an early dinner, I said to Turner--"Come out with me, and we will read that poem of Vaughan's in which I broke down today."

"O, papa!" said Connie, in a tone of injury, from the sofa.

"What is it, my dear?" I asked.

"Wouldn't it be as good for us as for Mr. Turner?"

"Quite, my dear. Well, I will keep it for the evening, and meantime Mr. Turner and I will go and see if we can find out anything about the change in the church-service."

For I had thrown into my bag as I left the rectory a copy of The Clergyman's Vade Mecum--a treatise occupied with the externals of the

churchman's relations--in which I soon came upon the following passage:

"So then it appears that the common practice of reading all three together, is an innovation, and if an ancient or infirm clergyman do read them at two or three several times, he is more strictly conformable; however, this is much better than to omit any part of the liturgy, or to read all three offices into one, as is now commonly done, without any pause or distinction."

"On the part of the clergyman, you see, Turner," I said, when I had finished reading the whole passage to him. "There is no care taken of the delicate women of the congregation, but only of the ancient or infirm clergyman. And the logic, to say the least, is rather queer: is it only in virtue of his antiquity and infirmity that he is to be upheld in being more strictly conformable? The writer's honesty has its heels trodden upon by the fear of giving offence. Nevertheless there should perhaps be a certain slowness to admit change, even back to a more ancient form."

"I don't know that I can quite agree with you there," said Turner. "If the form is better, no one should hesitate to advocate the change. If it is worse, then slowness is not sufficient--utter obstinacy is the right condition."

"You are right, Turner. For the right must be the rule, and where _the right_ is beyond our understanding or our reach, then _the better_, as indeed not only right compared with the other, but the sole ascent towards the right."

In the evening I took Henry Vaughan's poems into the common sitting-room, and to Connie's great delight read the whole of the lovely, though unequal little poem, called "The Retreat," in recalling which I had failed in the morning. She was especially delighted with the "white celestial thought," and the "bright shoots of everlastingness." Then I gave a few lines from another yet more unequal poem, worthy in themselves of the best of the other. I quote the first strophe entire:

CHILDHOOD.

"I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazzles at it, as at eternity.
Were now that chronicle alive,
Those white designs which children drive,
And the thoughts of each harmless hour,
With their content too in my power,
Quickly would I make my path even,
And by mere playing go to heaven.

* * * * *

And yet the practice worldlings call
Business and weighty action all,
Checking the poor child for his play,
But gravely cast themselves away.

* * * * *

An age of mysteries! which he
Must live twice that would God's face see;
Which angels guard, and with it play,

Angels! which foul men drive away.
How do I study now, and scan
Thee more than ere I studied man,
And only see through a long night
Thy edges and thy bordering light I
O for thy centre and midday!
For sure that is the _narrow way!_"

"For of such is the kingdom of heaven." said my wife softly, as I closed the book.

"May I have the book, papa?" said Connie, holding out her thin white cloud of a hand to take it.

"Certainly, my child. And if Wynnie would read it with you, she will feel more of the truth of what Mr. Percivale was saying to her about finish. Here are the finest, grandest thoughts, set forth sometimes with such carelessness, at least such lack of neatness, that, instead of their falling on the mind with all their power of loveliness, they are like a beautiful face disfigured with patches, and, what is worse, they put the mind out of the right, quiet, unquestioning, open mood, which is the only fit one for the reception of such true things as are embodied in the poems. But they are too beautiful after all to be more than a little spoiled by such a lack of the finish with which Art ends off all her labours. A gentleman, however, thinks it of no little importance to have his nails nice as well as his face and his shirt."

CHAPTER X.

THE OLD CASTLE.

The place Turner had chosen suited us all so well, that after attending to my duties on the two following Sundays at Kilkhaven, I returned on the Monday or Tuesday to the farmhouse. But Turner left us in the middle of the second week, for he could not be longer absent from his charge at home, and we missed him much. It was some days before Connie was quite as cheerful again as usual. I do not mean that she was in the least gloomy--that she never was; she was only a little less merry. But whether it was that Turner had opened our eyes, or that she had visibly improved since he allowed her to make a little change in her posture--certainly she appeared to us to have made considerable progress, and every now and then we were discovering some little proof of the fact. One evening, while we were still at the farm, she startled us by calling out suddenly,--

"Papa, papa! I moved my big toe! I did indeed."

We were all about her in a moment. But I saw that she was excited, and fearing a reaction I sought to calm her.

"But, my dear," I said, as quietly as I could, "you are probably still

aware that you are possessed of two big toes: which of them are we to congratulate on this first stride in the march of improvement?"

She broke out in the merriest laugh. A pause followed in which her face wore a puzzled expression. Then she said all at once, "Papa, it is very odd, but I can't tell which of them," and burst into tears. I was afraid that I had done more harm than good.

"It is not of the slightest consequence, my child," I said. "You have had so little communication with the twins of late, that it is no wonder you should not be able to tell the one from the other."

She smiled again through her sobs, but was silent, with shining face, for the rest of the evening. Our hopes took a fresh start, but we heard no more from her of her power over her big toe. As often as I inquired she said she was afraid she had made a mistake, for she had not had another hint of its existence. Still I thought it could not have been a fancy, and I would cleave to my belief in the good sign.

Percivale called to see us several times, but always appeared anxious not to intrude more of his society upon us than might be agreeable. He grew in my regard, however; and at length I asked him if he would assist me in another surprise which I meditated for my companions, and this time for Connie as well, and which I hoped would prevent the painful influences of the sight of the sea from returning upon them when they went back to Kilkhaven: they must see the sea from a quite different shore first. In a word I would take them to Tintagel, of the near position of which they were not aware, although in some of our walks we had seen the ocean in the distance. An early day was fixed for carrying out our project, and I proceeded to get everything ready. The only difficulty was to find a carriage in the neighbourhood suitable for receiving Connie's litter. In this, however, I at length succeeded, and on the morning of a glorious day of blue and gold, we set out for the little village of Trevenna, now far better known than at the time of which I write. Connie had been out every day since she came, now in one part of the fields, now in another, enjoying the expanse of earth and sky, but she had had no drive, and consequently had seen no variety of scenery. Therefore, believing she was now thoroughly able to bear it, I quite reckoned of the good she would get from the inevitable excitement. We resolved, however, after finding how much she enjoyed the few miles' drive, that we would not demand more, of her strength that day, and therefore put up at the little inn, where, after ordering dinner, Percivale and I left the ladies, and sallied forth to reconnoitre.

We walked through the village and down the valley beyond, sloping steeply between hills towards the sea, the opening closed at the end by the blue of the ocean below and the more ethereal blue of the sky above. But when we reached the mouth of the valley we found that we were not yet on the shore, for a precipice lay between us and the little beach below. On the left a great peninsula of rock stood out into the sea, upon which rose the ruins of the keep of Tintagel, while behind on the mainland stood the ruins of the castle itself, connected with the other only by a narrow isthmus. We had read that this peninsula had once been an island, and that the two parts of the castle were formerly connected by a drawbridge. Looking up at the great gap which now divided the two portions, it seemed at first impossible to believe that they had ever been thus united; but a little reflection cleared up the mystery.

The fact was that the isthmus, of half the height of the two parts

connected by it, had been formed entirely by the fall of portions of the rock and soil on each side into the narrow dividing space, through which the waters of the Atlantic had been wont to sweep. And now the fragments of walls stood on the very verge of the precipice, and showed that large portions of the castle itself had fallen into the gulf between. We turned to the left along the edge of the rock, and so by a narrow path reached and crossed to the other side of the isthmus. We then found that the path led to the foot of the rock, formerly island, of the keep, and thence in a zigzag up the face of it to the top. We followed it, and after a great climb reached a door in a modern battlement. Entering, we found ourselves amidst grass, and ruins haggard with age. We turned and surveyed the path by which we had come. It was steep and somewhat difficult. But the outlook was glorious. It was indeed one of God's mounts of vision upon which we stood. The thought, "O that Connie could see this!" was swelling in my heart, when Percivale broke the silence--not with any remark on the glory around us, but with the commonplace question--

"You haven't got your man with you, I think, Mr. Walton?"

"No," I answered; "we thought it better to leave him to look after the boys."

He was silent for a few minutes, while I gazed in delight.

"Don't you think," he said, "it would be possible to bring Miss Constance up here?"

I almost started at the idea, and had not replied before he resumed:

"It would be something for her to recur to with delight all the rest of her life."

"It would indeed. But it is impossible."

"I do not think so--if you would allow me the honour to assist you. I think we could do it perfectly between us."

I was again silent for a while. Looking down on the way we had come, it seemed an almost dreadful undertaking. Percivale spoke again.

"As we shall come here to-morrow, we need not explore the place now. Shall we go down at once and observe the whole path, with a view to the practicability of carrying her up?"

"There can be no objection to that," I answered, as a little hope, and courage with it, began to dawn in my heart. "But you must allow it does not look very practicable."

"Perhaps it would seem more so to you, if you had come up with the idea in your head all the way, as I did. Any path seems more difficult in looking back than at the time when the difficulties themselves have to be met and overcome."

"Yes, but then you must remember that we have to take the way back whether we will or no, if we once take the way forward."

"True; and now I will go down with the descent in my head as well as under my feet."

"Well, there can be no harm in reconnoitring it at least. Let us go."

"You know we can rest almost as often as we please," said Percivale, and turned to lead the way.

It certainly was steep, and required care even in our own descent; but for a man who had climbed mountains, as I had done in my youth, it could hardly be called difficult even in middle age. By the time we had got again into the valley road I was all but convinced of the practicability of the proposal. I was a little vexed, however, I must confess, that a stranger should have thought of giving such a pleasure to Connie, when the bare wish that she might have enjoyed it had alone arisen in my mind. I comforted myself with the reflection that this was one of the ways in which we were to be weaned from the world and knit the faster to our fellows. For even the middle-aged, in the decay of their daring, must look for the fresh thought and the fresh impulse to the youth which follows at their heels in the march of life. Their part is to will the relation and the obligation, and so, by love to and faith in the young, keep themselves in the line along which the electric current flows, till at length they too shall once more be young and daring in the strength of the Lord. A man must always seek to rise above his moods and feelings, to let them move within him, but not allow them to storm or gloom around him. By the time we reached home we had agreed to make the attempt, and to judge by the path to the foot of the rock, which was difficult in parts, whether we should be likely to succeed, without danger, in attempting the rest of the way and the following descent. As soon as we had arrived at this conclusion, I felt so happy in the prospect that I grew quite merry, especially after we had further agreed that, both for the sake of her nerves and for the sake of the lordly surprise, we should bind Connie's eyes so that she should see nothing till we had placed her in a certain position, concerning the preferableness of which we were not of two minds.

"What mischief have you two been about?" said my wife, as we entered our room in the inn, where the cloth was already laid for dinner. "You look just like two schoolboys that have been laying some plot, and can hardly hold their tongues about it."

"We have been enjoying our little walk amazingly," I answered. "So much so, that we mean to set out for another the moment dinner is over."

"I hope you will take Wynnie with you then."

"Or you, my love," I returned.

"No; I will stay with Connie."

"Very well. You, and Connie too, shall go out to-morrow, for we have found a place we want to take you to. And, indeed, I believe it was our anticipation of the pleasure you and she would have in the view that made us so merry when you accused us of plotting mischief."

My wife replied only with a loving look, and dinner appearing at this moment, we sat down a happy party.

When that was over--and a very good dinner it was, just what I like, homely in material but admirable in cooking--Wynnie and Percivale and I set out again. For as Percivale and I came back in the morning we had seen the church standing far aloft and aloof on the other side of the little valley, and we wanted to go to it. It was rather a steep climb, and Wynnie accepted

Percivale's offered arm. I led the way, therefore, and left them to follow--not so far in the rear, however, but that I could take a share in the conversation. It was some little time before any arose, and it was Wynn timer who led the way into it.

"What kind of things do you like best to paint, Mr. Percivale?" she asked.

He hesitated for several seconds, which between a question and an answer look so long, that most people would call them minutes.

"I would rather you should see some of my pictures--I should prefer that to answering your question," he said, at length.

"But I have seen some of your pictures," she returned.

"Pardon me. Indeed you have not, Miss Walton."

"At least I have seen some of your sketches and studies."

"Some of my sketches--none of my studies."

"But you make use of your sketches for your pictures, do you not?"

"Never of such as you have seen. They are only a slight antidote to my pictures."

"I cannot understand you."

"I do not wonder at that. But I would rather, I repeat, say nothing about my pictures till you see some of them."

"But how am I to have that pleasure, then?"

"You go to London sometimes, do you not?"

"Very rarely. More rarely still when the Royal Academy is open."

"That does not matter much. My pictures are seldom to be found there."

"Do you not care to send them there?"

"I send one, at least, every year. But they are rarely accepted."

"Why?"

This was a very improper question, I thought; but if Wynn timer had thought so she would not have put it. He hesitated a little before he replied--

"It is hardly for me to say why," he answered; "but I cannot wonder much at it, considering the subjects I choose.--But I daresay," he added, in a lighter tone, "after all, that has little to do with it, and there is something about the things themselves that precludes a favourable judgment. I avoid thinking about it. A man ought to try to look at his own work as if it were none of his, but not as with the eyes of other people. That is an impossibility, and the attempt a bewilderment. It is with his own eyes he must look, with his own judgment he must judge. The only effort is to get it set far away enough from him to be able to use his own eyes and his own judgment upon it."

"I think I see what you mean. A man has but his own eyes and his own judgment. To look with those of other people is but a fancy."

"Quite so. You understand me quite."

He said no more in explanation of his rejection by the Academy. Till we reached the church, nothing more of significance passed between them.

What a waste, bare churchyard that was! It had two or three lych-gates, but they had no roofs. They were just small enclosures, with the low stone tables, to rest the living from the weight of the dead, while the clergyman, as the keeper of heaven's wardrobe, came forth to receive the garment they restored--to be laid aside as having ended its work, as having been worn down in the winds, and rains, and labours of the world. Not a tree stood in that churchyard. Hank grass was the sole covering of the soil heaved up with the dead beneath. What blasts from the awful space of the sea must rush athwart the undefended garden! The ancient church stood in the midst, with its low, strong, square tower, and its long, narrow nave, the ridge bowed with age, like the back of a horse worn out in the service of man, and its little homely chancel, like a small cottage that had leaned up against its end for shelter from the western blasts. It was locked, and we could not enter. But of all world-worn, sad-looking churches, that one--sad, even in the sunset--was the dreariest I had ever beheld. Surely, it needed the gospel of the resurrection fervently preached therein, to keep it from sinking to the dust with dismay and weariness. Such a soul alone could keep it from vanishing utterly of dismal old age. Near it was one huge mound of grass-grown rubbish, looking like the grave where some former church of the dead had been buried, when it could stand erect no longer before the onsets of Atlantic winds. I walked round and round it, gathering its architecture, and peeping in at every window I could reach. Suddenly I was aware that I was alone. Returning to the other side, I found that Percivale was seated on the churchyard wall, next the sea--it would have been less dismal had it stood immediately on the cliffs, but they were at some little distance beyond bare downs and rough stone walls; he was sketching the place, and Wynn timer stood beside him, looking over his shoulder. I did not interrupt him, but walked among the graves, reading the poor memorials of the dead, and wondering how many of the words of laudation that were inscribed on their tombs were spoken of them while they were yet alive. Yet, surely, in the lives of those to whom they applied the least, there had been moments when the true nature, the nature God had given them, broke forth in faith and tenderness, and would have justified the words inscribed on their gravestones! I was yet wandering and reading, and stumbling over the mounds, when my companions joined me, and, without a word, we walked out of the churchyard. We were nearly home before one of us spoke.

"That church is oppressive," said Percivale. "It looks like a great sepulchre, a place built only for the dead--the church of the dead."

"It is only that it partakes with the living," I returned; "suffers with them the buffetings of life, outlasts them, but shows, like the shield of the Red-Cross Knight, the 'old dints of deep wounds.'"

"Still, is it not a dreary place to choose for a church to stand in?"

"The church must stand everywhere. There is no region into which it must not, ought not to enter. If it refuses any earthly spot, it is shrinking from its calling. Here this one stands for the sea as for the land, high-uplifted, looking out over the waters as a sign of the haven from all

storms, the rest in God. And down beneath in its storehouse lie the bodies of men--you saw the grave of some of them on the other side--flung ashore from the gulfing sea. It may be a weakness, but one would rather have the bones of his friend laid in the still Sabbath of the churchyard earth, than sweeping and swaying about as Milton imagines the bones of his friend Edward King, in that wonderful 'Lycidas.'" Then I told them the conversation I had had with the sexton at Kilkhaven. "But," I went on, "these fancies are only the ghostly mists that hang about the eastern hills before the sun rises. We shall look down on all that with a smile by and by; for the Lord tells us that if we believe in him we shall never die."

By this time we were back once more at the inn. We gave Connie a description of what we had seen.

"What a brave old church!" said Connie.

The next day I awoke very early, full of the anticipated attempt. I got up at once, found the weather most promising, and proceeded first of all to have a look at Connie's litter, and see that it was quite sound. Satisfied of this, I rejoiced in the contemplation of its lightness and strength.

After breakfast I went to Connie's room, and told her that Mr. Percivale and I had devised a treat for her. Her face shone at once.

"But we want to do it our own way."

"Of course, papa," she answered.

"Will you let us tie your eyes up?"

"Yes; and my ears and my hands too. It would be no good tying my feet, when I don't know one big toe from the other."

And she laughed merrily.

"We'll try to keep up the talk all the way, so that you sha'n't weary of the journey."

"You're going to carry me somewhere with my eyes tied up. O! how jolly! And then I shall see something all at once! Jolly! jolly!--Getting tired!" she repeated. "Even the wind on my face would be pleasure enough for half a day. I sha'n't get tired so soon as you will--you dear, kind papa! I am afraid I shall be dreadfully heavy. But I sha'n't jerk your arms much. I will lie so still!"

"And you won't mind letting Mr. Percivale help me to carry you?"

"No. Why should I, if he doesn't mind it? He looks strong enough; and I am sure he is nice, and won't think me heavier than I am."

"Very well, then. I will send mamma and Wynn timer to dress you at once; and we shall set out as soon as you are ready."

She clapped her hands with delight, then caught me round the neck and gave me one of my own kisses as she called the best she had, and began to call as loud as she could on her mamma and Wynn timer to come and dress her.

It was indeed a glorious morning. The wind came in little wafts, like veins of cool white silver amid the great, warm, yellow gold of the sunshine. The

sea lay before us a mound of blue closing up the end of the valley, as if overpowered into quietness by the lordliness of the sun overhead; and the hills between which we went lay like great sheep, with green wool, basking in the blissful heat. The gleam from the waters came up the pass; the grand castle crowned the left-hand steep, seeming to warm its old bones, like the ruins of some awful megatherium in the lighted air; one white sail sped like a glad thought across the spandrel of the sea; the shadows of the rocks lay over our path, like transient, cool, benignant deaths, through which we had to pass again and again to yet higher glory beyond; and one lark was somewhere in whose little breast the whole world was reflected as in the convex mirror of a dewdrop, where it swelled so that he could not hold it, but let it out again through his throat, metamorphosed into music, which he poured forth over all as the libation on the outspread altar of worship.

And of all this we talked to Connie as we went; and every now and then she would clap her hands gently in the fulness of her delight, although she beheld the splendour only as with her ears, or from the kisses of the wind on her cheeks. But she seemed, since her accident, to have approached that condition which Milton represents Samson as longing for in his blindness, wherein the sight should be

"through all parts diffused,
That she might look at will through every pore."

I had, however, arranged with the rest of the company, that the moment we reached the cliff over the shore, and turned to the left to cross the isthmus, the conversation should no longer be about the things around us; and especially I warned my wife and Wynn timer that no exclamation of surprise or delight should break from them before Connie's eyes were uncovered. I had said nothing to either of them about the difficulties of the way, that, seeing us take them as ordinary things, they might take them so too, and not be uneasy.

We never stopped till we reached the foot of the peninsula, née island, upon which the keep of Tintagel stands. There we set Connie down, to take breath and ease our arms before we began the arduous way.

"Now, now!" said Connie eagerly, lifting her hands in the belief that we were on the point of undoing the bandage from her eyes.

"No, no, my love, not yet," I said, and she lay still again, only she looked more eager than before.

"I am afraid I have tired out you and Mr. Percivale, papa," she said.

Percivale laughed so amusedly, that she rejoined roguishly--

"O yes! I know every gentleman is a Hercules--at least, he chooses to be considered one! But, notwithstanding my firm faith in the fact, I have a little womanly conscience left that is hard to hoodwink."

There was a speech for my wee Connie to make! The best answer and the best revenge was to lift her and go on. This we did, trying as well as we might to prevent the difference of level between us from tilting the litter too much for her comfort.

"Where are you going, papa?" she said once, but without a sign of fear in her voice, as a little slip I made lowered my end of the litter suddenly.

"You must be going up a steep place. Don't hurt yourself, dear papa."

We had changed our positions, and were now carrying her, head foremost, up the hill. Percivale led, and I followed. Now I could see every change on her lovely face, and it made me strong to endure; for I did find it hard work, I confess, to get to the top. It lay like a little sunny pool, on which all the cloudy thoughts that moved in some unseen heaven cast exquisitely delicate changes of light and shade as they floated over it. Percivale strode on as if he bore a feather behind him. I did wish we were at the top, for my arms began to feel like iron-cables, stiff and stark--only I was afraid of my fingers giving way. My heart was beating uncomfortably too. But Percivale, I felt almost inclined to quarrel with him before it was over, he strode on so unconcernedly, turning every corner of the zigzag where I expected him to propose a halt, and striding on again, as if there could be no pretence for any change of procedure. But I held out, strengthened by the play on my daughter's face, delicate as the play on an opal--one that inclines more to the milk than the fire.

When at length we turned in through the gothic door in the battlemented wall, and set our lovely burden down upon the grass--

"Percivale," I said, forgetting the proprieties in the affected humour of being angry with him, so glad was I that we had her at length on the mount of glory, "why did you go on walking like a castle, and pay no heed to me?"

"You didn't speak, did you, Mr. Walton," he returned, with just a shadow of solicitude in the question.

"No. Of course not," I rejoined.

"O, then," he returned, in a tone of relief, "how could I? You were my captain: how could I give in so long as you were holding on?"

I am afraid the _Percivale_, without the _Mister_, came again and again after this, though I pulled myself up for it as often as I caught myself.

"Now, papa!" said Connie from the grass.

"Not yet, my dear. Wait till your mamma and Wynn timer come. Let us go and meet them, Mr. Percivale."

"O yes, do, papa. Leave me alone here without knowing where I am or what kind of a place I am in. I should like to know how it feels. I have never been alone in all my life."

"Very well, my dear," I said; and Percivale and I left her alone in the ruins.

We found Ethelwyn toiling up with Wynn timer helping her all she could.

"Dear Harry," she said, "how could you think of bringing Connie up such an awful place? I wonder you dared to do it."

"It's done you see, wife," I answered, "thanks to Mr. Percivale, who has nearly torn the breath out of me. But now we must get you up, and you will say that to see Connie's delight, not to mention your own, is quite wages for the labour."

"Isn't she afraid to find herself so high up?"

"She knows nothing about it yet."

"You do not mean you have left the child there with her eyes tied up."

"To be sure. We could not uncover them before you came. It would spoil half the pleasure."

"Do let us make haste then. It is surely dangerous to leave her so."

"Not in the least; but she must be getting tired of the darkness. Take my arm now."

"Don't you think Mrs. Walton had better take my arm," said Percivale, "and then you can put your hand on her back, and help her a little that way."

We tried the plan, found it a good one, and soon reached the top. The moment our eyes fell upon Connie, we could see that she had found the place neither fearful nor lonely. The sweetest ghost of a smile hovered on her pale face, which shone in the shadow of the old gateway of the keep, with light from within her own sunny soul. She lay in such still expectation, that you would have thought she had just fallen asleep after receiving an answer to a prayer, reminding me of a little-known sonnet of Wordsworth's, in which he describes as the type of Death--

"the face of one
Sleeping alone within a mossy cave
With her face up to heaven; that seemed to have
Pleasing remembrance of a thought foregone;
A lovely beauty in a summer grave."

[Footnote: *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, part i.28.]

But she heard our steps, and her face awoke.

"Is mamma come?"

"Yes, my darling. I am here," said her mother. "How do you feel?"

"Perfectly well, mamma, thank you. Now, papa!"

"One moment more, my love. Now, Percivale."

We carried her to the spot we had agreed upon, and while we held her a little inclined that she might see the better, her mother undid the bandage from her head.

"Hold your hands over her eyes, a little way from them," I said to her as she untied the handkerchief, "that the light may reach them by degrees, and not blind her."

Ethelwyn did so for a few moments, then removed them. Still for a moment or two more, it was plain from her look of utter bewilderment, that all was a confused mass of light and colour. Then she gave a little cry, and to my astonishment, almost fear, half rose to a sitting posture. One moment more and she laid herself gently back, and wept and sobbed.

And now I may admit my reader to a share, though at best but a dim reflex in my poor words, of the glory that made her weep.

Through the gothic-arched door in the battlemented wall, which stood on the very edge of the precipitous descent, so that nothing of the descent was seen, and the door was as a framework to the picture, Connie saw a great gulf at her feet, full to the brim of a splendour of light and colour.

Before her rose the great ruins of rock and castle, the ruin of rock with castle; rough stone below, clear green happy grass above, even to the verge of the abrupt and awful precipice; over it the summer sky so clear that it must have been clarified by sorrow and thought; at the foot of the rocks, hundreds of feet below, the blue waters breaking in white upon the dark gray sands; all full of the gladness of the sun overflowing in speechless delight, and reflected in fresh gladness from stone and water and flower, like new springs of light rippling forth from the earth itself to swell the universal tide of glory--all this seen through the narrow gothic archway of a door in a wall--up--down--on either hand. But the main marvel was the look sheer below into the abyss full of light and air and colour, its sides lined with rock and grass, and its bottom lined with blue ripples and sand. Was it any wonder that my Connie should cry aloud when the vision dawned upon her, and then weep to ease a heart ready to burst with delight? "O Lord God," I said, almost involuntarily, "thou art very rich. Thou art the one poet, the one maker. We worship thee. Make but our souls as full of glory in thy sight as this chasm is to our eyes glorious with the forms which thou hast cloven and carved out of nothingness, and we shall be worthy to worship thee, O Lord, our God." For I was carried beyond myself with delight, and with sympathy with Connie's delight and with the calm worship of gladness in my wife's countenance. But when my eye fell on Wynnie, I saw a trouble mingled with her admiration, a self-accusation, I think, that she did not and could not enjoy it more; and when I turned from her, there were the eyes of Percivale fixed on me in wonderment; and for the moment I felt as David must have felt when, in his dance of undignified delight that he had got the ark home again, he saw the contemptuous eyes of Michal fixed on him from the window. But I could not leave it so. I said to him--coldly I daresay:

"Excuse me, Mr. Percivale; I forgot for the moment that I was not amongst my own family."

Percivale took his hat off.

"Forgive my seeming rudeness, Mr. Walton. I was half-envying and half-wondering. You would not be surprised at my unconscious behaviour if you had seen as much of the wrong side of the stuff as I have seen in London."

I had some idea of what he meant; but this was no time to enter upon a discussion. I could only say--

"My heart was full, Mr. Percivale, and I let it overflow."

"Let me at least share in its overflow," he rejoined, and nothing more passed on the subject.

For the next ten minutes we stood in absolute silence. We had set Connie down on the grass again, but propped up so that she could see through the doorway. And she lay in still ecstasy. But there was more to be seen ere we descended. There was the rest of the little islet with its crop of down-grass, on which the horses of all the knights of King Arthur's round table might have fed for a week--yes, for a fortnight, without, by any means, encountering the short commons of war. There were the ruins of the

castle so built of plates of the laminated stone of the rocks on which they stood, and so woven in or more properly incorporated with the outstanding rocks themselves, that in some parts I found it impossible to tell which was building and which was rock--the walls themselves seeming like a growth out of the island itself, so perfectly were they in harmony with, and in kind the same as, the natural ground upon which and of which they had been constructed. And this would seem to me to be the perfection of architecture. The work of man's hands should be so in harmony with the place where it stands that it must look as if it had grown out of the soil. But the walls were in some parts so thin that one wondered how they could have stood so long. They must have been built before the time of any formidable artillery--enough only for defence from arrows. But then the island was nowhere commanded, and its own steep cliffs would be more easily defended than any erections upon it. Clearly the intention was that no enemy should thereon find rest for the sole of his foot; for if he was able to land, farewell to the notion of any further defence. Then there was outside the walls the little chapel--such a tiny chapel! of which little more than the foundation remained, with the ruins of the altar still standing, and outside the chancel, nestling by its wall, a coffin hollowed in the rock; then the churchyard a little way off full of graves, which, I presume, would have vanished long ago were it not that the very graves were founded on the rock. There still stood old worn-out headstones of thin slate, but no memorials were left. Then there was the fragment of arched passage underground laid open to the air in the centre of the islet; and last, and grandest of all, the awful edges of the rock, broken by time, and carved by the winds and the waters into grotesque shapes and threatening forms. Over all the surface of the islet we carried Connie, and from three sides of this sea-fortress she looked abroad over "the Atlantic's level powers." It blew a gentle ethereal breeze on the top; but had there been such a wind as I have since stood against on that fearful citadel of nature, I should have been in terror lest we should all be blown, into the deep. Over the edge she peeped at the strange fantastic needle-rock, and round the corner she peeped to see Wynnies and her mother seated in what they call Arthur's chair--a canopied hollow wrought in the plated rock by the mightiest of all solvents--air and water; till at length it was time that we should take our leave of the few sheep that fed over the place, and issuing by the gothic door, wind away down the dangerous path to the safe ground below.

"I think we had better tie up your eyes again, Connie?" I said.

"Why?" she asked, in wonderment. "There's nothing higher yet, is there?"

"No, my love. If there were, you would hardly be able for it to-day, I should think. It is only to keep you from being frightened at the precipice as you go down."

"But I sha'n't be frightened, papa."

"How do you know that?"

"Because you are going to carry me."

"But what if I should slip? I might, you know."

"I don't mind. I sha'n't mind being tumbled over the precipice, if you do it. I sha'n't be to blame, and I'm sure you won't, papa." Then she drew my head down and whispered in my ear, "If I get as much more by being killed, as I have got by having my poor back hurt, I'm sure it will be well worth

it."

I tried to smile a reply, for I could not speak one. We took her just as she was, and with some tremor on my part, but not a single slip, we bore her down the winding path, her face showing all the time that, instead of being afraid, she was in a state of ecstatic delight. My wife, I could see, was nervous, however; and she breathed a sigh of relief when we were once more at the foot.

"Well, I'm glad that's over," she said.

"So am I," I returned, as we set down the litter.

"Poor papa! I've pulled his arms to pieces! and Mr. Percivale's too!"

Percivale answered first by taking up a huge piece of stone. Then turning towards her, he said, "Look here, Miss Connie;" and flung it far out from the isthmus on which we were resting. We heard it strike on a rock below, and then fall in a shower of fragments. "My arms are all right, you see," he said.

Meantime, Wynnie had scrambled down to the shore, where we had not yet been. In a few minutes, we still lingering, she came running back to us out of breath with the news:

"Papa! Mr. Percivale! there's such a grand cave down there! It goes right through under the island."

Connie looked so eager, that Percivale and I glanced at each other, and without a word, lifted her, and followed Wynnie. It was a little way that we had to carry her down, but it was very broken, and insomuch more difficult than the other. At length we stood in the cavern. What a contrast to the vision overhead!--nothing to be seen but the cool, dark vault of the cave, long and winding, with the fresh seaweed lying on its pebbly floor, and its walls wet with the last tide, for every tide rolled through in rising and falling--the waters on the opposite sides of the islet greeting through this cave; the blue shimmer of the rising sea, and the forms of huge outlying rocks, looking in at the further end, where the roof rose like a grand cathedral arch; and the green gleam of veins rich with copper, dashing and streaking the darkness in gloomy little chapels, where the floor of heaped-up pebbles rose and rose within till it met the descending roof. It was like a going-down from Paradise into the grave--but a cool, friendly, brown-lighted grave, which even in its darkest recesses bore some witness to the wind of God outside, in the occasional ripple of shadowed light, from the play of the sun on the waves, that, fledged and reflected, wandered across its jagged roof. But we dared not keep Connie long in the damp coolness; and I have given my reader quite enough of description for one hour's reading. He can scarcely be equal to more.

My invalids had now beheld the sea in such a different aspect, that I no longer feared to go back to Kilkhaven. Thither we went three days after, and at my invitation, Percivale took Turner's place in the carriage.

CHAPTER XI.

JOE AND HIS TROUBLE.

How bright the yellow shores of Kilkhaven looked after the dark sands of Tintagel! But how low and tame its highest cliffs after the mighty rampart of rocks which there face the sea like a cordon of fierce guardians! It was pleasant to settle down again in what had begun to look like home, and was indeed made such by the boisterous welcome of Dora and the boys. Connie's baby crowed aloud, and stretched forth her chubby arms at sight of her. The wind blew gently around us, full both of the freshness of the clean waters and the scents of the down-grasses, to welcome us back. And the dread vision of the shore had now receded so far into the past, that it was no longer able to hurt.

We had called at the blacksmith's house on our way home, and found that he was so far better as to be working at his forge again. His mother said he was used to such attacks, and soon got over them. I, however, feared that they indicated an approaching break-down.

"Indeed, sir," she said, "Joe might be well enough if he liked. It's all his own fault."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I cannot believe that your son is in any way guilty of his own illness."

"He's a well-behaved lad, my Joe," she answered; "but he hasn't learned what I had to learn long ago."

"What is that?" I asked.

"To make up his mind, and stick to it. To do one thing or the other."

She was a woman with a long upper lip and a judicial face, and as she spoke, her lip grew longer and longer; and when she closed her mouth in mark of her own resolution, that lip seemed to occupy two-thirds of all her face under the nose.

"And what is it he won't do?"

"I don't mind whether he does it or not, if he would only make--up--his--mind--and--stick--to--it."

"What is it you want him to do, then?"

"I don't want him to do it, I'm sure. It's no good to me--and wouldn't be much to him, that I'll be bound. Howsomever, he must please himself."

I thought it not very wonderful that he looked gloomy, if there was no more sunshine for him at home than his mother's face indicated. Few things can make a man so strong and able for his work as a sun indoors, whose rays are smiles, ever ready to shine upon him when he opens the door,--the face of wife or mother or sister. Now his mother's face certainly was not sunny. No doubt it must have shone upon him when he was a baby. God has made that provision for babies, who need sunshine so much that a mother's face cannot help being sunny to them: why should the sunshine depart as the child grows

older?

"Well, I suppose I must not ask. But I fear your son is very far from well. Such attacks do not often occur without serious mischief somewhere. And if there is anything troubling him, he is less likely to get over it."

"If he would let somebody make up his mind for him, and then stick to it--"

"O, but that is impossible, you know. A man must make up his own mind."

"That's just what he won't do."

All the time she looked naughty, only after a self-righteous fashion. It was evident that whatever was the cause of it, she was not in sympathy with her son, and therefore could not help him out of any difficulty he might be in. I made no further attempt to learn from her the cause of her son's discomfort, clearly a deeper cause than his illness. In passing his workshop, we stopped for a moment, and I made an arrangement to meet him at the church the next day.

I was there before him, and found that he had done a good deal since we left. Little remained except to get the keys put to rights, and the rods attached to the cranks in the box. To-day he was to bring a carpenter, a cousin of his own, with him.

They soon arrived, and a small consultation followed. The cousin was a bright-eyed, cheruby-cheeked little man, with a ready smile and white teeth: I thought he might help me to understand what was amiss in Joseph's affairs. But I would not make the attempt except openly. I therefore said half in a jocular fashion, as with gloomy, self-withdrawn countenance the smith was fitting one loop into another in two of his iron rods,--

"I wish we could get this cousin of yours to look a little more cheerful. You would think he had quarrelled with the sunshine."

The carpenter showed his white teeth between his rosy lips.

"Well, sir, if you'll excuse me, you see my cousin Joe is not like the rest of us. He's a religious man, is Joe."

"But I don't see how that should make him miserable. It hasn't made me miserable. I hope I'm a religious man myself. It makes me happy every day of my life."

"Ah, well," returned the carpenter, in a thoughtful tone, as he worked away gently to get the inside out of the oak-chest without hurting it, "I don't say it's the religion, for I don't know; but perhaps it's the way he takes it up. He don't look after hisself enough; he's always thinking about other people, you see, sir; and it seems to me, sir, that if you don't look after yourself, why, who is to look after you? That's common sense, _I_ think."

It was a curious contrast--the merry friendly face, which shone good-fellowship to all mankind, accusing the sombre, pale, sad, severe, even somewhat bitter countenance beside him, of thinking too much about other people, and too little about himself. Of course it might be correct in a way. There is all the difference between a comfortable, healthy inclination, and a pained, conscientious principle. It was a smile very unlike his cousin's with which Joe heard his remarks on himself.

"But," I said, "you will allow, at least, that if everybody would take Joe's way of it, there would then be no occasion for taking care of yourself."

"I don't see why, sir."

"Why, because everybody would take care of everybody else."

"Not so well, I doubt, sir."

"Yes, and a great deal better."

"At any rate, that's a long way off; and mean time, _who's_ to take care of the odd man like Joe there, that don't look after hisself?"

"Why, God, of course."

"Well, there's just where I'm out. I don't know nothing about that branch, sir."

I saw a grateful light mount up in Joe's gloomy eyes as I spoke thus upon his side of the question. He said nothing, however; and his cousin volunteering no further information, I did not push any advantage I might have gained.

At noon I made them leave their work, and come home with me to have their dinner; they hoped to finish the job before dusk. Harry Cobb and I dropped behind, and Joe Harper walked on in front, apparently sunk in meditation.

Scarcely were we out of the churchyard, and on the road leading to the rectory, when I saw the sexton's daughter meeting us. She had almost come up to Joe before he saw her, for his gaze was bent on the ground, and he started. They shook hands in what seemed to me an odd, constrained, yet familiar fashion, and then stood as if they wanted to talk, but without speaking. Harry and I passed, both with a nod of recognition to the young woman, but neither of us had the ill-manners to look behind. I glanced at Harry, and he answered me with a queer look. When we reached the turning that would hide them from our view, I looked back almost involuntarily, and there they were still standing. But before we reached the door of the rectory, Joe got up with us.

There was something remarkable in the appearance of Agnes Coombes, the sexton's daughter. She was about six-and-twenty, I should imagine, the youngest of the family, with a sallow, rather sickly complexion, somewhat sorrowful eyes, a smile rare and sweet, a fine figure, tall and slender, and a graceful gait. I now saw, I thought, a good hair's-breadth further into the smith's affairs. Beyond the hair's-breadth, however, all was dark. But I saw likewise that the well of truth, whence I might draw the whole business, must be the girl's mother.

After the men had had their dinner and rested a while, they went back to the church, and I went to the sexton's cottage. I found the old man seated at the window, with his pot of beer on the sill, and an empty plate beside it.

"Come in, sir," he said, rising, as I put my head in at the door. "The mis'ess ben't in, but she'll be here in a few minutes."

"O, it's of no consequence," I said. "Are they all well?"

"All comfortable, sir. It be fine dry weather for them, this, sir. It be in winter it be worst for them."

"But it's a snug enough shelter you've got here. It seems such, anyhow; though, to be sure, it is the blasts of winter that find out the weak places both in house and body."

"It ben't the wind touch them," he said; "they be safe enough from the wind. It be the wet, sir. There ben't much snow in these parts; but when it du come, that be very bad for them, poor things!"

Could it be that he was harping on the old theme again?

"But at least this cottage keeps out the wet," I said. "If not, we must have it seen to."

"This cottage du well enough, sir. It'll last my time, anyhow."

"Then why are you pitying your family for having to live in it?"

"Bless your heart, sir! It's not them. They du well enough. It's my people out yonder. You've got the souls to look after, and I've got the bodies. That's what it be, sir. To be sure!"

The last exclamation was uttered in a tone of impatient surprise at my stupidity in giving all my thoughts and sympathies to the living, and none to the dead. I pursued the subject no further, but as I lay in bed that night, it began to dawn upon me as a lovable kind of hallucination in which the man indulged. He too had an office in the Church of God, and he would magnify that office. He could not bear that there should be no further outcome of his labour; that the burying of the dead out of sight should be "the be-all and the end-all." He was God's vicar, the gardener in God's Acre, as the Germans call the churchyard. When all others had forsaken the dead, he remained their friend, caring for what little comfort yet remained possible to them. Hence in all changes of air and sky above, he attributed to them some knowledge of the same, and some share in their consequences even down in the darkness of the tomb. It was his way of keeping up the relation between the living and the dead. Finding I made him no reply, he took up the word again.

"You've got your part, sir, and I've got mine. You up into the pulpit, and I down into the grave. But it'll be all the same by and by."

"I hope it will," I answered. "But when you do go down into your own grave, you'll know a good deal less about it than you do now. You'll find you've got other things to think about. But here comes your wife. She'll talk about the living rather than the dead."

"That's natural, sir. She brought 'em to life, and I buried 'em--at least, best part of 'em. If only I had the other two safe down with the rest!"

I remembered what the old woman had told me--that she had two boys in the sea; and I knew therefore what he meant. He regarded his drowned boys as still tossed about in the weary wet cold ocean, and would have gladly laid them to rest in the warm dry churchyard.

He wiped a tear from the corner of his eye with the back of his hand, and saying, "Well, I must be off to my gardening," left me with his wife. I saw

then that, humorist as the old man might be, his humour, like that of all true humorists, lay close about the wells of weeping.

"The old man seems a little out of sorts," I said to his wife.

"Well, sir," she answered, with her usual gentleness, a gentleness which obedient suffering had perfected, "this be the day he buried our Nancy, this day two years; and to-day Agnes be come home from her work poorly; and the two things together they've upset him a bit."

"I met Agnes coming this way. Where is she?"

"I believe she be in the churchyard, sir. I've been to the doctor about her."

"I hope it's nothing serious."

"I hope not, sir; but you see--four on 'em, sir!"

"Well, she's in God's hands, you know."

"That she be, sir."

"I want to ask you about something, Mrs. Coombes."

"What be that, sir? If I can tell, I will, you may be sure, sir."

"I want to know what's the matter with Joe Harper, the blacksmith."

"They du say it be a consumption, sir."

"But what has he got on his mind?"

"He's got nothing on his mind, sir. He be as good a by as ever stepped, I assure you, sir."

"But I am sure there is something or other on his mind. He's not so happy as he should be. He's not the man, it seems to me, to be unhappy because he's ill. A man like him would not be miserable because he was going to die. It might make him look sad sometimes, but not gloomy as he looks."

"Well, sir, I believe you be right, and perhaps I know summat. But it's part guessing.--I believe my Agnes and Joe Harper are as fond upon one another as any two in the county."

"Are they not going to be married then?"

"There be the pint, sir. I don't believe Joe ever said a word o' the sort to Aggy. She never could ha' kep it from me, sir."

"Why doesn't he then?"

"That's the pint again, sir. All as knows him says it's because he be in such bad health, and he thinks he oughtn't to go marrying with one foot in the grave. He never said so to me; but I think very likely that be it."

"For that matter, Mrs. Coombes, we've all got one foot in the grave, I think."

"That be very true, sir."

"And what does your daughter think?"

"I believe she thinks the same. And so they go on talking to each other, quiet-like, like old married folks, not like lovers at all, sir. But I can't help fancying it have something to do with my Aggy's pale face."

"And something to do with Joe's pale face too, Mrs. Coombes," I said. "Thank you. You've told me more than I expected. It explains everything. I must have it out with Joe now."

"O deary me! sir, don't go and tell him I said anything, as if I wanted him to marry my daughter."

"Don't you be afraid. I'll take good care of that. And don't fancy I'm fond of meddling with other people's affairs. But this is a case in which I ought to do something. Joe's a fine fellow."

"That he be, sir. I couldn't wish a better for a son-in-law."

I put on my hat.

"You won't get me into no trouble with Joe, will ye, sir!"

"Indeed I will not, Mrs. Coombes. I should be doing a great deal more harm than good if I said a word to make him doubt you."

I went straight to the church. There were the two men working away in the shadowy tower, and there was Agnes standing beside, knitting like her mother, so quiet, so solemn even, that it did indeed look as if she were a long-married wife, hovering about her husband at his work. Harry was saying something to her as I went in, but when they saw me they were silent, and Agnes gently withdrew.

"Do you think you will get through to-night?" I asked.

"Sure of it, sir," answered Harry.

"You shouldn't be sure of anything, Harry. We are told in the New Testament that we ought to say if the Lord will," said Joe.

"Now, Joe, you're too hard upon Harry," I said. "You don't think that the Bible means to pull a man up every step like that, till he's afraid to speak a word. It was about a long journey and a year's residence that the Apostle James was speaking."

"No doubt, sir. But the principle's the same. Harry can no more be sure of finishing his work before it be dark, than those people could be of going their long journey."

"That is perfectly true. But you are taking the letter for the spirit, and that, I suspect, in more ways than one. The religion does not lie in not being sure about anything, but in a loving desire that the will of God in the matter, whatever it be, may be done. And if Harry has not learned yet to care about the will of God, what is the good of coming down upon him that way, as if that would teach him in the least. When he loves God, then, and not till then, will he care about his will. Nor does the religion lie in saying, if the Lord will, every time anything is to be done. It is a

most dangerous thing to use sacred words often. It makes them so common to our ear that at length, when used most solemnly, they have not half the effect they ought to have, and that is a serious loss. What the Apostle means is, that we should always be in the mood of looking up to God and having regard to his will, not always writing D.V. for instance, as so many do--most irreverently, I think--using a Latin contraction for the beautiful words, just as if they were a charm, or as if God would take offence if they did not make the salvo of acknowledgment. It seems to me quite heathenish. Our hearts ought ever to be in the spirit of those words; our lips ought to utter them rarely. Besides, there are some things a man might be pretty sure the Lord wills."

"It sounds fine, sir; but I'm not sure that I understand what you mean to say. It sounds to me like a darkening of wisdom."

I saw that I had irritated him, and so had in some measure lost ground. But Harry struck in--

"How can you say that now, Joe? I know what the parson means well enough, and everybody knows I ain't got half the brains you've got."

"The reason is, Harry, that he's got something in his head that stands in the way."

"And there's nothing in my head to stand in the way!" returned Harry, laughing.

This made me laugh too, and even Joe could not help a sympathetic grin. By this time it was getting dark.

"I'm afraid, Harry, after all, you won't get through to-night."

"I begin to think so too, sir. And there's Joe saying, 'I told you so,' over and over to himself, though he won't say it out like a man."

Joe answered only with another grin.

"I tell you what it is, Harry," I said--"you must come again on Monday. And on your way home, just look in and tell Joe's mother that I have kept him over to-morrow. The change will do him good."

"No, sir, that can't be. I haven't got a clean shirt."

"You can have a shirt of mine," I said. "But I'm afraid you'll want your Sunday clothes."

"I'll bring them for you, Joe--before you're up," interposed Harry. "And then you can go to church with Aggy Coombes, you know."

Here was just what I wanted.

"Hold your tongue, Harry," said Joe angrily. "You're talking of what you don't know anything about."

"Well, Joe, I ben't a fool, if I ben't so religious as you be. You ben't a bad fellow, though you be a Methodist, and I ben't a fool, though I be Harry Cobb."

"What do you mean, Harry? Do hold your tongue."

"Well, I'll tell you what I mean first, and then I'll hold my tongue. I mean this--that nobody with two eyes, or one eye, for that matter, in his head, could help seeing the eyes you and Aggy make at each other, and why you don't port your helm and board her--I won't say it's more than I know, but I do say it to be more than I think be fair to the young woman."

"Hold your tongue, Harry."

"I said I would when I'd answered you as to what I meant. So no more at present; but I'll be over with your clothes afore you're up in the morning."

As Harry spoke he was busy gathering his tools.

"They won't be in the way, will they, sir?" he said, as he heaped them together in the furthest corner of the tower.

"Not in the least," I returned. "If I had my way, all the tools used in building the church should be carved on the posts and pillars of it, to indicate the sacredness of labour, and the worship of God that lies, not in building the church merely, but in every honest trade honestly pursued for the good of mankind and the need of the workman. For a necessity of God is laid upon every workman as well as on St. Paul. Only St. Paul saw it, and every workman doesn't, Harry."

"Thank you, sir. I like that way of it. I almost think I could be a little bit religious after your way of it, sir."

"Almost, Harry!" growled Joe--not unkindly.

"Now, you hold your tongue, Joe," I said. "Leave Harry to me. You may take him, if you like, after I've done with him."

Laughing merrily, but making no other reply than a hearty good-night, Harry strode away out of the church, and Joe and I went home together.

When he had had his tea, I asked him to go out with me for a walk.

The sun was shining aslant upon the downs from over the sea. We rose out of the shadowy hollow to the sunlit brow. I was a little in advance of Joe. Happening to turn, I saw the light full on his head and face, while the rest of his body had not yet emerged from the shadow.

"Stop, Joe," I said. "I want to see you so for a moment."

He stood--a little surprised.

"You look just like a man rising from the dead, Joe," I said.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," he returned.

"I will describe yourself to you. Your head and face are full of sunlight, the rest of your body is still buried in the shadow. Look; I will stand where you are now; and you come here. You will soon see what I mean."

We changed places. Joe stared for a moment. Then his face brightened.

"I see what you mean, sir," he said. "I fancy you don't mean the

resurrection of the body, but the resurrection of righteousness."

"I do, Joe. Did it ever strike you that the whole history of the Christian life is a series of such resurrections? Every time a man bethinks himself that he is not walking in the light, that he has been forgetting himself, and must repent, that he has been asleep and must awake, that he has been letting his garments trail, and must gird up the loins of his mind--every time this takes place, there is a resurrection in the world. Yes, Joe; and every time that a man finds that his heart is troubled, that he is not rejoicing in God, a resurrection must follow--a resurrection out of the night of troubled thoughts into the gladness of the truth. For the truth is, and ever was, and ever must be, gladness, however much the souls on which it shines may be obscured by the clouds of sorrow, troubled by the thunders of fear, or shot through with the lightnings of pain. Now, Joe, will you let me tell you what you are like--I do not know your thoughts; I am only judging from your words and looks?"

"You may if you like, sir," answered Joe, a little sulkily. But I was not to be repelled.

I stood up in the sunlight, so that my eyes caught only about half the sun's disc. Then I bent my face towards the earth.

"What part of me is the light shining on now, Joe?"

"Just the top of your head," answered he.

"There, then," I returned, "that is just what you are like--a man with the light on his head, but not on his face. And why not on your face? Because you hold your head down."

"Isn't it possible, sir, that a man might lose the light on his face, as you put it, by doing his duty?"

"That is a difficult question," I replied. "I must think before I answer it."

"I mean," added Joe--"mightn't his duty be a painful one?"

"Yes. But I think that would rather etherealise than destroy the light. Behind the sorrow would spring a yet greater light from the very duty itself. I have expressed myself badly, but you will see what I mean.--To be frank with you, Joe, I do not see that light in your face. Therefore I think something must be wrong with you. Remember a good man is not necessarily in the right. St. Peter was a good man, yet our Lord called him Satan--and meant it of course, for he never said what he did not mean."

"How can I be wrong when all my trouble comes from doing my duty--nothing else, as far as I know?"

"Then," I replied, a sudden light breaking in on my mind, "I doubt whether what you suppose to be your duty can be your duty. If it were, I do not think it would make you so miserable. At least--I may be wrong, but I venture to think so."

"What is a man to go by, then? If he thinks a thing is his duty, is he not to do it?"

"Most assuredly--until he knows better. But it is of the greatest

consequence whether the supposed duty be the will of God or the invention of one's own fancy or mistaken judgment. A real duty is always something right in itself. The duty a man makes his for the time, by supposing it to be a duty, may be something quite wrong in itself. The duty of a Hindoo widow is to burn herself on the body of her husband. But that duty lasts no longer than till she sees that, not being the will of God, it is not her duty. A real duty, on the other hand, is a necessity of the human nature, without seeing and doing which a man can never attain to the truth and blessedness of his own being. It was the duty of the early hermits to encourage the growth of vermin upon their bodies, for they supposed that was pleasing to God; but they could not fare so well as if they had seen the truth that the will of God was cleanliness. And there may be far more serious things done by Christian people against the will of God, in the fancy of doing their duty, than such a trifle as swarming with worms. In a word, thinking a thing is your duty makes it your duty only till you know better. And the prime duty of every man is to seek and find, that he may do, the will of God."

"But do you think, sir, that a man is likely to be doing what he ought not, if he is doing what he don't like?"

"Not so likely, I allow. But there may be ambition in it. A man must not want to be better than the right. That is the delusion of the anchorite--a delusion in which the man forgets the rights of others for the sake of his own sanctity."

"It might be for the sake of another person, and not for the person's own sake at all."

"It might be; but except it were the will of God for that other person, it would be doing him or her a real injury."

We were coming gradually towards what I wanted to make the point in question. I wished him to tell me all about it himself, however, for I knew that while advice given on request is generally disregarded, to offer advice unasked is worthy only of a fool."

"But how are you to know the will of God in every case?" asked Joe.

"By looking at the general laws of life, and obeying them--except there be anything special in a particular case to bring it under a higher law."

"Ah! but that be just what there is here."

"Well, my dear fellow, that may be; but the special conduct may not be right for the special case for all that. The speciality of the case may not be even sufficient to take it from under the ordinary rule. But it is of no use talking generals. Let us come to particulars. If you can trust me, tell me all about it, and we may be able to let some light in. I am sure there is darkness somewhere."

"I will turn it over in my mind, sir; and if I can bring myself to talk about it, I will. I would rather tell you than anyone else."

I said no more. We watched a glorious sunset--there never was a grander place for sunsets--and went home.

CHAPTER XII.

A SMALL ADVENTURE.

The next morning Harry came with the clothes. But Joe did not go to church. Neither did Agnes make her appearance that morning. They were both present at the evening service, however.

When we came out of church, it was cloudy and dark, and the wind was blowing cold from the sea. The sky was covered with one cloud, but the waves tossing themselves against the rocks, flashed whiteness out of the general gloom. As the tide rose the wind increased. It was a night of surly temper--hard and gloomy. Not a star cracked the blue above--there was no blue; and the wind was gurdy; I once heard that word in Scotland, and never forgot it.

After one of our usual gatherings in Connie's room, which were much shorter here because of the evening service in summer, I withdrew till supper should be ready.

Now I have always had, as I think I have incidentally stated before, a certain peculiar pleasure in the surly aspects of nature. When I was a young man this took form in opposition and defiance; since I had begun to grow old the form had changed into a sense of safety. I welcomed such aspects, partly at least, because they roused my faith to look through and beyond the small region of human conditions in which alone the storm can be and blow, and thus induced a feeling like that of the child who lies in his warm crib and listens to the howling of one of these same storms outside the strong-built house which yet trembles at its fiercer onsets: the house is not in danger; or, if it be, that is his father's business, not his. Hence it came that, after supper, I put on my great-coat and travelling-cap, and went out into the ill-tempered night--speaking of it in its human symbolism.

I meant to have a stroll down to the breakwater, of which I have yet said little, but which was a favourite resort, both of myself and my children. At the further end of it, always covered at high water, was an outlying cluster of low rocks, in the heart of which the lord of the manor, a noble-hearted Christian gentleman of the old school, had constructed a bath of graduated depth--an open-air swimming-pool--the only really safe place for men who were swimmers to bathe in. Thither I was in the habit of taking my two little men every morning, and bathing with them, that I might develop the fish that was in them; for, as George Herbert says:

"Man is everything,
And more: he is a tree, yet bears no fruit;
A beast, yet is, or should be, more;"

and he might have gone on to say that he is, or should be, a fish as well.

It will seem strange to any reader who can recall the position of my Connie's room, that the nearest way to the breakwater should be through

that room; but so it was. I mention the fact because I want my readers to understand a certain peculiarity of the room. By the side of the window which looked out upon the breakwater was a narrow door, apparently of a closet or cupboard, which communicated, however, with a narrow, curving, wood-built passage, leading into a little wooden hut, the walls of which were by no means impervious to the wind, for they were formed of outside-planks, with the bark still upon them. From this hut one or two little windows looked seaward, and a door led out on the bit of sward in which lay the flower-bed under Connie's window. From this spot again a door in the low wall and thick hedge led out on the downs, where a path wound along the cliffs that formed the side of the bay, till, descending under the storm-tower, it brought you to the root of the breakwater.

This mole stretched its long strong low back to a rock a good way out, breaking the force of the waves, and rendering the channel of a small river, that here flowed into the sea across the sands from the mouth of the canal, a refuge from the Atlantic. But it was a roadway often hard to reach. In fair weather even, the wind falling as the vessel rounded the point of the breakwater into the calm of the projecting headlands, the under-current would sometimes dash her helpless on the rocks. During all this heavenly summer there had been no thought or fear of any such disaster. The present night was a hint of what weather would yet come.

When I went into Connie's room, I found her lying in bed a very picture of peace. But my entrance destroyed the picture.

"Papa," she said, "why have you got your coat on? Surely you are not going out to-night. The wind is blowing dreadfully."

"Not very dreadfully, Connie. It blew much worse the night we found your baby."

"But it is very dark."

"I allow that; but there is a glimmer from the sea. I am only going on the breakwater for a few minutes. You know I like a stormy night quite as much as a fine one."

"I shall be miserable till you come home, papa."

"Nonsense, Connie. You don't think your father hasn't sense to take care of himself! Or rather, Connie, for I grant that is poor ground of comfort, you don't think I can go anywhere without my Father to take care of me?"

"But there is no occasion--is there, papa?"

"Do you think I should be better pleased with my boys if they shrunk from everything involving the least possibility of danger because there was no occasion for it? That is just the way to make cowards. And I am certain God would not like his children to indulge in such moods of self-preservation as that. He might well be ashamed of them. The fearful are far more likely to meet with accidents than the courageous. But really, Connie, I am almost ashamed of talking so. It is all your fault. There is positively no ground for apprehension, and I hope you won't spoil my walk by the thought that my foolish little girl is frightened."

"I will be good--indeed I will, papa," she said, holding up her mouth to kiss me.

I left her room, and went through the wooden passage into the bark hut. The wind roared about it, shook it, and pawed it, and sung and whistled in the chinks of the planks. I went out and shut the door. That moment the wind seized upon me, and I had to fight with it. When I got on the path leading along the edge of the downs, I felt something lighter than any feather fly in my face. When I put up my hand, I found my cheek wet. Again and again I was thus assailed, but when I got to the breakwater I found what it was. They were flakes of foam, bubbles worked up into little masses of adhering thousands, which the wind blew off the waters and across the downs, carrying some of them miles inland. When I reached the breakwater, and looked along its ridge through the darkness of the night, I was bewildered to see a whiteness lying here and there in a great patch upon its top. They were but accumulations of these foam-flakes, like soap-suds, lying so thick that I expected to have to wade through them, only they vanished at the touch of my feet. Till then I had almost believed it was snow I saw. On the edge of the waves, in quieter spots, they lay like yeast, foaming and working. Now and then a little rush of water from a higher wave swept over the top of the broad breakwater, as with head bowed sideways against the wind, I struggled along towards the rock at its end; but I said to myself, "The tide is falling fast, and salt water hurts nobody," and struggled on over the huge rough stones of the mighty heap, outside which the waves were white with wrath, inside which they had fallen asleep, only heaving with the memory of their late unrest. I reached the tall rock at length, climbed the rude stair leading up to the flagstaff, and looked abroad, if looking it could be called, into the thick dark. But the wind blew so strong on the top that I was glad to descend. Between me and the basin where yesterday morning I had bathed in still water and sunshine with my boys, rolled the deathly waves. I wandered on the rough narrow space yet uncovered, stumbling over the stones and the rocky points between which they lay, stood here and there half-meditating, and at length, finding a sheltered nook in a mass of rock, sat with the wind howling and the waves bursting around me. There I fell into a sort of brown study--almost a half-sleep.

But I had not sat long before I came broad awake, for I heard voices, low and earnest. One I recognised as Joe's voice. The other was a woman's. I could not tell what they said for some time, and therefore felt no immediate necessity for disclosing my proximity, but sat debating with myself whether I should speak to them or not. At length, in a lull of the wind, I heard the woman say--I could fancy with a sigh--

"I'm sure you'll do what is right, Joe. Don't 'e think o' me, Joe."

"It's just of you that I do think, Aggy. You know it ben't for my sake. Surely you know that?"

There was no answer for a moment. I was still doubting what I had best do--go away quietly or let them know I was there--when she spoke again. There was a momentary lull now in the noises of both wind and water, and I heard what she said well enough.

"It ben't for me to contradict you, Joe. But I don't think you be going to die. You be no worse than last year. Be you now, Joe?"

It flashed across me how once before, a stormy night and darkness had brought me close to a soul in agony. Then I was in agony myself; now the world was all fair and hopeful around me--the portals of the world beyond ever opening wider as I approached them, and letting out more of their glory to gladden the path to their threshold. But here were two souls straying in a mist which faith might roll away, and leave them walking in

the light. The moment was come. I must speak.

"Joe!" I called out.

"Who's there?" he cried; and I heard him start to his feet.

"Only Mr. Walton. Where are you?"

"We can't be very far off," he answered, not in a tone of any pleasure at finding me so nigh.

I rose, and peering about through the darkness, found that they were a little higher up on the same rock by which I was sheltered.

"You mustn't think," I said, "that I have been eavesdropping. I had no idea anyone was near me till I heard your voices, and I did not hear a word till just the last sentence or two."

"I saw someone go up the Castle-rock," said Joe; "but I thought he was gone away again. It will be a lesson to me."

"I'm no tell-tale, Joe," I returned, as I scrambled up the rock. "You will have no cause to regret that I happened to overhear a little. I am sure, Joe, you will never say anything you need be ashamed of. But what I heard was sufficient to let me into the secret of your trouble. Will you let me talk to Joe, Agnes? I've been young myself, and, to tell the truth, I don't think I'm old yet."

"I am sure, sir," she answered, "you won't be hard on Joe and me. I don't suppose there be anything wrong in liking each other, though we can't be--married."

She spoke in a low tone, and her voice trembled very much; yet there was a certain womanly composure in her utterance. "I'm sure it's very bold of me to talk so," she added, "but Joe will tell you all about it."

I was close beside them now, and fancied I saw through the dusk the motion of her hand stealing into his.

"Well, Joe, this is just what I wanted," I said. "A woman can be braver than a big smith sometimes. Agnes has done her part. Now you do yours, and tell me all about it."

No response followed my adjuration. I must help him.

"I think I know how the matter lies, Joe. You think you are not going to live long, and that therefore you ought not to marry. Am I right?"

"Not far off it, sir," he answered.

"Now, Joe," I said, "can't we talk as friends about this matter? I have no right to intrude into your affairs--none in the least--except what friendship gives me. If you say I am not to talk about it, I shall be silent. To force advice upon you would be as impertinent as useless."

"It's all the same, I'm afraid, sir. My mind has been made up for a long time. What right have I to bring other people into trouble? But I take it kind of you, sir, though I mayn't look over-pleased. Agnes wants to hear your way of it. I'm agreeable."

This was not very encouraging. Still I thought it sufficient ground for proceeding.

"I suppose you will allow that the root of all Christian behaviour is the will of God?"

"Surely, sir."

"Is it not the will of God, then, that when a man and woman love each other, they should marry?"

"Certainly, sir--where there be no reasons against it."

"Of course. And you judge you see reason for not doing so, else you would?"

"I do see that a man should not bring a woman into trouble for the sake of being comfortable himself for the rest of a few weary days."

Agnes was sobbing gently behind her handkerchief. I knew how gladly she would be Joe's wife, if only to nurse him through his last illness.

"Not except it would make her comfortable too, I grant you, Joe. But listen to me. In the first place, you don't know, and you are not required to know, when you are going to die. In fact, you have nothing to do with it. Many a life has been injured by the constant expectation of death. It is life we have to do with, not death. The best preparation for the night is to work while the day lasts, diligently. The best preparation for death is life. Besides, I have known delicate people who have outlived all their strong relations, and been left alone in the earth--because they had possibly taken too much care of themselves. But marriage is God's will, and death is God's will, and you have no business to set the one over against, as antagonistic to, the other. For anything you know, the gladness and the peace of marriage may be the very means intended for your restoration to health and strength. I suspect your desire to marry, fighting against the fancy that you ought not to marry, has a good deal to do with the state of health in which you now find yourself. A man would get over many things if he were happy, that he cannot get over when he is miserable."

"But it's for Aggy. You forget that."

"I do not forget it. What right have you to seek for her another kind of welfare than you would have yourself? Are you to treat her as if she were worldly when you are not--to provide for her a comfort which yourself you would despise? Why should you not marry because you have to die soon?--if you are thus doomed, which to me is by no means clear. Why not have what happiness you may for the rest of your sojourn? If you find at the end of twenty years that here you are after all, you will be rather sorry you did not do as I say."

"And if I find myself dying at the end of six months'?"

"You will thank God for those six months. The whole thing, my dear fellow, is a want of faith in God. I do not doubt you think you are doing right, but, I repeat, the whole thing comes from want of faith in God. You will take things into your own hands, and order them after a preventive and self-protective fashion, lest God should have ordained the worst for you, which worst, after all, would be best met by doing his will without inquiry into the future; and which worst is no evil. Death is no more an evil than

marriage is."

"But you don't see it as I do," persisted the blacksmith.

"Of course I don't. I think you see it as it is not."

He remained silent for a little. A shower of spray fell upon us. He started.

"What a wave!" he cried. "That spray came over the top of the rock. We shall have to run for it."

I fancied that he only wanted to avoid further conversation.

"There's no hurry," I said. "It was high water an hour and a half ago."

"You don't know this coast, sir," returned he, "or you wouldn't talk like that."

As he spoke he rose, and going from under the shelter of the rock, looked along.

"For God's sake, Aggy!" he cried in terror, "come at once. Every other wave be rushing across the breakwater as if it was on the level."

So saying, he hurried back, caught her by the hand, and began to draw her along.

"Hadn't we better stay where we are?" I suggested.

"If you can stand the night in the cold. But Aggy here is delicate; and I don't care about being out all night. It's not the tide, sir; it's a ground swell--from a storm somewhere out at sea. That never asks no questions about tide or no tide."

"Come along, then," I said. "But just wait one minute more. It is better to be ready for the worst."

For I remembered that the day before I had seen a crowbar lying among the stones, and I thought it might be useful. In a moment or two I had found it, and returning, gave it to Joe. Then I took the girl's disengaged hand. She thanked me in a voice perfectly calm and firm. Joe took the bar in haste, and drew Agnes towards the breakwater.

Any real thought of danger had not yet crossed my mind. But when I looked along the outstretched back of the mole, and saw a dim sheet of white sweep across it, I felt that there was ground for his anxiety, and prepared myself for a struggle.

"Do you know what to do with the crowbar, Joe?" I said, grasping my own stout oak-stick more firmly.

"Perfectly," answered Joe. "To stick between the stones and hold on. We must watch our time between the waves."

"You take the command, then, Joe," I returned. "You see better than I do, and you know the ways of that raging wild beast there better than I do. I will obey orders--one of which, no doubt, will be, not for wind or sea to lose hold of Agnes--eh, Joe?"

Joe gave a grim enough laugh in reply, and we started, he carrying his crowbar in his right hand towards the advancing sea, and I my oak-stick in my left towards the still water within.

"Quick march!" said Joe, and away we went out on the breakwater.

Now the back of the breakwater was very rugged, for it was formed of huge stones, with wide gaps between, where the waters had washed out the cement, and worn their edges. But what impeded our progress secured our safety.

"Halt!" cried Joe, when we were yet but a few yards beyond the shelter of the rocks. "There's a topper coming."

We halted at the word of command, as a huge wave, with combing crest, rushed against the far out-sloping base of the mole, and flung its heavy top right over the middle of the mass, a score or two of yards in front of us.

"Now for it!" cried Joe. "Run!"

We did run. In my mind there was just sense enough of danger to add to the pleasure of the excitement. I did not know how much danger there was. Over the rough worn stones we sped stumbling.

"Halt!" cried the smith once more, and we did halt; but this time, as it turned out, in the middle front of the coming danger.

"God be with us!" I exclaimed, when the huge billow showed itself through the night, rushing towards the mole. The smith stuck his crowbar between two great stones. To this he held on with one hand, and threw the other arm round Agnes's waist. I, too, had got my oak firmly fixed, held on with one hand, and threw the other arm round Agnes. It took but a moment.

"Now then!" cried Joe. "Here she comes! Hold on, sir. Hold on, Aggy!"

But when I saw the height of the water, as it rushed on us up the sloping side of the mound, I cried out in my turn, "Down, Joe! Down on your face, and let it over us easy! Down Agnes!"

They obeyed. We threw ourselves across the breakwater, with our heads to the coming foe, and I grasped my stick close to the stones with all the power of a hand that was then strong. Over us burst the mighty wave, floating us up from the stones where we lay. But we held on, the wave passed, and we sprung gasping to our feet.

"Now, now!" cried Joe and I together, and, heavy as we were, with the water pouring from us, we flew across the remainder of the heap, and arrived, panting and safe, at the other end, ere one wave more had swept the surface. The moment we were in safety we turned and looked back over the danger we had traversed. It was to see a huge billow sweep the breakwater from end to end. We looked at each other for a moment without speaking.

"I believe, sir," said Joe at length, with slow and solemn speech, "if you hadn't taken the command at that moment we should all have been lost."

"It seems likely enough, when I look back on it. For one thing, I was not sure that my stick would stand, so I thought I had better grasp it low down."

"We were awfully near death," said Joe.

"Nearer than you thought, Joe; and yet we escaped it. Things don't go all as we fancy, you see. Faith is as essential to manhood as foresight--believe me, Joe. It is very absurd to trust God for the future, and not trust him for the present. The man who is not anxious is the man most likely to do the right thing. He is cool and collected and ready. Our Lord therefore told his disciples that when they should be brought before kings and rulers, they were to take no thought what answer they should make, for it would be given them when the time came."

We were climbing the steep path up to the downs. Neither of my companions spoke.

"You have escaped one death together," I said at length: "dare another."

Still neither of them returned an answer. When we came near the parsonage, I said, "Now, Joe, you must go in and get to bed at once. I will take Agnes home. You can trust me not to say anything against you?"

Joe laughed rather hoarsely, and replied: "As you please, sir. Good night, Aggie. Mind you get to bed as fast as you can."

When I returned from giving Agnes over to her parents, I made haste to change my clothes, and put on my warm dressing-gown. I may as well mention at once, that not one of us was the worse for our ducking. I then went up to Connie's room.

"Here I am, you see, Connie, quite safe."

"I've been lying listening to every blast of wind since you went out, papa. But all I could do was to trust in God."

"Do you call that all, Connie? Believe me, there is more power in that than any human being knows the tenth part of yet. It is indeed all."

I said no more then. I told my wife about it that night, but we were well into another month before I told Connie.

When I left her, I went to Joe's room to see how he was, and found him having some gruel. I sat down on the edge of his bed, and said,

"Well, Joe, this is better than under water. I hope you won't be the worse for it."

"I don't much care what comes of me, sir. It will be all over soon."

"But you ought to care what comes of you, Joe. I will tell you why. You are an instrument out of which ought to come praise to God, and, therefore, you ought to care for the instrument."

"That way, yes, sir, I ought."

"And you have no business to be like some children who say, 'Mamma won't give me so and so,' instead of asking her to give it them."

"I see what you mean, sir. But really you put me out before the young woman. I couldn't say before her what I meant. Suppose, you know, sir,

there was to come a family. It might be, you know."

"Of course. What else would you have?"

"But if I was to die, where would she be then?"

"In God's hands; just as she is now."

"But I ought to take care that she is not left with a burden like that to provide for."

"O, Joe! how little you know a woman's heart! It would just be the greatest comfort she could have for losing you--that's all. Many a woman has married a man she did not care enough for, just that she might have a child of her own to let out her heart upon. I don't say that is right, you know. Such love cannot be perfect. A woman ought to love her child because it is her husband's more than because it is her own, and because it is God's more than either's. I saw in the papers the other day, that a woman was brought before the Recorder of London for stealing a baby, when the judge himself said that there was no imaginable motive for her action but a motherly passion to possess the child. It is the need of a child that makes so many women take to poor miserable, broken-nosed lap-dogs; for they are self-indulgent, and cannot face the troubles and dangers of adopting a child. They would if they might get one of a good family, or from a respectable home; but they dare not take an orphan out of the dirt, lest it should spoil their silken chairs. But that has nothing to do with our argument. What I mean is this, that if Agnes really loves you, as no one can look in her face and doubt, she will be far happier if you leave her a child--yes, she will be happier if you only leave her your name for hers--than if you died without calling her your wife."

I took Joe's basin from him, and he lay down. He turned his face to the wall. I waited a moment, but finding him silent, bade him good-night, and left the room.

A month after, I married them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HARVEST.

It was some time before we got the bells to work to our mind, but at last we succeeded. The worst of it was to get the cranks, which at first required strong pressure on the keys, to work easily enough. But neither Joe nor his cousin spared any pains to perfect the attempt, and, as I say, at length we succeeded. I took Wynn timer down to the instrument and made her try whether she could not do something, and she succeeded in making the old tower discourse loudly and eloquently.

By this time the thanksgiving for the harvest was at hand: on the morning

of that first of all would I summon the folk to their prayers with the sound of the full peal. And I wrote a little hymn of praise to the God of the harvest, modelling it to one of the oldest tunes in that part of the country, and I had it printed on slips of paper and laid plentifully on the benches. What with the calling of the bells, like voices in the highway, and the solemn meditation of the organ within to bear aloft the thoughts of those who heard, and came to the prayer and thanksgiving in common, and the message which God had given me to utter to them, I hoped that we should indeed keep holiday.

Wynnie summoned the parish with the hundredth psalm pealed from aloft, dropping from the airy regions of the tower on village and hamlet and cottage, calling aloud--for who could dissociate the words from the music, though the words are in the Scotch psalms?--written none the less by an Englishman, however English wits may amuse themselves with laughing at their quaintness--calling aloud,

"All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell--
Come ye before him and rejoice."

Then we sang the psalm before the communion service, making bold in the name of the Lord to serve him with _mirth_ as in the old version, and not with the _fear_ with which some editor, weak in faith, has presumed to alter the line. Then before the sermon we sang the hymn I had prepared--a proceeding justifiable by many an example in the history of the church while she was not only able to number singers amongst her clergy, but those singers were capable of influencing the whole heart and judgment of the nation with their songs. Ethelwyn played the organ. The song I had prepared was this:

"We praise the Life of All;
From buried seeds so small
Who makes the ordered ranks of autumn stand;
Who stores the corn
In rick and barn
To feed the winter of the land.

We praise the Life of Light!
Who from the brooding night
Draws out the morning holy, calm, and grand;
Veils up the moon,
Sends out the sun,
To glad the face of all the land.

We praise the Life of Work,
Who from sleep's lonely dark
Leads forth his children to arise and stand,
Then go their way,
The live-long day,
To trust and labour in the land.

We praise the Life of Good,
Who breaks sin's lazy mood,
Toilsomely ploughing up the fruitless sand.
The furrowed waste
They leave, and haste
Home, home, to till their Father's land.

We praise the Life of Life,
Who in this soil of strife
Casts us at birth, like seed from sower's hand;
To die and so
Like corn to grow
A golden harvest in his land."

After we had sung this hymn, the meaning of which is far better than the versification, I preached from the words of St. Paul, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." And this is something like what I said to them:

"The world, my friends, is full of resurrections, and it is not always of the same resurrection that St. Paul speaks. Every night that folds us up in darkness is a death; and those of you that have been out early and have seen the first of the dawn, will know it--the day rises out of the night like a being that has burst its tomb and escaped into life. That you may feel that the sunrise is a resurrection--the word resurrection just means a rising again--I will read you a little description of it from a sermon by a great writer and great preacher called Jeremy Taylor. Listen. 'But as when the sun approaching towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns like those which decked the brows of Moses, when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly; so is a man's reason and his life.' Is not this a resurrection of the day out of the night? Or hear how Milton makes his Adam and Eve praise God in the morning,--

'Ye mists and exhalations that now rise
From hill or streaming lake, dusky or gray,
Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold,
In honour to the world's great Author rise,
Whether to deck with clouds the uncoloured sky,
Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers,
Rising or falling still advance his praise.'

But it is yet more of a resurrection to you. Think of your own condition through the night and in the morning. You die, as it were, every night. The death of darkness comes down over the earth; but a deeper death, the death of sleep, descends on you. A power overshadows you; your eyelids close, you cannot keep them open if you would; your limbs lie moveless; the day is gone; your whole life is gone; you have forgotten everything; an evil man might come and do with your goods as he pleased; you are helpless. But the God of the Resurrection is awake all the time, watching his sleeping men and women, even as a mother who watches her sleeping baby, only with larger eyes and more full of love than hers; and so, you know not how, all at once you know that you are what you are; that there is a world that wants you outside of you, and a God that wants you inside of you; you rise from the death of sleep, not by your own power, for you knew nothing about it; God put his hand over your eyes, and you were dead; he lifted his hand and breathed light on you and you rose from the dead, thanked the God who raised you up, and went forth to do your work. From darkness to light; from

blindness to seeing; from knowing nothing to looking abroad on the mighty world; from helpless submission to willing obedience,--is not this a resurrection indeed? That St. Paul saw it to be such may be shown from his using the two things with the same meaning when he says, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' No doubt he meant a great deal more. No man who understands what he is speaking about can well mean only one thing at a time.

"But to return to the resurrections we see around us in nature. Look at the death that falls upon the world in winter. And look how it revives when the sun draws near enough in the spring to wile the life in it once more out of its grave. See how the pale, meek snowdrops come up with their bowed heads, as if full of the memory of the fierce winds they encountered last spring, and yet ready in the strength of their weakness to encounter them again. Up comes the crocus, bringing its gold safe from the dark of its colourless grave into the light of its parent gold. Primroses, and anemones, and blue-bells, and a thousand other children of the spring, hear the resurrection-trumpet of the wind from the west and south, obey, and leave their graves behind to breathe the air of the sweet heavens. Up and up they come till the year is glorious with the rose and the lily, till the trees are not only clothed upon with new garments of loveliest green, but the fruit-tree bringeth forth its fruit, and the little children of men are made glad with apples, and cherries, and hazel-nuts. The earth laughs out in green and gold. The sky shares in the grand resurrection. The garments of its mourning, wherewith it made men sad, its clouds of snow and hail and stormy vapours, are swept away, have sunk indeed to the earth, and are now humbly feeding the roots of the flowers whose dead stalks they beat upon all the winter long. Instead, the sky has put on the garments of praise. Her blue, coloured after the sapphire-floor on which stands the throne of him who is the Resurrection and the Life, is dashed and glorified with the pure white of sailing clouds, and at morning and evening prayer, puts on colours in which the human heart drowns itself with delight--green and gold and purple and rose. Even the icebergs floating about in the lonely summer seas of the north are flashing all the glories of the rainbow. But, indeed, is not this whole world itself a monument of the Resurrection? The earth was without form and void. The wind of God moved on the face of the waters, and up arose this fair world. Darkness was on the face of the deep: God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.

"In the animal world as well, you behold the goings of the Resurrection. Plainest of all, look at the story of the butterfly--so plain that the pagan Greeks called it and the soul by one name--Psyche. Psyche meant with them a butterfly or the soul, either. Look how the creeping thing, ugly to our eyes, so that we can hardly handle it without a shudder, finding itself growing sick with age, straightway falls a spinning and weaving at its own shroud, coffin, and grave, all in one--to prepare, in fact, for its resurrection; for it is for the sake of the resurrection that death exists. Patiently it spins its strength, but not its life, away, folds itself up decently, that its body may rest in quiet till the new body is formed within it; and at length when the appointed hour has arrived, out of the body of this crawling thing breaks forth the winged splendour of the butterfly--not the same body--a new one built out of the ruins of the old--even as St. Paul tells us that it is not the same body we have in the resurrection, but a nobler body like ourselves, with all the imperfect and evil thing taken away. No more creeping for the butterfly; wings of splendour now. Neither yet has it lost the feet wherewith to alight on all that is lovely and sweet. Think of it--up from the toilsome journey over the low ground, exposed to the foot of every passer-by, destroying the lovely leaves upon which it fed, and the fruit which they should shelter,

up to the path at will through the air, and a gathering of food which hurts not the source of it, a food which is but as a tribute from the loveliness of the flowers to the yet higher loveliness of the flower-angel: is not this a resurrection? Its children too shall pass through the same process, to wing the air of a summer noon, and rejoice in the ethereal and the pure.

"To return yet again from the human thoughts suggested by the symbol of the butterfly"--

Here let me pause for a moment--and there was a corresponding pause, though but momentary, in the sermon as I spoke it--to mention a curious, and to me at the moment an interesting fact. At this point of my address, I caught sight of a white butterfly, a belated one, flitting about the church. Absorbed for a moment, my eye wandered after it. It was near the bench where my own people sat, and, for one flash of thought, I longed that the butterfly would alight on my Wynnies, for I was more anxious about her resurrection at the time than about anything else. But the butterfly would not. And then I told myself that God would, and that the butterfly was only the symbol of a grand truth, and of no private interpretation, to make which of it was both selfishness and superstition. But all this passed in a flash, and I resumed my discourse.

--"I come now naturally to speak of what we commonly call the Resurrection. Some say: 'How can the same dust be raised again, when it may be scattered to the winds of heaven?' It is a question I hardly care to answer. The mere difficulty can in reason stand for nothing with God; but the apparent worthlessness of the supposition renders the question uninteresting to me. What is of import is, that I should stand clothed upon, with a body which is my body because it serves my ends, justifies my consciousness of identity by being, in all that was good in it, like that which I had before, while now it is tenfold capable of expressing the thoughts and feelings that move within me. How can I care whether the atoms that form a certain inch of bone should be the same as those which formed that bone when I died? All my life-time I never felt or thought of the existence of such a bone! On the other hand, I object to having the same worn muscles, the same shrivelled skin with which I may happen to die. Why give me the same body as that? Why not rather my youthful body, which was strong, and facile, and capable? The matter in the muscle of my arm at death would not serve to make half the muscle I had when young. But I thank God that St. Paul says it will not be the same body. That body dies--up springs another body. I suspect myself that those are right who say that this body being the seed, the moment it dies in the soil of this world, that moment is the resurrection of the new body. The life in it rises out of it in a new body. This is not after it is put in the mere earth; for it is dead then, and the germ of life gone out of it. If a seed rots, no new body comes of it. The seed dies into a new life, and so does man. Dying and rotting are two very different things.--But I am not sure by any means. As I say, the whole question is rather uninteresting to me. What do I care about my old clothes after I have done with them? What is it to me to know what becomes of an old coat or an old pulpit gown? I have no such clinging to the flesh. It seems to me that people believe their bodies to be themselves, and are therefore very anxious about them--and no wonder then. Enough for me that I shall have eyes to see my friends, a face that they shall know me by, and a mouth to praise God withal. I leave the matter with one remark, that I am well content to rise as Jesus rose, however that was. For me the will of God is so good that I would rather have his will done than my own choice given me.

"But I now come to the last, because infinitely the most important part

of my subject--the resurrection for the sake of which all the other resurrections exist--the resurrection unto Life. This is the one of which St. Paul speaks in my text. This is the one I am most anxious--indeed, the only one I am anxious to set forth, and impress upon you.

"Think, then, of all the deaths you know; the death of the night, when the sun is gone, when friend says not a word to friend, but both lie drowned and parted in the sea of sleep; the death of the year, when winter lies heavy on the graves of the children of summer, when the leafless trees moan in the blasts from the ocean, when the beasts even look dull and oppressed, when the children go about shivering with cold, when the poor and improvident are miserable with suffering or think of such a death of disease as befalls us at times, when the man who says, 'Would God it were morning!' changes but his word, and not his tune, when the morning comes, crying, 'Would God it were evening!' when what life is left is known to us only by suffering, and hope is amongst the things that were once and are no more--think of all these, think of them all together, and you will have but the dimmest, faintest picture of the death from which the resurrection of which I have now to speak, is the rising. I shrink from the attempt, knowing how weak words are to set forth the death, set forth the resurrection. Were I to sit down to yonder organ, and crash out the most horrible dissonances that ever took shape in sound, I should give you but a weak figure of this death; were I capable of drawing from many a row of pipes an exhalation of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet, such as Milton himself could have invaded our ears withal, I could give you but a faint figure of this resurrection. Nevertheless, I must try what I can do in my own way.

"If into the face of the dead body, lying on the bed, waiting for its burial, the soul of the man should begin to dawn again, drawing near from afar to look out once more at those eyes, to smile once again through those lips, the change on that face would be indeed great and wondrous, but nothing for marvel or greatness to that which passes on the countenance, the very outward bodily face of the man who wakes from his sleep, arises from the dead and receives light from Christ. Too often indeed, the reposeful look on the face of the dead body would be troubled, would vanish away at the revisiting of the restless ghost; but when a man's own right true mind, which God made in him, is restored to him again, and he wakes from the death of sin, then comes the repose without the death. It may take long for the new spirit to complete the visible change, but it begins at once, and will be perfected. The bloated look of self-indulgence passes away like the leprosy of Naaman, the cheek grows pure, the lips return to the smile of hope instead of the grin of greed, and the eyes that made innocence shrink and shudder with their yellow leer grow childlike and sweet and faithful. The mammon-eyes, hitherto fixed on the earth, are lifted to meet their kind; the lips that mumbled over figures and sums of gold learn to say words of grace and tenderness. The truculent, repellent, self-satisfied face begins to look thoughtful and doubtful, as if searching for some treasure of whose whereabouts it had no certain sign. The face anxious, wrinkled, peering, troubled, on whose lines you read the dread of hunger, poverty, and nakedness, thaws into a smile; the eyes reflect in courage the light of the Father's care, the back grows erect under its burden with the assurance that the hairs of its head are all numbered. But the face can with all its changes set but dimly forth the rising from the dead which passes within. The heart, which cared but for itself, becomes aware of surrounding thousands like itself, in the love and care of which it feels a dawning blessedness undreamt of before. From selfishness to love--is not this a rising from the dead? The man whose ambition declares that his way in the world would be to subject everything to his desires, to

bring every human care, affection, power, and aspiration to his feet--such a world it would be, and such a king it would have, if individual ambition might work its will! if a man's opinion of himself could be made out in the world, degrading, compelling, oppressing, doing everything for his own glory!--and such a glory!--but a pang of light strikes this man to the heart; an arrow of truth, feathered with suffering and loss and dismay, finds out--the open joint in his armour, I was going to say--no, finds out the joint in the coffin where his heart lies festering in a death so dead that itself calls it life. He trembles, he awakes, he rises from the dead. No more he seeks the slavery of all: where can he find whom to serve? how can he become if but a threshold in the temple of Christ, where all serve all, and no man thinks first of himself? He to whom the mass of his fellows, as he massed them, was common and unclean, bows before every human sign of the presence of the making God. The sun, which was to him but a candle with which to search after his own ends, wealth, power, place, praise--the world, which was but the cavern where he thus searched--are now full of the mystery of loveliness, full of the truth of which sun and wind and land and sea are symbols and signs. From a withered old age of unbelief, the dim eyes of which refuse the glory of things a passage to the heart, he is raised up a child full of admiration, wonder, and gladness. Everything is glorious to him; he can believe, and therefore he sees. It is from the grave into the sunshine, from the night into the morning, from death into life. To come out of the ugly into the beautiful; out of the mean and selfish into the noble and loving; out of the paltry into the great; out of the false into the true; out of the filthy into the clean; out of the commonplace into the glorious; out of the corruption of disease into the fine vigour and gracious movements of health; in a word, out of evil into good--is not this a resurrection indeed--_the_ resurrection of all, the resurrection of Life? God grant that with St. Paul we may attain to this resurrection of the dead.

"This rising from the dead is often a long and a painful process. Even after he had preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and suffered much for the sake of his Master, Paul sees the resurrection of the dead towering grandly before him, not yet climbed, not yet attained unto--a mountainous splendour and marvel, still shining aloft in the air of existence, still, thank God, to be attained, but ever growing in height and beauty as, forgetting those things that are behind, he presses towards the mark, if by any means he may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Every blessed moment in which a man bethinks himself that he has been forgetting his high calling, and sends up to the Father a prayer for aid; every time a man resolves that what he has been doing he will do no more; every time that the love of God, or the feeling of the truth, rouses a man to look first up at the light, then down at the skirts of his own garments--that moment a divine resurrection is wrought in the earth. Yea, every time that a man passes from resentment to forgiveness, from cruelty to compassion, from hardness to tenderness, from indifference to carefulness, from selfishness to honesty, from honesty to generosity, from generosity to love,--a resurrection, the bursting of a fresh bud of life out of the grave of evil, gladdens the eye of the Father watching his children. Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light. As the harvest rises from the wintry earth, so rise thou up from the trials of this world a full ear in the harvest of Him who sowed thee in the soil that thou mightest rise above it. As the summer rises from the winter, so rise thou from the cares of eating and drinking and clothing into the fearless sunshine of confidence in the Father. As the morning rises out of the night, so rise thou from the darkness of ignorance to do the will of God in the daylight; and as a man feels that he is himself when he wakes from the troubled and grotesque visions of the night into the glory of the sunrise, even so wilt thou feel

that then first thou knowest what thy life, the gladness of thy being, is.
As from painful tossing in disease, rise into the health of well-being. As
from the awful embrace of thy own dead body, burst forth in thy spiritual
body. Arise thou, responsive to the indwelling will of the Father, even as
thy body will respond to thy indwelling soul.

'White wings are crossing;
Glad waves are tossing;
The earth flames out in crimson and green:

Spring is appearing,
Summer is nearing--
Where hast thou been?

Down in some cavern,
Death's sleepy tavern,
Housing, carousing with spectres of night?
The trumpet is pealing
Sunshine and healing--
Spring to the light."

With this quotation from a friend's poem, I closed my sermon, oppressed
with a sense of failure; for ever the marvel of simple awaking, the mere
type of the resurrection eluded all my efforts to fix it in words. I had to
comfort myself with the thought that God is so strong that he can work even
with our failures.

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