

The Seaboard Parish Vol. 3

George MacDonald

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THE SEABOARD PARISH

BY GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

A WALK WITH MY WIFE.

The autumn was creeping up on the earth, with winter holding by its skirts behind; but before I loose my hold of the garments of summer, I must write a chapter about a walk and a talk I had one night with my wife. It had rained a good deal during the day, but as the sun went down the air began to clear, and when the moon shone out, near the full, she walked the heavens, not "like one that hath been led astray," but as "queen and huntress, chaste and fair."

"What a lovely night it is!" said Ethelwyn, who had come into my study--where I always sat with unblinded windows, that the night and her creatures might look in upon me--and had stood gazing out for a moment.

"Shall we go for a little turn?" I said.

"I should like it very much," she answered. "I will go and put on my bonnet at once."

In a minute or two she looked in again, all ready. I rose, laid aside my Plato, and went with her. We turned our steps along the edge of the down, and descended upon the breakwater, where we seated ourselves upon the same spot where in the darkness I had heard the voices of Joe and Agnes. What a different night it was from that! The sea lay as quiet as if it could not move for the moonlight that lay upon it. The glory over it was so mighty in its peacefulness, that the wild element beneath was afraid to toss itself even with the motions of its natural unrest. The moon was like the face of a saint before which the stormy people has grown dumb. The rocks stood up solid and dark in the universal aether, and the pulse of the ocean throbbed against them with a lapping gush, soft as the voice of a passionate child soothed into shame of its vanished petulance. But the sky was the glory. Although no breath moved below, there was a gentle wind abroad in the upper regions. The air was full of masses of cloud, the vanishing fragments of the one great vapour which had been pouring down in rain the most of the day. These masses were all setting with one steady motion eastward into the abysses of space; now obscuring the fair moon, now solemnly sweeping away from before her. As they departed, out shone her marvellous radiance, as calm as ever. It was plain that she knew nothing of what we called her covering, her obscuration, the dimming of her glory. She had been busy all the time weaving her lovely opaline damask on the other side of the mass in which we said she was swallowed up.

"Have you ever noticed, wife," I said, "how the eyes of our minds--almost our bodily eyes--are opened sometimes to the cubicalness of nature, as it were?"

"I don't know, Harry, for I don't understand your question," she answered.

"Well, it was a stupid way of expressing what I meant. No human being could have understood it from that. I will make you understand in a moment, though. Sometimes--perhaps generally--we see the sky as a flat dome, spangled with star-points, and painted blue. Now I see it as an awful depth of blue air, depth within depth; and the clouds before me are not passing away to the left, but sinking away from the front of me into the marvellous unknown regions, which, let philosophers say what they will about time and space,--and I daresay they are right,--are yet very awful to me. Thank God, my dear," I said, catching hold of her arm, as the terror of mere space grew upon me, "for himself. He is deeper than space, deeper than time; he is the heart of all the cube of history."

"I understand you now, husband," said my wife.

"I knew you would," I answered.

"But," she said again, "is it not something the same with the things inside us? I can't put it in words as you do. Do you understand me now?"

"I am not sure that I do. You must try again."

"You understand me well enough, only you like to make me blunder where you can talk," said my wife, putting her hand in mine. "But I will try. Sometimes, after thinking about something for a long time, you come to a conclusion about it, and you think you have settled it plain and clear to yourself, for ever and a day. You hang it upon your wall, like a picture, and are satisfied for a fortnight. But some day, when you happen to cast a look at it, you find that instead of hanging flat on the wall, your picture has gone through it--opens out into some region you don't know where--shows

you far-receding distances of air and sea--in short, where you thought one question was settled for ever, a hundred are opened up for the present hour."

"Bravo, wife !" I cried in true delight. "I do indeed understand you now. You have said it better than I could ever have done. That's the plague of you women! You have been taught for centuries and centuries that there is little or nothing to be expected of you, and so you won't try. Therefore we men know no more than you do whether it is in you or not. And when you do try, instead of trying to think, you want to be in Parliament all at once."

"Do you apply that remark to me, sir?" demanded Ethelwyn.

"You must submit to bear the sins of your kind upon occasion," I answered.

"I am content to do that, so long as yours will help mine," she replied.

"Then I may go on?" I said, with interrogation.

"Till sunrise if you like. We were talking of the cubicalness--I believe you called it--of nature."

"And you capped it with the cubicalness of thought. And quite right too. There are people, as a dear friend of mine used to say, who are so accustomed to regard everything in the _flat_, as dogma cut and--not _always_ dried my moral olfactories aver--that if you prove to them the very thing they believe, but after another mode than that they have been accustomed to, they are offended, and count you a heretic. There is no help for it. Even St. Paul's chief opposition came from the Judaizing Christians of his time, who did not believe that God _could_ love the Gentiles, and therefore regarded him as a teacher of falsehood. We must not be fierce with them. Who knows what wickedness of their ancestors goes to account for their stupidity? For that there are stupid people, and that they are, in very consequence of their stupidity, conceited, who can deny? The worst of it is, that no man who is conceited can be convinced of the fact."

"Don't say that, Harry. That is to deny conversion."

"You are right, Ethelwyn. The moment a man is convinced of his folly, he ceases to be a fool. The moment a man is convinced of his conceit, he ceases to be conceited. But there _must_ be a final judgment, and the true man will welcome it, even if he is to appear a convicted fool. A man's business is to see first that he is not acting the part of a fool, and next, to help any honest people who care about the matter to take heed likewise that they be not offering to pull the mote out of their brother's eye. But there are even societies established and supported by good people for the express purpose of pulling out motes.--"The Mote-Pulling Society!--That ought to take with a certain part of the public."

"Come, come, Harry. You are absurd. Such people don't come near you."

"They can't touch me. No. But they come near good people whom I know, brandishing the long pins with which they pull the motes out, and threatening them with judgment before their time. They are but pins, to be sure--not daggers."

"But you have wandered, Harry, into the narrowest underground, musty ways, and have forgotten all about 'the cubicalness of nature.'"

"You are right, my love, as you generally are," I answered, laughing. "Look at that great antlered elk, or moose--fit quarry for Diana of the silver bow. Look how it glides solemnly away into the unpastured depths of the aerial deserts. Look again at that reclining giant, half raised upon his arm, with his face turned towards the wilderness. What eyes they must be under those huge brows! On what message to the nations is he borne as by the slow sweep of ages, on towards his mysterious goal?"

"Stop, stop, Harry," said my wife. "It makes me unhappy to hear grand words clothing only cloudy fancies. Such words ought to be used about the truth, and the truth only."

"If I could carry it no further, my dear, then it would indeed be a degrading of words. But there never was a vagary that uplifted the soul, or made the grand words flow from the gates of speech, that had not its counterpart in truth itself. Man can imagine nothing, even in the clouds of the air, that God has not done, or is not doing. Even as that cloudy giant yields, and is 'shepherded by the slow unwilling wind,' so is each of us borne onward to an unseen destiny--a glorious one if we will but yield to the Spirit of God that bloweth where it listeth--with a grand listing--coming whence we know not, and going whither we know not. The very clouds of the air are hung up as dim pictures of the thoughts and history of man."

"I do not mind how long you talk like that, husband, even if you take the clouds for your text. But it did make me miserable to think that what you were saying had no more basis than the fantastic forms which the clouds assume. I see I was wrong, though."

"The clouds themselves, in such a solemn stately march as this, used to make me sad for the very same reason. I used to think, What is it all for? They are but vapours blown by the wind. They come nowhence, and they go nowhither. But now I see them and all things as ever moving symbols of the motions of man's spirit and destiny."

A pause followed, during which we sat and watched the marvellous depth of the heavens, deep as I do not think I ever saw them before or since, covered with a stately procession of ever-appearing and ever-vanishing forms--great sculpturesque blocks of a shattered storm--the icebergs of the upper sea. These were not far off against a blue background, but floating near us in the heart of a blue-black space, gloriously lighted by a golden rather than silvery moon. At length my wife spoke.

"I hope Mr. Percivale is out to-night," she said. "How he must be enjoying it if he is!"

"I wonder the young man is not returning to his professional labours," I said. "Few artists can afford such long holidays as he is taking."

"He is laying in stock, though, I suppose," answered my wife.

"I doubt that, my dear. He said not, on one occasion, you may remember."

"Yes, I remember. But still he must paint better the more familiar he gets with the things God cares to fashion."

"Doubtless. But I am afraid the work of God he is chiefly studying at present is our Wynnies."

"Well, is she not a worthy object of his study?" returned Ethelwyn, looking

up in my face with an arch expression.

"Doubtless again, Ethel; but I hope she is not studying him quite so much in her turn. I have seen her eyes following him about."

My wife made no answer for a moment. Then she said,

"Don't you like him, Harry?"

"Yes. I like him very much."

"Then why should you not like Wynnie to like him?"

"I should like to be surer of his principles, for one thing."

"I should like to be surer of Wynnie's."

I was silent. Ethelwyn resumed.

"Don't you think they might do each other good?"

Still I could not reply.

"They both love the truth, I am sure; only they don't perhaps know what it is yet. I think if they were to fall in love with each other, it would very likely make them both more desirous of finding it still."

"Perhaps," I said at last. "But you are talking about awfully serious things, Ethelwyn."

"Yes, as serious as life," she answered.

"You make me very anxious," I said. "The young man has not, I fear, any means of gaining a livelihood for more than himself."

"Why should he before he wanted it? I like to see a man who can be content with an art and a living by it."

"I hope I have not been to blame in allowing them to see so much of each other," I said, hardly heeding my wife's words.

"It came about quite naturally," she rejoined. "If you had opposed their meeting, you would have been interfering just as if you had been Providence. And you would have only made them think more about each other."

"He hasn't said anything--has he?" I asked in positive alarm.

"O dear no. It may be all my fancy. I am only looking a little ahead. I confess I should like him for a son-in-law. I approve of him," she added, with a sweet laugh.

"Well," I said, "I suppose sons-in-law are possible, however disagreeable, results of having daughters."

I tried to laugh, but hardly succeeded.

"Harry," said my wife, "I don't like you in such a mood. It is not like you at all. It is unworthy of you."

"How can I help being anxious when you speak of such dreadful things as the possibility of having to give away my daughter, my precious wonder that came to me through you, out of the infinite--the tender little darling!"

"'Out of the heart of God,' you used to say, Henry. Yes, and with a destiny he had ordained. It is strange to me how you forget your best and noblest teaching sometimes. You are always telling us to trust in God. Surely it is a poor creed that will only allow us to trust in God for ourselves--a very selfish creed. There must be something wrong there. I should say that the man who can only trust God for himself is not half a Christian. Either he is so selfish that that satisfies him, or he has such a poor notion of God that he cannot trust him with what most concerns him. The former is not your case, Harry: is the latter, then?--You see I must take my turn at the preaching sometimes. Mayn't I, dearest?"

She took my hand in both of hers. The truth arose in my heart. I never loved my wife more than at that moment. And now I could not speak for other reasons. I saw that I had been faithless to my God, and the moment I could command my speech, I hastened to confess it.

"You are right, my dear," I said, "quite right. I have been wicked, for I have been denying my God. I have been putting my providence in the place of his--trying, like an anxious fool, to count the hairs on Wynnies head, instead of being content that the grand loving Father should count them. My love, let us pray for Wynnies; for what is prayer but giving her to God and his holy, blessed will?"

We sat hand in hand. Neither spoke aloud for some minutes, but we spoke in our hearts to God, talking to him about Wynnies. Then we rose together, and walked homeward, still in silence. But my heart and hand clung to my wife as to the angel whom God had sent to deliver me out of the prison of my faithlessness. And as we went, lo! the sky was glorious again. It had faded from my sight, had grown flat as a dogma, uninteresting as "a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours;" the moon had been but a round thing with the sun shining upon it, and the stars were only minding their own business. But now the solemn march towards an unseen, unimagined goal had again begun. Wynnies life was hid with Christ in God. Away strode the cloudy pageant with its banners blowing in the wind, which blew where it grandly listed, marching as to a solemn triumphal music that drew them from afar towards the gates of pearl by which the morning walks out of the New Jerusalem to gladden the nations of the earth. Solitary stars, with all their sparkles drawn in, shone, quiet as human eyes, in the deep solemn clefts of dark blue air. They looked restrained and still, as if they knew all about it--all about the secret of this midnight march. For the moon--she saw the sun, and therefore made the earth glad.

"You have been a moon to me this night, my wife," I said. "You were looking full at the truth, while I was dark. I saw its light in your face, and believed, and turned my soul to the sun. And now I am both ashamed and glad. God keep me from sinning so again."

"My dear husband, it was only a mood--a passing mood," said Ethelwyn, seeking to comfort me.

"It was a mood, and thank God it is now past; but it was a wicked one. It was a mood in which the Lord might have called me a devil, as he did St. Peter. Such moods have to be grappled with and fought the moment they appear. They must not have their way for a single thought even."

"But we can't help it always, can we, husband?"

"We can't help it out and out, because our wills are not yet free with the freedom God is giving us as fast as we will let him. When we are able to will thoroughly, then we shall do what we will. At least, I think we shall. But there is a mystery in it God only understands. All we know is, that we can struggle and pray. But a mood is an awful oppression sometimes when you least believe in it and most wish to get rid of it. It is like a headache in the soul."

"What do the people do that don't believe in God?" said Ethelwyn.

The same moment Wynnie, who had seen us pass the window, opened the door of the bark-house for us, and we passed into Connie's chamber and found her lying in the moonlight, gazing at the same heavens as her father and mother had been revelling in.

CHAPTER II.

OUR LAST SHORE-DINNER.

The next day was very lovely. I think it is the last of the kind of which I shall have occasion to write in my narrative of the Seaboard Parish. I wonder if my readers are tired of so much about the common things of Nature. I reason about it something in this way: We are so easily affected by the smallest things that are of the unpleasant kind, that we ought to train ourselves to the influence of those that are of an opposite nature. The unpleasant ones are like the thorns which make themselves felt as we scramble--for we often do scramble in a very undignified manner--through the thickets of life; and, feeling the thorns, we grumble, and are blind to all but the thorns. The flowers, and the lovely leaves, and the red berries, and the clusters of filberts, and the birds'-nests do not force themselves upon our attention as the thorns do, and the thorns make us forget to look for them. But a scratch would be forgotten--and that in mental hurts is often equivalent to a cure, for a forgotten scratch on the mind or heart will never fester--if we but allowed our being a moment's repose upon any of the quiet, waiting, unobtrusive beauties that lie around the half-trodden way, offering their gentle healing. And when I think how, not unfrequently, otherwise noble characters are anything but admirable when under the influence of trifling irritations, the very paltriness of which seems what the mind, which would at once rouse itself to a noble endurance of any mighty evil, is unable to endure, I would gladly help so with sweet antidotes to defeat the fly in the ointment of the apothecary that the whole pot shall send forth a pure savour. We ought for this to cultivate the friendships of little things. Beauty is one of the surest antidotes to vexation. Often when life looked dreary about me, from some real or fancied injustice or indignity, has a thought of truth been flashed into my mind from a flower, a shape of frost, or even a lingering shadow--not to mention such glories as angel-winged clouds, rainbows, stars, and sunrises. Therefore I hope that in my loving delay

over such aspects of Nature as impressed themselves upon me in this most memorable part of my history I shall not prove wearisome to my reader, for therein I should utterly contravene my hope and intent in the recording of them.

This day there was to be an unusually low tide, and we had reckoned on enlarging our acquaintance with the bed of the ocean--of knowing a few yards more of the millions of miles lapt in the mystery of waters. It was to be low water about two o'clock, and we resolved to dine upon the sands. But all the morning the children were out playing on the threshold of old Neptune's palace; for in his quieter mood he will, like a fierce mastiff, let children do with him what they will. I gave myself a whole holiday--sometimes the most precious part of my life both for myself and those for whom I labour--and wandered about on the shore, now passing the children, and assailed with a volley of cries and entreaties to look at this one's castle and that one's ditch, now leaving them behind, with what in its ungraduated flatness might well enough personate an endless desert of sand between, over the expanse of which I could imagine them disappearing on a far horizon, whence however a faint occasional cry of excitement and pleasure would reach my ears. The sea was so calm, and the shore so gently sloping, that you could hardly tell where the sand ceased and the sea began--the water sloped to such a thin pellicle, thinner than any knife-edge, upon the shining brown sand, and you saw the sand underneath the water to such a distance out. Yet this depth, which would not drown a red spider, was the ocean. In my mind I followed that bed of shining sand, bared of its hiding waters, out and out, till I was lost in an awful wilderness of chasms, precipices, and mountain-peaks, in whose caverns the sea-serpent may dwell, with his breath of pestilence; the kraken, with "his skaly rind," may there be sleeping

"His ancient dreamless, uninvaded sleep,"

while

"faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides,"

as he lies

"Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep."

There may lie all the horrors that Schiller's diver encountered--the frightful Molch, and that worst of all, to which he gives no name, which came creeping with a hundred knots at once; but here are only the gracious rainbow-woven shells, an evanescent jelly or two, and the queer baby-crabs that crawl out from the holes of the bordering rocks. What awful gradations of gentleness lead from such as these down to those cabins where wallow the inventions of Nature's infancy, when, like a child of untutored imagination, she drew on the slate of her fancy creations in which flitting shadows of beauty serve only to heighten the shuddering, gruesome horror. The sweet sun and air, the hand of man, and the growth of the ages, have all but swept such from the upper plains of the earth. What hunter's bow has twanged, what adventurer's rifle has cracked in those leagues of mountain-waste, vaster than all the upper world can show, where the beasts of the ocean "graze the sea-weed, their pasture"! Diana of the silver bow herself, when she descends into the interlunar caves of hell, sends no such monsters fleeing from her spells. Yet if such there be, such horrors too must lie in the undiscovered caves of man's nature, of which all this outer world is but a typical analysis. By equally slow gradations may the inner

eye descend from the truth of a Cordelia to the falsehood of an Iago. As these golden sands slope from the sunlight into the wallowing abyss of darkness, even so from the love of the child to his holy mother slopes the inclined plane of humanity to the hell of the sensualist. "But with one difference in the moral world," I said aloud, as I paced up and down on the shimmering margin, "that everywhere in the scale the eye of the all-seeing Father can detect the first quiver of the eyelid that would raise itself heavenward, responsive to his waking spirit." I lifted my eyes in the relief of the thought, and saw how the sun of the autumn hung above the waters oppressed with a mist of his own glory; far away to the left a man who had been clambering on a low rock, inaccessible save in such a tide, gathering mussels, threw himself into the sea and swam ashore; above his head the storm-tower stood in the stormless air; the sea glittered and shone, and the long-winged birds knew not which to choose, the balmy air or the cool deep, now flitting like arrow-heads through the one, now alighting eagerly upon the other, to forsake it anew for the thinner element. I thanked God for his glory.

"O, papa, it's so jolly--so jolly!" shouted the children as I passed them again.

"What is it that's so jolly, Charlie?" I asked.

"My castle," screeched Harry in reply; "only it's tumbled down. The water _would_ keep coming in underneath."

"I tried to stop it with a newspaper," cried Charlie, "but it wouldn't. So we were forced to let it be, and down it went into the ditch."

"We blew it up rather than surrender," said Dora. "We did; only Harry always forgets, and says it was the water did it."

I drew near the rock that held the bath. I had never approached it from this side before. It was high above my head, and a stream of water was flowing from it. I scrambled up, undressed, and plunged into its dark hollow, where I felt like one of the sea-beasts of which I had been dreaming, down in the caves of the unvisited ocean. But the sun was over my head, and the air with an edge of the winter was about me. I dressed quickly, descended on the other side of the rock, and wandered again on the sands to seaward of the breakwater, which lay above, looking dry and weary, and worn with years of contest with the waves, which had at length withdrawn defeated to their own country, and left it as if to victory and a useless age of peace. How different was the scene when a raving mountain of water filled all the hollow where I now wandered, and rushed over the top of that mole now so high above me; and I had to cling to its stones to keep me from being carried off like a bit of floating sea-weed! This was the loveliest and strangest part of the shore. Several long low ridges of rock, of whose existence I scarcely knew, worn to a level with the sand, hollowed and channelled with the terrible run of the tide across them, and looking like the old and outworn cheek-teeth of some awful beast of prey, stretched out seawards. Here and there amongst them rose a well-known rock, but now so changed in look by being lifted all the height between the base on the waters, and the second base in the sand, that I wondered at each, walking round and viewing it on all sides. It seemed almost a fresh growth out of the garden of the shore, with uncouth hollows around its fungous root, and a forsaken air about its brows as it stood in the dry sand and looked seaward. But what made the chief delight of the spot, closed in by rocks from the open sands, was the multitude of fairy rivers that flowed across it to the sea. The gladness these streams gave me I cannot communicate. The

tide had filled thousands of hollows in the breakwater, hundreds of cracked basins in the rocks, huge sponges of sand; from all of which--from cranny and crack, and oozing sponge--the water flowed in restricted haste back, back to the sea, tumbling in tiny cataracts down the faces of the rocks, bubbling from their roots as from wells, gathering in tanks of sand, and overflowing in broad shallow streams, curving and sweeping in their sandy channels, just like, the great rivers of a continent;--here spreading into smooth silent lakes and reaches, here babbling along in ripples and waves innumerable--flowing, flowing, to lose their small beings in the same ocean that met on the other side the waters of the Mississippi, the Orinoco, the Amazon. All their channels were of golden sand, and the golden sunlight was above and through and in them all: gold and gold met, with the waters between. And what gave an added life to their motion was, that all the ripples made shadows on the clear yellow below them. The eye could not see the rippling on the surface; but the sun saw it, and drew it in multitudinous shadowy motion upon the sand, with the play of a thousand fancies of gold burnished and dead, of sunlight and yellow, trembling, melting, curving, blending, vanishing ever, ever renewed. It was as if all the water-marks upon a web of golden silk had been set in wildest yet most graceful curvilinear motion by the breath of a hundred playful zephyrs. My eye could not be filled with seeing. I stood in speechless delight for a while, gazing at the "endless ending" which was "the humour of the game," and thinking how in all God's works the laws of beauty are wrought out in evanishment, in birth and death. There, there is no hoarding, but an ever-fresh creating, an eternal flow of life from the heart of the All-beautiful. Hence even the heart of man cannot hoard. His brain or his hand may gather into its box and hoard; but the moment the thing has passed into the box, the heart has lost it and is hungry again. If man would _have,_ it is the giver he must have; the eternal, the original, the ever-outpouring is alone within his reach; the everlasting _creation_ is his heritage. Therefore all that he makes must be free to come and go through the heart of his child; he can enjoy it only as it passes, can enjoy only its life, its soul, its vision, its meaning, not itself. To hoard rubies and sapphires is as useless and hopeless for the heart, as if I were to attempt to hoard this marvel of sand and water and sunlight in the same iron chest with the musty deeds of my wife's inheritance.

"Father," I murmured half aloud, "thou alone art, and I am because thou art. Thy will shall be mine."

I know that I must have spoken aloud, because I remember the start of consciousness and discomposure occasioned by the voice of Percivale greeting me.

"I beg your pardon," he added; "I did not mean to startle you, Mr. Walton. I thought you were only looking at Nature's childplay--not thinking."

"I know few things _more_ fit to set one thinking than what you have very well called Nature's childplay," I returned. "Is Nature very heartless now, do you think, to go on with this kind of thing at our feet, when away up yonder lies the awful London, with so many sores festering in her heart?"

"You must answer your own question, Mr. Walton. You know I cannot. I confess I feel the difficulty deeply. I will go further, and confess that the discrepancy makes me doubt many things I would gladly believe. I know _you_ are able to distinguish between a glad unbelief and a sorrowful doubt."

"Else were I unworthy of the humblest place in the kingdom--unworthy to be

a doorkeeper in the house of my God," I answered, and recoiled from the sound of my own words; for they seemed to imply that I believed myself worthy of the position I occupied. I hastened to correct them: "But do not mistake my thoughts," I said; "I do not dream of worthiness in the way of honour--only of fitness for the work to be done. For that I think God has fitted me in some measure. The doorkeeper's office may be given him, not because he has done some great deed worthy of the honour, but because he can sweep the porch and scour the threshold, and will, in the main, try to keep them clean. That is all the worthiness I dare to claim, even to hope that I possess."

"No one who knows you can mistake your words, except wilfully," returned Percivale courteously.

"Thank you," I said. "Now I will just ask you, in reference to the contrast between human life and nature, how you will go back to your work in London, after seeing all this child's and other play of Nature? Suppose you had had nothing here but rain and high winds and sea-fogs, would you have been better fitted for doing something to comfort those who know nothing of such influences than you will be now? One of the most important qualifications of a sick-nurse is a ready smile. A long-faced nurse in a sickroom is a visible embodiment and presence of the disease against which the eager life of the patient is fighting in agony. Such ought to be banished, with their black dresses and their mourning-shop looks, from every sick-chamber, and permitted to minister only to the dead, who do not mind looks. With what a power of life and hope does a woman--young or old I do not care--with a face of the morning, a dress like the spring, a bunch of wild flowers in her hand, with the dew upon them, and perhaps in her eyes too (I don't object to that--that is sympathy, not the worship of darkness),--with what a message from nature and life does she, looking death in the face with a smile, dawn upon the vision of the invalid! She brings a little health, a little strength to fight, a little hope to endure, actually lapt in the folds of her gracious garments; for the soul itself can do more than any medicine, if it be fed with the truth of life."

"But are you not--I beg your pardon for interposing on your eloquence with dull objection," said Percivale--"are you not begging all the question? _Is_ life such an affair of sunshine and gladness?"

"If life is not, then I confess all this show of nature is worse than vanity--it is a vile mockery. Life is gladness; it is the death in it that makes the misery. We call life-in-death life, and hence the mistake. If gladness were not at the root, whence its opposite sorrow, against which we arise, from which we recoil, with which we fight? We recognise it as death--the contrary of life. There could be no sorrow but for a recognition of primordial bliss. This in us that fights must be life. It is of the nature of light, not of darkness; darkness is nothing until the light comes. This very childplay, as you call it, of Nature, is her assertion of the secret that life is the deepest, that life shall conquer death. Those who believe this must bear the good news to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Our Lord has conquered death--yea, the moral death that he called the world; and now, having sown the seed of light, the harvest is springing in human hearts, is springing in this dance of radiance, and will grow and grow until the hearts of the children of the kingdom shall frolic in the sunlight of the Father's presence. Nature has God at her heart; she is but the garment of the Invisible. God wears his singing robes in a day like this, and says to his children, 'Be not afraid: your brothers and sisters up there in London are in my hands; go and help them. I am with you. Bear to them the message of joy. Tell them to be of

good cheer: I have overcome the world. Tell them to endure hunger, and not sin; to endure passion, and not yield; to admire, and not desire. Sorrow and pain are serving my ends; for by them will I slay sin; and save my children."

"I wish I could believe as you do, Mr. Walton."

"I wish you could. But God will teach you, if you are willing to be taught."

"I desire the truth, Mr. Walton."

"God bless you! God is blessing you," I said.

"Amen," returned Percivale devoutly; and we strolled away together in silence towards the cliffs.

The recession of the tide allowed us to get far enough away from the face of the rocks to see the general effect. With the lispings of the inch-deep wavelets at our heels we stood and regarded the worn yet defiant, the wasted and jagged yet reposeful face of the guardians of the shore.

"Who could imagine, in weather like this, and with this baby of a tide lying behind us, low at our feet, and shallow as the water a schoolboy pours upon his slate to wash it withal, that those grand cliffs before us bear on their front the scars and dints of centuries, of chiliads of stubborn resistance, of passionate contest with this same creature that is at this moment unable to rock the cradle of an infant? Look behind you, at your feet, Mr. Percivale; look before you at the chasms, rents, caves, and hollows of those rocks."

"I wish you were a painter, Mr. Walton," he said.

"I wish I were," I returned. "At least I know I should rejoice in it, if it had been given me to be one. But why do you say so now?"

"Because you have always some individual predominating idea, which would give interpretation to Nature while it gave harmony, reality, and individuality to your representation of her."

"I know what you mean," I answered; "but I have no gift whatever in that direction. I have no idea of drawing, or of producing the effects of light and shade; though I think I have a little notion of colour--perhaps about as much as the little London boy, who stopped a friend of mine once to ask the way to the field where the buttercups grew, had of nature."

"I wish I could ask your opinion of some of my pictures."

"That I should never presume to give. I could only tell you what they made me feel, or perhaps only think. Some day I may have the pleasure of looking at them."

"May I offer you my address?" he said, and took a card from his pocket-book. "It is a poor place, but if you should happen to think of me when you are next in London, I shall be honoured by your paying me a visit."

"I shall be most happy," I returned, taking his card.--"Did it ever occur to you, in reference to the subject we were upon a few minutes ago, how

little you can do without shadow in making a picture?"

"Little indeed," answered Percivale. "In fact, it would be no picture at all."

"I doubt if the world would fare better without its shadows."

"But it would be a poor satisfaction, with regard to the nature of God, to be told that he allowed evil for artistic purposes."

"It would indeed, if you regard the world as a picture. But if you think of his art as expended, not upon the making of a history or a drama, but upon the making of an individual, a being, a character, then I think a great part of the difficulty concerning the existence of evil which oppresses you will vanish. So long as a creature has not sinned, sin is possible to him. Does it seem inconsistent with the character of God that in order that sin should become impossible he should allow sin to come? that, in order that his creatures should choose the good and refuse the evil, in order that they might become such, with their whole nature infinitely enlarged, as to turn from sin with a perfect repugnance of the will, he should allow them to fall? that, in order that, from being sweet childish children, they should become noble, child-like men and women, he should let them try to walk alone? Why should he not allow the possible in order that it should become impossible? for possible it would ever have been, even in the midst of all the blessedness, until it had been, and had been thus destroyed. Thus sin is slain, uprooted. And the war must ever exist, it seems to me, where there is creation still going on. How could I be content to guard my children so that they should never have temptation, knowing that in all probability they would fail if at any moment it should cross their path? Would the deepest communion of father and child ever be possible between us? Evil would ever seem to be in the child, so long as it was possible it should be there developed. And if this can be said for the existence of moral evil, the existence of all other evil becomes a comparative trifle; nay, a positive good, for by this the other is combated."

"I think I understand you," returned Percivale. "I will think over what you have said. These are very difficult questions."

"Very. I don't think argument is of much use about them, except as it may help to quiet a man's uneasiness a little, and so give his mind peace to think about duty. For about the doing of duty there can be no question, once it is seen. And the doing of duty is the shortest--in very fact, the only way into the light."

As we spoke, we had turned from the cliffs, and wandered back across the salt streams to the sands beyond. From the direction of the house came a little procession of servants, with Walter at their head, bearing the preparations for our dinner--over the gates of the lock, down the sides of the embankment of the canal, and across the sands, in the direction of the children, who were still playing merrily.

"Will you join our early dinner, which is to be out of doors, as you see, somewhere hereabout on the sands?" I said.

"I shall be delighted," he answered, "if you will let me be of some use first. I presume you mean to bring your invalid out."

"Yes; and you shall help me to carry her, if you will."

"That is what I hoped," said Percivale; and we went together towards the parsonage.

As we approached, I saw Wynn timer sitting at the drawing-room window; but when we entered the room, she was gone. My wife was there, however.

"Where is Wynn timer?" I asked.

"She saw you coming," she answered, "and went to get Connie ready; for I guessed Mr. Percivale had come to help you to carry her out."

But I could not help doubting there might be more than that in Wynn timer's disappearance. "What if she should have fallen in love with him," I thought, "and he should never say a word on the subject? That would be dreadful for us all."

They had been repeatedly but not very much together of late, and I was compelled to allow to myself that if they did fall in love with each other it would be very natural on both sides, for there was evidently a great mental resemblance between them, so that they could not help sympathising with each other's peculiarities. And anyone could see what a fine couple they would make.

Wynn timer was much taller than Connie--almost the height of her mother. She had a very fair skin, and brown hair, a broad forehead, a wise, thoughtful, often troubled face, a mouth that seldom smiled, but on which a smile seemed always asleep, and round soft cheeks that dimpled like water when she did smile. I have described Percivale before. Why should not two such walk together along the path to the gates of the light? And yet I could not help some anxiety. I did not know anything of his history. I had no testimony concerning him from anyone that knew him. His past life was a blank to me; his means of livelihood probably insufficient--certainly, I judged, precarious; and his position in society--but there I checked myself: I had had enough of that kind of thing already. I would not willingly offend in that worldliness again. The God of the whole earth could not choose that I should look at such works of his hands after that fashion. And I was his servant--not Mammon's or Belial's.

All this passed through my mind in about three turns of the winnowing-fan of thought. Mr. Percivale had begun talking to my wife, who took no pains to conceal that his presence was pleasant to her, and I went upstairs, almost unconsciously, to Connie's room.

When I opened the door, forgetting to announce my approach as I ought to have done, I saw Wynn timer leaning over Connie, and Connie's arm round her waist. Wynn timer started back, and Connie gave a little cry, for the jerk thus occasioned had hurt her. Wynn timer had turned her head away, but turned it again at Connie's cry, and I saw a tear on her face.

"My darlings, I beg your pardon," I said. "It was very stupid of me not to knock at the door."

Connie looked up at me with large resting eyes, and said--

"It's nothing, papa, Wynn timer is in one of her gloomy moods, and didn't want you to see her crying. She gave me a little pull, that was all. It didn't hurt me much, only I'm such a goose! I'm in terror before the pain comes. Look at me," she added, seeing, doubtless, some perturbation on my countenance, "I'm all right now." And she smiled in my face perfectly.

I turned to Wynn timer, put my arm about her, kissed her cheek, and left the room. I looked round at the door, and saw that Connie was following me with her eyes, but Wynn timer's were hidden in her handkerchief.

I went back to the drawing-room, and in a few minutes Walter came to announce that dinner was about to be served. The same moment Wynn timer came to say that Connie was ready. She did not lift her eyes, or approach to give Percivale any greeting, but went again as soon as she had given her message. I saw that he looked first concerned and then thoughtful.

"Come, Mr. Percivale," I said; and he followed me up to Connie's room.

Wynn timer was not there; but Connie lay, looking lovely, all ready for going. We lifted her, and carried her by the window out on the down, for the easiest way, though the longest, was by the path to the breakwater, along its broad back and down from the end of it upon the sands. Before we reached the breakwater, I found that Wynn timer was following behind us. We stopped in the middle of it, and set Connie down, as if I wanted to take breath. But I had thought of something to say to her, which I wanted Wynn timer to hear without its being addressed to her.

"Do you see, Connie," I said, "how far off the water is?"

"Yes, papa; it is a long way off. I wish I could get up and run down to it."

"You can hardly believe that all between, all those rocks, and all that sand, will be covered before sunset."

"I know it will be. But it doesn't look likely, does it, papa!"

"Not the least likely, my dear. Do you remember that stormy night when I came through your room to go out for a walk in the dark?"

"Remember it, papa? I cannot forget it. Every time I hear the wind blowing when I wake in the night I fancy you are out in it, and have to wake myself up' quite to get rid of the thought."

"Well, Connie, look down into the great hollow there, with rocks and sand at the bottom of it, stretching far away."

"Yes, papa."

"Now look over the side of your litter. You see those holes all about between the stones?"

"Yes, papa."

"Well, one of those little holes saved my life that night, when the great gulf there was full of huge mounds of roaring water, which rushed across this breakwater with force enough to sweep a whole cavalry regiment off its back."

"Papa!" exclaimed Connie, turning pale.

Then first I told her all the story. And Wynn timer listened behind.

"Then I was right in being frightened, papa!" cried Connie, bursting into

tears; for since her accident she could not well command her feelings.

"You were right in trusting in God, Connie."

"But you might have been drowned, papa!" she sobbed.

"Nobody has a right to say that anything might have been other than what has been. Before a thing has happened we can say might or might not; but that has to do only with our ignorance. Of course I am not speaking of things wherein we ought to exercise will and choice. That is our department. But this does not look like that now, does it? Think what a change--from the dark night and the roaring water to this fulness of sunlight and the bare sands, with the water lispings on their edge away there in the distance. Now, I want you to think that in life troubles will come which look as if they would never pass away; the night and the storm look as if they would last for ever; but the calm and the morning cannot be stayed; the storm in its very nature is transient. The effort of Nature, as that of the human heart, ever is to return to its repose, for God is Peace."

"But if you will excuse me, Mr. Walton," said Percivale, "you can hardly expect experience to be of use to any but those who have had it. It seems to me that its influences cannot be imparted."

"That depends on the amount of faith in those to whom its results are offered. Of course, as experience, it can have no weight with another; for it is no longer experience. One remove, and it ceases. But faith in the person who has experienced can draw over or derive--to use an old Italian word--some of its benefits to him who has the faith. Experience may thus, in a sense, be accumulated, and we may go on to fresh experience of our own. At least I can hope that the experience of a father may take the form of hope in the minds of his daughters. Hope never hurt anyone, never yet interfered with duty; nay, always strengthens to the performance of duty, gives courage, and clears the judgment. St. Paul says we are saved by hope. Hope is the most rational thing in the universe. Even the ancient poets, who believed it was delusive, yet regarded it as an antidote given by the mercy of the gods against some, at least, of the ills of life."

"But they counted it delusive. A wise man cannot consent to be deluded."

"Assuredly not. The sorest truth rather than a false hope! But what is a false hope? Only one that ought not to be fulfilled. The old poets could give themselves little room for hope, and less for its fulfilment; for what were the gods in whom they believed--I cannot say in whom they trusted? Gods who did the best their own poverty of being was capable of doing for men when they gave them the illusion of hope. But I see they are waiting for us below. One thing I repeat--the waves that foamed across the spot where we now stand are gone away, have sunk and vanished."

"But they will come again, papa," faltered Wynnie.

"And God will come with them, my love," I said, as we lifted the litter.

In a few minutes more we were all seated on the sand around a table-cloth spread upon it. I shall never forget the peace and the light outside and in, as far as I was concerned at least, and I hope the others too, that afternoon. The tide had turned, and the waves were creeping up over the level, soundless almost as thought; but it would be time to go home long before they had reached us. The sun was in the western half of the sky, and

now and then a breath of wind came from the sea, with a slight saw-edge in it, but not enough to hurt. Connie could stand much more in that way now. And when I saw how she could move herself on her couch, and thought how much she had improved since first she was laid upon it, hope for her kept fluttering joyously in my heart. I could not help fancying even that I saw her move her legs a little; but I could not be in the least sure; and she, if she did move them, was clearly unconscious of it. Charles and Harry were every now and then starting up from their dinner and running off with a shout, to return with apparently increased appetite for the rest of it; and neither their mother nor I cared to interfere with the indecorum. Dora alone took it upon her to rebuke them. Wynn timer was very silent, but looked more cheerful. Connie seemed full of quiet bliss. My wife's face was a picture of heavenly repose. The old nurse was walking about with the baby, occasionally with one hand helping the other servants to wait upon us. They, too, seemed to have a share in the gladness of the hour, and, like Ariel, did their spiriting gently.

"This is the will of God," I said, after the things were removed, and we had sat for a few moments in silence.

"What is the will of God, husband?" asked Ethelwyn.

"Why, this, my love," I answered; "this living air, and wind, and sea, and light, and land all about us; this consenting, consorting harmony of Nature, that mirrors a like peace in our souls. The perfection of such visions, the gathering of them all in one was, is, I should say, in the face of Christ Jesus. You will say that face was troubled sometimes. Yes, but with a trouble that broke not the music, but deepened the harmony. When he wept at the grave of Lazarus, you do not think it was for Lazarus himself, or for his own loss of him, that he wept? That could not be, seeing he had the power to call him back when he would. The grief was for the poor troubled hearts left behind, to whom it was so dreadful because they had not faith enough in his Father, the God of life and love, who was looking after it all, full of tenderness and grace, with whom Lazarus was present and blessed. It was the aching, loving heart of humanity for which he wept, that needed God so awfully, and could not yet trust in him. Their brother was only hidden in the skirts of their Father's garment, but they could not believe that: they said he was dead--lost--away--all gone, as the children say. And it was so sad to think of a whole world full of the grief of death, that he could not bear it without the human tears to help his heart, as they help ours. It was for our dark sorrows that he wept. But the peace could be no less plain on the face that saw God. Did you ever think of that wonderful saying: 'Again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father'? The heart of man would have joined the 'because I go to the Father' with the former result--the not seeing of him. The heart of man is not able, without more and more light, to understand that all vision is in the light of the Father. Because Jesus went to the Father, therefore the disciples saw him tenfold more. His body no longer in their eyes, his very being, his very self was in their hearts--not in their affections only--in their spirits, their heavenly consciousness."

As I said this, a certain hymn, for which I had and have an especial affection, came into my mind, and, without prologue or introduction, I repeated it:

"If I Him but have,
If he be but mine,
If my heart, hence to the grave,
Ne'er forgets his love divine--

Know I nought of sadness,
Feel I nought but worship, love, and gladness.

If I Him but have,
Glad with all I part;
Follow on my pilgrim staff
My Lord only, with true heart;
Leave them, nothing saying,
On broad, bright, and crowded highways straying.

If I Him but have,
Glad I fall asleep;
Aye the flood that his heart gave
Strength within my heart shall keep,
And with soft compelling
Make it tender, through and through it swelling.

If I Him but have,
Mine the world I hail!
Glad as cherub smiling grave,
Holding back the virgin's veil.
Sunk and lost in seeing,
Earthly fears have died from all my being.

Where I have but Him
Is my Fatherland;
And all gifts and graces come
Heritage into my hand:
Brothers long deplored
I in his disciples find restored."

"What a lovely hymn, papa!" exclaimed Connie. She could always speak more easily than either her mother or sister. "Who wrote it?"

"Friedrich von Hardenberg, known, where he is known, as Novalis."

"But he must have written it in German. Did you translate it?"

"Yes. You will find, I think, that I have kept form, thought, and feeling, however I may have failed in making an English poem of it."

"O, you dear papa, it is lovely! Is it long since you did it?"

"Years before you were born, Connie."

"To think of you having lived so long, and being one of us!" she returned. "Was he a Roman Catholic, papa?"

"No, he was a Moravian. At least, his parents were. I don't think he belonged to any section of the church in particular."

"But oughtn't he, papa?"

"Certainly not, my dear, except he saw good reason for it. But what is the use of asking such questions, after a hymn like that?"

"O, I didn't think anything bad, papa, I assure you. It was only that I wanted to know more about him."

The tears were in her eyes, and I was sorry I had treated as significant what was really not so. But the constant tendency to consider Christianity as associated of necessity with this or that form of it, instead of as simply obedience to Christ, had grown more and more repulsive to me as I had grown myself, for it always seemed like an insult to my brethren in Christ; hence the least hint of it in my children I was too ready to be down upon like a most unchristian ogre. I took her hand in mine, and she was comforted, for she saw in my face that I was sorry, and yet she could see that there was reason at the root of my haste.

"But," said Wynn timer, who, I thought afterwards, must have strengthened herself to speak from the instinctive desire to show Percivale how far she was from being out of sympathy with what he might suppose formed a barrier between him and me--"But," she said, "the lovely feeling in that poem seems to me, as in all the rest of such poems, to belong only to the New Testament, and have nothing to do with this world round about us. These things look as if they were only for drawing and painting and being glad in, not as if they had relations with all those awful and solemn things. As soon as I try to get the two together, I lose both of them."

"That is because the human mind must begin with one thing and grow to the rest. At first, Christianity seemed to men to have only to do with their conscience. That was the first relation, of course. But even with art it was regarded as having no relation except for the presentment of its history. Afterwards, men forgot the conscience almost in trying to make Christianity comprehensible to the understanding. Now, I trust, we are beginning to see that Christianity is everything or nothing. Either the whole is a lovely fable setting forth the loftiest longing of the human soul after the vision of the divine, or it is such a fact as is the heart not only of theology so called, but of history, politics, science, and art. The treasures of the Godhead must be hidden in him, and therefore by him only can be revealed. This will interpret all things, or it has not yet been. Teachers of men have not taught this, because they have not seen it. If we do not find him in nature, we may conclude either that we do not understand the expression of nature, or have mistaken ideas or poor feelings about him. It is one great business in our life to find the interpretation which will render this harmony visible. Till we find it, we have not seen him to be all in all. Recognising a discord when they touched the notes of nature and society, the hermits forsook the instrument altogether, and contented themselves with a partial symphony--lofty, narrow, and weak. Their example, more or less, has been followed by almost all Christians. Exclusion is so much the easier way of getting harmony in the orchestra than study, insight, and interpretation, that most have adopted it. It is for us, and all who have hope in the infinite God, to widen its basis as we may, to search and find the true tone and right idea, place, and combination of instruments, until to our enraptured ear they all, with one voice of multiform yet harmonious utterance, declare the glory of God and of his Christ."

"A grand idea," said Percivale.

"Therefore likely to be a true one," I returned. "People find it hard to believe grand things; but why? If there be a God, is it not likely everything is grand, save where the reflection of his great thoughts is shaken, broken, distorted by the watery mirrors of our unbelieving and troubled souls? Things ought to be grand, simple, and noble. The ages of eternity will go on showing that such they are and ever have been. God will yet be victorious over our wretched unbeliefs."

I was sitting facing the sea, but with my eyes fixed on the sand, boring holes in it with my stick, for I could talk better when I did not look my familiar faces in the face. I did not feel thus in the pulpit; there I sought the faces of my flock, to assist me in speaking to their needs. As I drew to the close of my last monologue, a colder and stronger blast from the sea blew in my face. I lifted my head, and saw that the tide had crept up a long way, and was coming in fast. A luminous fog had sunk down over the western horizon, and almost hidden the sun, had obscured the half of the sea, and destroyed all our hopes of a sunset. A certain veil as of the commonplace, like that which so often settles down over the spirit of man after a season of vision and glory and gladness, had dropped over the face of Nature. The wind came in little bitter gusts across the dull waters. It was time to lift Connie and take her home.

This was the last time we ate together on the open shore.

CHAPTER III.

A PASTORAL VISIT.

The next morning rose neither "cherche't in a comely cloud" nor "roab'd in flames and amber light," but covered all in a rainy mist, which the wind mingled with salt spray torn from the tops of the waves. Every now and then the wind blew a blastful of larger drops against the window of my study with an angry clatter and clash, as if daring me to go out and meet its ire. The earth was very dreary, for there were no shadows anywhere. The sun was hustled away by the crowding vapours; and earth, sea, and sky were possessed by a gray spirit that threatened wrath. The breakfast-bell rang, and I went down, expecting to find my Wynnie, who was always down first to make the tea, standing at the window with a sad face, giving fit response to the aspect of nature without, her soul talking with the gray spirit. I did find her at the window, looking out upon the restless tossing of the waters, but with no despondent answer to the trouble of nature. On the contrary, her cheek, though neither rosy nor radiant, looked luminous, and her eyes were flashing out upon the ebb-tide which was sinking away into the troubled ocean beyond. Does my girl-reader expect me to tell her next that something had happened? that Percivale had said something to her? or that, at least, he had just passed the window, and given her a look which she might interpret as she pleased? I must disappoint her. It was nothing of the sort. I knew the heart and feeling of my child. It was only that kind nature was in sympathy with her mood. The girl was always more peaceful in storm than in sunshine. I remembered that now. A movement of life instantly began in her when the obligation of gladness had departed with the light. Her own being arose to provide for its own needs. She could smile now when nature required from her no smile in response to hers. And I could not help saying to myself, "She must marry a poor man some day; she is a creature of the north, and not of the south; the hot sun of prosperity would wither her up. Give her a bleak hill-side, and a glint or two of sunshine between the hailstorms, and she will live and grow; give her poverty and love, and life will be interesting to her as a romance; give

her money and position, and she will grow dull and haughty. She will believe in nothing that poet can sing or architect build. She will, like Cassius, scorn her spirit for being moved to smile at anything."

I had stood regarding her for a moment. She turned and saw me, and came forward with her usual morning greeting.

"I beg your pardon, papa: I thought it was Walter."

"I am glad to see a smile on your face, my love."

"Don't think me very disagreeable, papa. I know I am a trouble to you. But I am a trouble to myself first. I fear I have a discontented mind and a complaining temper. But I do try, and I will try hard to overcome it."

"It will not get the better of you, so long as you do the duty of the moment. But I think, as I told you before, that you are not very well, and that your indisposition is going to do you good by making you think about some things you are ready to think about, but which you might have banished if you had been in good health and spirits. You are feeling as you never felt before, that you need a presence in your soul of which at least you haven't enough yet. But I preached quite enough to you yesterday, and I won't go on the same way to-day again. Only I wanted to comfort you. Come and give me my breakfast."

"You do comfort me, papa," she answered, approaching the table. "I know I don't show what I feel as I ought, but you do comfort me much. Don't you like a day like this, papa?"

"I do, my dear. I always did. And I think you take after me in that, as you do in a good many things besides. That is how I understand you so well."

"Do I really take after you, papa? Are you sure that you understand me so well?" she asked, brightening up.

"I know I do," I returned, replying to her last question.

"Better than I do myself?" she asked with an arch smile.

"Considerably, if I mistake not," I answered.

"How delightful! To think that I am understood even when I don't understand myself!"

"But even if I am wrong, you are yet understood. The blessedness of life is that we can hide nothing from God. If we could hide anything from God, that hidden thing would by and by turn into a terrible disease. It is the sight of God that keeps and makes things clean. But as we are both, by mutual confession, fond of this kind of weather, what do you say to going out with me? I have to visit a sick woman."

"You don't mean Mrs. Coombes, papa?"

"No, my dear. I did not hear she was ill."

"O, I daresay it is nothing much. Only old nurse said yesterday she was in bed with a bad cold, or something of that sort."

"We'll call and inquire as we pass,--that is, if you are inclined to go

with me."

"How can you put an _if_ to that, papa?"

"I have just had a message from that cottage that stands all alone on the corner of Mr. Barton's farm--over the cliff, you know--that the woman is ill, and would like to see me. So the sooner we start the better."

"I shall have done my breakfast in five minutes, papa. O, here's mamma!--Mamma, I'm going out for a walk in the rain with papa. You won't mind, will you?"

"I don't think it will do you any harm, my dear. That's all I mind, you know. It was only once or twice when you were not well that I objected to it. I quite agree with your papa, that only lazy people are _glad_ to stay in-doors when it rains."

"And it does blow so delightfully!" said Wynnie, as she left the room to put on her long cloak and her bonnet.

We called at the sexton's cottage, and found him sitting gloomily by the low window, looking seaward.

"I hope your wife is not _very_ poorly, Coombes," I said.

"No, sir. She be very comfortable in bed. Bed's not a bad place to be in in such weather," he answered, turning again a dreary look towards the Atlantic. "Poor things!"

"What a passion for comfort you have, Coombes! How does that come about, do you think?"

"I suppose I was made so, sir."

"To be sure you were. God made you so."

"Surely, sir. Who else?"

"Then I suppose he likes making people comfortable if he makes people like to be comfortable."

"It du look likely enough, sir."

"Then when he takes it out of your hands, you mustn't think he doesn't look after the people you would make comfortable if you could."

"I must mind my work, you know, sir."

"Yes, surely. And you mustn't want to take his out of his hands, and go grumbling as if you would do it so much better if he would only let you get _your_ hand to it."

"I daresay you be right, sir," he said. "I must just go and have a look about, though. Here's Agnes. She'll tell you about mother."

He took his spade from the corner, and went out. He often brought his tools into the cottage. He had carved the handle of his spade all over with the names of the people he had buried.

"Tell your mother, Agnes, that I will call in the evening and see her, if she would like to see me. We are going now to see Mrs. Stokes. She is very poorly, I hear."

"Let us go through the churchyard, papa," said Wynnie, "and see what the old man is doing."

"Very well, my dear. It is only a few steps round."

"Why do you humour the sexton's foolish fancy so much, papa? It is such nonsense! You taught us it was, surely, in your sermon about the resurrection?"

"Most certainly, my dear. But it would be of no use to try to get it out of his head by any argument. He has a kind of craze in that direction. To get people's hearts right is of much more importance than convincing their judgments. Right judgment will follow. All such fixed ideas should be encountered from the deepest grounds of truth, and not from the outsides of their relations. Coombes has to be taught that God cares for the dead more than he does, and therefore it is unreasonable for him to be anxious about them."

When we reached the churchyard we found the old man kneeling on a grave before its headstone. It was a very old one, with a death's-head and cross-bones carved upon the top of it in very high relief. With his pocket-knife he was removing the lumps of green moss out of the hollows of the eyes of the carven skull. We did not interrupt him, but walked past with a nod.

"You saw what he was doing, Wynnie? That reminds me of almost the only thing in Dante's grand poem that troubles me. I cannot think of it without a renewal of my concern, though I have no doubt he is as sorry now as I am that ever he could have written it. When, in the Inferno, he reaches the lowest region of torture, which is a solid lake of ice, he finds the lost plunged in it to various depths, some, if I remember rightly, entirely submerged, and visible only through the ice, transparent as crystal, like the insects found in amber. One man with his head only above the ice, appeals to him as condemned to the same punishment to take pity on him, and remove the lumps of frozen tears from his eyes, that he may weep a little before they freeze again and stop the relief once more. Dante says to him, 'Tell me who you are, and if I do not assist you, I deserve to lie at the bottom of the ice myself.' The man tells him who he is, and explains to him one awful mystery of these regions. Then he says, 'Now stretch forth thy hand, and open my eyes.' 'And,' says Dante, I did not open them for him; and rudeness to him was courtesy."

"But he promised, you said."

"He did; and yet he did not do it. Pity and truth had abandoned him together. One would think little of it comparatively, were it not that Dante is so full of tenderness and grand religion. It is very awful, and may teach us many things."

"But what made you think of that now?"

"Merely what Coombes was about. The visual image was all. He was scooping the green moss out of the eyes of the death's-head on the gravestone."

By this time we were on the top of the downs, and the wind was buffeting

us, and every other minute assailing us with a blast of rain. Wynn timer drew her cloak closer about her, bent her head towards the blast, and struggled on bravely by my side. No one who wants to enjoy a walk in the rain must carry an umbrella; it is pure folly. When we came to one of the stone fences, we cowered down by its side for a few moments to recover our breath, and then struggled on again. Anything like conversation was out of the question. At length we dropped into a hollow, which gave us a little repose. Down below the sea was dashing into the mouth of the glen, or coomb, as they call it there. On the opposite side of the hollow, the little house to which we were going stood up against the gray sky.

"I begin to doubt whether I ought to have brought you, Wynn timer. It was thoughtless of me; I don't mean for your sake, but because your presence may be embarrassing in a small house; for probably the poor woman may prefer seeing me alone."

"I will go back, papa. I sha'n't mind it a bit."

"No; you had better come on. I shall not be long with her, I daresay. We may find some place that you can wait in. Are you wet?"

"Only my cloak. I am as dry as a tortoise inside."

"Come along, then. We shall soon be there."

When we reached the house I found that Wynn timer would not be in the way. I left her seated by the kitchen-fire, and was shown into the room where Mrs. Stokes lay. I cannot say I perceived. But I guessed somehow, the moment I saw her that there was something upon her mind. She was a hard-featured woman, with a cold, troubled black eye that rolled restlessly about. She lay on her back, moving her head from side to side. When I entered she only looked at me, and turned her eyes away towards the wall. I approached the bedside, and seated myself by it. I always do so at once; for the patient feels more at rest than if you stand tall up before her. I laid my hand on hers.

"Are you very ill, Mrs. Stokes?" I said.

"Yes, very," she answered with a groan. "It be come to the last with me."

"I hope not, indeed, Mrs. Stokes. It's not come to the last with us, so long as we have a Father in heaven."

"Ah! but it be with me. He can't take any notice of the like of me."

"But indeed he does, whether you think it or not. He takes notice of every thought we think, and every deed we do, and every sin we commit."

I said the last words with emphasis, for I suspected something more than usual upon her conscience. She gave another groan, but made no reply. I therefore went on.

"Our Father in heaven is not like some fathers on earth, who, so long as their children don't bother them, let them do anything they like. He will not have them do what is wrong. He loves them too much for that."

"He won't look at me," she said half murmuring, half sighing it out, so that I could hardly, hear what she said.

"It is because he is looking at you that you are feeling uncomfortable," I answered. "He wants you to confess your sins. I don't mean to me, but to himself; though if you would like to tell me anything, and I can help you, I shall be very glad. You know Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins; and that's why we call him our Saviour. But he can't save us from our sins if we won't confess that we have any."

"I'm sure I never said but what I be a great sinner, as well as other people."

"You don't suppose that's confessing your sins?" I said. "I once knew a woman of very bad character, who allowed to me she was a great sinner; but when I said, 'Yes, you have done so and so,' she would not allow one of those deeds to be worthy of being reckoned amongst her sins. When I asked her what great sins she had been guilty of, then, seeing these counted for nothing, I could get no more out of her than that she was a great sinner, like other people, as you have just been saying."

"I hope you don't be thinking I ha' done anything of that sort," she said with wakening energy. "No man or woman dare say I've done anything to be ashamed of."

"Then you've committed no sins?" I returned. "But why did you send for me? You must have something to say to me."

"I never did send for you. It must ha' been my husband."

"Ah, then I'm afraid I've no business here!" I returned, rising. "I thought you had sent for me."

She returned no answer. I hoped that by retiring I should set her thinking, and make her more willing to listen the next time I came. I think clergymen may do much harm by insisting when people are in a bad mood, as if they had everything to do, and the Spirit of God nothing at all. I bade her good-day, hoped she would be better soon, and returned to Wynnie.

As we walked home together, I said:

"Wynnie, I was right. It would not have done at all to take you into the sick-room. Mrs. Stokes had not sent for me herself, and rather resented my appearance. But I think she will send for me before many days are over."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ART OF NATURE.

We had a week of hazy weather after this. I spent it chiefly in my study and in Connie's room. A world of mist hung over the sea; it refused to hold any communion with mortals. As if ill-tempered or unhappy, it folded itself in its mantle and lay still.

What was it thinking about? All Nature is so full of meaning, that we cannot help fancying sometimes that she knows her own meanings. She is busy with every human mood in turn--sometimes with ten of them at once--picturing our own inner world before us, that we may see, understand, develop, reform it.

I was turning over some such thought in my mind one morning, when Dora knocked at the door, saying that Mr. Percivale had called, and that mamma was busy, and would I mind if she brought him up to the study.

"Not in the least, my dear," I answered; "I shall be very glad to see him."

"Not much of weather for your sacred craft, Percivale," I said as he entered. "I suppose, if you were asked to make a sketch to-day, it would be much the same as if a stupid woman were to ask you to take her portrait?"

"Not quite so bad as that," said Percivale.

"Surely the human face is more than nature."

"Nature is never stupid."

"The woman might be pretty."

"Nature is full of beauty in her worst moods; while the prettier such a woman, the more stupid she would look, and the more irksome you would feel the task; for you could not help making claims upon her which you would never think of making upon Nature."

"I daresay you are right. Such stupidity has a good deal to do with moral causes. You do not ever feel that Nature is to blame."

"Nature is never ugly. She may be dull, sorrowful, troubled; she may be lost in tears and pallor, but she cannot be ugly. It is only when you rise into animal nature that you find ugliness."

"True in the main only; for no lines of absolute division can be drawn in nature. I have seen ugly flowers."

"I grant it; but they are exceptional; and none of them are without beauty."

"Surely not. The ugliest soul even is not without some beauty. But I grant you that the higher you rise the more is ugliness possible, just because the greater beauty is possible. There is no ugliness to equal in its repulsiveness the ugliness of a beautiful face."

A pause followed.

"I presume," I said, "you are thinking of returning to London now, there seems so little to be gained by remaining here. When this weather begins to show itself I could wish myself in my own parish; but I am sure the change, even through the winter, will be good for my daughter."

"I must be going soon," he answered; "but it would be too bad to take offence at the old lady's first touch of temper. I mean to wait and see whether we shall not have a little bit of St. Martin's summer, as Shakspeare calls it; after which, hail London, queen of smoke and--"

"And what?" I asked, seeing he hesitated.

"'And soap,' I was fancying you would say; for you never will allow the worst of things, Mr. Walton."

"No, surely I will not. For one thing, the worst has never been seen by anybody yet. We have no experience to justify it."

We were chatting in this loose manner when Walter came to the door to tell me that a messenger had come from Mrs. Stokes.

I went down to see him, and found her husband.

"My wife be very bad, sir," he said. "I wish you could come and see her."

"Does she want to see me?" I asked.

"She's been more uncomfortable than ever since you was there last," he said.

"But," I repeated, "has she said she would like to see me?"

"I can't say it, sir," answered the man.

"Then it is you who want me to see her?"

"Yes, sir; but I be sure she do want to see you. I know her way, you see, sir. She never would say she wanted anything in her life; she would always leave you to find it out: so I got sharp at that, sir."

"And then would she allow she had wanted it when you got it her?"

"No, never, sir. She be peculiar--my wife; she always be."

"Does she know that you have come to ask me now?"

"No, sir."

"Have you courage to tell her?"

The man hesitated.

"If you haven't courage to tell her," I resumed, "I have nothing more to say. I can't go; or, rather, I will not go."

"I will tell her, sir."

"Then you will tell her that I refused to come until she sent for me herself."

"Ben't that rather hard on a dying woman, sir?"

"I have my reasons. Except she send for me herself, the moment I go she will take refuge in the fact that she did not send for me. I know your wife's peculiarity too, Mr. Stokes."

"Well, I will tell her, sir. It's time to speak my own mind."

"I think so. It was time long ago. When she sends for me, if it be in the middle of the night, I shall be with her at once."

He left me and I returned to Percivale.

"I was just thinking before you came," I said, "about the relation of Nature to our inner world. You know I am quite ignorant of your art, but I often think about the truths that lie at the root of it."

"I am greatly obliged to you," he said, "for talking about these things. I assure you it is of more service to me than any professional talk. I always think the professions should not herd together so much as they do; they want to be shone upon from other quarters."

"I believe we have all to help each other, Percivale. The sun himself could give us no light that would be of any service to us but for the reflective power of the airy particles through which he shines. But anything I know I have found out merely by foraging for my own necessities."

"That is just what makes the result valuable," he replied. "Tell me what you were thinking."

"I was thinking," I answered, "how everyone likes to see his own thoughts set outside of him, that he may contemplate them _objectively,_ as the philosophers call it. He likes to see the other side of them, as it were."

"Yes, that is, of course, true; else, I suppose, there would be no art at all."

"Surely. But that is not the aspect in which I was considering the question. Those who can so set them forth are artists; and however they may fail of effecting such a representation of their ideas as will satisfy themselves, they yet experience satisfaction in the measure in which they have succeeded. But there are many more men who cannot yet utter their ideas in any form. Mind, I do expect that, if they will only be good, they shall have this power some day; for I do think that many things we call differences in kind, may in God's grand scale prove to be only differences in degree. And indeed the artist--by artist, I mean, of course, architect, musician, painter, poet, sculptor--in many things requires it just as much as the most helpless and dumb of his brethren, seeing in proportion to the things that he can do, he is aware of the things he cannot do, the thoughts he cannot express. Hence arises the enthusiasm with which people hail the work of an artist; they rejoice, namely, in seeing their own thoughts, or feelings, or something like them, expressed; and hence it comes that of those who have money, some hang their walls with pictures of their own choice, others--"

"I beg your pardon," said Percivale, interrupting; "but most people, I fear, hang their walls with pictures of other people's choice, for they don't buy them at all till the artist has got a name."

"That is true. And yet there is a shadow of choice even there; for they won't at least buy what they dislike. And again the growth in popularity may be only what first attracted their attention--not determined their choice."

"But there are others who only buy them for their value in the market."

"Of such is not the talk,' as the Germans would say. In as far as your

description applies, such are only tradesmen, and have no claim to be considered now."

"Then I beg your pardon for interrupting. I am punished more than I deserve, if you have lost your thread."

"I don't think I have. Let me see. Yes. I was saying that people hang their walls with pictures of their choice; or provide music, &c., of their choice. Let me keep to the pictures: their choice, consciously or unconsciously, is determined by some expression that these pictures give to what is in themselves--the buyers, I mean. They like to see their own feelings outside of themselves."

"Is there not another possible motive--that the pictures teach them something?"

"That, I venture to think, shows a higher moral condition than the other, but still partakes of the other; for it is only what is in us already that makes us able to lay hold of a lesson. It is there in the germ, else nothing from without would wake it up."

"I do not quite see what all this has to do with Nature and her influences."

"One step more, and I shall arrive at it. You will admit that the pictures and objects of art of all kinds, with which a man adorns the house he has chosen or built to live in, have thenceforward not a little to do with the education of his tastes and feelings. Even when he is not aware of it, they are working upon him,--for good, if he has chosen what is good, which alone shall be our supposition."

"Certainly; that is clear."

"Now I come to it. God, knowing our needs, built our house for our needs--not as one man may build for another, but as no man can build for himself. For our comfort, education, training, he has put into form for us all the otherwise hidden thoughts and feelings of our heart. Even when he speaks of the hidden things of the Spirit of God, he uses the forms or pictures of Nature. The world is, as it were, the human, unseen world turned inside out, that we may see it. On the walls of the house that he has built for us, God has hung up the pictures--ever-living, ever-changing pictures--of all that passes in our souls. Form and colour and motion are there,--ever-modelling, ever-renewing, never wearying. Without this living portraiture from within, we should have no word to utter that should represent a single act of the inner world. Metaphysics could have no existence, not to speak of poetry, not to speak of the commonest language of affection. But all is done in such spiritual suggestion, portrait and definition are so avoided, the whole is in such fluent evanescence, that the producing mind is only aided, never overwhelmed. It never amounts to representation. It affords but the material which the thinking, feeling soul can use, interpret, and apply for its own purposes of speech. It is, as it were, the forms of thought cast into a lovely chaos by the inferior laws of matter, thence to be withdrawn by what we call the creative genius that God has given to men, and moulded, and modelled, and arranged, and built up to its own shapes and its own purposes."

"Then I presume you would say that no mere transcript, if I may use the word, of nature is the worthy work of an artist."

"It is an impossibility to make a mere transcript. No man can help seeing nature as he is himself, for she has all in her; but if he sees no meaning in especial that he wants to give, his portrait of her will represent only her dead face, not her living impassioned countenance."

"Then artists ought to interpret nature?"

"Indubitably; but that will only be to interpret themselves--something of humanity that is theirs, whether they have discovered it already or not. If to this they can add some teaching for humanity, then indeed they may claim to belong to the higher order of art, however imperfect they may be in their powers of representing--however lowly, therefore, their position may be in that order."

CHAPTER V.

THE SORE SPOT.

We went on talking for some time. Indeed we talked so long that the dinner-hour was approaching, when one of the maids came with the message that Mr. Stokes had called again, wishing to see me. I could not help smiling inwardly at the news. I went down at once, and found him smiling too.

"My wife do send me for you this time, sir," he said. "Between you and me, I cannot help thinking she have something on her mind she wants to tell you, sir."

"Why shouldn't she tell you, Mr. Stokes? That would be most natural. And then, if you wanted any help about it, why, of course, here I am."

"She don't think well enough of my judgment for that, sir; and I daresay she be quite right. She always do make me give in before she have done talking. But she have been a right good wife to me, sir."

"Perhaps she would have been a better if you hadn't given in quite so much. It is very wrong to give in when you think you are right."

"But I never be sure of it when she talk to me awhile."

"Ah, then I have nothing to say except that you ought to have been surer--_sometimes;_ I don't say _always._"

"But she do want you very bad now, sir. I don't think she'll behave to you as she did before. Do come, sir."

"Of course I will--instantly."

I returned to the study, and asked Percivale if he would like to go with me. He looked, I thought, as if he would rather not. I saw that it was hardly kind to ask him.

"Well, perhaps it is better not," I said; "for I do not know how long I may have to be with the poor woman. You had better wait here and take my place

at the dinner-table. I promise not to depose you if I should return before the meal is over."

He thanked me very heartily. I showed him into the drawing-room, told my wife where I was going, and not to wait dinner for me--I would take my chance--and joined Mr. Stokes.

"You have no idea, then," I said, after we had gone about half-way, "what makes your wife so uneasy?"

"No, I haven't," he answered; "except it be," he resumed, "that she was too hard, as I thought, upon our Mary, when she wanted to marry beneath her, as wife thought."

"How beneath her? Who was it she wanted to marry?"

"She did marry him, sir. She has a bit of her mother's temper, you see, and she would take her own way."

"Ah, there's a lesson to mothers, is it not? If they want to have their own way, they mustn't give their own temper to their daughters."

"But how are they to help it, sir?"

"Ah, how indeed? But what is your daughter's husband?"

"A labourer, sir. He works on a farm out by Carpstone."

"But you have worked on Mr. Barton's farm for many years, if I don't mistake?"

"I have, sir; but I am a sort of a foreman now, you see."

"But you weren't so always; and your son-in-law, whether he work his way up or not, is, I presume, much where you were when you married Mrs. Stokes?"

"True as you say, sir; and it's not me that has anything to say about it. I

never gave the man a nay. But you see, my wife, she always do be wanting to get her head up in the world; and since she took to the shopkeeping--"

"The shopkeeping!" I said, with some surprise; "I didn't know that."

"Well, you see, sir, it's only for a quarter or so of the year. You know it's a favourite walk for the folks as comes here for the bathing--past our house, to see the great cave down below; and my wife, she got a bit of a sign put up, and put a few ginger-beer bottles in the window, and--"

"A bad place for the ginger-beer," I said.

"They were only empty ones, with corks and strings, you know, sir. My wife, she know better than put the ginger-beer its own self in the sun. But I do think she carry her head higher after that; and a farm-labourer, as they call them, was none good enough for her daughter."

"And hasn't she been kind to her since she married, then?"

"She's never done her no harm, sir."

"But she hasn't gone to see her very often, or asked her to come and see you very often, I suppose?"

"There's ne'er a one o' them crossed the door of the other," he answered, with some evident feeling of his own in the matter.

"Ah; but you don't approve of that yourself, Stokes?"

"Approve of it? No, sir. I be a farm-labourer once myself; and so I do want to see my own daughter now and then. But she take after her mother, she do. I don't know which of the two it is as does it, but there's no coming and going between Carpstone and this."

We were approaching the house. I told Stokes he had better let her know I was there; for that, if she had changed her mind, it was not too late for me to go home again without disturbing her. He came back saying she was still very anxious to see me.

"Well, Mrs. Stokes, how do you feel to-day?" I asked, by way of opening the conversation. "I don't think you look much worse."

"I be much worse, sir. You don't know what I suffer, or you wouldn't make so little of it. I be very bad."

"I know you are very ill, but I hope you are not too ill to tell me why you are so anxious to see me. You have got something to tell me, I suppose."

With pale and death-like countenance, she appeared to be fighting more with herself than with the disease which yet had nearly overcome her. The drops stood upon her forehead, and she did not speak. Wishing to help her, if I might, I said--

"Was it about your daughter you wanted to speak to me?"

"No," she muttered. "I have nothing to say about my daughter. She was my own. I could do as I pleased with her."

I thought with myself, we must have a word about that by and by, but meantime she must relieve her heart of the one thing whose pressure she feels.

"Then," I said, "you want to tell me about something that was not your own?"

"Who said I ever took what was not my own?" she returned fiercely. "Did Stokes dare to say I took anything that wasn't my own?"

"No one has said anything of the sort. Only I cannot help thinking, from your own words and from your own behaviour, that that must be the cause of your misery."

"It is very hard that the parson should think such things," she muttered again.

"My poor woman," I said, "you sent for me because you had something to confess to me. I want to help you if I can. But you are too proud to confess it yet, I see. There is no use in my staying here. It only does you harm. So I will bid you good-morning. If you cannot confess to me, confess to God."

"God knows it, I suppose, without that."

"Yes. But that does not make it less necessary for you to confess it. How is he to forgive you, if you won't allow that you have done wrong?"

"It be not so easy that as you think. How would you like to say you had took something that wasn't your own?"

"Well, I shouldn't like it, certainly; but if I had it to do, I think I should make haste and do it, and so get rid of it."

"But that's the worst of it; I can't get rid of it."

"But," I said, laying my hand on hers, and trying to speak as kindly as I could, although her whole behaviour would have been exceedingly repulsive but for her evidently great suffering, "you have now all but confessed taking something that did not belong to you. Why don't you summon courage and tell me all about it? I want to help you out of the trouble as easily as ever I can; but I can't if you don't tell me what you've got that isn't yours."

"I haven't got anything," she muttered.

"You had something, then, whatever may have become of it now."

She was again silent.

"What did you do with it?"

"Nothing."

I rose and took up my hat. She stretched out her hand, as if to lay hold of me, with a cry.

"Stop, stop. I'll tell you all about it. I lost it again. That's the worst of it. I got no good of it."

"What was it?"

"A sovereign," she said, with a groan. "And now I'm a thief, I suppose."

"No more a thief than you were before. Rather less, I hope. But do you think it would have been any better for you if you hadn't lost it, and had got some good of it, as you say?"

She was silent yet again.

"If you hadn't lost it you would most likely have been a great deal worse for it than you are--a more wicked woman altogether."

"I'm not a wicked woman."

"It is wicked to steal, is it not?"

"I didn't steal it."

"How did you come by it, then?"

"I found it."

"Did you try to find out the owner?"

"No. I knew whose it was."

"Then it was very wicked not to return it. And I say again, that if you had not lost the sovereign you would have been most likely a more wicked woman than you are."

"It was very hard to lose it. I could have given it back. And then I wouldn't have lost my character as I have done this day."

"Yes, you could; but I doubt if you would."

"I would."

"Now, if you had it, you are sure you would give it back?"

"Yes, that I would," she said, looking me so full in the face that I was sure she meant it.

"How would you give it back? Would you get your husband to take it?"

"No; I wouldn't trust him."

"With the story, you mean I do not wish to imply that he would not restore it?"

"I don't mean that. He would do what I told him."

"How would you return it, then?"

"I should make a parcel of it, and send it."

"Without saying anything about it?"

"Yes. Where's the good? The man would have his own."

"No, he would not. He has a right to your confession, for you have wronged him. That would never do."

"You are too hard upon me," she said, beginning to weep angrily.

"Do you want to get the weight of this sin off your mind?" I said.

"Of course I do. I am going to die. O dear! O dear!"

"Then that is just what I want to help you in. You must confess, or the weight of it will stick there."

"But, if I confess, I shall be expected to pay it back?"

"Of course. That is only reasonable."

"But I haven't got it, I tell you. I have lost it."

"Have you not a sovereign in your possession?"

"No, not one."

"Can't you ask your husband to let you have one?"

"There! I knew it was no use. I knew you would only make matters worse. I do wish I had never seen that wicked money."

"You ought not to abuse the money; it was not wicked. You ought to wish that you had returned it. But that is no use; the thing is to return it now. Has your husband got a sovereign?"

"No. He may ha' got one since I be laid up. But I never can tell him about it; and I should be main sorry to spend one of his hard earning in that way, poor man."

"Well, I'll tell him, and we'll manage it somehow."

I thought for a few moments she would break out in opposition; but she hid her face with the sheet instead, and burst into a great weeping.

I took this as a permission to do as I had said, and went to the room-door and called her husband. He came, looking scared. His wife did not look up, but lay weeping. I hoped much for her and him too from this humiliation before him, for I had little doubt she needed it.

"Your wife, poor woman," I said, "is in great distress because--I do not know when or how--she picked up a sovereign that did not belong to her, and, instead of returning, put it away somewhere and lost it. This is what is making her so miserable."

"Deary me!" said Stokes, in the tone with which he would have spoken to a sick child; and going up to his wife, he sought to draw down the sheet from her face, apparently that he might kiss her; but she kept tight hold of it, and he could not. "Deary me!" he went on; "we'll soon put that all to rights. When was it, Jane, that you found it?"

"When we wanted so to have a pig of our own; and I thought I could soon return it," she sobbed from under the sheet.

"Deary me! Ten years ago! Where did you find it, old woman?"

"I saw Squire Tresham drop it, as he paid me for some ginger-beer he got for some ladies that was with him. I do believe I should ha' given it back at the time; but he made faces at the ginger-beer, and said it was very nasty; and I thought, well, I would punish him for it."

"You see it was your temper that made a thief of you, then," I said.

"My old man won't be so hard on me as you, sir. I wish I had told him first."

"I would wish that too," I said, "were it not that I am afraid you might have persuaded him to be silent about it, and so have made him miserable and wicked too. But now, Stokes, what is to be done? This money must be paid. Have you got it?"

The poor man looked blank.

"She will never be at ease till this money is paid," I insisted.

"Well, sir, I ain't got it, but I'll borrow it of someone; I'll go to master, and ask him."

"No, my good fellow, that won't do. Your master would want to know what you were going to do with it, perhaps; and we mustn't let more people know about it than just ourselves and Squire Tresham. There is no occasion for that. I'll tell you what: I'll give you the money, and you must take it; or, if you like, I will take it to the squire, and tell him all about it. Do you authorise me to do this, Mrs. Stokes?"

"Please, sir. It's very kind of you. I will work hard to pay you again, if it please God to spare me. I am very sorry I was so cross-tempered to you, sir; but I couldn't bear the disgrace of it."

She said all this from under the bed-clothes.

"Well, I'll go," I said; "and as soon as I've had my dinner I'll get a horse and ride over to Squire Tresham's. I'll come back to-night and tell you about it. And now I hope you will be able to thank God for forgiving you this sin; but you must not hide and cover it up, but confess it clean out to him, you know."

She made me no answer, but went on sobbing.

I hastened home, and as I entered sent Walter to ask the loan of a horse which a gentleman, a neighbour, had placed at my disposal.

When I went into the dining-room, I found that they had not sat down to dinner. I expostulated: it was against the rule of the house, when my return was uncertain.

"But, my love," said my wife, "why should you not let us please ourselves sometimes?" Dinner is so much nicer when you are with us."

"I am very glad you think so," I answered. "But there are the children: it is not good for growing creatures to be kept waiting for their meals."

"You see there are no children; they have had their dinner."

"Always in the right, wife; but there's Mr. Percivale."

"I never dine till seven o'clock, to save daylight," he said.

"Then I am beaten on all points. Let us dine."

During dinner I could scarcely help observing how Percivale's eyes followed Wynnies, or, rather, every now and then settled down upon her face. That she was aware, almost conscious of this, I could not doubt. One glance at her satisfied me of that. But certain words of the apostle kept coming again and again into my mind; for they were winged words those, and even when they did not enter they fluttered their wings at my window: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And I kept reminding myself that I must heave the load of sin off me, as I had been urging poor Mrs. Stokes to do; for God was ever seeking to lift it, only he could not without my help, for that would be to do me more harm than good by taking the one thing in which I was like him away from me--my action. Therefore I must have faith in him, and not be afraid; for surely all fear is sin, and one of the most oppressive sins from which the Lord came to save us.

Before dinner was over the horse was at the door. I mounted, and set out for Squire Tresham's.

I found him a rough but kind-hearted elderly man. When I told him the story of the poor woman's misery, he was quite concerned at her suffering. When I produced the sovereign he would not receive it at first, but requested me to take it back to her and say she must keep it by way of an apology for his rudeness about her ginger-beer; for I took care to tell him the whole story, thinking it might be a lesson to him too. But I begged him to take it; for it would, I thought, not only relieve her mind more thoroughly, but help to keep her from coming to think lightly of the affair afterwards. Of course I could not tell him that I had advanced the money, for that would have quite prevented him from receiving it. I then got on my horse again, and rode straight to the cottage.

"Well, Mrs. Stokes," I said, "it's all over now. That's one good thing done. How do you feel yourself now?"

"I feel better now, sir. I hope God will forgive me."

"God does forgive you. But there are more things you need forgiveness for. It is not enough to get rid of one sin. We must get rid of all our sins, you know. They're not nice things, are they, to keep in our hearts? It is just like shutting up nasty corrupting things, dead carcasses, under lock and key, in our most secret drawers, as if they were precious jewels."

"I wish I could be good, like some people, but I wasn't made so. There's my husband now. I do believe he never do anything wrong in his life. But then, you see, he would let a child take him in."

"And far better too. Infinitely better to be taken in. Indeed there is no harm in being taken in; but there is awful harm in taking in."

She did not reply, and I went on:

"I think you would feel a good deal better yet, if you would send for your daughter and her husband now, and make it up with them, especially seeing you are so ill."

"I will, sir. I will directly. I'm tired of having my own way. But I was made so."

"You weren't made to continue so, at all events. God gives us the necessary strength to resist what is bad in us. He is making at you now; only you must give in, else he cannot get on with the making of you. I think very likely he made you ill now, just that you might bethink yourself, and feel that you had done wrong."

"I have been feeling that for many a year."

"That made it the more needful to make you ill; for you had been feeling your duty, and yet not doing it; and that was worst of all. You know Jesus came to lift the weight of our sins, our very sins themselves, off our hearts, by forgiving them and helping us to cast them away from us. Everything that makes you uncomfortable must have sin in it somewhere, and he came to save you from it. Send for your daughter and her husband, and when you have done that you will think of something else to set right

that's wrong."

"But there would be no end to that way of it, sir."

"Certainly not, till everything was put right."

"But a body might have nothing else to do, that way."

"Well, that's the very first thing that has to be done. It is our business in this world. We were not sent here to have our own way and try to enjoy ourselves."

"That is hard on a poor woman that has to work for her bread."

"To work for your bread is not to take your own way, for it is God's way. But you have wanted many things your own way. Now, if you would just take his way, you would find that he would take care you should enjoy your life."

"I'm sure I haven't had much enjoyment in mine."

"That was just because you would not trust him with his own business, but must take it into your hands. If you will but do his will, he will take care that you have a life to be very glad of and very thankful for. And the longer you live, the more blessed you will find it. But I must leave you now, for I have talked to you long enough. You must try and get a sleep. I will come and see you again to-morrow, if you like."

"Please do, sir; I shall be very grateful."

As I rode home I thought, if the lifting of one sin off the human heart was like a resurrection, what would it be when every sin was lifted from every heart! Every sin, then, discovered in one's own soul must be a pledge of renewed bliss in its removing. And when the thought came again of what St. Paul had said somewhere, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," I thought what a weight of sin had to be lifted from the earth, and how blessed it might be. But what could I do for it? I could just begin with myself, and pray God for that inward light which is his Spirit, that so I might see him in everything and rejoice in everything as his gift, and then all things would be holy, for whatsoever is of faith must be the opposite of sin; and that was my part towards heaving the weight of sin, which, like myriads of gravestones, was pressing the life out of us men, off the whole world. Faith in God is life and righteousness--the faith that trusts so that it will obey--none other. Lord, lift the people thou hast made into holy obedience and thanksgiving, that they may be glad in this thy world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GATHERING STORM.

The weather cleared up again the next day, and for a fortnight it was lovely. In this region we saw less of the sadness of the dying year than in our own parish, for there being so few trees in the vicinity of the ocean, the autumn had nowhere to hang out her mourning flags. But there, indeed, so mild is the air, and so equable the temperature all the winter through, compared with the inland counties, that the bitterness of the season is almost unknown. This, however, is no guarantee against furious storms of wind and rain.

Not long after the occurrence last recorded, Turner paid us another visit. I confess I was a little surprised at his being able to get away so soon again; for of all men a country surgeon can least easily find time for a holiday; but he had managed it, and I had no doubt, from what I knew of him, had made thorough provision for his cure in his absence.

He brought us good news from home. Everything was going on well. Weir was working as hard as usual; and everybody agreed that I could not have got a man to take my place better.

He said he found Connie much improved; and, from my own observations, I was sure he was right. She was now able to turn a good way from one side to the other, and finding her health so steady besides, Turner encouraged her in making gentle and frequent use of her strength, impressing it upon her, however, that everything depended on avoiding everything like a jerk or twist of any sort. I was with them when he said this. She looked up at him with a happy smile.

"I will do all I can, Mr. Turner," she said, "to get out of people's way as soon as possible."

Perhaps she saw something in our faces that made her add--

"I know you don't mind the bother I am; but I do. I want to help, and not be helped--more than other people--as soon as possible. I will therefore be as gentle as mamma and as brave as papa, and see if we don't get well, Mr. Turner. I mean to have a ride on old Spry next summer.--I do," she added, nodding her pretty head up from the pillow, when she saw the glance the doctor and I exchanged. "Look here," she went on, poking the eider-down quilt up with her foot.

"Magnificent!" said Turner; "but mind, you must do nothing out of bravado. That won't do at all."

"I have done," said Connie, putting on a face of mock submission.

That day we carried her out for a few minutes, but hardly laid her down, for we were afraid of the damp from the earth. A few feet nearer or farther from the soil will make a difference. It was the last time for many weeks. Anyone interested in my Connie need not be alarmed: it was only because of the weather, not because of her health.

One day I was walking home from a visit I had been paying to Mrs. Stokes. She was much better, in a fair way to recover indeed, and her mental health was improved as well. Her manner to me was certainly very different, and the tone of her voice, when she spoke to her husband especially, was changed: a certain roughness in it was much modified, and I had good hopes that she had begun to climb up instead of sliding down the hill of difficulty, as she had been doing hitherto.

It was a cold and gusty afternoon. The sky eastward and overhead was tolerably clear when I set out from home; but when I left the cottage to return, I could see that some change was at hand. Shaggy vapours of light gray were blowing rapidly across the sky from the west. A wind was blowing fiercely up there, although the gusts down below came from the east. The clouds it swept along with it were formless, with loose fringes--disreputable, troubled, hasty clouds they were, looking like mischief. They reminded me of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," in which he compares the "loose clouds" to hair, and calls them "the locks of the approaching storm." Away to the west, a great thick curtain of fog, of a luminous yellow, covered all the sea-horizon, extending north and south as far as the eye could reach. It looked ominous. A surly secret seemed to lie in its bosom. Now and then I could discern the dim ghost of a vessel through it, as tacking for north or south it came near enough to the edge of the fog to show itself for a few moments, ere it retreated again into its bosom. There was exhaustion, it seemed to me, in the air, notwithstanding the coolness of the wind, and I was glad when I found myself comfortably seated by the drawing-room fire, and saw Wynnie bestirring herself to make the tea.

"It looks stormy, I think, Wynnie," I said.

Her eye lightened, as she looked out to sea from the window.

"You seem to like the idea of it," I added.

"You told me I was like you, papa; and you look as if you liked the idea of it too."

"_Per se_, certainly, a storm is pleasant to me. I should not like a world without storms any more than I should like that Frenchman's idea of the perfection of the earth, when all was to be smooth as a trim-shaven lawn, rocks and mountains banished, and the sea breaking on the shore only in wavelets of ginger-beer or lemonade, I forget which. But the older you grow, the more sides of a thing will present themselves to your contemplation. The storm may be grand and exciting in itself, but you cannot help thinking of the people that are in it. Think for a moment of the multitude of vessels, great and small, which are gathered within the skirts of that angry vapour out there. I fear the toils of the storm are around them. Look at the barometer in the hall, my dear, and tell me what it says."

She went and returned.

"It was not very low, papa--only at rain; but the moment I touched it, the hand dropped an inch."

"Yes, I thought so. All things look stormy. It may not be very bad here, however."

"That doesn't make much difference though, does it, papa?"

"No further than that being creatures in time and space, we must think of things from our own standpoint."

"But I remember very well how, when we were children, you would not let nurse teach us Dr. Watts's hymns for children, because you said they tended to encourage selfishness."

"Yes; I remember it very well. Some of them make the contrast between the misery of others and our own comforts so immediately the apparent--mind, I only say apparent--ground of thankfulness, that they are not fit for teaching. I do think that if you could put Dr. Watts to the question, he would abjure any such intention, saying that only he meant to heighten the sense of our obligation. But it does tend to selfishness and, what is worse, self-righteousness, and is very dangerous therefore. What right have I to thank God that I am not as other men are in anything? I have to thank God for the good things he has given to me; but how dare I suppose that he is not doing the same for other people in proportion to their capacity? I don't like to appear to condemn Dr. Watts's hymns. Certainly he has written the very worst hymns I know; but he has likewise written the best--for public worship, I mean."

"Well, but, papa, I have heard you say that any simple feeling that comes of itself cannot be wrong in itself. If I feel a delight in the idea of a storm, I cannot help it coming."

"I never said you could, my dear. I only said that as we get older, other things we did not feel at first come to show themselves more to us, and impress us more."

Thus my child and I went on, like two pendulums crossing each other in their swing, trying to reach the same dead beat of mutual intelligence.

"But," said Wynnie, "you say everybody is in God's hands as well as we."

"Yes, surely, my dear; as much out in yon stormy haze as here beside the fire."

"Then we ought not to be miserable about them, even if there comes a storm, ought we?"

"No, surely. And, besides, I think if we could help any of them, the very persons that enjoyed the storm the most would be the busiest to rescue them from it. At least, I fancy so. But isn't the tea ready?"

"Yes, papa. I'll just go and tell mamma."

When she returned with her mother, and the children had joined us, Wynnie resumed the talk.

"I know what I am going to say is absurd, papa, and yet I don't see my way out of it--logically, I suppose you would call it. What is the use of taking any trouble about them if they are in God's hands? Why should we try to take them out of God's hands?"

"Ah, Wynnie! at least you do not seek to hide your bad logic, or whatever you call it. Take them out of God's hands! If you could do that, it would be perdition indeed. God's hands is the only safe place in the universe; and the universe is in his hands. Are we not in God's hands on the shore because we say they are in his hands who go down to the sea in ships? If we draw them on shore, surely they are not out of God's hands."

"I see--I see. But God could save them without us."

"Yes; but what would become of us then? God is so good to us, that we must work our little salvation in the earth with him. Just as a father lets his little child help him a little, that the child may learn to be and to do,

so God puts it in our hearts to save this life to our fellows, because we would instinctively save it to ourselves, if we could. He requires us to do our best."

"But God may not mean to save them."

"He may mean them to be drowned--we do not know. But we know that we must try our little salvation, for it will never interfere with God's great and good and perfect will. Ours will be foiled if he sees that best."

"But people always say, when anyone escapes unhurt from an accident, 'by the mercy of God.' They don't say it is by the mercy of God when he is drowned."

"But people cannot be expected, ought not, to say what they do not feel. Their own first sensation of deliverance from impending death would break out in a 'thank God,' and therefore they say it is God's mercy when another is saved. If they go farther, and refuse to consider it God's mercy when a man is drowned, that is just the sin of the world--the want of faith. But the man who creeps out of the drowning, choking billows into the glory of the new heavens and the new earth--do you think his thanksgiving for the mercy of God which has delivered him is less than that of the man who creeps, exhausted and worn, out of the waves on to the dreary, surf-beaten shore? In nothing do we show less faith than the way in which we think and speak about death. 'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?' says the apostle. 'Here, here, here,' cry the Christian people, 'everywhere. It is an awful sting, a fearful victory. But God keeps it away from us many a time when we ask him--to let it pierce us to the heart, at last, to be sure; but that can't be helped.' I mean this is how they feel in their hearts who do not believe that God is as merciful when he sends death as when he sends life; who, Christian people as they are, yet look upon death as an evil thing which cannot be avoided, and would, if they might live always, be content to live always. Death or Life--each is God's; for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: there are no dead, for all live to him."

"But don't you think we naturally shrink from death, Harry?" said my wife.

"There can be no doubt about that, my dear."

"Then, if it be natural, God must have meant that it should be so."

"Doubtless, to begin with, but not to continue or end with. A child's sole desire is for food--the very best possible to begin with. But how would it be if the child should reach, say, two years of age, and refuse to share this same food with his little brother? Or what comes of the man who never so far rises above the desire for food that nothing could make him forget his dinner-hour? Just so the life of Christians should be strong enough to overcome the fear of death. We ought to love and believe him so much, that when he says we shall not die, we should at least believe that death must be something very different from what it looks to us to be--so different, that what we mean by the word does not apply to the reality at all; and so Jesus cannot use the word, because it would seem to us that he meant what we mean by it, which he, seeing it all round, cannot mean."

"That does seem quite reasonable," said Ethelwyn.

Turner had taken no part in the conversation. He, too, had just come in from a walk over the hills. He was now standing looking out at the sea.

"She looks uneasy, does she not?" I said.

"You mean the Atlantic?" he returned, looking round. "Yes, I think so. I am glad she is not a patient of mine. I fear she is going to be very feverish, probably delirious before morning. She won't sleep much, and will talk rather loud when the tide comes in."

"Disease has often an ebb and flow like the tide, has it not?"

"Often. Some diseases are like a plant that has its time to grow and blossom, then dies; others, as you say, ebb and flow again and again before they vanish."

"It seems to me, however, that the ebb and flow does not belong to the disease, but to Nature, which works through the disease. It seems to me that my life has its tides, just like the ocean, only a little more regularly. It is high water with me always in the morning and the evening; in the afternoon life is at its lowest; and I believe it is lowest again while we sleep, and hence it comes that to work the brain at night has such an injurious effect on the system. But this is perhaps all a fancy."

"There may be some truth in it. But I was just thinking when you spoke to me what a happy thing it is that the tide does not vary by an even six hours, but has the odd minutes; whence we see endless changes in the relation of the water to the times of the day. And then the spring-tides and the neap-tides! What a provision there is in the world for change!"

"Yes. Change is one of the forms that infinitude takes for the use of us human immortals. But come and have some tea, Turner. You will not care to go out again. What shall we do this evening? Shall we all go to Connie's room and have some Shakspeare?"

"I could wish nothing better. What play shall we have?"

"Let us have the _Midsummer Night's Dream,"_ said Ethelwyn.

"You like to go by contraries, apparently, Ethel. But you're quite right. It is in the winter of the year that art must give us its summer. I suspect that most of the poetry about spring and summer is written in the winter. It is generally when we do not possess that we lay full value upon what we lack."

"There is one reason," said Wynnie with a roguish look, "why I like that play."

"I should think there might be more than one," Wynnie."

"But one reason is enough for a woman at once; isn't it, papa?"

"I'm not sure of that. But what is your reason?"

"That the fairies are not allowed to play any tricks with the women. _They_ are true throughout."

"I might choose to say that was because they were not tried."

"And I might venture to answer that Shakspeare--being true to nature always,

as you say, papa--knew very well how absurd it would be to represent a woman's feelings as under the influence of the juice of a paltry flower."

"Capital, Wynnie!" said her mother; and Turner and I chimed in with our approbation.

"Shall I tell you what I like best in the play?" said Turner. "It is the common sense of Theseus in accounting for all the bewilderments of the night."

"But," said Ethelwyn, "he was wrong after all. What is the use of common sense if it leads you wrong? The common sense of Theseus simply amounted to this, that he would only believe his own eyes."

"I think Mrs. Walton is right, Turner," I said. "For my part, I have more admired the open-mindedness of Hippolyta, who would yield more weight to the consistency of the various testimony than could be altogether counterbalanced by the negation of her own experience. Now I will tell you what I most admire in the play: it is the reconciling power of the poet. He brings together such marvellous contrasts, without a single shock or jar to your feeling of the artistic harmony of the conjunction. Think for a moment--the ordinary commonplace courtiers; the lovers, men and women in the condition of all conditions in which fairy-powers might get a hold of them; the quarrelling king and queen of Fairyland, with their courtiers, Blossom, Cobweb, and the rest, and the court-jester, Puck; the ignorant, clownish artisans, rehearsing their play,--fairies and clowns, lovers and courtiers, are all mingled in one exquisite harmony, clothed with a night of early summer, rounded in by the wedding of the king and queen. But I have talked enough about it. Let us get our books."

As we sat in Connie's room, delighting ourselves with the reflex of the poet's fancy, the sound of the rising tide kept mingling with the fairy-talk and the foolish rehearsal. "Musk roses," said Titania; and the first of the blast, going round by south to west, rattled the window. "Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow," said Bottom; and the roar of the waters was in our ears. "So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle Gently entwist," said Titania; and the blast poured the rain in a spout against the window. "Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells," said Theseus; and the wind whistled shrill through the chinks of the bark-house opening from the room. We drew the curtains closer, made up the fire higher, and read on. It was time for supper ere we had done; and when we left Connie to have hers and go to sleep, it was with the hope that, through all the rising storm, she would dream of breeze-haunted summer woods.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GATHERED STORM.

I woke in the middle of the night and the darkness to hear the wind

howling. It was wide awake now, and up with intent. It seized the house, and shook it furiously; and the rain kept pouring, only I could not hear it save in the _rallentondo_ passages of the wind; but through all the wind I could hear the roaring of the big waves on the shore. I did not wake my wife; but I got up, put on my dressing-gown, and went softly to Connie's room, to see whether she was awake; for I feared, if she were, she would be frightened. Wynn timer always slept in a little bed in the same room. I opened the door very gently, and peeped in. The fire was burning, for Wynn timer was an admirable stoker, and could generally keep the fire in all night. I crept to the bedside: there was just light enough to see that Connie was fast asleep, and that her dreams were not of storms. It was a marvel how well the child always slept. But, as I turned to leave the room, Wynn timer's voice called me in a whisper. Approaching her bed, I saw her wide eyes, like the eyes of the darkness, for I could scarcely see anything of her face.

"Awake, darling?" I said.

"Yes, papa. I have been awake a long time; but isn't Connie sleeping delightfully? She does sleep so well! Sleep is surely very good for her."

"It is the best thing for us all, next to God's spirit, I sometimes think, my dear. But are you frightened by the storm? Is that what keeps you awake?"

"I don't think that is what keeps me awake; but sometimes the house shakes so that I do feel a little nervous. I don't know how it is. I never felt afraid of anything natural before."

"What our Lord said about not being afraid of anything that could only hurt the body applies here, and in all the terrors of the night. Think about him, dear."

"I do try, papa. Don't you stop; you will get cold. It is a dreadful storm, is it not? Suppose there should be people drowning out there now!"

"There may be, my love. People are dying almost every other moment, I suppose, on the face of the earth. Drowning is only an easy way of dying. Mind, they are all in God's hands."

"Yes, papa. I will turn round and shut my eyes, and fancy that his hand is over them, making them dark with his care."

"And it will not be fancy, my darling, if you do. You remember those odd but no less devout lines of George Herbert? Just after he says, so beautifully, 'And now with darkness closest weary eyes,' he adds:

Thus in thy ebony box
Thou dost enclose us, till the day
Put our amendment in our way,
And give new wheels to our disordered clocks."

"He is very fond of boxes, by the way. So go to sleep, dear. You are a good clock of God's making; but you want new wheels, according to our beloved brother George Herbert. Therefore sleep. Good-night."

This was tiresome talk--was it--in the middle of the night, reader? Well, but my child did not think so, I know.

Dark, dank, weeping, the morning dawned. All dreary was the earth and sky. The wind was still hunting the clouds across the heavens. It lulled a little while we sat at breakfast, but soon the storm was up again, and the wind raved. I went out. The wind caught me as if with invisible human hands, and shook me. I fought with it, and made my way into the village. The streets were deserted. I peeped up the inn-yard as I passed: not a man or horse was to be seen. The little shops looked as if nobody had crossed their thresholds for a week. Not a door was open. One child came out of the baker's with a big loaf in her apron. The wind threatened to blow the hair off her head, if not herself first into the canal. I took her by the hand and led her, or rather, let her lead me home, while I kept her from being carried away by the wind. Having landed her safely inside her mother's door, I went on, climbed the heights above the village, and looked abroad over the Atlantic. What a waste of aimless tossing to and fro! Gray mist above, full of falling rain; gray, wrathful waters underneath, foaming and bursting as billow broke upon billow. The tide was ebbing now, but almost every other wave swept the breakwater. They burst on the rocks at the end of it, and rushed in shattered spouts and clouds of spray far into the air over their heads. "Will the time ever come," I thought, "when man shall be able to store up even this force for his own ends? Who can tell?" The solitary form of a man stood at some distance gazing, as I was gazing, out on the ocean. I walked towards him, thinking with myself who it could be that loved Nature so well that he did not shrink from her even in her most uncompanionable moods. I suspected, and soon found I was right; it was Percivale.

"What a clashing of water-drops!" I said, thinking of a line somewhere in Coleridge's *Remorse*. They are but water-drops, after all, that make this great noise upon the rocks; only there is a great many of them."

"Yes," said Percivale. "But look out yonder. You see a single sail, close-reefed--that is all I can see--away in the mist there? As soon as you think of the human struggle with the elements, as soon as you know that hearts are in the midst of it, it is a clashing of water-drops no more. It is an awful power, with which the will and all that it rules have to fight for the mastery, or at least for freedom."

"Surely you are right. It is the presence of thought, feeling, effort that gives the majesty to everything. It is even a dim attribution of human feelings to this tormented, passionate sea that gives it much of its awe; although, as we were saying the other day, it is only a picture of the troubled mind. But as I have now seen how matters are with the elements, and have had a good pluvial bath as well, I think I will go home and change my clothes."

"I have hardly had enough of it yet," returned Percivale. "I shall have a stroll along the heights here, and when the tide has fallen a little way from the foot of the cliffs I shall go down on the sands and watch awhile there."

"Well, you're a younger man than I am; but I've seen the day, as Lear says. What an odd tendency we old men have to boast of the past: we would be judged by the past, not by the present. We always speak of the strength that is withered and gone, as if we had some claim upon it still. But I am not going to talk in this storm. I am always talking."

"I will go with you as far as the village, and then I will turn and take my way along the downs for a mile or two; I don't mind being wet."

"I didn't once."

"Don't you think," resumed Percivale, "that in some sense the old man--not that I can allow _you that dignity yet, Mr. Walton--has a right to regard the past as his own?"

"That would be scanned," I answered, as we walked towards the village. "Surely the results of the past are the man's own. Any action of the man's, upon which the life in him reposes, remains his. But suppose a man had done a good deed once, and instead of making that a foundation upon which to build more good, grew so vain of it that he became incapable of doing anything more of the same sort, you could not say that the action belonged to him still. Therein he has severed his connection with the past. Again, what has never in any deep sense been a man's own, cannot surely continue to be his afterwards. Thus the things that a man has merely possessed once, the very people who most admired him for their sakes when he had them, give him no credit for after he has lost them. Riches that have taken to themselves wings leave with the poor man only a surpassing poverty. Strength, likewise, which can so little depend on any exercise of the will in man, passes from him with the years. It was not his all the time; it was but lent him, and had nothing to do with his inward force. A bodily feeble man may put forth a mighty life-strength in effort, and show nothing to the eyes of his neighbour; while the strong man gains endless admiration for what he could hardly help. But the effort of the one remains, for it was his own; the strength of the other passes from him, for it was never his own. So with beauty, which the commonest woman acknowledges never to have been hers in seeking to restore it by deception. So, likewise, in a great measure with intellect."

"But if you take away intellect as well, what do you leave a man that can in any way be called his own?"

"Certainly his intellect is not his own. One thing only is his own--to will the truth. This, too, is as much God's gift as everything else: I ought to say is more God's gift than anything else, for he gives it to be the man's own more than anything else can be. And when he wills the truth, he has God himself. Man _can_ possess God: all other things follow as necessary results. What poor creatures we should have been if God had not made us to do something--to look heavenwards--to lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees! Something like this was in the mind of the prophet Jeremiah when he said, 'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' My own conviction is, that a vague sense of a far higher life in ourselves than we yet know anything about is at the root of all our false efforts to be able to think something of ourselves. We cannot commend ourselves, and therefore we set about priding ourselves. We have little or no strength of mind, faculty of operation, or worth of will, and therefore we talk of our strength of body, worship the riches we have, or have not, it is all one, and boast of our paltry intellectual successes. The man most ambitious of being considered a universal genius must at last confess himself a conceited dabbler, and be ready to part with all he knows for one glimpse more of that understanding of God which the wise men of old held to be essential to every man, but which the growing luminaries of the present day will not allow to be even possible for any man."

We had reached the brow of the heights, and here we parted. A fierce blast of wind rushed at me, and I hastened down the hill. How dreary the streets did look!--how much more dreary than the stormy down! I saw no living creature as I returned but a terribly draggled dog, a cat that seemed to have a bad conscience, and a lovely little girl-face, which, forgetful of its own rights, would flatten the tip of the nose belonging to it against a window-pane. Every rain-pool was a mimic sea, and had a mimic storm within its own narrow bounds. The water went hurrying down the kennels like a long brown snake anxious to get to its hole and hide from the tormenting wind, and every now and then the rain came in full rout before the conquering blast.

When I got home, I peeped in at Connie's door the first thing, and saw that she was raised a little more than usual; that is, the end of the conch against which she leaned was at a more acute angle. She was sitting staring, rather than gazing, out at the wild tumult which she could see over the shoulder of the down on which her window immediately looked. Her face was paler and keener than usual.

"Why, Connie, who set you up so straight?"

"Mr. Turner, papa. I wanted to see out, and he raised me himself. He says I am so much better, I may have it in the seventh notch as often as I like."

"But you look too tired for it. Hadn't you better lie down again?"

"It's only the storm, papa."

"The more reason you should not see it if it tires you so."

"It does not tire me, papa. Only I keep constantly wondering what is going to come out of it. It looks so as if something must follow."

"You didn't hear me come into your room last night, Connie. The storm was raging then as loud as it is now, but you were out of its reach--fast asleep. Now it is too much for you. You must lie down."

"Very well, papa."

I lowered the support, and when I returned from changing my wet garments she was already looking much better.

After dinner I went to my study, but when evening began to fall I went out again. I wanted to see how our next neighbours, the sexton and his wife, were faring. The wind had already increased in violence. It threatened to blow a hurricane. The tide was again rising, and was coming in with great rapidity. The old mill shook to the foundation as I passed through it to reach the lower part where they lived. When I peeped in from the bottom of the stair, I saw no one; but, hearing the steps of someone overhead, I called out.

Agnes's voice made answer, as she descended an inner stair which led to the bedrooms above--

"Mother's gone to church, sir."

"Gone to church!" I said, a vague pang darting through me as I thought whether I had forgotten any service; but the next moment I recalled what the old woman had herself told me of her preference for the church during a

storm.

"O yes, Agnes, I remember!" I said; "your mother thinks the weather bad enough to take to the church, does she? How do you come to be here now? Where is your husband?"

"He'll be here in an hour or so, sir. He don't mind the wet. You see, we don't like the old people to be left alone when it blows what the sailors call 'great guns.'"

"And what becomes of his mother then?"

"There don't be any sea out there, sir. Leastways," she added with a quiet smile, and stopped.

"You mean, I suppose, Agnes, that there is never any perturbation of the elements out there?"

She laughed; for she understood me well enough. The temper of Joe's mother was proverbial.

"But really, sir," she said, "she don't mind the weather a bit; and though we don't live in the same cottage with her, for Joe wouldn't hear of that, we see her far oftener than we see my mother, you know."

"I'm sure it's quite fair, Agnes. Is Joe very sorry that he married you, now?"

She hung her head, and blushed so deeply through all her sallow complexion, that I was sorry I had teased her, and said so. This brought a reply.

"I don't think he be, sir. I do think he gets better. He's been working very hard the last week or two, and he says it agrees with him."

"And how are you?"

"Quite well, thank you, sir."

I had never seen her look half so well. Life was evidently a very different thing to both of them now. I left her, and took my way to the church.

When I reached the churchyard, there, in the middle of the rain and the gathering darkness, was the old man busy with the duties of his calling. A certain headstone stood right under a drip from the roof of the southern transept; and this drip had caused the mould at the foot of the stone, on the side next the wall, to sink, so that there was a considerable crack between the stone and the soil. The old man had cut some sod from another part of the churchyard, and was now standing, with the rain pouring on him from the roof, beating this sod down in the crack. He was sheltered from the wind by the church, but he was as wet as he could be. I may mention that he never appeared in the least disconcerted when I came upon him in the discharge of his functions: he was so content with his own feeling in the matter, that no difference of opinion could disturb him.

"This will never do, Coombes," I said. "You will get your death of cold. You must be as full of water as a sponge. Old man, there's rheumatism in the world!"

"It be only my work, sir. But I believe I ha' done now for a night. I think

he'll be a bit more comfortable now. The very wind could get at him through that hole."

"Do go home, then," I said, "and change your clothes. Is your wife in the church?"

"She be, sir. This door, sir--this door," he added, as he saw me going round to the usual entrance. "You'll find her in there."

I lifted the great latch and entered. I could not see her at first, for it was much darker inside the church. It felt very quiet in there somehow, although the place was full of the noise of winds and waters. Mrs. Coombes was not sitting on the bell-keys, where I looked for her first, for the wind blew down the tower in many currents and draughts--how it did roar up there--as if the louvres had been a windsail to catch the wind and send it down to ventilate the church!--she was sitting at the foot of the chancel-rail, with her stocking as usual.

The sight of her sweet old face, lighted up by a moonlike smile as I drew near her, in the middle of the ancient dusk filled with sounds, but only sounds of tempest, gave me a sense of one dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, such as I shall never forget. It was no time to say much, however.

"How long do you mean to stay here, Mrs. Coombes?" I asked. "Not all night?"

"No, not all night, surely, sir. But I hadn't thought o' going yet for a bit."

"Why there's Coombes out there, wet to the skin; and I'm afraid he'll go on pottering at the churchyard bed-clothes till he gets his bones as full of rheumatism as they can hold."

"Deary me! I didn't know as my old man was there. He tould me he had them all comforble for the winter a week ago. But to be sure there's always some mendin' to do."

I heard the voice of Joe outside, and the next moment he came into the church. After speaking to me, he turned to Mrs. Coombes.

"You be comin' home with me, mother. This will never do. Father's as wet as a mop. I ha' brought something for your supper, and Aggy's a-cookin' of it; and we're going to be comfortable over the fire, and have a chapter or two of the New Testament to keep down the noise of the sea. There! Come along."

The old woman drew her cloak over her head, put her knitting carefully in her pocket, and stood aside for me to lead the way.

"No, no," I said; "I'm the shepherd and you're the sheep, so I'll drive you before me--at least, you and Coombes. Joe here will be offended if I take on me to say I am his shepherd."

"Nay, nay, don't say that, sir. You've been a good shepherd to me when I was a very sulky sheep. But if you'll please to go, sir, I'll lock the door behind; for you know in them parts the shepherd goes first and the sheep follow the shepherd. And I'll follow like a good sheep," he added, laughing.

"You're right, Joe," I said, and took the lead without more ado.

I was struck by his saying them parts, which seemed to indicate a habit of pondering on the places as well as circumstances of the gospel-story. The sexton joined us at the door, and we all walked to his cottage, Joe taking care of his mother-in-law and I taking what care I could of Coombes by carrying his tools for him. But as we went I feared I had done ill in that, for the wind blew so fiercely that I thought the thin feeble little man would have got on better if he had been more heavily weighted against it. But I made him take a hold of my arm, and so we got in. The old man took his tools from me and set them down in the mill, for the roof of which I felt some anxiety as we passed through, so full of wind was the whole space. But when we opened the inner door the welcome of a glowing fire burst up the stair as if that had been a well of warmth and light below. I went down with them. Coombes departed to change his clothes, and the rest of us stood round the fire, where Agnes was busy cooking something like white puddings for their supper.

"Did you hear, sir," said Joe, "that the coastguard is off to the Goose-pot? There's a vessel ashore there, they say. I met them on the road with the rocket-cart."

"How far off is that, Joe?"

"Some five or six miles, I suppose, along the coast nor'ards."

"What sort of a vessel is she?"

"That I don't know. Some say she be a schooner, others a brigantine. The coast-guard didn't know themselves."

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Coombes. "If any of them comes ashore, they'll be sadly knocked to pieces on the rocks in a night like this."

She had caught a little infection of her husband's mode of thought.

"It's not likely to clear up before morning, I fear; is it, Joe?"

"I don't think so, sir. There's no likelihood."

"Will you condescend to sit down and take a share with us, sir?" said the old woman.

"There would be no condescension in that, Mrs. Coombes. I will another time with all my heart; but in such a night I ought to be at home with my own people. They will be more uneasy if I am away."

"Of coorse, of coorse, sir."

"So I'll bid you good-night. I wish this storm were well over."

I buttoned my great-coat, pulled my hat down on my head, and set out. It was getting on for high water. The night was growing very dark. There would be a moon some time, but the clouds were so dense she could not do much while they came between. The roaring of the waves on the shore was terrible; all I could see of them now was the whiteness of their breaking, but they filled the earth and the air with their furious noises. The wind roared from the sea; two oceans were breaking on the land, only to the one

had been set a hitherto--to the other none. Ere the night was far gone, however, I had begun to doubt whether the ocean itself had not broken its bars.

I found the whole household full of the storm. The children kept pressing their faces to the windows, trying to pierce, as by force of will, through the darkness, and discover what the wild thing out there was doing. They could see nothing: all was one mass of blackness and dismay, with a soul in it of ceaseless roaring. I ran up to Connie's room, and found that she was left alone. She looked restless, pale, and frightened. The house quivered, and still the wind howled and whistled through the adjoining bark-hut.

"Connie, darling, have they left you alone?" I said.

"Only for a few minutes, papa. I don't mind it."

"Don't be frightened at the storm, my dear. He who could walk on the sea of Galilee, and still the storm of that little pool, can rule the Atlantic just as well. Jeremiah says he 'divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar.'"

The same moment Dora came running into the room.

"Papa," she cried, "the spray--such a lot of it--came dashing on the windows in the dining-room. Will it break them?"

"I hope not, my dear. Just stay with Connie while I run down."

"O, papa! I do want to see."

"What do you want to see, Dora?"

"The storm, papa."

"It is as black as pitch. You can't see anything."

"O, but I want to--to--be beside it."

"Well, you sha'n't stay with Connie, if you are not willing. Go along. Ask Wynnie to come here."

The child was so possessed by the commotion without that she did not seem even to see my rebuke, not to say feel it. She ran off, and Wynnie presently came. I left her with Connie, put on a long waterproof cloak, and went down to the dining-room. A door led from it immediately on to the little green in front of the house, between it and the sea. The dining-room was dark, for they had put out the lights that they might see better from the windows. The children and some of the servants were there looking out. I opened the door cautiously. It needed the strength of two of the women to shut it behind me. The moment I opened it a great sheet of spray rushed over me. I went down the little grassy slope. The rain had ceased, and it was not quite so dark as I had expected. I could see the gleaming whiteness all before me. The next moment a wave rolled over the low wall in front of me, breaking on it and wrapping me round in a sheet of water. Something hurt me sharply on the leg; and I found, on searching, that one of the large flat stones that lay for coping on the top of the wall was on the grass beside me. If it had struck me straight, it must have broken my leg.

There came a little lull in the wind, and just as I turned to go into the

house again, I thought I heard a gun. I stood and listened, but heard nothing more, and fancied I must have been mistaken. I returned and tapped at the door; but I had to knock loudly before they heard me within. When I went up to the drawing-room, I found that Percivale had joined our party. He and Turner were talking together at one of the windows.

"Did you hear a gun?" I asked them.

"No. Was there one?"

"I'm not sure. I half-fancied I heard one, but no other followed. There will be a good many fired to-night, though, along this awful coast."

"I suppose they keep the life-boat always ready," said Turner.

"No life-boat even, I fear, would live in such a sea," I said, remembering what the officer of the coast-guard had told me.

"They would try, though, I suppose," said Turner.

"I do not know," said Percivale. "I don't know the people. But I have seen a life-boat out in as bad a night--whether in as bad a sea, I cannot tell: that depends on the coast, I suppose."

We went on chatting for some time, wondering how the coast-guard had fared with the vessel ashore at the Goose-pot. Winnie joined us.

"How is Connie, now, my dear?"

"Very restless and excited, papa. I came down to say, that if Mr. Turner didn't mind, I wish he would go up and see her."

"Of course--instantly," said Turner, and moved to follow Winnie.

But the same moment, as if it had been beside us in the room, so clear, so shrill was it, we heard Connie's voice shrieking, "Papa, papa! There's a great ship ashore down there. Come, come!"

Turner and I rushed from the room in fear and dismay. "How? What? Where could the voice come from?" was the unformed movement of our thoughts. But the moment we left the drawing-room the thing was clear, though not the less marvellous and alarming. We forgot all about the ship, and thought only of our Connie. So much does the near hide the greater that is afar! Connie kept on calling, and her voice guided our eyes.

A, little stair led immediately from this floor up to the bark-hut, so that it might be reached without passing through the bedroom. The door at the top of it was open. The door that led from Connie's room into the bark-hut was likewise open, and light shone through it into the place--enough to show a figure standing by the furthest window with face pressed against the glass. And from this figure came the cry, "Papa, papa! Quick, quick! The waves will knock her to pieces!"

In very truth it was Connie standing there.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHIPWRECK.

Things that happen altogether have to be told one after the other. Turner and I both rushed at the narrow stair. There was not room for more than one upon it. I was first, but stumbled on the lowest step and fell. Turner put his foot on my back, jumped over me, sprang up the stair, and when I reached the top of it after him, he was meeting me with Connie in his arms, carrying her back to her room. But the girl kept crying--"Papa, papa, the ship, the ship!"

My duty woke in me. Turner could attend to Connie far better than I could. I made one spring to the window. The moon was not to be seen, but the clouds were thinner, and light enough was soaking through them to show a wave-tormented mass some little way out in the bay; and in that one moment in which I stood looking, a shriek pierced the howling of the wind, cutting through it like a knife. I rushed bare-headed from the house. When or how the resolve was born in me I do not know, but I flew straight to the sexton's, snatched the key from the wall, crying only "ship ashore!" and rushed to the church.

I remember my hand trembled so that I could hardly get the key into the lock. I made myself quieter, opened the door, and feeling my way to the tower, knelt before the keys of the bell-hammers, opened the chest, and struck them wildly, fiercely. An awful jangling, out of tune and harsh, burst into monstrous being in the storm-vexed air. Music itself was untuned, corrupted, and returning to chaos. I struck and struck at the keys. I knew nothing of their normal use. Noise, outcry, *_reveille_* was all I meant.

In a few minutes I heard voices and footsteps. From some parts of the village, out of sight of the shore, men and women gathered to the summons. Through the door of the church, which I had left open, came voices in hurried question. "Ship ashore!" was all I could answer, for what was to be done I was helpless to think.

I wondered that so few appeared at the cry of the bells. After those first nobody came for what seemed a long time. I believe, however, I was beating the alarum for only a few minutes altogether, though when I look back upon the time in the dark church, it looks like half-an-hour at least. But indeed I feel so confused about all the doings of that night that in attempting to describe them in order, I feel as if I were walking in a dream. Still, from comparing mine with the recollected impressions of others, I think I am able to give a tolerably correct result. Most of the incidents seem burnt into my memory so that nothing could destroy the depth of the impression; but the order in which they took place is none the less doubtful.

A hand was laid on my shoulder.

"Who is there?" I said; for it was far too dark to know anyone.

"Percivale. What is to be done? The coastguard is away. Nobody seems to

know about anything. It is of no use to go on ringing more. Everybody is out, even to the maid-servants. Come down to the shore, and you will see."

"But is there not the life-boat?"

"Nobody seems to know anything about it, except 'it's no manner of use to go trying of that with such a sea on.'"

"But there must be someone in command of it," I said.

"Yes," returned Percivale; "but there doesn't seem to be one of the crew amongst the crowd. All the sailor-like fellows are going about with their hands in their pockets."

"Let us make haste, then," I said; "perhaps we can find out. Are you sure the coastguard have nothing to do with the life-boat?"

"I believe not. They have enough to do with their rockets."

"I remember now that Roxton told me he had far more confidence in his rockets than in anything a life-boat could do, upon this coast at least."

While we spoke we came to the bank of the canal. This we had to cross, in order to reach that part of the shore opposite which the wreck lay. To my surprise the canal itself was in a storm, heaving and tossing and dashing over its banks.

"Percivale," I exclaimed, "the gates are gone; the sea has torn them away."

"Yes, I suppose so. Would God I could get half-a-dozen men to help me. I have been doing what I could; but I have no influence amongst them."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "What could you do if you had a thousand men at your command?"

He made me no answer for a few moments, during which we were hurrying on for the bridge over the canal. Then he said:

"They regard me only as a meddling stranger, I suppose; for I have been able to get no useful answer. They are all excited; but nobody is doing anything."

"They must know about it a great deal better than we," I returned; "and we must take care not to do them the injustice of supposing they are not ready to do all that can be done."

Percivale was silent yet again.

The record of our conversation looks as quiet on the paper as if we had been talking in a curtained room; but all the time the ocean was raving in my very ear, and the awful tragedy was going on in the dark behind us. The wind was almost as loud as ever, but the rain had quite ceased, and when we reached the bridge the moon shone out white, as if aghast at what she had at length succeeded in pushing the clouds aside that she might see. Awe and helplessness oppressed us. Having crossed the canal, we turned to the shore. There was little of it left; for the waves had rushed up almost to the village. The sand and the roads, every garden wall, every window that looked seaward was crowded with gazers. But it was a wonderfully quiet crowd, or seemed so at least; for the noise of the wind and the waves

filled the whole vault, and what was spoken was heard only in the ear to which it was spoken. When we came amongst them we heard only a murmur as of more articulated confusion. One turn, and we saw the centre of strife and anxiety--the heart of the storm that filled heaven and earth, upon which all the blasts and the billows broke and raved.

Out there in the moonlight lay a mass of something whose place was discernible by the flashing of the waves as they burst over it. She was far above low-water mark--lay nearer the village by a furlong than the spot where we had taken our last dinner on the shore. It was strange to think that yesterday the spot lay bare to human feet, where now so many men and women were isolated in a howling waste of angry waters; for the cry of women came plainly to our ears, and we were helpless to save them. It was terrible to have to do nothing. Percivale went about hurriedly, talking to this one and that one, as if he still thought something might be done. He turned to me.

"Do try, Mr. Walton, and find out for me where the captain of the life-boat is."

I turned to a sailor-like man who stood at my elbow and asked him.

"It's no use, I assure you, sir," he answered; "no boat could live in such a sea. It would be throwing away the men's lives."

"Do you know where the captain lives?" Percivale asked.

"If I did, I tell you it is of no use."

"Are you the captain yourself?" returned Percivale.

"What is that to you?" he answered, surly now. "I know my own business."

The same moment several of the crowd nearest the edge of the water made a simultaneous rush into the surf, and laid hold of something, which, as they returned drawing it to the shore, I saw to be a human form. It was the body of a woman--alive or dead I could not tell. I could just see the long hair hanging from the head, which itself hung backward helplessly as they bore her up the bank. I saw, too, a white face, and I can recall no more.

"Run, Percivale," I said, "and fetch Turner. She may not be dead yet."

"I can't," answered Percivale. "You had better go yourself, Mr. Walton."

He spoke hurriedly. I saw he must have some reason for answering me so abruptly. He was talking to a young fellow whom I recognised as one of the most dissolute in the village; and just as I turned to go they walked away together.

I sped home as fast as I could. It was easier to get along now that the moon shone. I found that Turner had given Connie a composing draught, and that he had good hopes she would at least be nothing the worse for the marvellous result of her excitement. She was asleep exhausted, and her mother was watching by her side. It, seemed strange that she could sleep; but Turner said it was the safest reaction, partly, however, occasioned by what he had given her. In her sleep she kept on talking about the ship.

We hurried back to see if anything could be done for the woman. As we went up the side of the canal we perceived a dark body meeting us. The clouds

had again obscured, though not quite hidden the moon, and we could not at first make out what it was. When we came nearer it showed itself a body of men hauling something along. Yes, it was the life-boat, afloat on the troubled waves of the canal, each man seated in his own place, his hands quiet upon his oar, his cork-jacket braced about him, his feet out before him, ready to pull the moment they should pass beyond the broken gates of the lock out on the awful tossing of the waves. They sat very silent, and the men on the path towed them swiftly along. The moon uncovered her face for a moment, and shone upon the faces of two of the rowers.

"Percivale! Joe!" I cried.

"All right, sir!" said Joe.

"Does your wife know of it, Joe?" I almost gasped.

"To be sure," answered Joe. "It's the first chance I've had of returning thanks for her. Please God, I shall see her again to-night."

"That's good, Joe. Trust in God, my men, whether you sink or swim."

"Ay, ay, sir!" they answered as one man.

"This is your doing, Percivale," I said, turning and walking alongside of the boat for a little way.

"It's more Jim Allen's," said Percivale. "If I hadn't got a hold of him I couldn't have done anything."

"God bless you, Jim Allen!" I said. "You'll be a better man after this, I think."

"Donnow, sir," returned Jim cheerily. "It's harder work than pulling an oar."

The captain himself was on board. Percivale having persuaded Jim Allen, the two had gone about in the crowd seeking proselytes. In a wonderfully short space they had found almost all the crew, each fresh one picking up another or more; till at length the captain, protesting against the folly of it, gave in, and once having yielded, was, like a true Englishman, as much in earnest as any of them. The places of two who were missing were supplied by Percivale and Joe, the latter of whom would listen to no remonstrance.

"I've nothing to lose," Percivale had said. "You have a young wife, Joe."

"I've everything to win," Joe had returned. "The only thing that makes me feel a bit faint-hearted over it, is that I'm afraid it's not my duty that drives me to it, but the praise of men, leastways of a woman. What would Aggy think of me if I was to let them drown out there and go to my bed and sleep? I must go."

"Very well, Joe," returned Percivale, "I daresay you are right. You can row, of course?"

"I can row hard, and do as I'm told," said Joe.

"All right," said Percivale; "come along."

This I heard afterwards. We were now hurrying against the wind towards the

mouth of the canal, some twenty men hauling on the tow-rope. The critical moment would be in the clearing of the gates, I thought, some parts of which might remain swinging; but they encountered no difficulty there, as I heard afterwards. For I remembered that this was not my post, and turned again to follow the doctor.

"God bless you, my men!" I said, and left them.

They gave a great hurrah, and sped on to meet their fate. I found Turner in the little public-house, whither they had carried the body. The woman was quite dead.

"I fear it is an emigrant vessel," he said.

"Why do you think so?" I asked, in some consternation.

"Come and look at the body," he said.

It was that of a woman about twenty, tall, and finely formed. The face was very handsome, but it did not need the evidence of the hands to prove that she was one of our sisters who have to labour for their bread.

"What should such a girl be doing on board ship but going out to America or Australia--to her lover, perhaps," said Turner. "You see she has a locket on her neck; I hope nobody will dare to take it off. Some of these people are not far derived from those who thought a wreck a Godsend."

A sound of many feet was at the door just as we turned to leave the house. They were bringing another body--that of an elderly woman--dead, quite dead. Turner had ceased examining her, and we were going out together, when, through all the tumult of the wind and waves, a fierce hiss, vindictive, wrathful, tore the air over our heads. Far up, seawards, something like a fiery snake shot from the high ground on the right side of the bay, over the vessel, and into the water beyond it.

"Thank God! that's the coastguard," I cried.

We rushed through the village, and up on the heights, where they had planted their apparatus. A little crowd surrounded them. How dismal the sea looked in the struggling moonlight! I felt as if I were wandering in the mazes of an evil dream. But when I approached the cliff, and saw down below the great mass, of the vessel's hulk, with the waves breaking every moment upon her side, I felt the reality awful indeed. Now and then there would come a kind of lull in the wild sequence of rolling waters, and then I fancied for a moment that I saw how she rocked on the bottom. Her masts had all gone by the board, and a perfect chaos of cordage floated and swung in the waves that broke over her. But her bowsprit remained entire, and shot out into the foamy dark, crowded with human beings. The first rocket had missed. They were preparing to fire another. Roxton stood with his telescope in his hand, ready to watch the result.

"This is a terrible job, sir," he said when I approached him; "I doubt if we shall save one of them."

"There's the life-boat!" I cried, as a dark spot appeared on the waters approaching the vessel from the other side.

"The life-boat!" he returned with contempt. "You don't mean to say they've got her out! She'll only add to the mischief. We'll have to save her

too."

She was still some way from the vessel, and in comparatively smooth water. But between her and the hull the sea raved in madness; the billows rode over each other, in pursuit, as it seemed, of some invisible prey. Another hiss, as of concentrated hatred, and the second rocket was shooting its parabola through the dusky air. Roxton raised his telescope to his eye the same moment.

"Over her stern!" he cried. "There's a fellow getting down from the cat-head to run aft.--Stop, stop!" he shouted involuntarily. "There's an awful wave on your quarter."

His voice was swallowed in the roaring of the storm. I fancied I could distinguish a dark something shoot from the bows towards the stern. But the huge wave fell upon the wreck. The same moment Roxton exclaimed--so coolly as to amaze me, forgetting how men must come to regard familiar things without discomposure--

"He's gone! I said so. The next'll have better luck, I hope."

That man came ashore alive, though.

All were forward of the foremast. The bowsprit, when I looked through Roxton's telescope, was shapeless as with a swarm of bees. Now and then a single shriek rose upon the wild air. But now my attention was fixed on the life-boat. She had got into the wildest of the broken water; at one moment she was down in a huge cleft, the next balanced like a beam on the knife-edge of a wave, tossed about hither and thither, as if the waves delighted in mocking the rudder; but hitherto she had shipped no water. I am here drawing upon the information I have since received; but I did see how a huge wave, following close upon the back of that on which she floated, rushed, towered up over her, toppled, and fell upon the life-boat with tons of water: the moon was shining brightly enough to show this with tolerable distinctness. The boat vanished. The next moment, there she was, floating helplessly about, like a living thing stunned by the blow of the falling wave. The struggle was over. As far as I could see, every man was in his place; but the boat drifted away before the storm shore-wards, and the men let her drift. Were they all killed as they sat? I thought of my Wynnies, and turned to Roxton.

"That wave has done for them," he said. "I told you it was no use. There they go."

"But what is the matter?" I asked. "The men are sitting every man in his place."

"I think so," he answered. "Two were swept overboard, but they caught the ropes and got in again. But don't you see they have no oars?"

That wave had broken every one of them off at the rowlocks, and now they were as helpless as a sponge.

I turned and ran. Before I reached the brow of the hill another rocket was fired and fell wide shorewards, partly because the wind blew with fresh fury at the very moment. I heard Roxton say--"She's breaking up. It's no use. That last did for her;" but I hurried off for the other side of the bay, to see what became of the life-boat. I heard a great cry from the vessel as I reached the brow of the hill, and turned for a parting glance.

The dark mass had vanished, and the waves were rushing at will over the space. When I got to the shore the crowd was less. Many were running, like myself, towards the other side, anxious about the life-boat. I hastened after them; for Percivale and Joe filled my heart.

They led the way to the little beach in front of the parsonage. It would be well for the crew if they were driven ashore there, for it was the only spot where they could escape being dashed on rocks.

There was a crowd before the garden-wall, a bustle, and great confusion of speech. The people, men and women, boys and girls, were all gathered about the crew of the life-boat,--which already lay, as if it knew of nothing but repose, on the grass within.

"Percivale!" I cried, making my way through the crowd.

There was no answer.

"Joe Harper!" I cried again, searching with eager eyes amongst the crew, to whom everybody was talking.

Still there was no answer; and from the disjointed phrases I heard, I could gather nothing. All at once I saw Wynnie looking over the wall, despair in her face, her wide eyes searching wildly through the crowd. I could not look at her till I knew the worst. The captain was talking to old Coombes. I went up to him. As soon as he saw me, he gave me his attention.

"Where is Mr. Percivale?" I asked, with all the calmness I could assume.

He took me by the arm, and drew me out of the crowd, nearer to the waves, and a little nearer to the mouth of the canal. The tide had fallen considerably, else there would not have been standing-room, narrow as it was, which the people now occupied. He pointed in the direction of the Castle-rock.

"If you mean the stranger gentleman--"

"And Joe Harper, the blacksmith," I interposed.

"They're there, sir."

"You don't mean those two--just those two--are drowned?" I said.

"No, sir; I don't say that; but God knows they have little chance."

I could not help thinking that God might know they were not in the smallest danger. But I only begged him to tell me where they were.

"Do you see that schooner there, just between you and the Castle-rock?"

"No," I answered; "I can see nothing. Stay. I fancy I can. But I am always ready to fancy I see a thing when I am told it is there. I can't say I see it."

"I can, though. The gentleman you mean, and Joe Harper too, are, I believe, on board of that schooner."

"Is she aground?"

"O dear no, sir. She's a light craft, and can swim there well enough. If she'd been aground, she'd ha' been ashore in pieces hours ago. But whether she'll ride it out, God only knows, as I said afore."

"How ever did they get aboard of her? I never saw her from the heights opposite."

"You were all taken up by the ship ashore, you see, sir. And she don't make much show in this light. But there she is, and they're aboard of her. And this is how it was."

He went on to give me his part of the story; but I will now give the whole of it myself, as I have gathered and pieced it together.

Two men had been swept overboard, as Roxton said--one of them was Percivale--but they had both got on board again, to drift, oarless, with the rest--now in a windless valley--now aloft on a tempest-swept hill of water--away towards a goal they knew not, neither had chosen, and which yet they could by no means avoid.

A little out of the full force of the current, and not far from the channel of the small stream, which, when the tide was out, flowed across the sands nearly from the canal gates to the Castle-rock, lay a little schooner, belonging to a neighbouring port, Boscastle, I think, which, caught in the storm, had been driven into the bay when it was almost dark, some considerable time before the great ship. The master, however, knew the ground well. The current carried him a little out of the wind, and would have thrown him upon the rocks next, but he managed to drop anchor just in time, and the cable held; and there the little schooner hung in the skirts of the storm, with the jagged teeth of the rocks within an arrow flight. In the excitement of the great wreck, no one had observed the danger of the little coasting bird. If the cable held till the tide went down, and the anchor did not drag, she would be safe; if not, she must be dashed to pieces.

In the schooner were two men and a boy: two men had been washed overboard an hour or so before they reached the bay. When they had dropped their anchor, they lay down exhausted on the deck. Indeed they were so worn out that they had been unable to drop their sheet anchor, and were holding on only by their best bower. Had they not been a good deal out of the wind, this would have been useless. Even if it held she was in danger of having her bottom stove in by bumping against the sands as the tide went out. But that they had not to think of yet. The moment they lay down they fell fast asleep in the middle of the storm. While they slept it increased in violence.

Suddenly one of them awoke, and thought he saw a vision of angels. For over his head faces looked down upon him from the air--that is, from the top of a great wave. The same moment he heard a voice, two of the angels dropped on the deck beside him, and the rest vanished. Those angels were Percivale and Joe. And angels they were, for they came just in time, as all angels do--never a moment too soon or a moment too late: the schooner was dragging her anchor. This was soon plain even to the less experienced eyes of the said angels.

But it did not take them many minutes now to drop their strongest anchor, and they were soon riding in perfect safety for some time to come.

One of the two men was the son of old Coombes, the sexton, who was engaged

to marry the girl I have spoken of in the end of the fourth chapter in the second volume.

Percivale's account of the matter, as far as he was concerned, was, that as they drifted helplessly along, he suddenly saw from the top of a huge wave the little vessel below him. They were, in fact, almost upon the rigging. The wave on which they rode swept the quarter-deck of the schooner.

Percivale says the captain of the lifeboat called out "Aboard!" The captain said he remembered nothing of the sort. If he did, he must have meant it for the men on the schooner to get on board the lifeboat. Percivale, however, who had a most chivalrous (ought I not to say Christian?) notion of obedience, fancying the captain meant them to board the schooner, sprang at her fore-shrouds. Thereupon the wave sweeping them along the schooner's side, Joe sprang at the main-shrouds, and they dropped on the deck together.

But although my reader is at ease about their fate, we who were in the affair were anything but easy at the time corresponding to this point of the narrative. It was a terrible night we passed through.

When I returned, which was almost instantly, for I could do nothing by staring out in the direction of the schooner, I found that the crowd was nearly gone. One little group alone remained behind, the centre of which was a woman. Wynnie had disappeared. The woman who remained behind was Agnes Harper.

The moon shone out clear as I approached the group; indeed, the clouds were breaking-up and drifting away off the heavens. The storm had raved out its business, and was departing into the past.

"Agnes," I said.

"Yes, sir," she answered, and looked up as if waiting for a command. There was no colour in her cheeks or in her lips--at least it seemed so in the moonlight--only in her eyes. But she was perfectly calm. She was leaning against the low wall, with her hands clasped, but hanging quietly down before her.

"The storm is breaking-up, Agnes," I said.

"Yes, sir," she answered in the same still tone. Then, after just a moment's pause, she spoke out of her heart.

"Joe's at his duty, sir?"

I have given the utterance a point of interrogation; whether she meant that point I am not quite sure.

"Indubitably," I returned. "I have such faith in Joe, that I should be sure of that in any case. At all events, he's not taking care of his own life. And if one is to go wrong, I would ten thousand times rather err on that side. But I am sure Joe has been doing right, and nothing else."

"Then there's nothing to be said, sir, is there?" she returned, with a sigh that sounded as of relief.

I presume some of the surrounding condolers had been giving her Job's comfort by blaming her husband.

"Do you remember, Agnes, what the Lord said to his mother when she reproached him with having left her and his father?"

"I can't remember anything at this moment, sir," was her touching answer.

"Then I will tell you. He said, 'Why did you look for me? Didn't you know that I must be about something my Father had given me to do?' Now, Joe was and is about his Father's business, and you must not be anxious about him. There could be no better reason for not being anxious."

Agnes was a very quiet woman. When without a word she took my hand and kissed it, I felt what a depth there was in the feeling she could not utter. I did not withdraw my hand, for I knew that would be to rebuke her love for Joe.

"Will you come in and wait?" I said indefinitely.

"No, thank you, sir. I must go to my mother. God will look after Joe, won't he, sir?"

"As sure as there is a God, Agnes," I said; and she went away without another word.

I put my hand on the top of the wall and jumped over. I started back with terror, for I had almost alighted on the body of a woman lying there. The first insane suggestion was that it had been cast ashore; but the next moment I knew that it was my own Wynn timer.

She had not even fainted. She was lying with her handkerchief stuffed into her mouth to keep her from screaming. When I uttered her name she rose, and, without looking at me, walked away towards the house. I followed. She went straight to her own room and shut the door. I went to find her mother. She was with Connie, who was now awake, lying pale and frightened. I told Ethelwyn that Percivale and Joe were on board the little schooner, which was holding on by her anchor, that Wynn timer was in terror about Percivale, that I had found her lying on the wet grass, and that she must get her into a warm bath and to bed. We went together to her room.

She was standing in the middle of the floor, with her hands pressed against her temples.

"Wynn timer," I said, "our friends are not drowned. I think you will see them quite safe in the morning. Pray to God for them."

She did not hear a word.

"Leave her with me," said Ethelwyn, proceeding to undress her; "and tell nurse to bring up the large bath. There is plenty of hot water in the boiler. I gave orders to that effect, not knowing what might happen."

Wynn timer shuddered as her mother said this; but I waited no longer, for when Ethelwyn spoke everyone felt her authority. I obeyed her, and then went to Connie's room.

"Do you mind being left alone a little while?" I asked her.

"No, papa; only--are they all drowned?" she said with a shudder.

"I hope not, my dear; but be sure of the mercy of God, whatever you fear. You must rest in him, my love; for he is life, and will conquer death both in the soul and in the body."

"I was not thinking of myself, papa."

"I know that, my dear. But God is thinking of you and every creature that he has made. And for our sakes you must be quiet in heart, that you may get better, and be able to help us."

"I will try, papa," she said; and, turning slowly on her side, she lay quite still.

Dora and the boys were all fast asleep, for it was very late. I cannot, however, say what hour it was.

Telling nurse to be on the watch because Connie was alone, I went again to the beach. I called first, however, to inquire after Agnes. I found her quite composed, sitting with her parents by the fire, none of them doing anything, scarcely speaking, only listening intently to the sounds of the storm now beginning to die away.

I next went to the place where I had left Turner. Five bodies lay there, and he was busy with a sixth. The surgeon of the place was with him, and they quite expected to recover this man.

I then went down to the sands. An officer of the revenue was taking charge of all that came ashore--chests, and bales, and everything. For a week the sea went on casting out the fragments of that which she had destroyed. I have heard that, for years after, the shifting of the sands would now and then discover things buried that night by the waves.

All the next day the bodies kept coming ashore, some peaceful as in sleep, others broken and mutilated. Many were cast upon other parts of the coast. Some four or five only, all men, were recovered. It was strange to me how I got used to it. The first horror over, the cry that yet another body had come awoke only a gentle pity--no more dismay or shuddering. But, finding I could be of no use, I did not wait longer than just till the morning began to dawn with a pale ghastly light over the seething raging sea; for the sea raged on, although the wind had gone down. There were many strong men about, with two surgeons and all the coastguard, who were well accustomed to similar though not such extensive destruction. The houses along the shore were at the disposal of any who wanted aid; the Parsonage was at some distance; and I confess that when I thought of the state of my daughters, as well as remembered former influences upon my wife, I was very glad to think there was no necessity for carrying thither any of those whom the waves cast on the shore.

When I reached home, and found Wynn timer and Connie again asleep, I walked out along our own downs till I came whence I could see the little schooner still safe at anchor. From her position I concluded--correctly as I found afterwards--that they had let out her cable far enough to allow her to reach the bed of the little stream, where the tide would leave her more gently. She was clearly out of all danger now; and if Percivale and Joe had got safe on board of her, we might confidently expect to see them before many hours were passed. I went home with the good news.

For a few moments I doubted whether I should tell Wynn timer, for I could not know with any certainty that Percivale was in the schooner. But presently I

recalled former conclusions to the effect that we have no right to modify God's facts for fear of what may be to come. A little hope founded on a present appearance, even if that hope should never be realised, may be the very means of enabling a soul to bear the weight of a sorrow past the point at which it would otherwise break down. I would therefore tell Wynn timer, and let her share my expectation of deliverance.

I think she had been half-asleep, for when I entered her room she started up in a sitting posture, looking wild, and putting her hands to her head.

"I have brought you good news, Wynn timer," I said. "I have been out on the downs, and there is light enough now to see that the little schooner is quite safe."

"What schooner?" she asked listlessly, and lay down again, her eyes still staring, awfully unappeased.

"Why the schooner they say Percivale got on board."

"He isn't drowned then!" she cried with a choking voice, and put her hands to her face and burst into tears and sobs.

"Wynn timer," I said, "look what your faithlessness brings upon you. Everybody but you has known all night that Percivale and Joe Harper are probably quite safe. They may be ashore in a couple of hours."

"But you don't know it. He may be drowned yet."

"Of course there is room for doubt, but none for despair. See what a poor helpless creature hopelessness makes you."

"But how can I help it, papa?" she asked piteously. "I am made so."

But as she spoke the dawn was clear upon the height of her forehead.

"You are not made yet, as I am always telling you; and God has ordained that you shall have a hand in your own making. You have to consent, to desire that what you know for a fault shall be set right by his loving will and spirit."

"I don't know God, papa."

"Ah, my dear, that is where it all lies. You do not know him, or you would never be without hope."

"But what am I to do to know him!" she asked, rising on her elbow.

The saving power of hope was already working in her. She was once more turning her face towards the Life.

"Read as you have never read before about Christ Jesus, my love. Read with the express object of finding out what God is like, that you may know him and may trust him. And now give yourself to him, and he will give you sleep."

"What are we to do," I said to my wife, "if Percivale continue silent? For even if he be in love with her, I doubt if he will speak."

"We must leave all that, Harry," she answered.

She was turning on myself the counsel I had been giving Wynn timer. It is strange how easily we can tell our brother what he ought to do, and yet, when the case comes to be our own, do precisely as we had rebuked him for doing. I lay down and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL.

It was a lovely morning when I woke once more. The sun was flashing back from the sea, which was still tossing, but no longer furiously, only as if it wanted to turn itself every way to flash the sunlight about. The madness of the night was over and gone; the light was abroad, and the world was rejoicing. When I reached the drawing-room, which afforded the best outlook over the shore, there was the schooner lying dry on the sands, her two cables and anchors stretching out yards behind her; but half way between the two sides of the bay rose a mass of something shapeless, drifted over with sand. It was all that remained together of the great ship that had the day before swept over the waters like a live thing with wings--of all the works of man's hands the nearest to the shape and sign of life. The wind had ceased altogether, only now and then a little breeze arose which murmured "I am very sorry," and lay down again. And I knew that in the houses on the shore dead men and women were lying.

I went down to the dining-room. The three children were busy at their breakfast, but neither wife, daughter, nor visitor had yet appeared. I made a hurried meal, and was just rising to go and inquire further into the events of the night, when the door opened, and in walked Percivale, looking very solemn, but in perfect health and well-being. I grasped his hand warmly.

"Thank God," I said, "that you are returned to us, Percivale."

"I doubt if that is much to give thanks for," he said.

"We are the judges of that," I rejoined. "Tell me all about it."

While he was narrating the events I have already communicated, Wynn timer entered. She started, turned pale and then very red, and for a moment hesitated in the doorway.

"Here is another to rejoice at your safety, Percivale," I said.

Thereupon he stepped forward to meet her, and she gave him her hand with an emotion so evident that I felt a little distressed--why, I could not easily have told, for she looked most charming in the act,--more lovely than I had ever seen her. Her beauty was unconsciously praising God, and her heart would soon praise him too. But Percivale was a modest man, and I think attributed her emotion to the fact that he had been in danger in the way of

duty,--a fact sufficient to move the heart of any good woman.

She sat down and began to busy herself with the teapot. Her hand trembled. I requested Percivale to begin his story once more; and he evidently enjoyed recounting to her the adventures of the night.

I asked him to sit down and have a second breakfast while I went into the village, whereto he seemed nothing loth.

As I crossed the floor of the old mill to see how Joe was, the head of the sexton appeared emerging from it. He looked full of weighty solemn business. Bidding me good-morning, he turned to the corner where his tools lay, and proceeded to shoulder spade and pickaxe.

"Ah, Coombes! you'll want them," I said.

"A good many o' my people be come all at once, you see, sir," he returned. "I shall have enough ado to make 'em all comfortable like."

"But you must get help, you know; you can never make them all comfortable yourself alone."

"We'll see what I can do," he returned. "I ben't a bit willin' to let no one do my work for me, I do assure you, sir."

"How many are there wanting your services?" I asked.

"There be fifteen of them now, and there be more, I don't doubt, on the way."

"But you won't think of making separate graves for them all," I said. "They died together: let them lie together."

The old man set down his tools, and looked me in the face with indignation. The face was so honest and old, that, without feeling I had deserved it, I yet felt the rebuke.

"How would you like, sir," he said, at length, "to be put in the same bed with a lot of people you didn't know nothing about?"

I knew the old man's way, and that any argument which denied the premiss of his peculiar fancy was worse than thrown away upon him. I therefore ventured no farther than to say that I had heard death was a leveller.

"That be very true; and, mayhap, they mightn't think of it after they'd been down awhile--six weeks, mayhap, or so. But anyhow, it can't be comfortable for 'em, poor things. One on 'em be a baby: I daresay he'd rather lie with his mother. The doctor he say one o' the women be a mother. I don't know," he went on reflectively, "whether she be the baby's own mother, but I daresay neither o' them 'll mind it if I take it for granted, and lay 'em down together. So that's one bed less."

One thing was clear, that the old man could not dig fourteen graves within the needful time. But I would not interfere with his office in the church, having no reason to doubt that he would perform its duties to perfection. He shouldered his tools again and walked out. I descended the stair, thinking to see Joe; but there was no one there but the old woman.

"Where are Joe and Agnes?" I asked.

"You see, sir, Joe had promised a little job of work to be ready to-day, and so he couldn't stop. He did say Agnes needn't go with him; but she thought she couldn't part with him so soon, you see, sir."

"She had received him from the dead--raised to life again," I said; "it was most natural. But what a fine fellow Joe is; nothing will make him neglect his work!"

"I tried to get him to stop, sir, saying he had done quite enough last night for all next day; but he told me it was his business to get the tire put on Farmer Wheatstone's cart-wheel to-day just as much as it was his business to go in the life-boat yesterday. So he would go, and Aggy wouldn't stay behind."

"Fine fellow, Joe!" I said, and took my leave.

As I drew near the village, I heard the sound of hammering and sawing, and apparently everything at once in the way of joinery; they were making the coffins in the joiners' shops, of which there were two in the place.

I do not like coffins. They seem to me relics of barbarism. If I had my way, I would have the old thing decently wound in a fair linen cloth, and so laid in the bosom of the earth, whence it was taken. I would have it vanish, not merely from the world of vision, but from the world of form, as soon as may be. The embrace of the fine life-hoarding, life-giving mould, seems to me comforting, in the vague, foolish fancy that will sometimes emerge from the froth of reverie--I mean, of subdued consciousness remaining in the outworn frame. But the coffin is altogether and vilely repellent. Of this, however, enough, I hate even the shadow of sentiment, though some of my readers, who may not yet have learned to distinguish between sentiment and feeling, may wonder how I dare to utter such a barbarism.

I went to the house of the county magistrate hard by, for I thought something might have to be done in which I had a share. I found that he had sent a notice of the loss of the vessel to the Liverpool papers, requesting those who might wish to identify or claim any of the bodies to appear within four days at Kilkhaven.

This threw the last upon Saturday, and before the end of the week it was clear that they must not remain above ground over Sunday. I therefore arranged that they should be buried late on the Saturday night.

On the Friday morning, a young woman and an old man, unknown to each other, arrived by the coach from Barnstaple. They had come to see the last of their friends in this world; to look, if they might, at the shadow left behind by the departing soul. For as the shadow of any object remains a moment upon the magic curtain of the eye after the object itself has gone, so the shadow of the soul, namely, the body, lingers a moment upon the earth after the object itself has gone to the "high countries." It was well to see with what a sober sorrow the dignified little old man bore his grief. It was as if he felt that the loss of his son was only for a moment. But the young woman had taken on the hue of the corpse she came to seek. Her eyes were sunken as if with the weight of the light she cared not for, and her cheeks had already pined away as if to be ready for the grave. A being thus emptied of its glory seized and possessed my thoughts. She never even told us whom she came seeking, and after one involuntary question, which simply received no answer, I was very careful not even to approach

another. I do not think the form she sought was there; and she may have gone home with the lingering hope to cast the gray aurora of a doubtful dawn over her coming days, that, after all, that one had escaped.

On the Friday afternoon, with the approbation of the magistrate, I had all the bodies removed to the church. Some in their coffins, others on stretchers, they were laid in front of the communion-rail. In the evening these two went to see them. I took care to be present. The old man soon found his son. I was at his elbow as he walked between the rows of the dead. He turned to me and said quietly--

"That's him, sir. He was a good lad. God rest his soul. He's with his mother; and if I'm sorry, she's glad."

With that he smiled, or tried to smile. I could only lay my hand on his arm, to let him know that I understood him, and was with him. He walked out of the church, sat down, upon a stone, and stared at the mould of a new-made grave in front of him. What was passing behind those eyes God only knew--certainly the man himself did not know. Our lightest thoughts are of more awful significance than the most serious of us can imagine.

For the young woman, I thought she left the church with a little light in her eyes; but she had said nothing. Alas! that the body was not there could no more justify her than Milton in letting her

"frail thoughts dally with false surmise."

With him, too, she might well add--

"Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas Wash far away."

But God had them in his teaching, and all I could do was to ask them to be my guests till the funeral and the following Sunday were over. To this they kindly consented, and I took them to my wife, who received them like herself, and had in a few minutes made them at home with her, to which no doubt their sorrow tended, for that brings out the relations of humanity and destroys its distinctions.

The next morning a Scotchman of a very decided type, originally from Aberdeen, but resident in Liverpool, appeared, seeking the form of his daughter. I had arranged that whoever came should be brought to me first. I went with him to the church. He was a tall, gaunt, bony man, with long arms and huge hands, a rugged granite-like face, and a slow ponderous utterance, which I had some difficulty in understanding. He treated the object of his visit with a certain hardness, and at the same time lightness, which also I had some difficulty in understanding.

"You want to see the--" I said, and hesitated.

"Ow ay--the boadies," he answered. "She winna be there, I daursay, but I wad jist like to see; for I wadna like her to be beeried gin sae be 'at she was there, wi'oot biddin' her good-bye like."

When we reached the church, I opened the door and entered. An awe fell upon me fresh and new. The beautiful church had become a tomb: solemn, grand, ancient, it rose as a memorial of the dead who lay in peace before her altar-rail, as if they had fled thither for sanctuary from a sea of troubles. And I thought with myself, Will the time ever come when the churches shall stand as the tombs of holy things that have passed away,

when Christ shall have rendered up the kingdom to his Father, and no man shall need to teach his neighbour or his brother, saying, "Know the Lord"? The thought passed through my mind and vanished, as I led my companion up to the dead. He glanced at one and another, and passed on. He had looked at ten or twelve ere he stopped, gazing on the face of the beautiful form which had first come ashore. He stooped and stroked the white cheeks, taking the head in his great rough hands, and smoothed the brown hair tenderly, saying, as if he had quite forgotten that she was dead--

"Eh, Maggie! hoo cam _ye_ here, lass?"

Then, as if for the first time the reality had grown comprehensible, he put his hands before his face, and burst into tears. His huge frame was shaken with sobs for one long minute, while I stood looking on with awe and reverence. He ceased suddenly, pulled a blue cotton handkerchief with yellow spots on it--I see it now--from his pocket, rubbed his face with it as if drying it with a towel, put it back, turned, and said, without looking at me, "I'll awa' hame."

"Wouldn't you like a piece of her hair?" I asked.

"Gin ye please," he answered gently, as if his daughter's form had been mine now, and her hair were mine to give.

By the vestry door sat Mrs. Coombes, watching the dead, with her sweet solemn smile, and her constant ministrations of knitting.

"Have you got a pair of scissors there, Mrs. Coombes?" I asked.

"Yes, to be sure, sir," she answered, rising, and lifting a huge pair by the string suspending them from her waist.

"Cut off a nice piece of this beautiful hair," I said.

She lifted the lovely head, chose, and cut off a long piece, and handed it respectfully to the father.

He took it without a word, sat down on the step before the communion-rail, and began to smooth out the wonderful sleeve of dusky gold. It was, indeed, beautiful hair. As he drew it out, I thought it must be a yard long. He passed his big fingers through and through it, but tenderly, as if it had been still growing on the live lovely head, stopping every moment to pick out the bits of sea-weed and shells, and shake out the sand that had been wrought into its mass. He sat thus for nearly half-an-hour, and we stood looking on with something closely akin to awe. At length he folded it up, drew from his pocket an old black leather book, laid it carefully in the innermost pocket, and rose. I led the way from the church, and he followed me.

Outside the church, he laid his hand on my arm, and said, groping with his other hand in his trousers-pocket--

"She'll hae putten ye to some expense--for the coffin an' sic like."

"We'll talk about that afterwards," I answered. "Come home with me now, and have some refreshment."

"Na, I thank ye. I hae putten ye to eneuch o' tribble already. I'll jist awa' hame."

"We are going to lay them down this evening. You won't go before the funeral. Indeed, I think you can't get away till Monday morning. My wife and I will be glad of your company till then."

"I'm no company for gentle-fowk, sir."

"Come and show me in which of these graves you would like to have her laid," I said.

He yielded and followed me.

Coombes had not dug many spadefuls before he saw what had been plain enough--that ten such men as he could not dig the graves in time. But there was plenty of help to be had from the village and the neighbouring farms. Most of them were now ready, but a good many men were still at work. The brown hillocks lay all about the church-yard--the mole-heaps of burrowing Death.

The stranger looked around him. His face grew critical. He stepped a little hither and thither. At length he turned to me and said--

"I wadna like to be greedy; but gin ye wad lat her lie next the kirk there--i' that neuk, I wad tak' it kindly. And syne gin ever it cam' aboot that I cam' here again, I wad ken whaur she was. Could ye get a sma' bit heidstane putten up? I wad leave the siller wi' ye to pay for't."

"To be sure I can. What will you have put on the stone?"

"Ow jist--let me see--Maggie Jamieson--nae Marget, but jist Maggie. She was aye Maggie at home. Maggie Jamieson, frae her father. It's the last thing I can gie her. Maybe ye micht put a verse o' Scripter aneath't, ye ken."

"What verse would you like?"

He thought for a little.

"Isna there a text that says, 'The deid shall hear his voice'?"

"Yes: 'The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.'"

"Ay. That's it. Weel, jist put that on.--They canna do better than hear his voice," he added, with a strange mixture of Scotch ratiocination.

I led the way home, and he accompanied me without further objection or apology. After dinner, I proposed that we should go upon the downs, for the day was warm and bright. We sat on the grass. I felt that I could not talk to them as from myself. I knew nothing of the possible gulfs of sorrow in their hearts. To me their forms seemed each like a hill in whose unseen bosom lay a cavern of dripping waters, perhaps with a subterranean torrent of anguish raving through its hollows and tumbling down hidden precipices, whose voice God only heard, and God only could still. This daughter might, though from her face I did not think it, have gone away against her father's will. That son might have been a ne'er-do-well at home--how could I tell? The woman might be looking for the lover that had forsaken her--I could not divine. I would speak no words of my own. The Son of God had spoken words of comfort to his mourning friends, when he was the present God and they were the forefront of humanity; I would read some of the words he spoke. From them the human nature in each would draw what

comfort it could. I took my New Testament from my pocket, and said, without any preamble,

"When our Lord was going to die, he knew that his friends loved him enough to be very wretched about it. He knew that they would be overwhelmed for a time with trouble. He knew, too, that they could not believe the glad end of it all, to which end he looked, across the awful death that awaited him--a death to which that of our friends in the wreck was ease itself. I will just read to you what he said."

I read from the fourteenth to the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. I knew there were worlds of meaning in the words into which I could hardly hope any of them would enter. But I knew likewise that the best things are just those from which the humble will draw the truth they are capable of seeing. Therefore I read as for myself, and left it to them to hear for themselves. Nor did I add any word of comment, fearful of darkening counsel by words without knowledge. For the Bible is awfully set against what is not wise.

When I had finished, I closed the book, rose from the grass, and walked towards the brow of the shore. They rose likewise and followed me. I talked of slight things; the tone was all that communicated between us. But little of any sort was said. The sea lay still before us, knowing nothing of the sorrow it had caused.

We wandered a little way along the cliff. The burial-service was at seven o'clock.

"I have an invalid to visit out in this direction," I said; "would you mind walking with me? I shall not stay more than five minutes, and we shall get back just in time for tea."

They assented kindly. I walked first with one, then with another; heard a little of the story of each; was able to say a few words of sympathy, and point, as it were, a few times towards the hills whence cometh our aid. I may just mention here, that since our return to Marshmallows I have had two of them, the young woman and the Scotchman, to visit us there.

The bell began to toll, and we went to church. My companions placed themselves near the dead. I went into the vestry till the appointed hour. I thought as I put on my surplice how, in all religions but the Christian, the dead body was a pollution to the temple. Here the church received it, as a holy thing, for a last embrace ere it went to the earth.

As the dead were already in the church, the usual form could not be carried out. I therefore stood by the communion-table, and there began to read, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

I advanced, as I read, till I came outside the rails and stood before the dead. There I read the Psalm, "Lord, thou hast been our refuge," and the glorious lesson, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Then the men of the neighbourhood came forward, and in long solemn procession bore the bodies out of the church, each to its grave. At the church-door I stood and read, "Man that is born of a woman;" then went from one to another of the graves, and read over each, as the earth fell on the coffin-lid, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy." Then again, I went back to the

church-door and read, "I heard a voice from heaven;" and so to the end of the service.

Leaving the men to fill up the graves, I hastened to lay aside my canonicals, that I might join my guests; but my wife and daughter had already prevailed on them to leave the churchyard.

A word now concerning my own family. Turner insisted on Connie's remaining in bed for two or three days. She looked worse in face--pale and worn; but it was clear, from the way she moved in bed, that the fresh power called forth by the shock had not vanished with the moment.

Wynn timer was quieter almost than ever; but there was a constant _secret_ light, if I may use the paradox, in her eyes. Percivale was at the house every day, always ready to make himself useful. My wife bore up wonderfully. As yet the much greater catastrophe had come far short of the impression made by the less. When quieter hours should come, however, I could not help fearing that the place would be dreadfully painful to all but the younger ones, who, of course, had the usual child-gift of forgetting. The servants--even Walter--looked thin and anxious.

That Saturday night I found myself, as I had once or twice found myself before, entirely unprepared to preach. I did not feel anxious, because I did not feel that I was to blame: I had been so much occupied. I had again and again turned my thoughts thitherward, but nothing recommended itself to me so that I could say "I must take that;" nothing said plainly, "This is what you have to speak of."

As often as I had sought to find fitting matter for my sermon, my mind had turned to death and the grave; but I shrunk from every suggestion, or rather nothing had come to me that interested myself enough to justify me in giving it to my people. And I always took it as my sole justification, in speaking of anything to the flock of Christ, that I cared heartily in my own soul for that thing. Without this consciousness I was dumb. And I do think, highly as I value prophecy, that a clergyman ought to be at liberty upon occasion to say, "My friends, I cannot preach to-day." What a riddance it would be for the Church, I do not say if every priest were to speak sense, but only if every priest were to abstain from speaking of that in which, at the moment, he feels little or no interest!

I went to bed, which is often the very best thing a man can do; for sleep will bring him from God that which no effort of his own will can compass. I have read somewhere--I will verify it by present search--that Luther's translation, of the verse in the psalm, "So he giveth to his beloved sleep," is, "He giveth his beloved sleeping," or while asleep. Yes, so it is, literally, in English, "It is in vain that ye rise early, and then sit long, and eat your bread with care, for to his friends he gives it sleeping." This was my experience in the present instance; for the thought of which I was first conscious when I awoke was, "Why should I talk about death? Every man's heart is now full of death. We have enough of that--even the sum that God has sent us on the wings of the tempest. What I have to do, as the minister of the new covenant, is to speak of life." It flashed in on my mind: "Death is over and gone. The resurrection comes next. I will speak of the raising of Lazarus."

The same moment I knew that I was ready to speak. Shall I or shall I not give my reader the substance of what I said? I wish I knew how many of them would like it, and how many would not. I do not want to bore them with sermons, especially seeing I have always said that no sermons ought to

be printed; for in print they are but what the old alchemists would have called a *caput mortuum*, or death's head, namely, a lifeless lump of residuum at the bottom of the crucible; for they have no longer the living human utterance which gives all the power on the minds of the hearers. But I have not, either in this or in my preceding narrative, attempted to give a sermon as I preached it. I have only sought to present the substance of it in a form fitter for being read, somewhat cleared of the unavoidable, let me say necessary--yes, I will say *valuable*--repetitions and enforcements by which the various considerations are pressed upon the minds of the hearers. These are entirely wearisome in print--useless too, for the reader may ponder over every phrase till he finds out the purport of it--if indeed there be such readers nowadays.

I rose, went down to the bath in the rocks, had a joyous physical ablution, and a swim up and down the narrow cleft, from which I emerged as if myself newly born or raised anew, and then wandered about on the downs full of hope and thankfulness, seeking all I could to plant deep in my mind the long-rooted truths of resurrection, that they might be not only ready to blossom in the warmth of the spring-tides to come, but able to send out some leaves and promissory buds even in the wintry time of the soul, when the fogs of pain steam up from the frozen clay soil of the body, and make the monarch-will totter dizzily upon his throne, to comfort the eyes of the bewildered king, reminding him that the King of kings hath conquered Death and the Grave. There is no perfect faith that cannot laugh at winters and graveyards, and all the whole array of defiant appearances. The fresh breeze of the morning visited me. "O God," I said in my heart, "would that when the dark day comes, in which I can feel nothing, I may be able to front it with the memory of this day's strength, and so help myself to trust in the Father! I would call to mind the days of old, with David the king."

When I returned to the house, I found that one of the sailors, who had been cast ashore with his leg broken, wished to see me. I obeyed, and found him very pale and worn.

"I think I am going, sir," he said; "and I wanted to see you before I die."

"Trust in Christ, and do not be afraid," I returned.

"I prayed to him to save me when I was hanging to the rigging, and if I wasn't afraid then, I'm not going to be afraid now, dying quietly in my bed. But just look here, sir."

He took from under his pillow something wrapped up in paper, unfolded the envelope, and showed a lump of something--I could not at first tell what. He put it in my hand, and then I saw that it was part of a bible, with nearly the upper half of it worn or cut away, and the rest partly in a state of pulp.

"That's the bible my mother gave me when I left home first," he said. "I don't know how I came to put it in my pocket, but I think the rope that cut through that when I was lashed to the shrouds would a'most have cut through my ribs if it hadn't been for it."

"Very likely," I returned. "The body of the Bible has saved your bodily life: may the spirit of it save your spiritual life."

"I think I know what you mean, sir," he panted out. "My mother was a good woman, and I know she prayed to God for me."

"Would you like us to pray for you in church to-day?"

"If you please, sir; me and Bob Fox. He's nearly as bad as I am."

"We won't forget you," I said. "I will come in after church and see how you are."

I knelt and offered the prayers for the sick, and then took my leave. I did not think the poor fellow was going to die.

I may as well mention here, that he has been in my service ever since. We took him with us to Marshmallows, where he works in the garden and stables, and is very useful. We have to look after him though, for his health continues delicate.

CHAPTER X.

THE SERMON.

When I stood up to preach, I gave them no text; but, with the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of St. John open before me, to keep me correct, I proceeded to tell the story in the words God gave me; for who can dare to say that he makes his own commonest speech?

"When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and therefore our elder brother, was going about on the earth, eating and drinking with his brothers and sisters, there was one family he loved especially--a family of two sisters and a brother; for, although he loves everybody as much as they can be loved, there are some who can be loved more than others. Only God is always trying to make us such that we can be loved more and more. There are several stories--O, such lovely stories!--about that family and Jesus; and we have to do with one of them now.

"They lived near the capital of the country, Jerusalem, in a village they called Bethany; and it must have been a great relief to our Lord, when he was worn out with the obstinacy and pride of the great men of the city, to go out to the quiet little town and into the refuge of Lazarus's house, where everyone was more glad at the sound of his feet than at any news that could come to them.

"They had at this time behaved so ill to him in Jerusalem--taking up stones to stone him even, though they dared not quite do it, mad with anger as they were--and all because he told them the truth--that he had gone away to the other side of the great river that divided the country, and taught the people in that quiet place. While he was there his friend Lazarus was taken ill; and the two sisters, Martha and Mary, sent a messenger to him, to say to him, 'Lord, your friend is very ill.' Only they said it more beautifully than that: 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.' You know, when anyone is ill, we always want the person whom he loves most to come to him.

This is very wonderful. In the worst things that can come to us the first thought is of love. People, like the Scribes and Pharisees, might say, 'What good can that do him?' And we may not in the least suppose that the person we want knows any secret that can cure his pain; yet love is the first thing we think of. And here we are more right than we know; for, at the long last, love will cure everything: which truth, indeed, this story will set forth to us. No doubt the heart of Lazarus, ill as he was, longed after his friend; and, very likely, even the sight of Jesus might have given him such strength that the life in him could have driven out the death which had already got one foot across the threshold. But the sisters expected more than this: they believed that Jesus, whom they knew to have driven disease and death out of so many hearts, had only to come and touch him--nay, only to speak a word, to look at him, and their brother was saved. Do you think they presumed in thus expecting? The fact was, they did not believe enough; they had not yet learned to believe that he could cure him all the same whether he came to them or not, because he was always with them. We cannot understand this; but our understanding is never a measure of what is true.

"Whether Jesus knew exactly all that was going to take place I cannot tell. Some people may feel certain upon points that I dare not feel certain upon. One thing I am sure of: that he did not always know everything beforehand, for he said so himself. It is infinitely more valuable to us, because more beautiful and godlike in him, that he should trust his Father than that he should foresee everything. At all events he knew that his Father did not want him to go to his friends yet. So he sent them a message to the effect that there was a particular reason for this sickness--that the end of it was not the death of Lazarus, but the glory of God. This, I think, he told them by the same messenger they sent to him; and then, instead of going to them, he remained where he was.

"But O, my friends, what shall I say about this wonderful message? Think of being sick for the glory of God! of being shipwrecked for the glory of God! of being drowned for the glory of God! How can the sickness, the fear, the broken-heartedness of his creatures be for the glory of God? What kind of a God can that be? Why just a God so perfectly, absolutely good, that the things that look least like it are only the means of clearing our eyes to let us see how good he is. For he is so good that he is not satisfied with being good. He loves his children, so that except he can make them good like himself, make them blessed by seeing how good he is, and desiring the same goodness in themselves, he is not satisfied. He is not like a fine proud benefactor, who is content with doing that which will satisfy his sense of his own glory, but like a mother who puts her arm round her child, and whose heart is sore till she can make her child see the love which is her glory. The glorification of the Son of God is the glorification of the human race; for the glory of God is the glory of man, and that glory is love. Welcome sickness, welcome sorrow, welcome death, revealing that glory!

"The next two verses sound very strangely together, and yet they almost seem typical of all the perplexities of God's dealings. The old painters and poets represented Faith as a beautiful woman, holding in her hand a cup of wine and water, with a serpent coiled up within. Highhearted Faith! she scruples not to drink of the life-giving wine and water; she is not repelled by the upcoiled serpent. The serpent she takes but for the type of the eternal wisdom that looks repellent because it is not understood. The wine is good, the water is good; and if the hand of the supreme Fate put that cup in her hand, the serpent itself must be good too,--harmless, at least, to hurt the truth of the water and the wine. But let us read the

verses.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.'

"Strange! his friend was sick: he abode two days where he was! But remember what we have already heard. The glory of God was infinitely more for the final cure of a dying Lazarus, who, give him all the life he could have, would yet, without that glory, be in death, than the mere presence of the Son of God. I say mere presence, for, compared with the glory of God, the very presence of his Son, so dissociated, is nothing. He abode where he was that the glory of God, the final cure of humanity, the love that triumphs over death, might shine out and redeem the hearts of men, so that death could not touch them.

"After the two days, the hour had arrived. He said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judaea.' They expostulated, because of the danger, saying, 'Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?' The answer which he gave them I am not sure whether I can thoroughly understand; but I think, in fact I know, it must bear on the same region of life--the will of God. I think what he means by walking in the day is simply doing the will of God. That was the sole, the all-embracing light in which Jesus ever walked. I think he means that now he saw plainly what the Father wanted him to do. If he did not see that the Father wanted him to go back to Judaea, and yet went, that would be to go stumblingly, to walk in the darkness. There are twelve hours in the day--one time to act--a time of light and the clear call of duty; there is a night when a man, not seeing where or hearing how, must be content to rest. Something not inharmonious with this, I think, he must have intended; but I do not see the whole thought clearly enough to be sure that I am right. I do think, further, that it points at a clearer condition of human vision and conviction than I am good enough to understand; though I hope one day to rise into this upper stratum of light.

"Whether his scholars had heard anything of Lazarus yet, I do not know. It looks a little as if Jesus had not told them the message he had had from the sisters. But he told them now that he was asleep, and that he was going to wake him. You would think they might have understood this. The idea of going so many miles to wake a man might have surely suggested death. But the disciples were sorely perplexed with many of his words. Sometimes they looked far away for the meaning when the meaning lay in their very hearts; sometimes they looked into their hands for it when it was lost in the grandeur of the ages. But he meant them to see into all that he said by and by, although they could not see into it now. When they understood him better, then they would understand what he said better. And to understand him better they must be more like him; and to make them more like him he must go away and give them his spirit--awful mystery which no man but himself can understand.

"Now he had to tell them plainly that Lazarus was dead. They had not thought of death as a sleep. I suppose this was altogether a new and Christian idea. Do not suppose that it applied more to Lazarus than to other dead people. He was none the less dead that Jesus meant to take a weary two days' journey to his sepulchre and wake him. If death is not a sleep, Jesus did not speak the truth when he said Lazarus slept. You may say it was a figure; but a figure that is not like the thing it figures is simply a lie.

"They set out to go back to Judaea. Here we have a glimpse of the faith of Thomas, the doubter. For a doubter is not without faith. The very fact that he doubts, shows that he has some faith. When I find anyone hard upon doubters, I always doubt the quality of his faith. It is of little use to have a great cable, if the hemp is so poor that it breaks like the painter of a boat. I have known people whose power of believing chiefly consisted in their incapacity for seeing difficulties. Of what fine sort a faith must be that is founded in stupidity, or far worse, in indifference to the truth and the mere desire to get out of hell! That is not a grand belief in the Son of God, the radiation of the Father. Thomas's want of faith was shown in the grumbling, self-pitying way in which he said, 'Let us also go that we may die with him.' His Master had said that he was going to wake him. Thomas said, 'that we may die with him.' You may say, 'He did not understand him.' True, it may be, but his unbelief was the cause of his not understanding him. I suppose Thomas meant this as a reproach to Jesus for putting them all in danger by going back to Judaea; if not, it was only a poor piece of sentimentality. So much for Thomas's unbelief. But he had good and true faith notwithstanding; for he went with his Master.

"By the time they reached the neighbourhood of Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days. Someone ran to the house and told the sisters that Jesus was coming. Martha, as soon as she heard it, rose and went to meet him. It might be interesting at another time to compare the difference of the behaviour of the two sisters upon this occasion with the difference of their behaviour upon another occasion, likewise recorded; but with the man dead in his sepulchre, and the hope dead in these two hearts, we have no inclination to enter upon fine distinctions of character. Death and grief bring out the great family likenesses in the living as well as in the dead.

"When Martha came to Jesus, she showed her true though imperfect faith by almost attributing her brother's death to Jesus' absence. But even in the moment, looking in the face of the Master, a fresh hope, a new budding of faith, began in her soul. She thought--'What if, after all, he were to bring him to life again!' O, trusting heart, how thou leavest the dull-plodding intellect behind thee! While the conceited intellect is reasoning upon the impossibility of the thing, the expectant faith beholds it accomplished. Jesus, responding instantly to her faith, granting her half-born prayer, says, 'Thy brother shall rise again;' not meaning the general truth recognised, or at least assented to by all but the Sadducees, concerning the final resurrection of the dead, but meaning, 'Be it unto thee as thou wilt. I will raise him again.' For there is no steering for a fine effect in the words of Jesus. But these words are too good for Martha to take them as he meant them. Her faith is not quite equal to the belief that he actually will do it. The thing she could hope for afar off she could hardly believe when it came to her very door. 'O, yes,' she said, her mood falling again to the level of the commonplace, 'of course, at the last day.' Then the Lord turns away her thoughts from the dogmas of her faith to himself, the Life, saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?' Martha, without understanding what he said more than in a very poor part, answered in words which preserved her honesty entire, and yet included all he asked, and a thousandfold more than she could yet believe: 'Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.'

"I dare not pretend to have more than a grand glimmering of the truth of Jesus' words 'shall never die;' but I am pretty sure that when Martha came to die, she found that there was indeed no such thing as she had meant when

she used the ghastly word _death_, and said with her first new breath, 'Verily, Lord, I am not dead.'

"But look how this declaration of her confidence in the Christ operated upon herself. She instantly thought of her sister; the hope that the Lord would do something swelled within her, and, leaving Jesus, she went to find Mary. Whoever has had a true word with the elder brother, straightway will look around him to find his brother, his sister. The family feeling blossoms: he wants his friend to share the glory withal. Martha wants Mary to go to Jesus too.

"Mary heard her, forgot her visitors, rose, and went. They thought she went to the grave: she went to meet its conqueror. But when she came to him, the woman who had chosen the good part praised of Jesus, had but the same words to embody her hope and her grief that her careful and troubled sister had uttered a few minutes before. How often during those four days had not the self-same words passed between them! 'Ah, if he had been here, our brother had not died!' She said so to himself now, and wept, and her friends who had followed her wept likewise. A moment more, and the Master groaned; yet a moment, and he too wept. 'Sorrow is catching;' but this was not the mere infection of sorrow. It went deeper than mere sympathy; for he groaned in his spirit and was troubled. What made him weep? It was when he saw them weeping that he wept. But why should he weep, when he knew how soon their weeping would be turned into rejoicing? It was not for their weeping, so soon to be over, that he wept, but for the human heart everywhere swollen with tears, yea, with griefs that can find no such relief as tears; for these, and for all his brothers and sisters tormented with pain for lack of faith in his Father in heaven, Jesus wept. He saw the blessed well-being of Lazarus on the one side, and on the other the streaming eyes from whose sight he had vanished. The veil between was so thin! yet the sight of those eyes could not pierce it: their hearts must go on weeping--without cause, for his Father was so good. I think it was the helplessness he felt in the impossibility of at once sweeping away the phantasm death from their imagination that drew the tears from the eyes of Jesus. Certainly it was not for Lazarus; it could hardly be for these his friends--save as they represented the humanity which he would help, but could not help even as he was about to help them.

"The Jews saw herein proof that he loved Lazarus; but they little thought it was for them and their people, and for the Gentiles whom they despised, that his tears were now flowing--that the love which pressed the fountains of his weeping was love for every human heart, from Adam on through the ages.

"Some of them went a little farther, nearly as far as the sisters, saying, 'Could he not have kept the man from dying?' But it was such a poor thing, after all, that they thought he might have done. They regarded merely this unexpected illness, this early death; for I daresay Lazarus was not much older than Jesus. They did not think that, after all, Lazarus must die some time; that the beloved could be saved, at best, only for a little while. Jesus seems to have heard the remark, for he again groaned in himself.

"Meantime they were drawing near the place where he was buried. It was a hollow in the face of a rock, with a stone laid against it. I suppose the bodies were laid on something like shelves inside the rock, as they are in many sepulchres. They were not put into coffins, but wound round and round with linen.

"When they came before the door of death, Jesus said to them, 'Take away

the stone.' The nature of Martha's reply--the realism of it, as they would say now-a-days--would seem to indicate that her dawning faith had sunk again below the horizon, that in the presence of the insignia of death, her faith yielded, even as the faith of Peter failed him when he saw around him the grandeur of the high-priest, and his Master bound and helpless. Jesus answered--O, what an answer!--To meet the corruption and the stink which filled her poor human fancy, 'the glory of God' came from his lips: human fear; horror speaking from the lips of a woman in the very jaws of the devouring death; and the 'said I not unto thee?' from the mouth of him who was so soon to pass worn and bloodless through such a door! 'He stinketh,' said Martha. 'The glory of God,' said Jesus. 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?'

"Before the open throat of the sepulchre Jesus began to speak to his Father aloud. He had prayed to him in his heart before, most likely while he groaned in his spirit. Now he thanked him that he had comforted him, and given him Lazarus as a first-fruit from the dead. But he will be true to the listening people as well as to his ever-hearing Father; therefore he tells why he said the word of thanks aloud--a thing not usual with him, for his Father was always hearing, him. Having spoken it for the people, he would say that it was for the people.

"The end of it all was that they might believe that God had sent him--a far grander gift than having the dearest brought back from the grave; for he is the life of men.

"Lazarus, come forth!"

"And Lazarus came forth, creeping helplessly with inch-long steps of his linen-bound limbs. 'Ha, ha! brother, sister!' cries the human heart. The Lord of Life hath taken the prey from the spoiler; he hath emptied the grave. Here comes the dead man, welcome as never was child from the womb--new-born, and in him all the human race new-born from the grave! 'Loose him and let him go,' and the work is done. The sorrow is over, and the joy is come. Home, home, Martha, Mary, with your Lazarus! He too will go with you, the Lord of the Living. Home and get the feast ready, Martha! Prepare the food for him who comes hungry from the grave, for him who has called him thence. Home, Mary, to help Martha! What a household will yours be! What wondrous speech will pass between the dead come to life and the living come to die!

"But what pang is this that makes Lazarus draw hurried breath, and turns Martha's cheek so pale? Ah, at the little window of the heart the pale eyes of the defeated Horror look in. What! is he there still! Ah, yes, he will come for Martha, come for Mary, come yet again for Lazarus--yea, come for the Lord of Life himself, and carry all away. But look at the Lord: he knows all about it, and he smiles. Does Martha think of the words he spoke, 'He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die'? Perhaps she does, and, like the moon before the sun, her face returns the smile of her Lord.

"This, my friends, is a fancy in form, but it embodies a dear truth. What is it to you and me that he raised Lazarus? We are not called upon to believe that he will raise from the tomb that joy of our hearts which lies buried there beyond our sight. Stop! Are we not? We are called upon to believe this; else the whole story were for us a poor mockery. What is it to us that the Lord raised Lazarus?--Is it nothing to know that our Brother is Lord over the grave? Will the harvest be behind the first-fruits? If he tells us he cannot, for good reasons, raise up our vanished love to-day, or to-morrow, or for all the years of our life to come, shall we not mingle

the smile of faithful thanks with the sorrow of present loss, and walk diligently waiting? That he called forth Lazarus showed that he was in his keeping, that he is Lord of the living, and that all live to him, that he has a hold of them, and can draw them forth when he will. If this is not true, then the raising of Lazarus is false; I do not mean merely false in fact, but false in meaning. If we believe in him, then in his name, both for ourselves and for our friends, we must deny death and believe in life. Lord Christ, fill our hearts with thy Life!"

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGED PLANS.

In a day or two Connie was permitted to rise and take to her couch once more. It seemed strange that she should look so much worse, and yet be so much stronger. The growth of her power of motion was wonderful. As they carried her, she begged to be allowed to put her feet to the ground. Turner yielded, though without quite ceasing to support her. He was satisfied, however, that she could have stood upright for a moment at least. He would not, of course, risk it, and made haste to lay her down.

The time of his departure was coming near, and he seemed more anxious the nearer it came; for Connie continued worn-looking and pale; and her smile, though ever ready to greet me when I entered, had lost much of its light. I noticed, too, that she had the curtain of her window constantly so arranged as to shut out the sea. I said something to her about it once. Her reply was:

"Papa, I can't bear it. I know it is very silly; but I think I can make you understand how it is: I was so fond of the sea when I came down; it seemed to lie close to my window, with a friendly smile ready for me every morning when I looked out. I daresay it is all from want of faith, but I can't help it: it looks so far away now, like a friend that had failed me, that I would rather not see it."

I saw that the struggling life within her was grievously oppressed, that the things which surrounded her were no longer helpful. Her life had been driven as to its innermost cave; and now, when it had been enticed to venture forth and look abroad, a sudden pall had descended upon nature. I could not help thinking that the good of our visit to Kilkhaven had come, and that evil, from which I hoped we might yet escape, was following. I left her, and sought Turner.

"It strikes me, Turner," I said, "that the sooner we get out of this the better for Connie."

"I am quite of your opinion. I think the very prospect of leaving the place would do something to restore her. If she is so uncomfortable now, think what it will be in the many winter nights at hand."

"Do you think it would be safe to move her?"

"Far safer than to let her remain. At the worst, she is now far better than when she came. Try her. Hint at the possibility of going home, and see how she will take it."

"Well, I sha'n't like to be left alone; but if she goes they must all go, except, perhaps, I might keep Wynn timer. But I don't know how her mother would get on without her."

"I don't see why you should stay behind. Mr. Weir would be as glad to come as you would be to go; and it can make no difference to Mr. Shepherd."

It seemed a very sensible suggestion. I thought a moment. Certainly it was a desirable thing for both my sister and her husband. They had no such reasons as we had for disliking the place; and it would enable her to avoid the severity of yet another winter. I said as much to Turner, and went back to Connie's room.

The light of a lovely sunset was lying outside her window. She was sitting so that she could not see it. I would find out her feeling in the matter without any preamble.

"Would you like to go back to Marshmallows, Connie?" I asked.

Her countenance flashed into light.

"O, dear papa, do let us go," she said; "that would be delightful."

"Well, I think we can manage it, if you will only get a little stronger for the journey. The weather is not so good to travel in as when we came down."

"No; but I am ever so much better, you know, than I was then."

The poor girl was already stronger from the mere prospect of going home again. She moved restlessly on her couch, half mechanically put her hand to the curtain, pulled it aside, looked out, faced the sun and the sea, and did not draw back. My mind was made up. I left her, and went to find Ethelwyn. She heartily approved of the proposal for Connie's sake, and said that it would be scarcely less agreeable to herself. I could see a certain troubled look above her eyes, however.

"You are thinking of Wynn timer," I said.

"Yes. It is hard to make one sad for the sake of the rest."

"True. But it is one of the world's recognised necessities."

"No doubt."

"Besides, you don't suppose Percivale can stay here the whole winter. They must part some time."

"Of course. Only they did not expect it so soon."

But here my wife was mistaken.

I went to my study to write to Weir. I had hardly finished my letter when Walter came to say that Mr. Percivale wished to see me. I told him to show

him in.

"I am just writing home to say that I want my curate to change places with me here, which I know he will be glad enough to do. I see Connie had better go home."

"You will all go, then, I presume?" returned Percivale.

"Yes, yes; of course."

"Then I need not so much regret that I can stay no longer. I came to tell you that I must leave to-morrow."

"Ah! Going to London?"

"Yes. I don't know how to thank you for all your kindness. You have made my summer something like a summer; very different, indeed, from what it would otherwise have been."

"We have had our share of advantage, and that a large one. We are all glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Percivale."

He made no answer.

"We shall be passing through London within a week or ten days in all probability. Perhaps you will allow us the pleasure of looking at some of your pictures then?"

His face flushed. What did the flush mean? It was not one of mere pleasure. There was confusion and perplexity in it. But he answered at once:

"I will show you them with pleasure. I fear, however, you will not care for them."

Would this fear account for his embarrassment? I hardly thought it would; but I could not for a moment imagine, with his fine form and countenance before me, that he had any serious reason for shrinking from a visit.

He began to search for a card.

"O, I have your address. I shall be sure to pay you a visit. But you will dine with us to-day, of course?" I said.

"I shall have much pleasure," he answered; and took his leave.

I finished my letter to Weir, and went out for a walk.

I remember particularly the thoughts that moved in me and made that walk memorable. Indeed, I think I remember all outside events chiefly by virtue of the inward conditions with which they were associated. Mere outside things I am very ready to forget. Moods of my own mind do not so readily pass away; and with the memory of some of them every outward circumstance returns; for a man's life is where the kingdom of heaven is--within him. There are people who, if you ask the story of their lives, have nothing to tell you but the course of the outward events that have constituted, as it were, the clothes of their history. But I know, at the same time, that some of the most important crises in my own history (by which word history I mean my growth towards the right conditions of existence) have been beyond the grasp and interpretation of my intellect. They have passed, as it were,

without my consciousness being awake enough to lay hold of their phenomena. The wind had been blowing; I had heard the sound of it, but knew not whence it came nor whither it went; only, when it was gone, I found myself more responsible, more eager than before.

I remember this walk from the thoughts I had about the great change hanging over us all. I had now arrived at the prime of middle life; and that change which so many would escape if they could, but which will let no man pass, had begun to show itself a real fact upon the horizon of the future. Death looks so far away to the young, that while they acknowledge it unavoidable, the path stretches on in such vanishing perspective before them, that they see no necessity for thinking about the end of it yet; and far would I be from saying they ought to think of it. Life is the true object of a man's care: there is no occasion to make himself think about death. But when the vision of the inevitable draws nigh, when it appears plainly on the horizon, though but as a cloud the size of a man's hand, then it is equally foolish to meet it by refusing to meet it, to answer the questions that will arise by declining to think about them. Indeed, it is a question of life then, and not of death. We want to keep fast hold of our life, and, in the strength of that, to look the threatening death in the face. But to my walk that morning.

I wandered on the downs till I came to the place where a solitary rock stands on the top of a cliff looking seaward, in the suggested shape of a monk praying. On the base on which he knelt I seated myself, and looked out over the Atlantic. How faded the ocean appeared! It seemed as if all the sunny dyes of the summer had been diluted and washed with the fogs of the coming winter, when I thought of the splendour it wore when first from these downs I gazed on the outspread infinitude of space and colour.

"What," I said to myself at length, "has she done since then? Where is her work visible? She has riven, and battered, and destroyed, and her destruction too has passed away. So worketh Time and its powers! The exultation of my youth is gone; my head is gray; my wife is growing old; our children are pushing us from our stools; we are yielding to the new generation; the glory for us hath departed; our life lies weary before us like that sea; and the night cometh when we can no longer work."

Something like this was passing vaguely through my mind. I sat in a mournful stupor, with a half-consciousness that my mood was false, and that I ought to rouse myself and shake it off. There is such a thing as a state of moral dreaming, which closely resembles the intellectual dreaming in sleep. I went on in this false dreamful mood, pitying myself like a child tender over his hurt and nursing his own cowardice, till, all at once, "a little pipling wind" blew on my cheek. The morning was very still: what roused that little wind I cannot tell; but what that little wind roused I will try to tell. With that breath on my cheek, something within me began to stir. It grew, and grew, until the memory of a certain glorious sunset of red and green and gold and blue, which I had beheld from these same heights, dawned within me. I knew that the glory of my youth had not departed, that the very power of recalling with delight that which I had once felt in seeing, was proof enough of that; I knew that I could believe in God all the night long, even if the night were long. And the next moment I thought how I had been reviling in my fancy God's servant, the sea. To how many vessels had she not opened a bounteous highway through the waters, with labour, and food, and help, and ministrations, glad breezes and swelling sails, healthful struggle, cleansing fear and sorrow, yea, and friendly death! Because she had been commissioned to carry this one or that one, this hundred or that thousand of his own creatures from one world to

another, was I to revile the servant of a grand and gracious Master? It was blameless in Connie to feel the late trouble so deeply that she could not be glad: she had not had the experience of life, yea, of God, that I had had; she must be helped from without. But for me, it was shameful that I, who knew the heart of my Master, to whom at least he had so often shown his truth, should ever be doleful and oppressed. Yet even me he had now helped from within. The glory of existence as the child of the Infinite had again dawned upon me. The first hour of the evening of my life had indeed arrived; the shadows had begun to grow long--so long that I had begun to mark their length; this last little portion of my history had vanished, leaving its few gray ashes behind in the crucible of my life; and the final evening must come, when all my life would lie behind me, and all the memory of it return, with its mornings of gold and red, with its evenings of purple and green; with its dashes of storm, and its foggy glooms; with its white-winged aspirations, its dull-red passions, its creeping envies in brown and black and earthy yellow. But from all the accusations of my conscience, I would turn me to the Lord, for he was called Jesus because he should save his people from their sins. Then I thought what a grand gift it would be to give his people the power hereafter to fight the consequences of their sins. Anyhow, I would trust the Father, who loved me with a perfect love, to lead the soul he had made, had compelled to be, through the gates of the death-birth, into the light of life beyond. I would cast on him the care, humbly challenge him with the responsibility he had himself undertaken, praying only for perfect confidence in him, absolute submission to his will.

I rose from my seat beside the praying monk, and walked on. The thought of seeing my own people again filled me with gladness. I would leave those I had here learned to love with regret; but I trusted I had taught them something, and they had taught me much; therefore there could be no end to our relation to each other--it could not be broken, for it was _in the Lord_, which alone can give security to any tie. I should not, therefore, sorrow as if I were to see their faces no more.

I now took my farewell of that sea and those cliffs. I should see them often ere we went, but I should not feel so near them again. Even this parting said that I must "sit loose to the world"--an old Puritan phrase, I suppose; that I could gather up only its uses, treasure its best things, and must let all the rest go; that those things I called mine--earth, sky, and sea, home, books, the treasured gifts of friends--had all to leave me, belong to others, and help to educate them. I should not need them. I should have my people, my souls, my beloved faces tenfold more, and could well afford to part with these. Why should I mind this chain passing to my eldest boy, when it was only his mother's hair, and I should have his mother still?

So my thoughts went on thinking themselves, until at length I yielded passively to their flow.

I found Wynn timer looking very grave when I went into the drawing-room. Her mother was there, too, and Mr. Percivale. It seemed rather a moody party. They wakened up a little, however, after I entered, and before dinner was over we were all chatting together merrily.

"How is Connie?" I asked Ethelwyn.

"Wonderfully better already," she answered.

"I think everybody seems better," I said. "The very idea of home seems

reviving to us all."

Wynn timer darted a quick glance at me, caught my eyes, which was more than she had intended, and blushed; sought refuge in a bewildered glance at Percivale, caught his eye in turn, and blushed yet deeper. He plunged instantly into conversation, not without a certain involuntary sparkle in his eye.

"Did you go to see Mrs. Stokes this morning?" he asked.

"No," I answered. "She does not want much visiting now; she is going about her work, apparently in good health. Her husband says she is not like the same woman; and I hope he means that in more senses than one, though I do not choose to ask him any questions about his wife."

I did my best to keep up the conversation, but every now and then after this it fell like a wind that would not blow. I withdrew to my study. Percivale and Wynn timer went out for a walk. The next morning he left by the coach--early. Turner went with him.

Wynn timer did not seem very much dejected. I thought that perhaps the prospect of meeting him again in London kept her up.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STUDIO.

I will not linger over our preparations or our leave-takings. The most ponderous of the former were those of the two boys, who, as they had wanted to bring down a chest as big as a corn-bin, full of lumber, now wanted to take home two or three boxes filled with pebbles, great oystershells, and sea-weed.

Weir, as I had expected, was quite pleased to make the exchange. An early day had been fixed for his arrival; for I thought it might be of service to him to be introduced to the field of his labours. Before he came, I had gone about among the people, explaining to them some of my reasons for leaving them sooner than I had intended, and telling them a little about my successor, that he might not appear among them quite as a stranger. He was much gratified with their reception of him, and had no fear of not finding himself quite at home with them. I promised, if I could comfortably manage it, to pay them a short visit the following summer, and as the weather was now getting quite cold, hastened our preparations for departure.

I could have wished that Turner had been with us on the journey, but he had been absent from his cure to the full extent that his conscience would permit, and I had not urged him. He would be there to receive us, and we had got so used to the management of Connie, that we did not feel much anxiety about the travelling. We resolved, if she seemed strong enough as we went along, to go right through to London, making a few days there the

only break in the transit.

It was a bright, cold morning when we started. But Connie could now bear the air so well, that we set out with the carriage open, nor had we occasion to close it. The first part of our railway journey was very pleasant. But when we drew near London, we entered a thick fog, and before we arrived, a small dense November rain was falling. Connie looked a little dispirited, partly from weariness, but no doubt from the change in the weather.

"Not very cheerful, this, Connie, my dear," I said.

"No, papa," she answered; "but we are going home, you know."

Going home. It set me thinking--as I had often been set thinking before, always with fresh discovery and a new colour on the dawning sky of hope. I lay back in the carriage and thought how the November fog this evening in London, was the valley of the shadow of death we had to go through on the way _home._ A shadow like this would fall upon me; the world would grow dark and life grow weary; but I should know it was the last of the way home.

Then I began to question myself wherein the idea of this home consisted. I knew that my soul had ever yet felt the discomfort of strangeness, more or less, in the midst of its greatest blessedness. I knew that as the thought of water to the thirsty _soul_, for it is the soul far more than the body that thirsts even for the material water, such is the thought of home to the wanderer in a strange country. As the weary soul pines for sleep, and every heart for the cure of its own bitterness, so my heart and soul had often pined for their home. Did I know, I asked myself, where or what that home was? It could consist in no change of place or of circumstance; no mere absence of care; no accumulation of repose; no blessed communion even with those whom my soul loved; in the midst of it all I should be longing for a homelier home--one into which I might enter with a sense of infinitely more absolute peace, than a conscious child could know in the arms, upon the bosom of his mother. In the closest contact of human soul with human soul, when all the atmosphere of thought was rosy with love, again and yet again on the far horizon would the dun, lurid flame of unrest shoot for a moment through the enchanted air, and Psyche would know that not yet had she reached her home. As I thought this I lifted my eyes, and saw those of my wife and Connie fixed on mine, as if they were reproaching me for saying in my soul that I could not be quite at home with them. Then I said in my heart, "Come home with me, beloved--there is but one home for us all. When we find--in proportion as each of us finds--that home, shall we be gardens of delight to each other--little chambers of rest--galleries of pictures--wells of water."

Again, what was this home? God himself. His thoughts, his will, his love, his judgment, are man's home. To think his thoughts, to choose his will, to love his loves, to judge his judgments, and thus to know that he is in us, with us, is to be at home. And to pass through the valley of the shadow of death is the way home, but only thus, that as all changes have hitherto led us nearer to this home, the knowledge of God, so this greatest of all outward changes--for it is but an outward change--will surely usher us into a region where there will be fresh possibilities of drawing nigh in heart, soul, and mind to the Father of us. It is the father, the mother, that make for the child his home. Indeed, I doubt if the home-idea is complete to the parents of a family themselves, when they remember that their fathers and mothers have vanished.

At this point something rose in me seeking utterance.

"Won't it be delightful, wife," I began, "to see our fathers and mothers such a long way back in heaven?"

But Ethelwyn's face gave so little response, that I felt at once how dreadful a thing it was not to have had a good father or mother. I do not know what would have become of me but for a good father. I wonder how anybody ever can be good that has not had a good father. How dreadful not to be a good father or good mother! Every father who is not good, every mother who is not good, just makes it as impossible to believe in God as it can be made. But he is our one good Father, and does not leave us, even should our fathers and mothers have thus forsaken us, and left him without a witness.

Here the evil odour of brick-burning invaded my nostrils, and I knew that London was about us. A few moments after, we reached the station, where a carriage was waiting to take us to our hotel.

Dreary was the change from the stillness and sunshine of Kilkhaven to the fog and noise of London; but Connie slept better that night than she had slept for a good many nights before.

After breakfast the next morning, I said to Wynnies,

"I am going to see Mr. Percivale's studio, my dear: have you any objection to going with me?"

"No, papa," she answered, blushing. "I have never seen an artist's studio in my life."

"Come along, then. Get your bonnet at once. It rains, but we shall take a cab, and it won't matter."

She ran off, and was ready in a few minutes. We gave the driver directions, and set off. It was a long drive. At length he stopped at the door of a very common-looking house, in a very dreary-looking street, in which no man could possibly identify his own door except by the number. I knocked. A woman who looked at once dirty and cross, the former probably the cause of the latter, opened the door, gave a bare assent to my question whether Mr. Percivale was at home, withdrew to her den with the words "second-floor," and left us to find our own way up the two flights of stairs. This, however, involved no great difficulty. We knocked at the door of the front room. A well-known voice cried, "Come in," and we entered.

Percivale, in a short velvet coat, with his palette on his thumb, advanced to meet us cordially. His face wore a slight flush, which I attributed solely to pleasure, and nothing to any awkwardness in receiving us in such a poor place as he occupied. I cast my eyes round the room. Any romantic notions Wynnies might have indulged concerning the marvels of a studio, must have paled considerably at the first glance around Percivale's room--plainly the abode if not of poverty, then of self-denial, although I suspected both. A common room, with no carpet save a square in front of the fireplace; no curtains except a piece of something like drugget nailed flat across all the lower half of the window to make the light fall from upwards; two or three horsehair chairs, nearly worn out; a table in a corner, littered with books and papers; a horrible lay-figure, at the present moment dressed apparently for a scarecrow; a large easel, on which

stood a half-finished oil-painting--these constituted almost the whole furniture of the room. With his pocket-handkerchief Percivale dusted one chair for Wynnie and another for me. Then standing before us, he said:

"This is a very shabby place to receive you in, Miss Walton, but it is all I have got."

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesses," I ventured to say.

"Thank you," said Percivale. "I hope not. It is well for me it should not."

"It is well for the richest man in England that it should not," I returned. "If it were not so, the man who could eat most would be the most blessed."

"There are people, even of my acquaintance, however, who seem to think it does."

"No doubt; but happily their thinking so will not make it so even for themselves."

"Have you been very busy since you left us, Mr. Percivale?" asked Wynnie.

"Tolerably," he answered. "But I have not much to show for it. That on the easel is all. I hardly like to let you look at it, though."

"Why?" asked Wynnie.

"First, because the subject is painful. Next, because it is so unfinished that none but a painter could do it justice."

"But why should you paint subjects you would not like people to look at?"

"I very much want people to look at them."

"Why not us, then?" said Wynnie.

"Because you do not need to be pained."

"Are you sure it is good for you to pain anybody?" I said.

"Good is done by pain--is it not?" he asked.

"Undoubtedly. But whether we are wise enough to know when and where and how much, is the question."

"Of course I do not make the pain my object."

"If it comes only as a necessary accompaniment, that may alter the matter greatly," I said. "But still I am not sure that anything in which the pain predominates can be useful in the best way."

"Perhaps not," he returned.--"Will you look at the daub?"

"With much pleasure," I replied, and we rose and stood before the easel. Percivale made no remark, but left us to find out what the picture meant. Nor had I long to look before I understood it--in a measure at least.

It represented a garret-room in a wretchedly ruinous condition. The plaster

had come away in several places, and through between the laths in one spot hung the tail of a great rat. In a dark corner lay a man dying. A woman sat by his side, with her eyes fixed, not on his face, though she held his hand in hers, but on the open door, where in the gloom you could just see the struggles of two undertaker's men to get the coffin past the turn of the landing towards the door. Through the window there was one peep of the blue sky, whence a ray of sunlight fell on the one scarlet blossom of a geranium in a broken pot on the window-sill outside.

"I do not wonder you did not like to show it," I said. "How can you bear to paint such a dreadful picture?"

"It is a true one. It only represents a fact."

"All facts have not a right to be represented."

"Surely you would not get rid of painful things by huddling them out of sight?"

"No; nor yet by gloating upon them."

"You will believe me that it gives me anything but pleasure to paint such pictures--as far as the subject goes," he said with some discomposure.

"Of course. I know you well enough by this time to know that. But no one could hang it on his wall who would not either gloat on suffering or grow callous to it. Whence, then, would come the good I cannot doubt you propose to yourself as your object in painting the picture? If it had come into my possession, I would--"

"Put it in the fire," suggested Percivale with a strange smile.

"No. Still less would I sell it. I would hang it up with a curtain before it, and only look at it now and then, when I thought my heart was in danger of growing hardened to the sufferings of my fellow-men, and forgetting that they need the Saviour."

"I could not wish it a better fate. That would answer my end."

"Would it, now? Is it not rather those who care little or nothing about such matters that you would like to influence? Would you be content with one solitary person like me? And, remember, I wouldn't buy it. I would rather not have it. I could hardly bear to know it was in my house. I am certain you cannot do people good by showing them only the painful. Make it as painful as you will, but put some hope into it--something to show that action is worth taking in the affair. From mere suffering people will turn away, and you cannot blame them. Every show of it, without hinting at some door of escape, only urges them to forget it all. Why should they be pained if it can do no good?"

"For the sake of sympathy, I should say," answered Percivale.

"They would rejoin, 'It is only a picture. Come along.' No; give people hope, if you would have them act at all, in anything."

"I was almost hoping you would read the picture rather differently. You see there is a bit of blue sky up there, and a bit of sunshiny scarlet in the window."

He looked at me curiously as he spoke.

"I can read it so for myself, and have metamorphosed its meaning so. But you only put in the sky and the scarlet to heighten the perplexity, and make the other look more terrible."

"Now I know that as an artist I have succeeded, however I may have failed otherwise. I did so mean it; but knowing you would dislike the picture, I almost hoped in my cowardice, as I said, that you would read your own meaning into it."

Wynn timer had not said a word. As I turned away from the picture, I saw that she was looking quite distressed, but whether by the picture or the freedom with which I had remarked upon it, I do not know. My eyes falling on a little sketch in sepia, I began to examine it, in the hope of finding something more pleasant to say. I perceived in a moment, however, that it was nearly the same thought, only treated in a gentler and more poetic mode. A girl lay dying on her bed. A youth held her hand. A torrent of summer sunshine fell through the window, and made a lake of glory upon the floor. I turned away.

"You like that better, don't you, papa?" said Wynn timer tremulously.

"It is beautiful, certainly," I answered. "And if it were only one, I should enjoy it--as a mood. But coming after the other, it seems but the same thing more weakly embodied."

I confess I was a little vexed; for I had got much interested in Percivale, for his own sake as well as for my daughter's, and I had expected better things from him. But I saw that I had gone too far.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Percivale," I said.

"I fear I have been too free in my remarks. I know, likewise, that I am a clergyman, and not a painter, and therefore incapable of giving the praise which I have little doubt your art at least deserves."

"I trust that honesty cannot offend me, however much and justly it may pain me."

"But now I have said my worst, I should much like to see what else you have at hand to show me."

"Unfortunately I have too much at hand. Let me see."

He strode to the other end of the room, where several pictures were leaning against the wall, with their faces turned towards it. From these he chose one, but, before showing it, fitted it into an empty frame that stood beside. He then brought it forward and set it on the easel. I will describe it, and then my reader will understand the admiration which broke from me after I had regarded it for a time.

A dark hill rose against the evening sky, which shone through a few thin pines on its top. Along a road on the hill-side four squires bore a dying knight--a man past the middle age. One behind carried his helm, and another led his horse, whose fine head only appeared in the picture. The head and countenance of the knight were very noble, telling of many a battle, and ever for the right. The last had doubtless been gained, for one might read victory as well as peace in the dying look. The party had just reached the

edge of a steep descent, from which you saw the valley beneath, with the last of the harvest just being reaped, while the shocks stood all about in the fields, under the place of the sunset. The sun had been down for some little time. There was no gold left in the sky, only a little dull saffron, but plenty of that lovely liquid green of the autumn sky, divided with a few streaks of pale rose. The depth of the sky overhead, which you could not see for the arrangement of the picture, was mirrored lovelily in a piece of water that lay in the centre of the valley.

"My dear fellow," I cried, "why did you not show me this first, and save me from saying so many unkind things? Here is a picture to my own heart; it is glorious. Look here, Wynn timer," I went on; "you see it is evening; the sun's work is done, and he has set in glory, leaving his good name behind him in a lovely harmony of colour. The old knight's work is done too; his day has set in the storm of battle, and he is lying lapt in the coming peace. They are bearing him home to his couch and his grave. Look at their faces in the dusky light. They are all mourning for and honouring the life that is ebbing away. But he is gathered to his fathers like a shock of corn fully ripe; and so the harvest stands golden in the valley beneath. The picture would not be complete, however, if it did not tell us of the deep heaven overhead, the symbol of that heaven whither he who has done his work is bound. What a lovely idea to represent it by means of the water, the heaven embodying itself in the earth, as it were, that we may see it! And observe how that dusky hill-side, and those tall slender mournful-looking pines, with that sorrowful sky between, lead the eye and point the heart upward towards that heaven. It is indeed a grand picture, full of feeling--a picture and a parable."

[Footnote: This is a description, from memory only, of a picture painted by Arthur Hughes.]

I looked at the girl. Her eyes were full of tears, either called forth by the picture itself or by the pleasure of finding Percivale's work appreciated by me, who had spoken so hardly of the others.

"I cannot tell you how glad I am that you like it," she said.

"Like it!" I returned; "I am simply delighted with it, more than I can express--so much delighted that if I could have this alongside of it, I should not mind hanging that other--that hopeless garret--on the most public wall I have."

"Then," said Wynn timer bravely, though in a tremulous voice, "you confess--don't you, papa?--that you were too hard on Mr. Percivale at first?"

"Not too hard on his picture, my dear; and that was all he had yet given me to judge by. No man should paint a picture like that. You are not bound to disseminate hopelessness; for where there is no hope there can be no sense of duty."

"But surely, papa, Mr. Percivale has some sense of duty," said Wynn timer in an almost angry tone.

"Assuredly my love. Therefore I argue that he has some hope, and therefore, again, that he has no right to publish such a picture."

At the word publish Percivale smiled. But Wynn timer went on with her defence:

"But you see, papa, that Mr. Percivale does not paint such pictures only. Look at the other."

"Yes, my dear. But pictures are not like poems, lying side by side in the same book, so that the one can counteract the other. The one of these might go to the stormy Hebrides, and the other to the Vale of Avalon; but even then I should be strongly inclined to criticise the poem, whatever position it stood in, that had nothing--positively nothing--of the aurora in it."

Here let me interrupt the course of our conversation to illustrate it by a remark on a poem which has appeared within the last twelvemonth from the pen of the greatest living poet, and one who, if I may dare to judge, will continue the greatest for many, many years to come. It is only a little song, "I stood on a tower in the wet." I have found few men who, whether from the influence of those prints which are always on the outlook for something to ridicule, or from some other cause, did not laugh at the poem. I thought and think it a lovely poem, although I am not quite sure of the transposition of words in the last two lines. But I do not approve of the poem, just because there is no hope in it. It lacks that touch or hint of red which is as essential, I think, to every poem as to every picture--the life-blood--the one pure colour. In his hopeful moods, let a man put on his singing robes, and chant aloud the words of gladness--or of grief, I care not which--to his fellows; in his hours of hopelessness, let him utter his thoughts only to his inarticulate violin, or in the evanescent sounds of any his other stringed instrument; let him commune with his own heart on his bed, and be still; let him speak to God face to face if he may--only he cannot do that and continue hopeless; but let him not sing aloud in such a mood into the hearts of his fellows, for he cannot do them much good thereby. If it were a fact that there is no hope, it would not be a truth. No doubt, if it were a fact, it ought to be known; but who will dare be confident that there is no hope? Therefore, I say, let the hopeless moods, at least, if not the hopeless men, be silent.

"He could refuse to let the one go without the other," said Wynnie.

"Now you are talking like a child, Wynnie, as indeed all partisans do at the best. He might sell them together, but the owner would part them.--If you will allow me, I will come and see both the pictures again to-morrow."

Percivale assured me of welcome, and we parted, I declining to look at any more pictures that day, but not till we had arranged that he should dine with us in the evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOME AGAIN.

I will not detain my readers with the record of the few days we spent in London. In writing the account of it, as in the experience of the time

itself, I feel that I am near home, and grow the more anxious to reach it. Ah! I am growing a little anxious after another home, too; for the house of my tabernacle is falling to ruins about me. What a word home is! To think that God has made the world so that you have only to be born in a certain place, and live long enough in it to get at the secret of it, and henceforth that place is to you a home with all the wonderful meaning in the word. Thus the whole earth is a home to the race; for every spot of it shares in the feeling: some one of the family loves it as his home. How rich the earth seems when we so regard it--crowded with the loves of home! Yet I am now getting ready to go home--to leave this world of homes and go home. When I reach that home, shall I even then seek yet to go home? Even then, I believe, I shall seek a yet warmer, deeper, truer home in the deeper knowledge of God--in the truer love of my fellow-man. Eternity will be, my heart and my faith tell me, a travelling homeward, but in jubilation and confidence and the vision of the beloved.

When we had laid Connie once more in her own room, at least the room which since her illness had come to be called hers, I went up to my study. The familiar faces of my books welcomed me. I threw myself in my reading-chair, and gazed around me with pleasure. I felt it so homely here. All my old friends--whom somehow I hoped to see some day--present there in the spirit ready to talk with me any moment when I was in the mood, making no claim upon my attention when I was not! I felt as if I should like, when the hour should come, to die in that chair, and pass into the society of the witnesses in the presence of the tokens they had left behind them.

I heard shouts on the stair, and in rushed the two boys.

"Papa, papa!" they were crying together.

"What is the matter?"

"We've found the big chest just where we left it."

"Well, did you expect it would have taken itself off?"

"But there's everything in it just as we left it."

"Were you afraid, then, that the moment you left it it would turn itself upside down, and empty itself of all its contents on the floor?"

They laughed, but apparently with no very keen appreciation of the attempt at a joke.

"Well, papa, I did not think anything about it; but--but--but--there everything is as we left it."

With this triumphant answer they turned and hurried, a little abashed, out of the room; but not many moments elapsed before the sounds that arose from them were sufficiently reassuring as to the state of their spirits. When they were gone, I forgot my books in the attempt to penetrate and understand the condition of my boys' thoughts; and I soon came to see that they were right and I was wrong. It was the movement of that undeveloped something in us which makes it possible for us in everything to give thanks. It was the wonder of the discovery of the existence of law. There was nothing that they could understand, a priori, to necessitate the remaining of the things where they had left them. No doubt there was a reason in the nature of God, why all things should hold together, whence springs the law of gravitation, as we call it; but as far as the boys could

understand of this, all things might as well have been arranged for flying asunder, so that no one could expect to find anything where he had left it. I began to see yet further into the truth that in everything we must give thanks, and whatever is not of faith is sin. Even the laws of nature reveal the character of God, not merely as regards their ends, but as regards their kind, being of necessity fashioned after ideal facts of his own being and will.

I rose and went down to see if everybody was getting settled, and how the place looked. I found Ethel already going about the house as if she had never left it, and as if we all had just returned from a long absence and she had to show us home-hospitality. Wynnie had vanished; but I found her by and by in the favourite haunt of her mother before her marriage--beside the little pond called the Bishop's Basin, of which I do not think I have ever told my readers the legend. But why should I mention it, for I cannot tell it now? The frost lay thick in the hollow when I went down there to find her; the branches, lately clothed with leaves, stood bare and icy around her. Ethelwyn and I had almost forgotten that there was anything out of the common in connection with the house. The horror of this mysterious spot had laid hold upon Wynnie. I resolved that that night I would, in her mother's presence, tell her all the legend of the place, and the whole story of how I won her mother. I did so; and I think it made her trust us more. But now I left her there, and went to Connie. She lay in her bed; for her mother had got her thither at once, a perfect picture of blessed comfort. There was no occasion to be uneasy about her. I was so pleased to be at home again with such good hopes, that I could not rest, but went wandering everywhere--into places even which I had not entered for ten years at least, and found fresh interest in everything; for this was home, and here I was.

Now I fancy my readers, looking forward to the end, and seeing what a small amount of print is left, blaming me; some, that I have roused curiosity without satisfying it; others, that I have kept them so long over a dull book and a lame conclusion. But out of a life one cannot always cut complete portions, and serve them up in nice shapes. I am well aware that I have not told them the fate, as some of them would call it, of either of my daughters. This I cannot develop now, even as far as it is known to me; but, if it is any satisfaction to them to know this much--and it will be all that some of them mean by fate, I fear--I may as well tell them now that Wynnie has been Mrs. Percivale for many years, with a history well worth recounting; and that Connie has had a quiet, happy life for nearly as long, as Mrs. Turner. She has never got strong, but has very tolerable health. Her husband watches her with the utmost care and devotion. My Ethelwyn is still with me. Harry is gone home. Charlie is a barrister of the Middle Temple. And Dora--I must not forget Dora--well, I will say nothing about her fate, for good reasons--it is not quite determined yet. Meantime she puts up with the society of her old father and mother, and is something else than unhappy, I fully believe.

"And Connie's baby?" asks some one out of ten thousand readers. I have no time to tell you about her now; but as you know her so little, it cannot be such a trial to remain, for a time at least, unenlightened with regard to her fate.

The only other part of my history which could contain anything like incident enough to make it interesting in print, is a period I spent in London some few years after the time of which I have now been writing. But I am getting too old to regard the commencement of another history with composure. The labour of thinking into sequences, even the bodily labour of

writing, grows more and more severe. I fancy I can think correctly still; but the effort necessary to express myself with corresponding correctness becomes, in prospect, at least, sometimes almost appalling. I must therefore take leave of my patient reader--for surely every one who has followed me through all that I have here written, well deserves the epithet--as if the probability that I shall write no more were a certainty, bidding him farewell with one word: _"Friend, hope thou in God,"_ and for a parting gift offering him a new, and, I think, a true rendering of the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Now faith is the essence of hopes, the trying of things unseen."

Good-bye.

THE END.

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