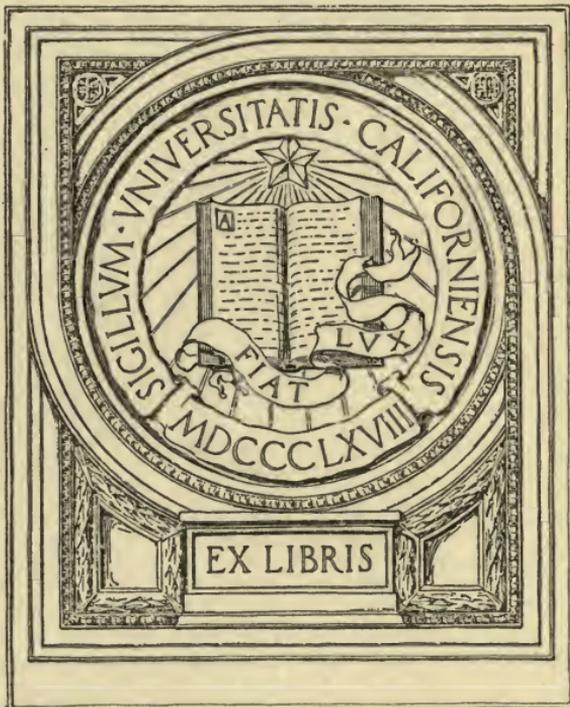


A PROPHET IN BABYLON

✦ W. J. DAWSON ✦

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A PROPHET IN BABYLON

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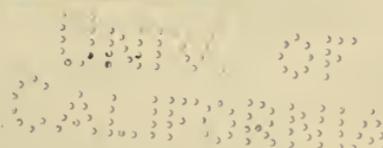
A Prophet in Babylon

A STORY OF SOCIAL SERVICE

BY

W. J. DAWSON

Author of "Makers of Modern English," "Empire of Love," etc.



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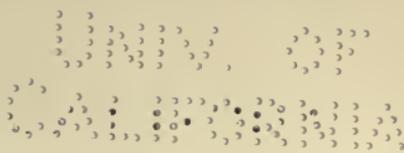


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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DEACONS' MEETING	9
II. A SELLER OF RHETORIC	20
III. PARADISE LOST	32
IV. STORM SIGNALS	44
V. DR. JORDAN	56
VI. A DISCUSSION	71
VII. THE GHOSTLY DAWN	85
VIII. A RETIRED PROPHET	101
IX. THE UNDERWORLD	118
X. THE DISSIMULATION OF MARGARET	134
XI. RENUNCIATION	151
XII. FAREWELL THE OLD	168
XIII. AN INTERVIEW	185
XIV. THE HOUSE OF JOY	201
XV. THE VISION	219
XVI. THE CROSS OF STARS	237
XVII. OLIVIA'S CHOICE	252

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVIII. THE YOUNG APOSTLES	268
XIX. BUTLER'S INQUISITION	283
XX. THE POOL AND THE RIVER	299
XXI. HOME AT LAST	315
XXII. A TRAGEDY	332
XXIII. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW	348
XXIV. PERFECT LOVE	360



A PROPHET IN BABYLON

I

THE DEACONS' MEETING

THE meeting of the deacons of the Mayfield Avenue Union Church was nearly over, and it had not been a pleasant meeting. Nothing had been said that could be called positively offensive to the minister, the Rev. John Gaunt, but a good deal had been implied. John Gaunt had been minister of the church for nearly seven years. He had come to it on an enthusiastic call when its prestige had somewhat declined, and the force of his personality and preaching genius had raised it, within two years, to a position of commanding influence. In the fourth year of his ministry the zenith of success was reached. The pews were all let, and many persons applied for seats in vain. In the fifth year a change began to be perceptible. There was no longer a crowd. In the sixth year there were many vacant seats, and some of his most substantial supporters had moved into new and distant suburbs. In the seventh year the process of disintegration was manifest. Hence the present meeting, the ob-

10 A PROPHET IN BABYLON

ject of which was the discussion of what Deacon Roberts tiresomely described as "the situation."

In the early years of his ministry Gaunt had been accustomed to describe himself as more free than any minister in New York. He could preach any doctrine he pleased, he was untroubled by any question of finance, and he was conscious of an atmosphere of warm loyalty among his people. When some of his less successful brethren complained of their difficulties in relation to their people, he smiled with the suave commiseration of a superior person. It seemed to him the easiest thing in the world to manage men, to attach them to one's self, to evoke from them generous feelings and acts.

"I have never had a day's trouble in my church," he was accustomed to say.

This was true in the broad, general sense in which he intended it, but, nevertheless, it had never represented the real facts of the case. He had always carried out his own policies, but he was perfectly aware that he could not have done so but for the fact of his success in the pulpit. The most contentious church critic is silent in the presence of visible success. But it does not follow that he will be always silent. Churches, like armies, live by conquest; when conquest ceases, mutiny begins.

During the last year John Gaunt had slowly come to a partial understanding of this law. It was only partial, for his own reluctance to face the facts of the case made him a slow learner. He had carefully

closed his ears to many veiled hints on the part of the managers of the church, the significance of which was obvious. But the pressure of facts, however slowly exerted, cannot be continuously resisted. His own eyes told him that his congregation was falling off. To himself he explained this disastrous fact by the departure of many of his best supporters to the rapidly growing suburbs of the city. But he soon found that such explanations excited no sympathy in the minds of men like Deacon Roberts, who were accustomed to measure things by results, and knew no other standard of measurement. The laws of finance, like natural laws, have no pity. It was useless to say to himself, as he had often done of late, that a church is not a financial affair, and ought not to be treated as such: his managers were, with one exception, men used to judge things solely from the financial standpoint, and they were quite inaccessible to sentiment. From the moment when a deficit was reported in the church accounts, he was conscious of a certain change of attitude toward him.

It was then that he made the most painful discovery of his life; for the first time he realized that he was the paid servant of the church. The gross, naked reality of his relationship to his board of managers was disclosed. It had been carefully hidden during the years of success; so carefully that he had forgotten its existence. In those years his boast was true; he had not had a day's trouble

in his church. Crowds hung upon his words; with the magic of his voice he could raise any sum of money he wished; and when he met his managers for the discussion of affairs the meetings were as nearly jovial as decorum would permit. Of course he had imagined that this happy state of things would continue. It sometimes seemed to him that he was miraculously fed, like Elijah by the ravens. His income was transferred silently to his pocket, and it seemed given rather than earned. He asked no question how it was raised; there was no need. But for months now he had been secretly uneasy; and though hitherto no word had been said to him, he was conscious in the changed looks of his managers that they grudged what they gave him.

To a proud and brilliant man this perception was torture. Some men would have sought that easy way of escape which is found in a change of pastorate. He could hardly doubt that many pulpits would welcome him, if it were known that he desired them. But here his pride blocked the way, and beneath his pride was a stratum of stubbornness which was impenetrable. He was perfectly aware of his gifts, although the knowledge never degenerated into vanity. He knew that he could preach as few men could, and he was not wrong when he told himself that he was preaching to-day better than he had ever preached in his life. For, with all its brilliance, his mind was one that fructifies with experience, that goes on learning and broadening with the years.

He had only to compare his early sermons with those preached recently to discover that his mind had made great advances in the seven years of his ministry; and he told himself, with some bitterness, that if these poor early sermons attracted crowds, the later sermons were infinitely better deserving of success.

Yet the plain fact met him that his career of success was abruptly closed. He no longer moved along the privileged way, with the elect company of those for whom the gifts of life are unrestrained. He had to fight for his position; it seemed not unlikely that he might even have to fight for his daily bread. He had often used the word "sordid" of that great army of strugglers who compose the majority in every city—the men and women who are too absorbed in the fight for bread to care for the poetries and philosophies; it seemed now that he must descend from his pedestal of privilege, and know their anxieties and miseries. It seemed an impossible thing, yet there had been fugitive moments of late when the thought thrilled him. But there were much more frequent moments of pure dismay. That he should fail, and fail too after having tasted success;—no, he would not admit it. He would do something novel, striking, impressive. He would put all his gifts to service as he had never done before. . . . And he had done it. Never had his oratory struck so full a note as in these last months. His wife, his own most gentle and acute critic, had

often told him so. His friend Palmer, the one deacon of the church who lived an intellectual life, had corroborated her testimony. Yet here was the result—this long postponed, but inevitable meeting of his deacons to consider “the situation.”

“It’s like this,” Deacon Roberts had said: “the time has come when we must cut our clothes according to our cloth. There are things I have to do without, not because I don’t want them, but because I can’t afford them. We’ve just got to cut down expenses.”

“Of course we all know that,” replied Deacon Hocking. “That’s what we’re here for. But will brother Roberts tell us how?”

There was an odd antipathy between Roberts and Hocking. Every one knew that whatever the one proposed the other would oppose, and that into these disputes no question of principle ever entered.

“I’m not bound to answer,” said Roberts.

“Yes, you are,” retorted Hocking. “What’s the use of talking about economy if you daren’t say what you mean by it?”

Thus challenged, Roberts gathered himself up for a set speech. He was a small, thin man, narrow-shouldered, spectacled, of neat appearance, whose deferential manners concealed a temper of obstinate dogmatism. He had fought his way from poverty to relative opulence, and had learnt nothing in the struggle but the habit of penuriousness. He had a peculiarly irritating voice, thin in tone, penetrating,

and at the same time querulous. Hocking was a large man, whose bluff manners covered an equal barrenness of sentiment. The two were very friendly in private life, but they consistently opposed each other on all public business. John Gaunt had treated each with a kind of humorous disregard through the early days of his ministry; but lately he had come to regard them with alarm, perceiving in them qualities of opposition of which they had previously given no sign.

"Well," said Roberts, "my meaning is plain. The church is declining. It's not for me to say why."

Whereupon, with the curious inconsistency of the speaker who is mastered by his rhetoric instead of mastering it, he proceeded to discuss the question at large. He gave facts and figures with a deadly fluency. The minister waited in tortured impatience for any generous or illuminating word. The speech was precisely the sort of speech that would be made at a company meeting after a bad year's trade. As Roberts spoke, in his precise, cold fashion, an almost visible wave of despondency settled over the meeting. Gaunt felt as though he was at his own funeral, hearing the will read.

"Such are the facts," Roberts concluded. "We can discuss the remedies better at another meeting when the pastor is not present."

"Oh, don't do that!" said Gaunt. "I am quite prepared to hear all that you have to say. Indeed, I

ought to hear it, since it concerns me more than any one else."

"Let us hear what the pastor himself has to say," suggested Hocking.

"I've very little to say," replied Gaunt, "and I'm not sure that I can say it without giving offence. What has impressed me most to-night is that you all seem to accept defeat as if it were irreparable. I have listened in vain for the note of courage. I may as well let you know at once that I am not of that spirit. I am going on. It's not a time for economy, but generosity. Wise generals don't reduce their forces in the face of the enemy. No doubt we have lost some of our best members. We all know why. They have migrated to the suburbs. But there are more people living at the very doors of the church than there were seven years ago when I commenced my ministry. I propose to get those people."

"We don't want them," interrupted an old deacon named Small. "They are not our kind of folk. They wouldn't mix."

"They are people, at all events," said Gaunt, with a grave smile. "It may be a misfortune that the church is situated among them, but since it is, the church ought to exist for them more than for anybody else."

"That's very well in sentiment, no doubt," retorted the old deacon. "But it won't work. This has always been a church of the rich, and if it

changes its character there are many of us that won't wish to stay in it."

Gaunt had it on his tongue to say, "Then let the rich support it," but he was restrained by the recollection of his own attitude of mind in previous years. How often had he been pleased to hear the church described as a church of the rich! He had boasted of it, not in a vain or sordid way it is true; but he had boasted. It had seemed to him a matter of legitimate pride that his influence had been exerted over rich men. Of course he had done nothing to discourage the poor from attending his ministrations, but he had not wanted them, or sought them, or, indeed, thought much about them. To influence the rich, to attract the men of means, to direct their generousities—was not that, after all, the best way to serve the poor? So he had argued a hundred times. Because he had so argued his tongue was now tied. And yet for a vivid moment he now saw a vision of the poor—the struggling multitude with their pathetic pretence of competence, the daily workers crowded in narrow rooms, the heroic silent throng of uncomplaining lives around him, and he felt the pathos of their lot.

But they "wouldn't mix." Well, was the sentiment, however offensive it sounded, so far from the truth? And with this question came another which stung him more painfully: was he the kind of man who had any message for the poor? From the day he had left the seminary he had grown fastidious, and

ever more fastidious, in his tastes and habits. Circumstances had helped him. He had lived among people of good manners and easy lives. He had met a good many persons of intellectual tastes, and he had developed wonderfully through the need imposed upon him to understand and interpret their ways of thinking. If his deacons were men of commoner quality, at all events they had admired him. So everything had favoured the growth of his intellectualism. But he was dimly aware that every step in this road of cold and fastidious intellectualism had taken him further from the mass of the people. He no longer knew the dialect of their thought. He had not the key to their life. In the pride of his mind he often told himself that it was not necessary for him to speak so as to be understood of the common people. Lesser men could do this: but he was a preacher to the cultured, and he demanded a certain sensitiveness of ideas and sympathies in his hearers as the surface on which his own thoughts could interpret themselves. And now once more there flashed upon his mind a faint vision of the poor, as he had read about them in books and newspaper articles; the strugglers who did not read, whose minds lay dim and undeveloped under clouds of drudgery and harassing anxiety. It was a fine thing to say he meant to get these people into his church; but could he? Had he any message for them? Could he himself mix with them?

He did not know, but he felt his courage ebbing

at the prospect. The cold wave of despondency which had submerged the meeting at last rolled over him, too. He became conscious of an immense weariness: weariness of his position, of the difficulties that beset him, of life itself.

There was no further discussion. One by one the deacons rose, and bade him good-night. When he went out into the street it was raining, and the city wore its most doleful aspect.

He buttoned up his coat and went home with a dismal sense that the triumph of life was over for him. Henceforth nothing awaited him but defeat.

II

A SELLER OF RHETORIC

WHEN Gaunt woke next morning the sun was shining brightly and the late November air was soft and pleasant. His good spirits came back to him with a rush, as they usually did on days of abundant sunlight. It was impossible not to believe in himself on such a morning. The city itself which spread around him, this wonderful New York, with its disorderly gaiety, its clamant light-heartedness, its atmosphere of energy, courage, triumph, set his nerves tingling with a new sense of life. New York believed so vehemently in itself. It was prodigal, corrupt, foolish, yet, somehow, it went on in its path of careless conquest. Its men and women were a race by themselves. They took the chances of life with such inimitable gaiety. This was the outstanding characteristic about them which had always moved Gaunt to admiration. In older countries and cities—London, for example, in which he had once been a sojourner for several months—when men failed they went down, and that was the end of them. In New York failure was regarded as a mere episode on the way of success. Men felt the solid ground

suddenly shift beneath their feet, but they just squared their shoulders, escaped the avalanche by a hair's breadth, and were soon climbing again with undiminished courage. Well, and he was a New Yorker. He had lived long enough in the city to be infected by its spirit. He must now show that he had profited by it, and be up and doing to rebuild the tottering structure of his success.

He was quite gay when he sat down to breakfast, and his wife rejoiced and expanded in the atmosphere of his cheerfulness, as flowers expand in the sun. She was by nature a person of equal temperament, indefatigably diligent, kind-hearted, and sweet-tempered. She had little imagination, and so was spared those extremes of emotion which come from a too acute vision of things. Life was for her a very plain and practical piece of business; its one commanding ethic was to do the duty that lay at hand, and do it as well as could be. Gaunt had sometimes wished that she had more power of entering into his inner world of thought and feeling, but he had come to recognise that her very disability gave her a kind of undisturbed serenity and strength on which he was glad to lean. On any practical question he would have trusted her judgment against his own. Upon the more delicate issues of conduct he would have hesitated to consult her. He loved her, of course, but it was not with that adoring passion which far less competent women often excite. But if he could not give her passion, he gave

her what women of capricious charm rarely get, complete confidence in her wisdom and her ability to guide his affairs with discretion. Was she content with what he gave? She believed she was; but what woman ever yet was really content with the rewards of discretion; what woman in her private thoughts does not yearn for the touch of passion which transfigures life? Margaret Gaunt had known that yearning, but being a woman of equal temperament had dried her secret tears, had called herself foolish for indulging them, and had schooled herself into contentment with her lot. It was the sort of victory which multitudes of women attain, but it is rarely so complete that the heart never awakens from its trance—a truth which Margaret Gaunt was to discover later on, as her life moved out upon a broader current to stormier seas.

She made a pleasant figure as she sat behind the steaming coffee-maker that morning. Her calm face refreshed by dreamless sleep had a bright, girlish colour in it, her hair was arranged in a broad brown braid, and she wore a plain linen dress which admirably suited her. Her face was not beautiful in any ordinary sense, but her brow was broad, and her eyes were of that hue of clear gray which bespeaks sincerity.

“You were very late last night,” she said. “It was good of you not to disturb me.”

“Yes; the meeting went on longer than we expected,” he replied.

"What did they do? I hope it all went off pleasantly."

"Well, no. Not exactly pleasantly, but still we got through."

"Tell me about it."

"Oh, you can guess," he replied. "Roberts is all for economy, and I imagine he only says bluntly what the others think."

"Well, I suppose he's right. I'm sure it wouldn't hurt us any if we gave up the quartette. They cost a great deal, and lately they've sung dreadfully flat. Besides which, they don't really take any interest in the service. The men have taken to go out during your sermon, and it's my belief they go out to smoke, and the women sit and yawn."

Gaunt frowned. He knew very well the truth of what his wife said, but he did not like to hear her say it. However, he covered his annoyance with a laugh, and replied: "Well, I don't think that idea struck Roberts or any one else. Besides, it's preposterous; we must maintain the music at all costs."

"Why?" she asked. "You wouldn't be pleased if I kept an incompetent maid in your house. You would ask if she was worth the price. Besides, I suppose that if the managers talk of economy there is some real need for it, and they realize that they must cut their clothes according to their cloth."

It was the very phrase which Roberts had used, but as he now heard it on the lips of his wife it seemed to have an almost malignant meaning. It

laid bare the whole commercial side of the church too nakedly, too grossly. He made no effort now to conceal his annoyance.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Margaret. It hurts me more than I can say. You make me feel just what I felt last night when Roberts was speaking, that there's nothing sacred about a church, and nothing delicate in my relations to it—that it's all a matter of commerce, and I am what Augustine long ago so bitterly called himself, a mere 'seller of rhetoric.'"

"I don't know Augustine," she replied. "Who was he, anyhow? But if he was pastor of a New York church, I guess he spoke the truth. You see, dear, however you may put it, you *are* a seller of rhetoric, and very fine rhetoric, too. I don't see that anything can alter that, and I don't see why you and I shouldn't speak the exact truth to each other. It may be all wrong, but that's the principle on which churches are run to-day. I don't believe Roberts ever thought of the church as a sacred place in his life, except, of course, in the conventional sense. It's a kind of business, which he is anxious to run at a profit. So's a college for that matter, and the professors in it; what are they but sellers of knowledge? And a successful poet; what is he but a seller of emotions?"

"Well, that's not my idea of a church, and I don't believe it's really yours."

"I didn't say it was, dear. But you see it's not a

question of ideas but of facts. And you can't dispute with facts. The only thing you can do is to be reconciled to them."

"O Margaret," he replied, with a passionate gesture, "let us get out of it all. Let us find a cottage somewhere and be free. But, no, that's cowardice. It's only running away. And I gave Roberts my word last night that I would go on, that I would win out somehow. . . . Margaret, help me to be brave."

"My poor dear, you're worried." She had risen from her seat and stood by his side. She laid her cool, capable hands a moment on his own, and said: "I think I know how you feel."

"No, you don't, dear," he said. "You don't know how this sort of thing tortures me, and God forbid that I should tell you."

"Well, don't be tortured," she said, brightly. "I don't pretend to be a philosopher, like you; but there's one bit of philosophy I do know—admit the facts and then make the best of them. I never knew a house yet where everything went on perfectly. Something is always going wrong, but then you expect it, and you don't let people know more of it than you can help. I guess churches are pretty much the same. There's a lot of things go on in the basement that aren't reported upstairs. But there's no need to think too much about them. Now you go and make your sermon like a good boy, and forget all about Roberts and the rest of them. It takes

courage to forget, more courage I sometimes think than anything else, but it's the only way to go through life with comfort."

Gaunt could not help smiling, which was precisely the effect which she wished to produce.

"I believe," he said, "there's more real wisdom in your little finger than in my whole body."

"Oh, wisdom of a kind," she said, with a laugh. "Wisdom of the plain, not the decorated kind. A woman who has run a house with three maids in New York City for seven years, and never failed to put a dinner on the table properly, can't help learning a few things worth knowing, and the chief is, just to go on and don't worry."

"But how not to worry, that's the question, Margaret. I don't think you quite realize my position, dear."

"Oh, yes, I do. I've seen trouble coming for a long time. Do you think I've not noticed the change in the church, people leaving, and all that? If it were your fault I should worry fast enough, but I know it isn't, and so I don't worry."

"It doesn't matter whose fault it is, from what I can see. It's the thing itself, the humiliation of it."

"I don't feel humiliated, anyway," she said, proudly. "When I am I'll let you know, be sure of that. If it comes to that, I'd rather see you leading a forlorn hope than finding everything easy. It's much more interesting for one thing, and it appeals to one more. Of course you're going to be

disappointed in some of the people. Adversity leaves only the worthiest for one's friends. Well, I don't know but what it's worth it. I think you've always thought people better than they are,—the church people, I mean,—and so you expect from them a good deal more than they can give. Don't you think it would be wise just to admit what every one else sees to be the truth, that church people are pretty much like other folk, with all sorts of streaks in them, and none of them good or bad right through?"

"But they ought to be better than other folk, Margaret. If they are not, it is my reproach."

"If God made them so, I don't see why you should worry because you can't improve on His workmanship. If they are good enough for Him to make, they should be good enough for you to put up with. So you take my advice, dear, and just go on, and don't worry."

Margaret left the room with a bright smile of gentle mockery, and Gaunt went to his library. Usually the mere sight of the large, quiet room, with its long rows of books, brought an instant composure, but to-day the charm failed.

His was the kind of mind which, once started on a theme, cannot dismiss it at will. It analyzes, discusses, dramatizes the intruding thought; allows it to possess the fancy, to dominate the will, until the entire brain is full of its echoes, its endless personifications, its subtle variations. And the thought which obsessed him now was this humiliating thought that

he was a "seller of rhetoric," a brain and voice bought for a certain sum of money by an organisation called a church.

He had never quite seen himself in this light before. But once having so seen himself, he could see nothing else. It did not help him to reassure himself that he had never tampered with his sincerity for gain. His boast of freedom was true as far as it went; he had taught what he pleased, and had never consciously modified his teachings to suit any man's views. But behind this boast there emerged a disconcerting question: had not his power to please the taste of his hearers arisen simply from the fact that he had accepted his environment, and unconsciously adapted himself to it? Was not his whole mental life like the dyer's hand, "subdued to what it worked in"? He remembered now some of those hasty socialistic generalisations which he had taken for truths in his seminary days. He had then held, or thought he held, very decided views on the inequality of wealth. Suppose these views had truth in them, why had he not preached them? And he knew that the reason for his silence did not lie in any radical change of view, but in his unconscious compliance with his environment. It was unconscious, perhaps, but not the less real. For a man's temper is revealed by unconscious qualities as well as conscious; is even more truthfully revealed, because there is no effort to retard the truth.

From this his mind passed at a bound to a more

disturbing question: was the accepted organisation of a modern church right? Could any sincere man suppose that the poor Man of Nazareth would have approved the hire of men for their talents as the ministers of His Church? Was it not inevitable that the real truth about things could scarcely be spoken under such conditions, since he who lived to please must needs please to live?

And the longer he thought, the clearer there rose before his mind the vision of the Man out of whose Tragedy all churches had been born—His poverty and contentment with poverty; His simplicity and entire unworldliness; His disdain for appearances, for conventions, for the smooth hypocrisies of traditional religion; His boldness in the face of certain social disaster; His sublime unselfishness; and at last His solitary death, deserted even by those who had believed Him, and yet secure in His own knowledge of victory, in His own sense of the things for which He was born having been really done. Alas, who could say that? Whose life was not based on compromise? And yet surely the very essence of that divine Life was the lesson that compromise with truth is death, that the only victory is complete sincerity.

Dared he be sincere, he, John Gaunt? That was the real question which confronted him. It was the only real question in life.

But like most questions that go to the core and root of things it was spoken so quietly that he did

not at first comprehend its force. It was a still small voice within his soul, the sound of a bell heard underneath the sea, in a submerged belfry. It fell strangely on the ear of his spirit. For, like most men who lead a busy public life, he had gradually ceased to have any real acquaintance with himself. The very need, the constant call, for the expression of his thoughts had led him to a rapid harvesting only of such thoughts as lay upon the surface of the mind; he knew nothing of the depths. And now from that depth of his own unrecognized personality there came this quiet voice, which spoke with incomparable clearness, asking him whether he had ever been sincere; whether he could be, even if he would?

In the ordinary sense of the term he could answer, Yes: he had never dealt falsely with himself. But he now saw that such a reply was insufficient. Had he dealt truly? Had he ever allowed his soul free play? And he knew he had not. It was not the selling of rhetoric which troubled him now; it was rather that he had sold himself. Not in any vulgar sense, of course; not as men did who made fortunes by fraud or dishonesty; but he had sold himself for praise, and had lived by and for praise, and that was why the withdrawal of praise was to him a torture.

So decisive was the verdict that he looked round the room uneasily, as though he feared that the inward voice might be overheard.

As he did so, his eyes fell upon a large photo-

gravure of a picture which had always fascinated him, the Christ upon the Cross, by Velasquez. Margaret, with her practical mind, had always objected to it, as much too morbid and depressing for the library of a thinker. He had often thought of removing it, but whenever he essayed to do so, the pathos of the picture moved him afresh, and seemed to protest against the wrong he would do it. He looked at it now, the dim background, the bowed head with the dark hair fallen over the forehead in the last abandonment of pain, the white, rigid limbs, the finality, the majesty, the conquering tranquillity of it all—he looked, and instinctively fell upon his knees.

For *He* had heard—that silent spectator on the Cross.

And He had asked the question, too—He whose death was the sublime vindication of sincerity.

“God help me to be sincere; I will try.”

He hardly knew that he had spoken the words. Perhaps he did not. But his inmost soul had spoken, and deep had answered unto deep.

III

PARADISE LOST

GAUNT worked throughout the day steadily at his sermon without making much progress. He was usually a rapid worker, but to-day his faculty of concentration failed him. He tried theme after theme, but each in turn seemed barren. He searched his notebook for suggestions, but found none. It would seem that his emotional experience had had the unforeseen effect of altering the values of his entire world of thought, as the wave of earthquake creates new landscapes, by displacement and transposition.

Ordinarily his sensitive taste would have been quickly attracted by some poetic phrase of Scripture, which he would have clothed with literary allusion, and expanded into a series of suggestive paragraphs. The result would have been an essay, more or less exquisite according to his mood. How often had he gone into the pulpit to deliver such an essay, himself keenly aware of its fine points, and glad in the knowledge of his own efficiency! How often had he been thrillingly conscious of the visible delight of his hearers when he reached and declaimed those passages in his discourse which best displayed his ability! But now, for a reason which he had not yet

fully apprehended, such a method of preaching suddenly appeared to him futile and empty. Yet he knew no other. The habit of seven years was not to be broken in a moment. So he toiled on with a perplexed mind, and a painful sense of disappointment in himself.

In the evening his friend Palmer called. Palmer was the one deacon, already referred to, who could be said to live an intellectual life. He was a spare man of about forty, with a high dome of forehead, fringed by grizzled black hair, a satirical mouth, and a pair of peculiarly keen light-blue eyes. He had had a curious career. The son of prosperous farming folk in the South, he had worked his way through college with the sparsest help from home, for his father had had no sympathy with his ambitions. He had intended entering the ministry, but had been prevented by his own early loss of faith. At the close of his college course he had actually been a student in a theological seminary, but the little stock of faith he took with him to the seminary had been quite dissolved in his attempt to acquire theological knowledge. The further he went, the less he found in which he could really believe. He was further discouraged by the low tone of religious feeling among his fellow-students, and to a certain degree among the professors also. In the general talk among the students he found the ministry regarded almost entirely as a profession. The main theme of conversation was the status of various

churches, the salaries they paid, and the chances each man thought he had of securing a prize. There were exceptions, of course. There was Rees Allen, a genuine enthusiast, who had gone to China as a missionary, and had perished in the Boxer riots. There was another good little fellow called Stimson, whose faith was proof against all criticism simply because his intellect was radically incapable of understanding that criticism could exist in relation to faith. These men, and a few others of kindred qualities, formed a group by themselves, and with them he had no contact. As to the professors he could never rid himself of the idea that they were the paid apologists of a system of truth which they themselves only believed with many reservations. In this conclusion he was not quite just: he was simply misled by the fact that he knew the professors only on their intellectual side; and he did not allow for the fact that it was their main business to criticise the basis of faith rather than impart its spirit. But, although in later years he judged more fairly, at the time these immature conclusions were disastrous to him. The result was that when the time came for him to enter the ministry, his repugnance to it had become invincible. He knew that he had nothing to teach that was of any moment to the world; and when the professor whom he most respected assured him that faith would come by the inculcation of faith in others, he replied satirically that at least the success of the process was not appa-

rent in his instructors. That sentence closed to him the career of the ministry.

When the doors of the seminary closed behind him, he went out into the world without the least idea of what path he would take. At first he drifted westward, attracted by the freedom, energy, virility, and infinite promise of the West. One summer found him bridge-building on the Yukon, another engaged in journalistic work in Seattle. For a whole winter he toiled in a lumber camp in Wisconsin. Here, for the first time, he came to grips with real life—that primitive life of men which has gone on since the first day broke, and will continue to the hour when the last sunset leaves the world tenantless and dark. There was no time for speculative thought in a life that endured hunger and thirst, the pressure of primal needs, the lash of excessive and unintermitted labour. He fared roughly, slept soundly, was drenched with rain and storm, and came to rejoice in the crude valours of his daily toil. He came also to appreciate the manhood of his associates. They were strange comrades for one of his upbringing; men coarse in thought and life, and often stained by crime, but they took life with a sort of brutal good-nature, and they had the crowning virtue of courage. He found in them, and in the life he lived with them, just the kind of tonic which his soul needed. Questions of creed and destiny seemed irrelevant and ridiculous in such scenes. They were the mere toys over which chil-

dren disputed; they belonged to an artificial life; the very vastness of the forest, the march of stars across the lonely heavens, the daily contact with primeval earth, removed him at an immeasurable distance from such trivialities. That winter in the lumber camp taught him many lessons, the chief of which were faith in man as man, and the conviction that the chief business of life is to live, not to get a living, and still less to pass one's time in tedious disputes about the nature of life.

All the time, however, he was slowly, though unconsciously, coming to the knowledge of his own faculties. He knew that this life of primitive exertion could not last; it was but an episode. It was inevitable that he should return to cities, and in due time he found himself in New York studying law. Here, at last, his analytic mind found its true arena. He succeeded slowly in his career, not for want of energy, but because he had no great passion for success. He was content with modest competence, where most men of his ability would have pushed on to fortune. But he was one of those men who find in leisure for books and private study a much happier fruit of labour than could ever come through wealth purchased at the price of a constantly harassed and divided mind. He lived a quiet and cultured life in one of the older houses of Washington Square, with his favourite sister Esther as his housekeeper. When Gaunt came to Mayfield Avenue Church, Palmer found him out, attracted

by the reports of Gaunt's unusual intellectual ability. In the quiet life which he now lived some of his old religious beliefs had come back to him, though in changed and attenuated forms. He had no difficulty in joining a church where freedom of belief was so wide as in Gaunt's church. Later on he was unable to discover any valid reason why he should not become a deacon in the church, although he accepted the position more out of love for Gaunt than any other reason, and even then reluctantly. So it had come to pass that the two men had become intimate friends, and there was rarely a Friday night when Palmer did not come round to Gaunt's house to smoke his cigar, and talk over books and philosophies.

It was the custom with Gaunt to discuss with Palmer the themes of his addresses, and it was natural on this occasion that he should begin by describing to his friend the new difficulties he had encountered.

"I don't know when I've felt so flat," he said. "It's not that I've run out of ideas, my mind is restless with ideas, but I don't seem able to co-ordinate them, don't seem to find any kind of text that offers hospitality for them."

"Didn't know texts were created for any such purpose," said Palmer, drily.

"Perhaps not, but it seems the best use you can put them to. If one didn't do that, logically it ought to be enough just to read a text and be done with it."

"Why not?" said Palmer. "After all Paul manages to say more in five words than you do in five thousand."

"Why not? Because my occupation would be gone, for one thing," laughed Gaunt. "And if it comes to that why don't you state a law and sit down without making a speech on behalf of your client?"

"I do whenever I can," said Palmer.

"I'd do it, too—if I could."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. You're far too fond of hearing your own voice for that. And people are too fond of hearing you, and you're too amiable not to indulge them."

"That's not very flattering to me, Palmer."

"I don't flatter any one. At least I try not. Flattery is the diplomacy of feebleness. When you find me indulging in flattery you may conclude my intellect is decaying."

"Well, I'm bound to say you do usually tell me the truth about myself. How many fine theories of mine you've ridiculed out of existence in this very room! And yet, Palmer, there are some things about me I don't believe you so much as suspect—things that I myself have only suspected lately."

"What things?"

"I don't know whether I can tell you. At least I can't tell you in so many words. But let me ask you a question. You've listened to me for several years, and your approval of what I've said I take

for granted. I would like to know if in all these years I've ever helped you?"

"Why, of course you have. If you hadn't I'm not the man to have listened to you so long. No man of any intellect can listen to eloquence without a sense of exhilaration, a kind of glow which sends him back to common duty with a lighter heart."

"That's not what I mean," said Gaunt, slowly. "Let me try to be plain, though I don't find it easy."

"No, orators never do. They wouldn't be orators if they did."

"Please don't jest, I'm really serious."

"Very well, I'll be sober as a judge. State your case, and I'll say nothing till you're through."

"Well, then, this is the point. It has come home to me to-day in quite a new way that all these years I may have been playing at truth, playing at life. Answer me honestly this question: Have I, in anything I have ever said or done, helped you in such a way as to add any vital elements to your life? I don't doubt your admiration, your appreciation; you have given me these in a measure much beyond my deserts. But admiration is a diet on which a man's soul cannot live. Have you discovered any new truth through me? Have I got at your soul in any real way? I know the very phrase sounds strange and strained. Perhaps you will think that it savours of cant. You and I have discussed theologies and philosophies without number, but I don't remember one genuine conversation on religion. It is because

of this that I shrink even now from naming it. But I can't be silent any longer. There comes a time in a man's life when he takes stock of himself, goes through his life with a relentless inquisition, and that time came to me this morning. And just because I know you won't flatter me, I want to put my question with absolute frankness: Have I, or have I not, in all these years done anything to create in you a more real and definite sense of religion?"

Palmer rose from his seat, and walked up and down the room in perfect silence for some minutes. Then he stood beside the chair on which Gaunt was sitting, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"You're sure you want me to tell you?"

"I'm quite sure."

"Well, let me tell you a story. Some years ago, as you know, I was working for my bread in a lumber camp in Wisconsin. The life was hard and brutal, but as near primitive life as a modern man can get. I suppose not a man amongst us ever prayed, or read the Scripture, or gave the least thought to religion; and for months I was no better than the rest. One day there arrived in the camp a little under-sized fellow called Milton. He was so obviously out of place that we nicknamed him in jest 'Paradise Lost.' He did his best to do the work other men did, but he was obviously unfitted for it. When we got back from the woods at night, and lay down in our bunks in the huge shack, with a red-hot stove in the middle, poor 'Paradise Lost' was

subjected to all sorts of cruel horseplay. This went on for weeks, and 'Paradise Lost' never once retorted with an oath or angry word, so that at last the men gave up nagging him because there was no fun in it. Presently, he revealed a new side to his character. If a man was sick and mad with drink 'Paradise Lost' would sit up all night with him, and help him fight through the horrors. There were one or two bad accidents that winter, and 'Paradise Lost' was always ready to play the nurse, and did it with a skill and tenderness no woman could surpass. All this time he never said a word about religion, although we knew he carried a New Testament in his pocket, and chaffed him a good deal about it.

"One night, it was near Christmas, we were all together in the shack, and most of us pretty dull, for we were thinking of friends and homes far away. Suddenly 'Paradise Lost' offered to sing to us. At any ordinary time his offer would have been received with shouts of derision. The little man whipped out a Sankey's hymnbook, and began to sing in a sweet, clear tenor, 'Shall we gather at the River?' At the second verse some one heaved a boot at him, but the little man went on with a smile, and at the third verse we were actually joining in the chorus. Then he pulled out his Testament, and without asking anybody's leave began to read us the beautiful story of the birth of Jesus. It sounded as if we had never heard it before, and somehow the recollection of the star-shine outside, and the lonely forest, and

our warm shack in the lonely waste, made Bethlehem and the watching Shepherds seem real. Then he read the death of Jesus, and with such simple pathos that I know my eyes filled with tears, and I was not the only one. When he had done he began to speak to us. I can't reproduce his speech, but some of it I shall never forget.

“ ‘I'm just one of yourselves, lads,’ he said, ‘and not a bit better than you, but I've got a Friend some of you haven't got, and my Friend is Him about whom I've been reading to you to-night. I know you wonder why I ever came here, and I'll tell you. I was a wicked lad, and broke my mother's heart, as some of you have done. One day this Friend of mine took hold of me, and said: “You've just got to follow Me. You've been foolish long enough, but now I've found you and I don't intend to let you go. But you've got to do something for Me, too. You've got to go to the wickedest sort of place you can find, and help men to be good the best way you know.” So I said: “That's only fair, and I'll do my best,” and so I came here. I don't know books, and I never shall, but I know that it's wiser to be good than bad, and you know it, too. I can't talk to you like the preachers can, and maybe you wouldn't listen to me if I could. But I tell you that the same Friend that found me is here to be friends with you, if you'll let Him, and the moment you'll try to live straight, lads, that moment you'll find Him helping you.’

“‘Paradise Lost’ didn’t get jeered at after that night. He’d won out. He went about doing good, and that appeared to be the only religion he knew, and it was about all we wanted, or were capable of understanding.

“Such religion as I have, I got from that little man. Christ came back to me in him. He taught me that the only way of really helping your brother man to a real faith is by living as though your own faith were real.

“And now you see my point. You know, Gaunt, I wouldn’t grieve you wilfully, but since you’ve asked me a question, I’ll answer it honestly. You’ve not helped me in the way you’ve indicated. You’ve fed my mind, and I am grateful—but my soul, no. The only man who ever touched my soul was that little preacher in the lumber camp. He did it because he lived like Christ, and I don’t believe any man will ever reach the soul of another man until he lives like Christ. Sermons and theologies don’t count—it’s the life and nothing else.”

Gaunt sat with bowed head.

“I should hate to think I had wounded you,” said Palmer.

“I need to be wounded,” said Gaunt, in a low voice. “It’s surgery—surgery that perhaps may save me.”

Palmer wrung his friend’s hand, and silently left the room.

IV

STORM SIGNALS

THE Sunday-morning service at Mayfield Avenue Church had just concluded, and it was evident that something unusual had happened. Groups of people stood in the aisles and vestibules, engaged in eager conversation. Deacon Roberts wore his most dangerous smile—it was characteristic of the man that he smiled most when he was most annoyed. Hocking, Small, and the other deacons had retired to the vestry, the door of which was shut. Every one knew that they were in conclave. One lady, Mrs. Somerset, who enjoyed the reputation of being the best-dressed woman in the church, was observed bending over the book-locker in her pew with a very flushed face. It was evident that she was removing her books. When Margaret Gaunt came down the aisle Mrs. Somerset moved toward her with peremptory eagerness, and began to address her in a loud tone, without so much as offering her her hand. Courtesy had never been Mrs. Somerset's strong point, and she made no pretence of it now.

“I wish you good-morning, Mrs. Gaunt,” she said, with an angry nod; “it will be some time before we meet again.”

"Why, how's that?" said Margaret. "I thought you were not going to California this winter."

"Nor am I. I expect to be in New York all the winter. But I don't expect to enter this church again."

"Oh, Mrs. Somerset," said Margaret, in her sweetest manner, "you surely don't mean that. Why, what has happened?"

"If you don't know, it would be no use my trying to inform you."

Margaret flushed in spite of her self-control. It had been one of her chief duties as a minister's wife to cultivate self-control, and she had needed it more in her relations toward Mrs. Somerset than toward any other person in the church. For Mrs. Somerset was one of those unhappily constituted women who are only able to believe in their own self-importance by assuring themselves of the insignificance of other people. She was by no means a vulgar person, but the possession of wealth had exaggerated her self-esteem to a degree that was intolerable. She could be flattered and cajoled into acts of considerable generosity, but generosity was neither indigenous nor spontaneous in her. She was the sort of woman of whom it is said, "It's well to keep upon her right side"; which usually means that she is a kind of fractious child who must be bribed by sweetmeats to be good. Put her at the head of things, and no one could be sweeter tempered; ignore her, and no one could be more spiteful. And so, although many

fitter persons could have been found, Mrs. Somerset had long reigned supreme in church clubs and similar organisations, and had even posed as an expert on literature of which she knew nothing, and on the "New Theology," of which she knew less.

"I'm sure I'm not in the least aware of any reason for your extraordinary conduct," said Margaret—"unless," she added, with a touch of delicate malice, "you've just discovered some frightful heresy in my husband's theology, which contradicts your own."

"Oh, it's not theology, you know that very well," she retorted, with an indignant rattle of her big gold bracelets. "I believe in the New Theology, and all that, as you very well know. But when your husband tells us, as he told us this morning, that wealthy people are usually selfish, complacent, and unsympathetic: that they don't try to know the reality of life among the poor, and all that kind of nonsense, as if it were my business to go slumming, I for one feel insulted. If he loves the poor so much, he'd better go to them. Certainly I shall not stay to have them brought to me."

"And did my husband really say all those dreadful things, Mrs. Somerset? If he did I must have been asleep, for I never heard them. I will tell you what he did say—or what I thought he said, since your hearing seems to have been more acute than mine. He said the tendency of wealth was toward self-complacency, which is true enough. He said we were responsible for the poor, since the system

of life we support creates them—which surely you won't deny. And he did say, I admit, that a church which was a social club, with every one in it of one class, existing for its own gratification, was not exactly the kind of church Jesus Christ came to create. In what way can such statements be an insult to you? I'd really be glad to know."

"Oh, it wasn't that altogether," she replied, with the usual feminine skill in evading the point. "It was his manner, the way in which he said it. It was positively offensive. And I know he looked straight at me, as if he meant me. And then there was that dreadful story about a lumber camp at the end of the sermon—drunken men and Sankey's hymns, and all that sort of thing—so different from his usual sermons, it was outrageous, as if that had anything to do with us. I really didn't think your husband could be so coarse. His own sense might have told him it was out of place. Why, he quite ranted. And I've never been accustomed to such goings-on."

"And you never heard of a lumber camp in your life before? Why, how strange! I always thought your husband made his fortune out of lumber. I'm almost sure you told me so."

Margaret could not for her life have resisted such a palpable hit.

But it produced no effect except to increase the wrath of Mrs. Somerset, who with an angry gesture gathered her books together, and swept out of the church.

As Mrs. Somerset left the church, another of the church ladies of a very different order approached Margaret. She was a white-haired, tall woman of very quiet manners, and retiring disposition. She had had some great trouble in her early married life, of which no one knew the exact details. Whatever it was it had broken her life, and left her poor. She and Margaret had never met except in casual ways. But Margaret, with her clear judgment, had long ago perceived Mrs. Holcombe's worth. More than once she had wished she knew her better: for in the calm, gracious face of the older woman there was the rare attractiveness which comes only from sorrowful experiences which have been spiritualized into disciplines, from obscure Calvaries out of whose torture and darkness the soul has attained a better resurrection.

"Will you pardon me, if I confess that I heard all that Mrs. Somerset said, and I don't agree in a word of it?" she began.

"I'm only too delighted to hear you say so," said Margaret.

"I heard also every word your husband said, and I drank it in, as one long athirst who has found the waters. I have waited seven years for this morning's sermon. I think I always knew it would come—at least I always believed it would. I should have left the church long ago except for that belief. But I knew that your husband had not only a brilliant mind, but a big heart, and I felt that some day he

must let his heart speak. His heart spoke this morning. Oh, encourage him to let it go on speaking. God has some great work for him to do, but he'll only do it by letting his heart guide him. Perhaps I ought not to say these things to you, but when I saw how you were being grieved by the foolish anger of the lady who has just gone out, I felt I must speak."

The words were so lovingly spoken, with such sincerity and deep feeling, that for the moment Margaret's strong self-control forsook her. Her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"I can only thank you," she said, "though I don't quite know whether I take your meaning. Won't you come and see me? I'm very sorry not to have known you better."

"Oh, it's not your fault," she answered. "I've not wished to be known. I lead a very quiet life, with only my memories for company. As I've grown older I fear I have grown less and less inclined to meet people, which is not quite a right state of feeling. You get to live almost entirely in the past when you live alone. The past is all that seems real; the present is a kind of dream. But to-day I've felt for the first time for many years as if I were coming out of the past. The shadows are melting, and it has come to me that there may yet be something left for me to do before I die. I shall be very glad to know you better, if you'll take me just as I am, a woman growing old, whose life has had many sor-

rows, and has learned the hard lesson of resignation and renunciation."

Margaret's heart went out to her. And in the rush of warm tenderness which she felt for this lonely woman, there was mingled a sharp bitter of reproach. Here was a woman whom no one had treated as of much account, Margaret among the number. It was women like Mrs. Somerset who had moved in the high places of the church, demanded attention, absorbed notice, and all the time this woman with her sorrow, and her character purified by sorrow, had stood by, lonely and unloved.

"I shall be gladder than I can say to have you call upon me." But the phrase seemed too formal. "To have you for my friend," she added.

"Then I will come."

And at that moment there began one of those pure and deep friendships which are only possible between persons of absolute sincerity.

His heart had spoken—Mrs. Holcombe had used the right phrase in describing the sermon which John Gaunt preached that morning.

It was a sermon so unlike anything that had preceded it, that it was little wonder if it had startled and offended his hearers. There had been none of the usual literary allusions in it, not a single quotation from favourite authors, not even a phrase that could be accounted brilliant. The omissions were the more remarkable because he had of late devoted his Sunday mornings to a criticism of Browning's

philosophy of life. These addresses had excited unusual interest. Students had brought note-books with them, and the members of various literary clubs had been attracted by expositions which were undoubtedly competent and scholarly. Gaunt had delivered them with a view to publication. He was, in fact, already engaged in making a book out of them.

But this morning the note-books were unused. It was soon evident that nothing was to be said about Browning. He read a series of passages from the Gospels, in each one of which the Master appeared as surrounded by publicans and sinners.

"Who were these people?" he asked. "Quite clearly they were not reputable people, for every one was surprised that Christ should associate with them. The general opinion was that Jesus had fallen into bad company. But what do we mean by bad company? We usually mean vicious people, and we think of them as a class by themselves. But vice is more equally distributed than we suppose, is not confined to classes, and has no exclusive brand.

"Lustfulness and intemperance are vices, but so also are bad temper, meanness, selfishness, and inordinate pride. Jesus seems to have thought selfishness a much worse thing than folly. The worst people He knew were those whom the world thought the best. At all events He spoke to them His most dreadful words of rebuke. But to the other people, who were foolish and wicked, but not unkind, He

told tender stories about love and forgiveness. He did it not once nor twice, but uniformly, so that He came to be known as the Friend of publicans and sinners. The good people, of course, used the term in derision, but Jesus accepted it as a compliment.

“Was Jesus wrong? Of course we dare not *say* that He was wrong, though many of us may think He was. In either case He paid for His temerity with the Cross. For it was the good people who put Him to death. The publicans and sinners had no hand in the world’s greatest tragedy. They could not have crucified their Friend. But to the good people he was not a friend but an enemy, and the chief reason why they hated Him was because they knew that He saw through their pretence of goodness.

“So then it seems that if we would imitate Christ, as we say we wish to do, we have to find our friends among the despised people whom He loved. The publican and sinner—do we know any persons answering to this description? Do we wish to know them? Do we ever think of them? Have they ever entered this church, or would we welcome them if they did?”

If Gaunt had stopped at that point, there would have been little sensation. So far he had only made general statements, and religious congregations are too well used to such statements to realize any personal implications in them. And, as he spoke, he

was perfectly aware of this. He knew, not indeed for the first time, but for the first time with vivid realisation, that the Jesus of whom he spoke was to his hearers no more than the symbol of a sentiment, a Jesus of romance, with romantic ideas of love and justice, which no one supposed capable of interpretation into terms of ordinary conduct. It was even as Jesus had foreseen it would be through the ages: men would praise His words, but would not do the things which He commended them. An anguish of disdain seized upon Gaunt, disdain in part for himself that he had been so little in accord with the truths he had just uttered, and in part with his hearers that they were manifestly pleased with truths which ought to have covered them with shame. For he knew—his long experience taught him—that if he were to stop with the picture he had drawn of the Friend of publican and sinners, not one of his hearers would be moved to any novel act of conduct. He foresaw that they would thank him for his sermon, praise it, say they had “enjoyed” it—that dreadful phrase which puts the seal of entire futility on preaching! His very soul sickened in him at the prospect. It came to him in a flash of blinding light that if ever he was to be sincere, he must be so now.

He stood silent for several moments. His face was pale, but it was a kind of pallor that had a strange element of brightness in it. It suggested moonlight on snow.

His hands were folded before him, his figure was rigid.

The silence grew: it spread like a wave. Then there were uneasy movements and rustlings in the pews. Roberts sat very upright with lips half open.

And then at last Gaunt spoke, but the note of challenging disdain had gone out of his voice. He spoke quietly, but each word was surcharged with intensity. And through all there throbbed the note of pity—it had the effect of a sob in a singer's voice—pity for himself that he had failed so long in his highest duty, and for others that they did not see what he beheld. He no longer drew a picture of something that happened centuries ago: he made his hearers feel that the same divine Teacher, who had dealt so tenderly with sinners and so rigorously with the proud and hard, stood at that very moment in the midst of this conventionally Christian congregation. And then he told the story of Palmer's lumber-camp hero, much as Palmer had related it to him. He pictured this weak little man, this despised "Paradise Lost," with his ignorance of books and theologies, nursing drunken men through their nights of horror, indefatigably tender in his ministration to those who derided him, sustained by one beautiful impulse, that he must needs do what his unseen Friend had done and bade him do. "Here is the true Christian," he cried. "Nay, not the Christian, but the Christ, one whose shoe's latchet I am unworthy to unloose, one whom you and I,

living complacent lives of luxury, shall envy when the judgment comes. Your religion and mine has hitherto been only a gratification—never a sacrifice. It has been a sorry travesty of religion. It will never become a reality till it becomes a sacrifice.”

Words were given to him in that hour. He who had for seven years read his little careful essays to an eclectic congregation, suddenly spoke with lips of flame. During the latter part of his address he seemed utterly unconscious both of himself and his audience; and so he did not see the angry flush on Mrs. Somerset's ample cheeks, nor the pale dismay on many other faces. One face was whiter than his own: it was Palmer's. The moment the address concluded Palmer left the church.

As if by preconcerted signal, at the close of the final hymn the deacons gathered at the vestry door.

Not one spoke to him. But as he passed the door on his departure from the church, he heard a murmur of voices behind that closed door. He knew that he was the subject of their discussion.

V

DR. JORDAN

PEOPLE who suppose that a human character can be altered radically by a sudden emotional experience, however intense, do not understand human nature. Such an experience renders character fluid; into what shape the molten elements will flow depends on the fibre of a man's will. Many persons, besides St. Paul, have had their visions on the way to Damascus; some of them, in the cool gray light of the next morning, have dismissed them as hallucinations; some have believed, but disobeyed; some have obeyed for a time, but in the end have found the pressure of the world too strong for them. Deliverance from an old and accustomed mode of life is never easy and rarely rapid. When we pull a plant up by the roots we are astonished to discover how many fibres it has, and with what tenacity a very small fibre will cling to the vein of earth in which it has laboriously established itself. Moreover, we soon find that it needs a delicate and strong hand for the work; we must slowly and gently loosen the roots, for if we are rough and violent in our methods we kill that which we meant to save.

Gaunt had experienced a powerful emotion; a new dynamic had been introduced into his life. During the whole of that memorable Sunday he had literally glowed and thrilled with its novel force. But when Monday morning dawned physical conditions began to assert themselves. He woke with a leaden pressure on the brain, a languor in each limb, the familiar symptoms of nervous exhaustion. His elation had died down into despondence.

It was very early when he woke—that most doleful hour in great cities when the day labours to be born, and the city seems to turn on its uneasy bed, reluctant to resume its toils. He heard far off the hooting sirens in the harbour, those harsh voices, raucous and persistent, which goad weary men to new labour. He watched the slow diffusion of cold, gray light in the clouded sky, and the gusty, uneven wind seemed to him like the sighing of defeated angels. It was the hour when, for imaginative men, thought is most introspective and reminiscent. As he lay quiet, watching the sombre dawn, his whole past life began to march before him in a series of rapidly unfolded pictures. His early life and struggles, its mistakes and errors, the humiliations he had endured through ignorance and lack of manners, his laborious evolution from the country lad into the scholar and the gentleman—he recalled all, he relived all. He figured it to himself as a steep and shining mountain, with steps of glass, up which he had toiled with remorseless patience. With what

superb confidence he had gone on, in spite of failures and rebuffs! And he had arrived; there was no doubt of that. He had gained the summit, where people of benignant features moved, and met him with a smiling welcome. And then, with a swift pang of self-pity, he perceived himself slipping backward on those stairs of glass, and the features of those benignant people on the summit were averted from him in cold scorn and mockery.

One thought prevailed over all others at that moment, the thought of Margaret. What did she really think? He knew her loyal, but could she give him that inner sympathy which he most needed at this hour? She would stand by him, of course; that was a thing beyond doubt. But if his whole life was to be changed, if he were now to enter on a new struggle, compared with which all these early struggles were a pastime, would her heart be with him? He recalled their life together. It had begun so beautifully, with all that exquisite tenderness of passion of which poets have sung. He recalled the first time that he had kissed her—it was on a winter evening, as they trod together a path of sparkling snow in a wood, on their way home from skating. The rest of the party had gone on; he and she were alone, and he had drawn her to him and kissed her cold cheek. For a long time after that he had fancifully loved to kiss her cheek when it was cold. During the first months of their married life much of his romantic and idyllic tenderness had remained.

Then it had seemed as though the practical elements in her character had gradually displaced the idyllic. There were fewer occasions of tenderness, as life became fuller of duties for each of them. At first he resented her absorption in household duties; then he became reconciled to what seemed an inevitable condition of life. He withdrew more and more into himself, and without observing the stages of his process, came more and more to shut her out of his intellectual life. She had never complained; she had been wiser if she had. She also had appeared to acquiesce in conditions which seemed inevitable, and had developed into a very practical woman, with a hundred daily tasks to absorb her. And now Gaunt saw with dismay that he had lost the clue to his wife's nature. He did not know her real mind. He was about to expose her to a tremendous ordeal, and he had nothing to guide him as to her real attitude towards it.

At that moment his reverie was broken by the ringing of the telephone which he kept beside his bed. Dr. Jordan wanted to see him at nine o'clock. He rose wearily, and began to dress.

Dr. Jordan was a man just past the middle point of life, the minister of a neighbouring church. He was clean-shaved, with a humorous, but firm mouth, bright shrewd eyes, a good forehead, and thin iron-gray hair. He was a man of no great intellectual parts, who never pretended to be anything but a mediocre preacher. He professed a mild kind of

heterodoxy, but he really took very little interest in theology. All his energies were devoted to the management of his church, and in this art he was a past-master. No one knew better than he how to organize the diverse elements of a church into a harmonious whole. He had an instinct which almost amounted to genius for comprehending the exact limits of men, the direction of their thoughts, the scale of their preferences, the direction in which they wished to move. Thus, when he announced any particular policy, it was so nicely timed that his people recognized in it the exposition of their own designs, and justly gave him credit for wise leadership. He did not pretend to any very lofty views of human nature. He was fond of quoting Luther's despondent axiom that "You must take men as they are, you cannot change their characters." In times of dispute and difficulty he was fertile in compromise, but his compromises usually had so much practical wisdom in them that no one ever thought of accusing him of lack of principle. It was by arts such as these that he had maintained for many years, without great intellectual gifts, a position of influence and authority in which such gifts are commonly considered indispensable. Thus he was a man generally trusted and obeyed, sagacious and experienced; a man of suave manners and smooth speech, who rode easily upon the waves of life, and knew better than to expose himself to inconvenient tempests when safe harbours were accessible. Gaunt

had had much pleasant fellowship with him. He was a welcome comrade on the golf-links, a pleasant guest at the dinner table, a shrewd man of the world, viewing most aspects of life in a spirit of lucid irony; but scarcely the man to whom any one would go in any deep spiritual emergency.

As Gaunt went downstairs to meet him, he guessed the object of his visit. No doubt Jordan had heard something about the sensation caused by the sermon of the previous morning. He had probably come to talk it over.

Jordan met him with his usual humorous smile, and at once proceeded to the business which had made him so early a visitor.

“So you’ve been fluttering the doves, I hear. Have you seen the morning papers?”

“No, I have not. You don’t mean to say there’s anything about me in them?”

“Read them. Here they are.”

He pointed to the leading New York papers which lay upon the table.

Gaunt took them up, and his eye at once caught the headline, “Sensational Utterances by a New York Minister.” He perceived immediately that he was the minister, and that at least one-third of the report of his utterances was totally inaccurate. But he soon discovered, that in spite of these inaccuracies, whoever had written the report had written sympathetically. If here and there were garbled phrases which he was sure he had not used, there

were others which he recognized, only they seemed much more extreme in print than they did in speech. Three of the reports were alike in the sympathy which they manifested, one of the three going so far as to applaud him as a prophet. The fourth was openly hostile and rancorous. It was composed of the worst kind of flippant newspaper wit—clever, ironical, jeering. “We await developments,” it concluded. “We are curious to know what Dr. Gaunt’s people have to say of their pastor. He has used the pulpit as a Coward’s Castle, to make accusations which he very well knew could not be publicly contradicted. It was an act of insolence as well as cowardice. We can hardly suppose that a church with the reputation of Mayfield Avenue will patiently endure this new and odious kind of Sunday Vaudeville.”

“Well,” said Jordan, “what do you think of it? You seem to have got yourself into the most unholy kind of mess.”

“Oh, the reports are right enough in the main,” said Gaunt—“except the last. That is obviously exaggerated and malicious.”

“It’s not a question now of accuracy or inaccuracy,” said Jordan, gravely. “The mischief’s done. If every line in these paragraphs was false, it would make no difference. You know the old proverb, ‘A lie runs round the world while Truth is putting on its boots.’ The question is what do you intend to do about it?”

“What would you have me do? I can’t pretend I didn’t say these things. I did, and I meant them. I still mean them. Of course I intend to stand by them.”

“Come, come, my dear fellow, you’re excited and out of sorts. You’ve been running down nervously a long time. I’ve seen it, if you haven’t. Now sit down, and let us talk the whole thing over quietly. Any man may make a mistake, but the only mistake that is irretrievable is persisting in a mistake.”

“But I’ve not make a mistake,” said Gaunt, with a vehement gesture. “I’ve spoken truth.”

“Oh, of course, we’ll grant that,” said Jordan, soothingly. “You’ll excuse my saying it, but any fool can speak what he calls the truth, and accomplish more harm by doing it than if he told lies. ‘All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient’—you know who said it. Besides, all truth is relative.”

At that moment Margaret entered the library. The conversation ceased, and both men rose. Gaunt’s first impulse was to conceal the nature of the conversation from his wife. Then suddenly the recollection of his early morning reverie came back to him. He had blamed himself for shutting Margaret out of his life, and at the same time had yearned for her sympathy in the inner matters of his life. Here was the decisive test of whether she was indeed capable of that sympathy. His eye rested on her with more of that early tender passion

of devotedness than he had known for many years. She looked pale—had she also had her painful dreams? And this was surely her question, as much as his. He took his resolution instantly. “Margaret,” he said, “Dr. Jordan was just discussing with me the events of yesterday. It seems the papers are full of reports about me. I’d like you to hear what he says; it concerns you, too, and we’ll advise together.”

Margaret looked at him with a grateful smile, and silently sat down at his side. “Now, Dr. Jordan, you were saying——”

Jordan went over the ground again, taking care to explain with more than his accustomed suavity the points he wished to emphasize. He was secretly annoyed and embarrassed by the presence of Mrs. Gaunt. But he was much too adroit a man to betray the least discomfiture.

“And what do you advise?” said Margaret.

“Well, it’s a little difficult to say offhand, but it seems to me the wisest way would be to give it out that you’re suffering from nervous breakdown, and go away at once to Florida for a month. It’s a mercy for us ministers that our people have very short memories. We suppose that they remember our sermons, and some of them like to pretend that they do. As a matter of fact they forget them in a month. Go away, and you’ll find it will all blow over. Take care that you don’t give them very good supplies while you are away; that will increase their

gratitude when you come back. You'll come back with flying colours, and very likely get a new start and do better than ever. There's nothing like a nervous breakdown to quicken people's loyalty."

Gaunt could not forbear a burst of laughter. But even while he laughed he was conscious of a deepening sense of annoyance, and a rising disgust. Jordan's remedy for his difficulties was really too colossally impudent in its complete disregard of the vital elements of the problem.

"And you really think I could do that?" he said.

"Why not?" said Jordan, with a grave smile. "Let us look at the facts of the case. You've a little overstepped the mark of discretion. That's no great sin. We're all liable to it. No one will think the worse of you for it, unless you persist in it. As a matter of fact, you've got a splendid advertisement out of it. A month's judicious silence, and, I repeat, you will come back to your pulpit with added popularity."

"Oh, if popularity were everything, if that was what I was playing for, I dare say you are right. But you forget that this is a question of truth and self-respect. I must go on in the course I have taken at all costs, or lose all right to my own respect and the respect of others."

"At all costs?—That's a large order. I wonder whether you have really counted the costs? Here and there a man is born who can afford to talk in this way. He usually comes about once in a cen-

tury. Even then he is commonly the child of a movement, not its creator. He happens to speak something that is in everybody's mind, and that is why he succeeds. He hits the psychologic moment—that is all. Do you suppose yourself that kind of man? If you are not, the wisest thing you can do is to have the sense to come in out of the rain."

"I don't pretend to be any particular kind of man, Jordan. I'm just myself. I've done what I thought right, and as for counting the costs I've never thought of them."

"No. I supposed not, and that's why I came to see you directly I knew what had occurred. Now, don't be angry—you know I am your friend and mean well by you. I've seen in my twenty years' experience a good half-dozen men as brilliant as you fizzle out, not through decay of power, but through indiscretion. Where are they now? Some of them are eating their hearts out with chagrin in miserable country churches from which they will never emerge. They've been relegated to obscurity, and are glad to do a priest's poorest duty for a piece of bread. One of them is an ill-paid journalist,—he thought the press would welcome him and he'd be an editor,—he's a disappointed journalist doing hackwork for a pittance, and he'll never be anything better. Another of them is actually a book-hawker—I bought a trashy cyclopædia which I didn't want from him the other day as an act of charity—and he once had a church as good as yours. The trouble with all

these men was that they thought themselves bigger than they were, they imagined they could do as they liked, and they didn't understand their relation to their churches. Now the plain fact is no man can do as he likes in a church, however strong he is. If he can't carry his church with him in what he does, he has to go—that's the brutal truth. The church is always stronger than the man, for the church knows perfectly that it can get a hundred men to pick and choose from, and the man knows he can't get a church."

"You assume I'm at war with my church," interrupted Gaunt. "That's not the case. My church has always given me the fullest liberty of speech, and I have no reason to suppose they wish to retrench that liberty."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Jordan. "Really, Gaunt, you amaze me. Don't you know that this boasted liberty of speech means nothing more than liberty to say things your people like you to say? Begin to say the things they don't want you to say, and you'll soon discover how little your liberty is worth."

"And you amaze me," retorted Gaunt. "I never heard from any one so low an ideal of a church as yours."

"It may low or high, that is a matter of opinion, but I know it's true. I could wish it otherwise, and if wishes were wings pigs would fly. So, being a moderately wise man, I don't spend my time in idle wishes—I take my facts, try to understand them,

and act accordingly. If I have to drive a freight train over a bad road, I don't try to run it like a Twentieth Century Flier; I know it can't be done. I economize my steam, and do the best I can, and am content to get through on schedule time, though the speed is pretty poor. But after all it's better to get there than to burst up on the way through over-zeal. Well, a church is a pretty heavy freight-train, and you can supply the rest of the parable for yourself. Keep to your schedule—you may be sure it's the best that can be done.

“I know your church better than you think; I knew it long before you came to it. You don't like Roberts, and you despise him for his business way of looking at things. Now I know Roberts very well; in fact, he's an old friend of mine. He's really a very worthy man; a little penurious, of course, as we know, but that's his nature. He really admires you, as much as such a man can. And he really loves the church, and would toil night and day for its success, for it's the only bit of idealism in his narrow life. Why offend him? In your position I should conciliate and use him. And it's the same with all your people; they are proud of their church. But if you antagonize them, they're only human, and they'll retaliate. And then you'll get at the true nature of your costs—you'll have to go, and you'll get a dreadful fall, and you'll find that the papers which hail you as a prophet to-day will forget your existence the moment you're a discarded minister.

“Now can't you see that it's better to get your freight train through on good time than to wreck it by attempting the impossible?”

“Oh, I see you're right from your point of view, Jordan. And I should be ungrateful if I didn't recognize that you really mean to help me. Only, you see, our points of view are different.”

“Well, you'll come to mine, when you've thought about it enough,” said Jordan, cheerfully. “The signals are against you. Don't outrun your signals. Take my advice—go to Florida, and when the prodigal comes home there will be the usual festivities.”

Gaunt, in spite of his resentment, felt it impossible to be angry with the man. He was so imperceptibly amiable, so certain of his own wisdom, so sincerely friendly and well-meaning. He shook hands with him cordially, although he knew that a great gulf separated them.

“I shall leave Mrs. Gaunt as my ambassador,” Jordan said, as he left the room. “Mrs. Gaunt is a practical woman. It's a lucky thing for you poor babes of genius that you have given to you by a merciful Providence a wise woman to mother your ignorance.”

Gaunt accompanied him to the door. When he returned to the library Margaret was still standing as he had left her. Her face was pale, her attitude pensive; only in her eyes which were unusually bright, as with a dew of tears, was there the indi-

cation of some hidden significant upheaval in her thought.

"Well, Margaret, what do you think of him? Didn't he make you think of Bunyan's Mr. Worldly Wiseman?"

"No," she said, slowly. "Not of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, but of some one much worse. Some one sleek, crafty, cruel—a huge purring cat, with restless talons. And not that altogether—a creature conscienceless, who didn't know it—a man reconciled to evil and little ways and believing them good and wise—a tempter of the soul with lips of honey.

"I shrank from him as he spoke. I hated to take his hand, I felt it had power to drag me down.

"And when he left the room I drew a long breath, and said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' "

For answer Gaunt stooped and kissed her. A great wave of love and gratitude swept through his heart.

In that moment he knew that his wife understood him, that she had truly entered into his inner life again, and would never again stand outside his heart's door.

Whatever happened to him now seemed but a light price to pay for this sweetness of restored confidence, this divine new-found happiness.

VI

A DISCUSSION

DEACON ROBERTS lived in an apartment house a few blocks from Mayfield Avenue Church. It was a quiet house of the old-fashioned sort, used by old-fashioned people. Occasionally a young married couple strayed into it, but soon left, unable to endure its dulness. Roberts and his wife had lived there for twelve years, during the whole of which period they had been supposed to be looking after a house. Apparently they had found it impossible to discover what they wanted, for they still occupied the same suite of rooms, and had achieved the distinction of having become the oldest residents.

The fact was that whenever the opportunity came to purchase a house, Roberts grudged the expenditure, and after a brief struggle conquered his temptation and settled down again to the old life. Every day he ate the same breakfast at the same hour, went downtown, returned with automatic punctuality, sat down to the same dinner, and was in bed on the stroke of eleven. The menus in the dining-room had fresh dates upon them day by day, but their substance never varied; and the same thing was true of Roberts' life. He had steadily accumulated money,

but it had never occurred to him to change his mode of life. His wife, a very plain and homely woman, had sometimes spasmodic attacks of social ambition, but they had come to nothing. If they had had children the story might have been different, but they were childless. So each settled more and more into a groove, from which at last neither had any desire to escape.

There are many people of this description to be found in all large cities—people to whom the city as a vital entity does not exist. They never go to a theatre or a concert; they take no part in those intellectual conclaves where the movements of art or literature are discussed; they never look upon a celebrated person, or are present at an historic occasion; they remain provincials with a provincialism more inelastic than any other, the provincialism of cities. The only New York they know is bounded by the business office on one side and the apartment house on the other. They are ignorant alike of the splendour and the squalor that surrounds them. They are like the peasants of some war-devastated country, who see without curiosity the spears and banners of contending hosts marching hither and thither, themselves content to go on tilling the soil, without so much as a question concerning the tremendous issues which antagonize the nations. The capacity for the tragic is not in them. They would stick to the narrow round of daily habit even though the Last Trumpet blew, and would resent an inter-

ruption which disclosed to them the Gates of Paradise.

Roberts and his wife were persons of this order. How, then, had Roberts ever come to be a leading figure in the life of Mayfield Avenue Church? Because, as Dr. Jordan put it, the church represented the one bit of idealism in his prosaic life. Here, he who otherwise would have been an entirely negligible item in a vast city, was capable of becoming important. His precise method of speech created the impression of sound business judgment and sagacity. In the earlier period of his association with the church he had little influence. The management of the church was then in the hands of men of much bigger calibre and social importance than himself. But as these died or removed, it was not easy to fill their places, and then the eyes of the people were directed to Roberts. He was so methodical, diligent, and punctual, that the absence in him of the larger gifts of leadership was overlooked. The time came when it was difficult to find men either willing or able to give the church the service which an active part in its administration demanded. Then Roberts found his opportunity. He became a deacon, and was at first a silent and observant deacon. Little by little as the business problems of the church became exigent, he acquired influence, till at last he found himself in a position of authority. His authority was based altogether on his business faculties; he remained narrow and pro-

vincial in his spirit. He had no more vision of the spiritual ideals of a church than he had of the tragic realities of the great city in which he lived the life of a tame cat. The church was to him nothing more than a business enterprise, and the faculties he applied to its service were precisely those which governed his office on Broadway.

It was a little after eight o'clock in the evening. Dinner was over, and Roberts was expecting his fellow deacons at a privately convened committee in his own rooms. Mrs. Roberts had retired to the company of a lady in a neighbouring room, having been significantly warned by her husband that she had better not return till after ten o'clock. Roberts was clearly uneasy. He arranged and rearranged the chairs in the room with a critical and dissatisfied air, walked restlessly up and down, and twice retired to the contiguous bedroom to improve his toilet. When he had completed these exercises he found that there was still a quarter of an hour to spare, and he used it to review his thoughts.

These thoughts were not pleasant and by no means clear. It was true, as Dr. Jordan had said, that he admired Gaunt in his own way, but it was with many reservations. His admiration chiefly went out to Gaunt as a successful attraction; it did not extend to his intellectual qualities, which he was incapable of understanding. Then, at the back of all his thoughts there was a grievance of which he had never spoken to any one except his wife. He knew

very well that Gaunt had intimate relations with certain members of the church, which had never been extended to himself. There was Palmer, for example. Gaunt spent whole days in Palmer's society, and yet Palmer was a financial nobody. Besides this, according to Roberts' narrow creed, Palmer was a person whose religious profession barely entitled him to be a member of a church at all, and still less a deacon. Roberts could not complain that Gaunt had ever treated him with discourtesy, but it was manifest that the minister took no pleasure in his company. Gaunt had never talked with him on any subject but the business of the church. If he had visited him, the visits had been brief and perfunctory. Gaunt's manner toward him, while outwardly courteous, was significant of a certain disdain, the quiet, uncalculated disdain of superior intellect. And Roberts, like most men who have fought their way from penury to affluence, had an excellent opinion of himself, and was secretly, but sensitively, proud and vain. The more complete his triumph in the esteem of his fellow deacons had become, the more irritable he felt over his failure with the minister, till at last Gaunt was to him what the unrespectful Mordecai at the gate was to Haman.

These were very small motives, no doubt, but man is often a very small creature. The writer upon human life—the novelist, for example,—is naturally attracted by the big forces and motives, by the pas-

sions of rage or revenge which break out in the red flame of murder, by the lust which wrecks everything in its path like the tornado, by the relentless craft which plots and achieves tragedies that fill the world with horror. But these things are after all exceptional. There are other tragedies, not less deadly and much more widely disastrous in their effects, which have their origin in causes so slight that they appear ridiculous. What bitter estrangements have arisen from a cold glance, a thoughtless word, an indifferent manner! How often has wounded vanity rankled till the whole heart is poisoned! What alienations of friendship, deepening into deadly feuds, have owed themselves to nothing more than stifled resentment over some act so trivial that it has been quite unnoticed by the person against whom the resentment has been kindled! Roberts was an example of the play of these forces. As he probed his thoughts in this brief quarter of an hour of silent waiting, he discovered in the dark recesses of his heart the coiled serpent of envenomed enmity to Gaunt. He knew now that he wanted to see Gaunt humbled. He would have recoiled from the idea of doing Gaunt a personal injury, but he did want to humble him; to make him conscious that he, Roberts, was not a person to be lightly disposed of. His injured vanity demanded the sacrifice of Gaunt. His own voracious sense of self-importance, so long quieted by prudential motives, could only be satiated by such a sacrifice.

Half-past eight struck, the deacons arrived, and were soon seated at the table. Small and Hocking were the first to come; three others followed, one of whom only is important in this story, a little nervous man called Tasker. The last to arrive was Palmer.

Roberts surveyed the little party with the eye of a strategist. He could rely on Hocking and Small, with the former of them he had had a long private conference that morning, the issue of which was a general agreement of hostility against Gaunt. Small was an obstinate and awkward man, who usually kept his own counsel; but Roberts knew him to be highly incensed over the sermon of Sunday. Tasker was an amiable man, who suffered from constitutional inability to make up his mind on any subject whatever. He was never so happy as in balancing probabilities, discovering difficulties, quibbling over non-essentials. His favourite phrase was that things "act and react"! Everything acted and reacted, every road had its lion in the path, every course of action led to negations; therefore, inaction was the only real wisdom. He was not sure whether his politics were Republican or Democrat; sometimes they were the one, sometimes the other. He would argue for the New Theology, but always with the saving clause that a good deal might be said for the old. Sometimes he talked like a socialist, but the moment he was acclaimed as one, he repudiated the accusation, and became violently individualistic. You see, everything acted and reacted. He had used

the phrase so long that he had come to believe it the statement of an ultimate philosophic principle. It was a perplexing world for poor Tasker; a world singularly destitute of plain paths, and wickedly labyrinthine in its system. What could an amiable and irresolute man do in a world where everything had this mischievous habit of acting and reacting?

The conversation was at first desultory. The fact was, no one cared to come to the point. At last Roberts forced the pace.

"It's nine o'clock," he remarked. "Don't you think we had better come to business?"

"Perhaps Brother Roberts will state the business," said Hocking, with a knowing glance.

"I've no objection," said Roberts, with a stiffening of his prim figure. He adjusted his spectacles, and began in his most lawyer-like tones of precision, his thin, querulous voice giving a disagreeable emphasis to each word. He at first confined himself to his old theme of facts and figures. His fellow-deacons moved uneasily. They had heard it all before. They also knew that this part of his speech was mere skirmishing. They were impatient for the main point of attack.

"Well, then, it comes to this," he concluded. "We can't pay our way on the present basis. This is a meeting of business men, and we must look at things in a business spirit. We all respect and admire our pastor." Here Hocking coughed loudly, and Tasker nodded approvingly. "But when a business is not

succeeding, however much we may respect our manager, we have to deal with him plainly. We have to tell him that part of the blame is his. In any case it would be only just to reduce his income. I am prepared to recommend the latter course in relation to our manager—our minister, I mean,—viz., that the circumstances of the case warrant us in reducing his income by one-third.”

The conclave drew a long breath.

Tasker was the first to speak. He was taken by surprise. Of course he would not dispute the figures. But there was a point that weighed with him: what would the world think? What would become of their prestige? Retrenchment might be necessary, but was it politic? And then came his favourite phrase—these things acted and reacted. On the one hand you might retrench, but on the other you must consider what the effect would be on the public. There was clearly no light of resolution in Tasker.

“Prestige,” growled Small. “I guess that’s pretty low, anyway. Last Sunday has given the church a black eye for all decent people.”

“Allow me,” replied Tasker, in his most amicable voice, “but I really don’t think I can let that pass. I don’t think I can. I don’t at all agree that the church has suffered by anything—anything from what has occurred. In fact, if we are to discuss last Sunday morning’s address, I must say I agreed with it—that is, in part. I think that if we came

to talk matters over with the pastor we should find that we are all agreed with him—in part. Of course he may have been injudicious, slightly injudicious, but the papers were not unfriendly. I have all the press reports in my pocket, and I think I can prove that the press was not unfriendly—that is, not really unfriendly——”

“We are not here to discuss the press,” interrupted Hocking. “We have our own eyes, and can read.”

“Yes,” persisted Tasker, “but isn’t it a fact that this meeting was called as a result of last Sunday’s sermon?”

“No, it’s not a fact,” said Roberts. “We may have our own views about that sermon—for my part I thought it deplorable—but whether that sermon had been preached or not, we should still have had to consider the financial position of the church. That is the main point. That is what we have to discuss.”

The two colourless deacons nodded their heads. They were old gentlemen, and wanted to go home to bed. They were amiable men, with no known antipathies; but they each cherished a strong dislike to late meetings.

In the meantime, Palmer had sat silent. He had been coldly greeted on his arrival by Roberts, who had secretly hoped that he would not come.

“I agree with Deacon Roberts,” he said, “as to the real point of discussion. No one is better able

than he to discuss finance. No one is less fitted to discuss ethics and philosophy."

Palmer's voice was quietly ironical. It was that note of irony in Palmer which always irritated Roberts. It was a weapon against which he knew he had no defence. He flushed at the words, and his eyes flashed behind his spectacles; but he mastered himself, and said with a sorry attempt at a smile, "That is not prettily put, but I don't dispute its truth. I am glad that Deacon Palmer supports my view of the nature of the meeting."

"Nevertheless," said Palmer, "ethics do enter into this discussion, as they do into any kind of human business. I think we should be very sure that in any attitude we may take to-night toward the church and its affairs, no personal feeling is allowed to distort our views."

"I disclaim all personal feeling," retorted Roberts. "I am concerned solely over the finances of the church. I don't allow any feeling connected with the pastor to enter into the matter."

"Judas would probably have said the same thing," said Palmer. "He thought so much of the thirty pieces of silver that he quite forgot his Master."

"What am I to understand by that?" said Roberts, angrily.

"Precisely what I say," said Palmer. "Your mind is obsessed by questions of finance. I don't say that they have no importance. But you see nothing else. And there is much more than a pitiable ques-

tion of money involved. There's a human life, a man, a ministry. There's the question of truth; what men ought to think and do who call themselves the disciples of Jesus, how they ought to feel, what is the right interpretation of their discipleship. Judas forgot all that. He saw failure ahead, and his own prestige threatened; so he made the best bargain he could, and got his thirty pieces of silver, and in his shameful fear and haste had not one thought of love, or loyalty, or even pity for the Man he had professed to follow. We are in peril of the same blindness to-night. We are thinking of money, always money, and——"

"I must interrupt this—this diatribe," said Roberts. "As chairman of this meeting, I must interrupt." His thin voice quivered with indignation.

"I must insist on the question which is before us being discussed," he continued.

"Which is?" said Palmer.

"A recommendation which I make, after long deliberation, that the salary of the minister of the Mayfield Avenue Church be reduced by one-third."

"After long deliberation?" said Palmer. "Should I be wrong if I guessed that the deliberation was no longer than since last Sunday—that, in fact, this step is the direct result of certain feelings aroused on that day?"

"Now, need we recriminate like this?" said Tasker. "According to my view you are both right and both wrong. Of course the question of finance

must be considered, and I suppose that certain things said last Sunday will have some influence on minds in considering it. These things act and react."

But no one heeded him. The little man flushed with nervousness and sat down in painful agitation. Roberts and Palmer remained standing. It was evident that the duel was between them.

"I don't know what right any one has to investigate my private thought," said Roberts. "But I don't in the least object to giving a plain answer to a plain question. I did resolve on my course last Sunday. I did so because I saw that from that hour new difficulties were certain to come upon the church. Things were difficult before that; they are a thousandfold worse now. Therefore, I am of opinion that the course I recommend has now become imperative. We must reduce our expenditure, and do it at once. Has Deacon Palmer anything to say against that course?"

"Yes, that's the point," said Hocking. "Let us vote and be done with it."

Small nodded his head vehemently. The two colourless deacons nodded theirs. They were eager for bed, poor gentlemen, and did not care very much what happened if only the meeting would close.

"Yes, I've something to say," said Palmer.

"An amendment, perhaps?" sneered Roberts.

"Not altogether," said Palmer. "A statement, rather, and one that may prove a little surprising. Briefly it is this. I have had a long conversation

to-day with Dr. Gaunt. The issue of it, as regards this particular discussion, may be stated in a few words. Dr. Gaunt recognizes fully the financial difficulties of the church, and takes what, I think, is a more than generous view of his own responsibility for those difficulties. He is also entirely aware that since he does not intend to retract anything that he said last Sunday, but rather to reiterate it, the difficulties of the position may tend to increase rather than decrease. Therefore he authorizes me to say that henceforth he will accept no fixed salary from the church. He wishes to be entirely free in his teachings, and in order to become so has determined to free the church from all financial obligations toward himself."

The announcement came as a bolt out of the blue. Roberts knew that his scheme had failed. He was too astute to admit it, however. He uttered a few halting words which expressed a recognition of the generosity of Gaunt. But no one was deceived by them. Least of all was he himself deceived. From that hour his enmity was hatred, the unquenchable hatred of defeated cunning.

VII

THE GHOSTLY DAWN

OF all hours that carry alarm to the human soul, there is no hour so full of the significance of fear as that gray interval which follows the first breath of dawn. Not the night, for we understand its meaning, and know how to welcome its silences after day's loud tumult. The true ghostly hour, before which the soul shrinks, is not the hour when the world falls asleep, but when it awakes. For then the atmosphere is pregnant with presences; the dead, it may be, hurrying back to the house of dust before the cock crows; angels withdrawing from the chambers where they have watched the dying; the dying themselves, with their last fight accomplished, gliding out with fearful feet upon the long road that lies among the stars. Then, too, all familiar shapes are clothed in vagueness, and appear strange and menacing. The tall houses are mere pillars of gloom; the windows, where no human face appears, are as sealed eyes, made blind by tragic visions which are secret and unspoken; the very streets, empty of their eager life, loom spectral; the trees are as hooded nuns, clothed in gray; and the world draws long shuddering breaths, and sigh-

ings fill the air, and echoes of the secular strifes of men whose very memories are forgotten. It is this element of uncertainty which makes the hour dreadful—the uncertain light, and shapes, and sounds—and the sense that with the slow growth of light there must come some revelation so new and strange that the soul at once desires and shrinks from it.

“But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”

The veriest sceptic might believe that record. Anything may happen in the ghostly dawn, when the mists melt upon a silent sea; and the strangest thing of all may happen, that Jesus stands beside us, and we do not know Him.

It was so that Gaunt felt in those weeks which followed the events already narrated. He stood in a spectral world, where everything seemed unreal. His whole past life appeared an error, a nullity. It had crumbled beneath his feet and disappeared. The things which had loomed large in that life melted into nothingness, and a vague new world began to build itself around him.

Amid these shadows he groped slowly, at first more conscious of a lost world than of a world new-born. Ever since that memorable Sunday when he had broken with tradition, he had been aware of a great change in himself. The values of life had altered. He was no longer anxious to please men,

nor careful of his reputation. He had never been so in any narrow or unworthy sense, but as he surveyed his past life he saw that these had often been the guiding motives of his conduct. He had been a man conscious of a great position, and of the influence which attached to it; but now self-consciousness was dead in him. He knew men talked much of him, and not kindly, but he was not careful to know what they said. He was as one who treads a high mountain path alone, hearing no more the babble of voices in the village at his feet. In all his public addresses he had hitherto cared much for literary form. He knew the fine phrases in his sermons, was subtly conscious of their value, and of their effect on others, and had waited for that effect. Perhaps his phrases were not less felicitous now, but he was unconscious of them; he spoke out of the fulness of his heart, conscious only of the burden of his message. For men like Roberts, whom he had once despised, he felt now only soft commiseration. He saw them as men imprisoned in a narrow life, men to be pitied rather than blamed. His manner toward them was singularly gentle; and although they often sought to provoke him, he had no angry words for them.

The earliest effect of this change of temper was the decision renouncing his salary which Palmer had made at the deacons' meeting.

"You can do nothing for men until you have convinced them that you are disinterested," Palmer had

said to him. "The chief hindrance to the Church is that men do not believe its ministers disinterested."

"Am I not disinterested?" he had replied.

"Certainly you are, according to conventional standards," Palmer had replied. "I know, and a few other people know, that a man of your ability might have done well in any profession, and have reaped far greater worldly rewards. But that is not the point. The mass of men judge not by what is, but by what seems. They see you living a comfortable life, well-paid, and according to their own standards even extravagantly paid, for what appears an easy exercise of ability. They not unnaturally suppose that complete honesty of mind is not possible in such a position. They regard your calling as a profession. You do something which you are paid to do. It does not in the least matter that their estimate is unjust or ignorant. They think these things. Consequently they keep away from the church, and if they hear you at any time do so with suspicion of your motives."

"You can never overcome prejudices of this kind," Gaunt replied, sadly.

"Cannot you? My dear friend, have you forgotten your history? Why, history is full of the splendid stories of men who have cast away their supports, given up everything for an idea. And as I read history, that has been the supreme secret of the success of a Francis of Assisi, of a John Wesley, of a Booth.

The world reveres its martyrs, whomsoever else it may despise."

"But, Palmer, I am not one of these. I am only a weak man struggling toward the light."

"And what more were they? Great men at the last—yes—but weak men once. Oh, I know how you think and feel. You are a victim to that enfeebling adoration of great men which is so common to-day. You adore them as exceptions to the rule of life. You ought to think of them as examples, and to say what man has done and been, man can still do and be."

"No, no, Palmer. I might think in this way of other people, but never of myself."

"Well, then, I will set you an easier task," said Palmer. "Let us forget all about great men, and simply look to ourselves. Do you see this one thing to be true, that your power over men, and any one's power, will be in the direct ratio of the conviction men have of their disinterestedness?"

"Yes, I see that."

"And do you realize that you are just entering on a path which can only be pursued by constant self-renunciation? Do you realize that what the world is always seeking, and for the most part in vain, is living examples of what self-renunciation means, and that Christianity can only regain its authority by the influence of such lives?"

"Oh, I see it, I see it," Gaunt answered, passionately. "I have seen it for a long time, but have been

afraid to admit it. I can't read the Gospels without feeling their reproach for a life like mine. I can't come into contact with poor people without realizing the essential falseness of my position. And I feel it most of all in the pulpit. I am a tame prophet. I am bound by a chain of gold.—The angel with the fire of coal hovers just above me, but I cannot reach out to him.—Sometimes I hardly wish to. I fear the pain."

"Touch the flame," said Palmer, softly, "and it will melt the chain as well as scorch the lips."

It was Palmer's way to put a thing in a phrase, and leave the truth so uttered to do its own work. He had that rarest art of moral surgery, to know exactly how far the knife should go, at what point to stop. During all the years of his friendship with Gaunt he had been quietly studying his friend's nature, with a growing belief in its immense but latent spiritual possibilities. He had never intruded his advice. Often he had purposely offered it in an ironical and even humorous form. He had always had some dim foreshadowing of the coming crisis in Gaunt's life; and so he was prepared for it, and knew precisely how to act. And now that he saw the soul struggling to be born, he knew the way that it must travel, the method of its deliverance and triumph. It was the old way of self-renunciation; there was no other.

"Can these things be?" Gaunt had pondered

sadly through the long sleepless night which had followed this talk with his friend.

“Can I let the old life go—the well-ordered, comfortable life, of ascertained duties and desires—for this new life whose paths seem so vague, so perilous?” The ghostly dawn weighed on him. And yet amid all the fear and trouble of that hour, he was conscious, as it were, of Some One who gently loosened his fingers as they clung to the world—unlocked them one by one in quiet mastery, so that the baubles of pride and worldliness for which he had fought fell from his grasp, and fell unregarded.

The practical issue of these emotions was the message which Palmer had given to the deacons. Gaunt realized that he must be free, and he dared be poor in order that he might be free. Henceforth he would take nothing from the world that should be a bribe, or even a possible menace to his own spiritual freedom. It may seem a small step, perhaps, to those who have never taken it; to those who have never had enough of the world to feel its loss; to those who have never known the satisfactions of a life which has been fed with praise, and have never eaten the rough crusts of blame. But to a man of Gaunt's nature, inherently proud, and accustomed to the material rewards of success, it meant much. It implied a reversal of all customary thoughts, an entire change of attitude toward the world.

The vagueness and fear of the ghostly dawn was also with him in other ways, particularly in relation to his thoughts about religion.

Religion had hitherto been for him a philosophy touched with sentiment—it was so he would have defined it. He had rationalized his religion to the last point at which any kind of faith was possible. The result had been that the older he grew the less he had in which he really believed. All the supernatural elements of the Gospels he had quietly discarded. The Gospels were to him a beautiful amalgam of legend, symbol, and poetry. They charmed him, but the charm was in the main literary. They were the creation of adoring minds, whose adoration flowered into literary genius; but as sober histories they were impossible.

But now he had reached a point where he had become humble enough to doubt his own doubts. He could hardly have defined the exact processes of his thought, but there were certain episodes which marked his progress.

One of these episodes was a visit which he paid one day to the dying bed of a youth of his congregation who had been fatally injured in the football field. He had always been a quiet youth, of good life, but he had never made any open profession of religion. Just before he died a wonderful smile lit up his face, he raised his hand as if to greet some unseen friend, and said, "I'm not afraid. I see Jesus. He is with me." The words were not un-

usual; Gaunt knew perfectly well that in the hysteria of death such words were often uttered by devout people. But the curious thing in this instance was that this dying youth had never been devout; there was nothing hysteric in his nature; and the look upon his face was one of immense surprise, as though the vision had come unsought, and was not the reflex of a previous experience—a fantasy wrought out of memories of hymns and sermons; such explanations were absurd, impossible. That look of surprise—the intensity, the wonder of it, and yet the element of recognition, as if it were after all a natural thing that Jesus should be there,—how explain it?

The martyr, the saint, had a right to such a vision. It would be the natural birth of the ecstasy which made them capable of martyrdom. But this lad—an ordinary good lad, fond of sport, unimaginative? Gaunt looked round the room, seeking for some clue among the boy's simple possessions. There were the usual portraits of college friends, the college badge, a shelf of books of quite commonplace character, a Greek Testament—nothing that suggested the devout temperament. He talked with the parents—all that they could say was that he was always a good lad, full of brightness and affection. And yet to him came this vision—this surprising vision.

He told Palmer the incident.

Palmer listened with a grave smile.

“Well,” he said, “what is it that you find so incomprehensible?”

“Why, just this,” said Gaunt, “that, granting the vision real, it should come to that lad.”

“And to whom could it come more fittingly?” Palmer replied. “Think a moment: here is a poor lad torn out of life by a cruel accident just when life is at its sweetest with him. He surely needed more than most men something to help him die, to make him feel in dying that life was not a hideous mistake. It would be just like Jesus to come to such a dying boy. He would say: ‘The saints can do without Me, they’ve had Me all the time, and they have the faith which believes without sight, anyway. But this poor broken life, this boy smitten in his prime, he needs a Hand to help him on the dark road, an assurance that all is well. So he shall see Me standing at the gate of death when it uncloses.’”

“Then you think it was all real?” said Gaunt, in a low voice. “Why, if I could think that, it would alter all the world for me.”

“And why not?” said Palmer.

There was a long silence, and then Palmer spoke again, as a man soliloquizing with himself.

“Of course it’s all hallucination on the premises you uphold—

“Far hence He lies
In that lone Syrian town,
And on His grave, with silent eyes,
The Syrian stars look down;

and all that kind of thing. Jesus is dead—and death ends all. They buried Him, and His bones are dust, and He has no more a living place among men than the men of the Stone Age have.

“That is your position. It was mine once. From the rational and materialistic point of view there is no other.

“But suppose we begin the story at the other end, and read it without prepossession and prejudice. Well, this is what I see. First of all, man getting more and more of God into him as his soul enlarges, his spiritual capacity expands. And this means that man gets more and more of the power of eternal life into him, for this is eternal life, to know God. It takes ages upon ages to work out this new consciousness. The Egyptians were probably the first to realize it. They built up a wonderful system of religion, the entire basis of which was the conviction of some elements in man which survived death. Then came the Hebrews, who spoiled the Egyptians in more senses than one, for they stole from them their most vital ideas of religion. But the Hebrews were too gross to believe thoroughly in the survival of the soul. So they built up a religion which was adapted to the practical needs of daily life—and beyond that lay Sheol, the house of darkness, where men cannot praise God. Yet through all this materialism of religion the Egyptian ideals survive. The light grows. Voice after voice affirms that there is some indestructible element in man—for God is all

the time flowing more and more into man, and man is becoming more and more conscious that he is in some strange way an incarnation of God.

“Then comes One who says He has found the Great Secret—He is the authentic incarnation of God.

“It is a tremendous claim; the majority of men ridicule it, as was natural; a few believe. Those who ridicule it are gross men, who are content with their portion in this life; those who believe it are spiritual people, who have within their own natures elements which make the claim of Jesus probable.

“One thing at least is certain: all things fit together marvellously to support the claim of Jesus. That claim, put in modern language, is simply this, that He has more of God in Him than mortal ever had before—that God finds in Him an unimpeded channel, and that God is, therefore, able to act through Him with a completeness never attained before. And all things, I say, fit together marvellously in support of that claim. Jesus does precisely the sort of things which God might do if God were incarnated in a Man. He heals the sick, calms the seas, gathers the winds into His hands; and, more marvellous still, in His ideas of mercy, justice, and love, speaks as God might speak, and at such an elevation of thought that no thinker has ever since been able to equal or surpass Him. Yes—that is the real miracle, beside which all those other acts which we name miraculous are inconsiderable. A peasant

out of Galilee, unlettered, suddenly steps upon the throne of human thought, the supreme eminence, and speaks as God might have spoken."

Palmer paused a moment. There was a look upon his face which Gaunt had never seen before—a withdrawn look, as of one who hears music inaudible to others, one who listens and strains forward listening.

When he spoke again his voice had a deeper note, a low, vibrating note, that thrilled his listener.

"And then He died. He was slain by evil men. All His goodness had gone for nothing. And a few people who had loved Him took up the poor broken body, and hid it in a safe tomb, and that was the end. Gaunt, *was it the end?* In the nature of things could it be the end?"

"Not if we admit the truth of what I have already said. Here is a Man in whom God was present, in a degree never before known in human history. Everybody felt it who came in contact with Him—His disciples, His enemies, His judges, and crowds of poor distressed people whom He had helped. It's not a question of theology, it's something a man feels. And remember that the essential fact in all this strange life is that Jesus had carried the spirituality of man to its furthest possible limit. He had outgrown the physical long before His death; He moves with the tranquillity and freedom of a disembodied spirit along the last tragic paths, and awe falls upon men as they watch Him. Now what would you expect to happen? Precisely what did

happen, or what is alleged to have happened. For once more the whole story is fitted together with a skill which no human invention could have compassed. It is absolutely logical on the premises that man is more than a body, and that Jesus had asserted the life of the spirit in men in its fullest form. For the spirit now triumphs. It survives death. It is an indestructible personality, capable of manifesting itself to human eyes. All that the Egyptian had asserted as true, all that the most pious minds of all ages had believed, is vindicated in the actual resurrection of a Person from the depths of the grave. And the story is believed, not only for the testimony which supports it, but for a much more invincible reason, that all who are capable of forming a just idea of the personality of Jesus feel that the story *ought* to be true. It is demanded by the nature of the life of Jesus.

“So I have come to think, and hence I have no difficulty in believing that that dying boy did actually see Jesus just before his eyes closed. I tell you Jesus is *alive*. I know it. There are times when I am more conscious of His presence than I have ever been of the presence of any human creature. It has not been a matter of suggestion—a book, a picture, a chord of music, stirring the devout or poetic sense in me—nothing of that kind. It has come suddenly, unexpectedly, when I was thinking of quite different things—the sense of a Presence, of Some One near me, touching me with a gentle pressure, enfolding me

for an instant. It's like a child waking in the night with the sense that his mother has kissed him in the dark. The child says, 'Why, that must have been mother, no one else would have kissed me like that.' I say, 'That must have been Jesus. No one else could have thrilled me with such awe and happiness.' But who can describe these things? I am almost ashamed of having tried."

"You should not be," said Gaunt. "If I felt as you feel, I would publish my experience on the house-tops."

"So you will one day. Speech is your portion, silence is mine. You are the only person to whom I have ever spoken in this way. Shall I tell you just why I did it?"

"Tell me."

"Because you have come to a point where you have really got a vision of Jesus, but it is as yet only the Jesus of practical service. You see that earthly life in all its sweet compassion and simplicity, and you are nobly emulous to imitate it. That is a great step—it has already changed your whole character and temper. But you'll find that you can't stop there. You can't live that life by imitation. You can only do so by union. You must feel that Jesus is alive for you—that He is really with you always. Do you remember those lines of Le Gallienne's:

"Loud mockers of the angry street
Say, Christ is crucified again;
Twice pierced those Gospel-bearing feet,

Twice broken that great heart in vain.
I smile, and to myself I say,
Why, Christ talks with me all the day.

That expresses what I mean.”

“I wish I could feel it, but I don’t, I don’t.”

“Well, don’t try to force the feeling. Don’t be in a hurry. The hour may be nearer than you think.”

So it was that Gaunt stood in the ghostly dawn, waiting for a revelation, for the emergence of something, he scarce knew what, out of the gray mists.

And though he knew it not, the mists were slowly lifting all the time, the day was beginning to break, and already through the vague light the Master was approaching him.



VIII

A RETIRED PROPHET

THE mail one morning brought Gaunt a letter which greatly interested him. It was written in a cramped and feeble hand and was very brief. It was signed, Paul Gordon.

Paul Gordon was, as might have been guessed from the handwriting, a very old man. His history was remarkable. At forty years of age he had been known far and wide as one of the most brilliant preachers in America. From his pulpit he had gone to a professor's chair in a great theological seminary, somewhat to the dismay of his friends, who regarded the step as a mistake. The fact was, however, that Gordon had suddenly discovered that the foundations of his faith were insecure. He had been caught in the rising tide of German destructive criticism, and found himself defenceless. When the professorship of Hebrew had been offered him in the seminary, he hailed the opportunity of escape from a position which he had come to regard as untenable. In his new position he gave himself up to a thorough investigation of the sources of his faith, and as time went on was less and less heard of as a preacher. At fifty his star again arose above the horizon. He

published a book, characterized by the most daring statements of Biblical criticism, statements which had long been among the commonplaces of German theology, but which were entirely novel to his American readers. The result was a famous heresy trial. For three years the name of Paul Gordon was on everybody's lips. Those who knew him best rushed to his defence. Many of these ardent friends did not profess to endorse his views, but they were enthusiastic in their admiration for his character. They might well be, for it would have been difficult to find any man among the churches who lived a life of nobler sacrifice and service than Gordon. He gave the larger part of his income, and devoted every moment of time which he could spare from his duties, to work among the very poorest classes of New York. One reason why he had ceased to be known as a popular preacher was that he refused to leave this work. During all the progress of the great controversy Gordon might have been discovered almost any night in a dingy mission hall near the river, doing work that very few persons in that day attempted to do among a motley company of drunkards, thieves, and harlots. "If he thought like Socrates, he lived like Christ," one of his friends said of him, and the epigram was long remembered.

It was soon proved, however, that no consideration of the purity and nobleness of Gordon's character was able to soften the judgment of the men

whose hostility he had aroused. They pressed the case against him with remorseless logic. After three years of excited struggle, during which Gordon himself was the only man who preserved his equanimity of temper, he was formally deposed and driven from the Church. For a dozen years longer he published books, and went on with his mission work. In his later books the controversial spirit had almost disappeared. They were books of spiritual insight, inculcating in the simplest language the unchangeable elements of all religions. But as his work in controversy had made him famous, so the cessation of that work marked his relegation to obscurity. His books gradually ceased to be read, and his name was forgotten. In his sixtieth year a severe illness made it impossible for him to continue his mission work. He retired to a tiny home on the Hudson, where he gave himself up to the placid pursuits of old age. Now and again his name was heard in clerical circles, and as the old bitterness died away, he came to be regarded with admiration by the few who knew him. But he rarely appeared in public, sought no society, and was content to forget the world and be forgotten by it. Gaunt had never seen him but once. He had once heard the old man speak, and retained a vivid picture of a patriarch, calm, dignified, almost majestic in appearance, with long white hair falling on his shoulders, whose voice had a kind of musical magnetism in it, which made his least word seem important. That was many

years ago, and as Gaunt read the letter which lay on his breakfast table, he realized that Paul Gordon must now be a man upon the verge of eighty.

"I have heard of you," the letter ran, "and though I have never met you, have found myself unusually interested in your career. There may be some things which an old man might say to you, which you might not be unwilling to hear. I am presumptuous enough to think that I might even help you, if you would let me do so. Come out and see me. I am always at home, and shall always welcome you."

"That's a most interesting letter," said Gaunt, as he handed it to his wife.

Margaret read it slowly. There had been a time when Gaunt would not have thought it worth while to show her such a letter. The change in their relationship was marked by the fact that he now consulted her on everything, and in these constant exchanges of confidence her heart had found a new and delightful stimulant to affection.

"Well," she said, as she put the letter down, "why don't you go out to Riverside to-day and see Dr. Gordon? It's a lovely day, you are tired and need a change. It'll do you good."

"I'll go if you'll go with me, dear."

"Very well, it's a bargain. Let us start at once before the freshness of the day is over. I'm about tired of the house."

"That's a good thing," said Gaunt, with a boyish

laugh, "because it's pretty certain that we shan't be in this house much longer. It's a wholesome dispensation of Providence that you should begin to be weaned from what you can't have."

"Oh, I didn't say that," she laughed back. "Why, you're as bad as the orthodox commentators you are always abusing, who read all sorts of inferences into plain meanings. But seriously, dear, I'm about through with this house. There are only two of us, and yet we must needs have a dozen rooms to keep clean, and two hired girls and a man to look after, and my weekly bills are growing frightful! It really doesn't seem worth while. If it goes on much longer, I believe I'll be a convert to the simple life."

"And that's where the Providence comes in, don't you see? I'm thinking of two rooms in a slum. The bankbook is getting low. There's no knowing what we may come to."

"Well," she answered, "I don't know that I should object, not if it was a real, nice, healthy slum. There's a Settlement girl I met the other day, who took me to her rooms, and they were a wonderful sight. I think they were about eight feet square, each of them; and they were all white paint and bright chintz, and that sort of thing, with a stove you could put in your pocket, and a lovely collapsible bath which I think she used as a bed, and all sorts of tiny cupboards wherever there was a spare corner, and everything as neat as a new pin. I forget what she paid for them, some ridiculously small

sum, but I know she sort of pitied me for living in a twelve-roomed house, and really made me feel that I was a fool for my pains. And her friends lived in Forty-eighth Street, I think she said, so she had data for her comparison."

"Why, it sounds quite idyllic."

"Well, according to her account, it was. She said she had got more thrills out of that narrow street crowded with poor working folk than she'll ever get in Fifth Avenue. She was dying of respectability in Forty-eighth Street, literally and physically dying of dulness, but from the moment she went to live in those tiny rooms, and tried to do something for the working-girls of the neighbourhood, she got thrilled back into vitality. It was rather a good phrase that—'thrilled back into vitality'—I suppose that is why I remember it. But come, if we're going to Riverside, we must make haste."

In a few minutes they started. It was, as Margaret had said, a lovely morning, one of those days of bright sunshine and crisp air which make New Yorkers forget that there is such a thing as winter. They were both in high spirits, for the air had an almost intoxicating quality in it. It was the sort of day which gives men courage; which fills them with a happy sense of the benignity of Nature and makes them move gaily as to the sound of trumpets. It was a long time since Gaunt had felt so happy. No memory of the annoyances he had endured remained

with him; he felt as though he had recaptured his youth, and the careless mirth of youth.

So, as they went, they talked together in high good-humour as people might who had never known a care. They let their fancy range over the picture they had conjured up of life in two rooms.

"I believe it would really be the greatest fun in the world," said Margaret. "Besides, think what a fine moral discipline it would be. We should be bound to behave beautifully to each other when neither of us could lose sight of the other for a single moment. Depend upon it, the real cause of most unhappy marriages is that people are able to sulk in separate rooms by themselves."

"And think of the intellectual discipline of living in a house so small there isn't room in it to change your mind," he retorted.

"Nor your clothes," she said. "That's a much more serious problem for a woman."

"That would be an incentive to economy."

"If you would do me the honour to audit my household accounts, a thing you've never done yet, you'd find incentive enough for economy, I promise you. Do you know, dear, you're a very bold man? You are making out to live without visible means of support."

"Oh, it's not as bad as that, is it? I'm a better economist than you suppose. Quite seriously, I've thought the whole thing out, but I didn't mean to say anything to you just now. I think if we give

up the house—we can easily sublet it, you know—and go into quiet rooms somewhere, we can stand a pretty long siege. I can always earn enough by my pen to find us bread.”

“And why didn’t you like to speak to me, dear? Did you think I wasn’t willing?”

“Not exactly that. But I thought it would come hard on you.”

“It would be a good deal harder on me to suppose you thought I wasn’t ready to make any sacrifice you wished me to make. Besides, I’m not so sure that it is a sacrifice. I feel very much like that Settlement girl: I’ve grown dull with respectability, and I wouldn’t object to get thrilled again into vitality. I’m suffering from fatty degeneration of the soul.”

“And I’m afflicted with an incipient attack of love-making. Why, Margaret, I don’t believe I’ve had such a dear foolish talk with you since the old days in the woods when I was courting you.”

“Does it seem so very long ago?” said Margaret, demurely.

At that moment they arrived at Riverside, and were soon climbing the hill in quest of Gordon’s house. They found it at last, a very plain frame house, with a little grove of trees at the back, and a wonderful view of the river, and the brownish-gray battlements of the Palisades in front. As they drew near they saw Gordon himself, slowly walking up and down the gravel path that divided the small lawn from the house. He wore a long black

cloak, over the collar of which his white hair streamed; he was evidently lost in some profound meditation. There was a certain grandeur of loneliness and detachment about that solitary figure which they both felt instinctively. He moved slowly, yet with a firm step which declared unabated vigour. But the chief impression he created was of singular and complete calm. It was hardly possible to associate him with any thought of a tumultuous world, still less to imagine him as a man around whom that tumult had once raged. He looked like a seer who had always trodden in the high silences, and dwelt among the lonely places of life.

Gordon heard their footsteps on the gravel path, and turned round. That impression of singular calmness which had already been created was justified by his face. It was a face moulded after a classic design, in fine pure lines. The nose was straight, the mouth firm, and yet tender, the forehead only contradicted the Greek ideal of beauty by its unusual loftiness. But the chief feature was the eyes. These were of a curious shade of grayish blue, quiet and penetrating, a little dulled by the film of years, but still unusually bright. They created a strong sense of self-absorption, as if their vision were inward rather than outward; eyes that brooded over their own depths, that saw hidden things, and things that were far away.

The old man greeted his visitors with a stately grace.

"It's good of you to come so soon," he said. "Although I am an old man I have never reconciled myself to the procrastinating spirit of age. I like to do at once the thing I mean to do. I discern the same temperament in you, and it should help us to be friends."

"I count it one of the privileges of my life to have received your invitation," said Gaunt.

They walked up and down the little terrace for a time, talking of common things, and feeling their way toward more intimate relationship. At noon a very simple lunch was served.

"I lunch early," said the old man, "because I like to give all the rest of the day to study. At one time I did all my work in the morning, but as I have grown older I find that the machinery of the mind is a little slower in getting started. So I spend my mornings in the open air, and accumulate the vigour I need for work in that way."

"Then you still work?" said Gaunt.

"In some ways I work harder than I ever did," said Gordon. "I've a theory that the real life of man is the life of the intellect and spirit. Where this is strong, the physical life is correspondingly strong. The men who die early are usually men of imperfectly vitalized minds and souls."

"In that case you have yet a long life before you, Dr. Gordon."

"I hope so," he answered simply. "I have no patience with the common talk of good people about

wanting to go to heaven. It is the insincerest kind of twaddle. No healthy-minded man dies except with infinite reluctance. The world is much too interesting for any man to wish to leave it who can be of any use in it. Do you remember Goethe's scornful question, 'Why should a man who has work to do want to ramble off into Eternity?' "

"No, it is new to me."

"Well, it is worth remembering, for it contains a very wholesome philosophy of life. Of course, it's not complete, for Goethe with all his vast efficiency was a pagan. He never grasped the truth that what the Christian calls eternal life is a real thing, only it begins here and now. 'This is eternal life, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent,' not something distant and vague, but a thing that is. To the man who has once grasped that truth, old age is impossible."

Gordon's face glowed as he spoke, and Gaunt, looking upon it, recognized the truest commentary upon his words. The mass of white hair that crowned the brow only served to accentuate the freshness and eagerness of the face, which preserved, in spite of the lines drawn across it by the finger of Thought, an element of indestructible vitality.

When the lunch was over, Gordon at once introduced the theme of Gaunt's recent doings. He invited Gaunt to explain his aims and purposes. Gaunt, encouraged by his sympathy, opened his heart freely.

He closed with a half-indignant and half-humorous description of Dr. Jordan's attitude toward him.

"Poor fellow!" said Gordon. "You can't be angry with him; he only did according to his nature. I think I met Jordan once; at all events I know his type pretty well. It is a type bred by the present condition of the Church, in which the petty diplomatist counts for much more than the prophet. You know the old satirical epigram, that the world consists of three classes, men, women, and parsons. What it crudely expresses is that the minister is an emasculated person, and this is often true. He is made too comfortable, nursed and dandled on the laps of admiring coteries, and so sheltered from the world that he is totally unacquainted with the realities of life. It is only what might be expected that he should come to shirk realities of all kinds—the realities of thought as well as life—and when he comes into contact with a real man he as naturally hates him, and wants to crush him.

"But don't let us wander into personalities," he continued, "and above all let us avoid satire, for satire is a sort of moral astigmatism which fatally distorts all the real values of things. I learned that lesson a long time ago in my own troubles. My first impulse was to say and write satirical things about my opponents, for I saw how easy it would be to cover them with derision. But I soon found that such a temper harmed me more than it did them. I lost my own tranquillity in disturbing

theirs, and the clear stream of my own thoughts and purposes grew turbid and discoloured. The only way for a man to do any truly great work in the world, is for him to go straight forward to his goal, paying no attention to either praise or blame, as long as he is sure of his purpose. Well, then, what is it you purpose? That is the only matter worth thought."

Thereupon Gaunt began to sketch the plan which he desired to follow. He did not intend to be driven out of the Church; he would reform it from within. He would make his church the rallying point of all classes, rich and poor alike. He would substitute the law of service for the yoke of creeds, as the sole test of membership. He spoke with conviction, the very need for positive statement and exact definition giving a form to many thoughts within him which had hitherto been inchoate and unco-ordinate.

The old man listened attentively. When Gaunt had done, there was a long silence. Then Gordon said, in a gentle voice, "My dear young friend, it can't be done."

"What can't be done?" said Gaunt.

"Why, this: you can't reform the Church from within. Think a moment, and you will see that I am right. Jesus wished to do it. He was a child of the Church. He loved it. He taught in its synagogues. He repeatedly said that He came not to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it. But even He found the task impossible, and the answer of

the Jewish Church to His sweet reasonableness was the Cross. Luther tried it: he also found it impossible, and the wine of new truth had to be put into new bottles. Wesley tried it. He did not wish to break with the Anglican Church, and he died in the delusion that he had not done so. The result proved the magnitude of his mistake. He had created a power which he could not control, and Methodism took its own way, and became a church in its own right. The story is always the same. The reason is that every new truth must grow by its own roots. You can't gather grapes of thistles."

"Then what would you have me do?" said Gaunt.

"Do just what you are doing. Cherish your illusion as long as you can, for it is a generous illusion. Neither I, nor any other man, can at the present stage make you conscious of its impossibility. It is only the event that can teach you this. I myself once had the same programme. I imagined the Church rallying to me, declaring for freedom, reconstituting itself, evolving itself from within into a new form. Later on I discovered the invincible conservatism of human nature. I spent some bitter hours over that discovery. Then, at last, I saw that the old day must die before the new day could be born. It's poor work adapting old machinery to new needs; the cheapest way is to fling the old to the scrap-heap at once, and be done with it, and give the new a fair chance."

"Then you despair of the Church?"

“In its present form, yes; of its ultimate triumph, no. For my part, I would gladly vote for the total abolition of the Church in all its existing forms, and begin right over again from the foundation. Anyway, it will have to be done before long if the Church is to survive. For the Church in its present form is on its death-bed, with lights and incense and moving music, and all that kind of thing, but the odour of corruption and decomposition is in the air. The world knows perfectly well what is going on. I know nothing more pathetic than the angry wonder so often expressed by all kinds of ecclesiastic people over the fact that the mass of the people won't go to church. Surely the inference should be plain; it is to every one save the ecclesiastic. It is that life has gone out of the churches. If the Church were alive, people would not be able to stay away from it.”

The short winter afternoon was waning fast. The old man had risen from his chair as he talked; he stood against the window, and the red light of the setting sun shone full upon his face. It was as though the face itself radiated flame, and the red sunset light clothed him in a prophet's robe.

“Pray don't think I am a pessimist,” he added. “There is no man more hopeful than I. And my hope for the future rises high, indeed, when I see younger men, like yourself, willing to face poverty for principle. Though that, of course,—poverty, I mean,—is the least part of the matter. Any man

who lives a real inner life should be careless of externals. It is perhaps the best, and certainly the most exacting, test of whether a man's inner life is real—have externals ceased to count for much with him?"

Involuntarily the eyes of both Gaunt and his wife took in the aspects of the little room. There was not a single unnecessary article of furniture in it. All was bare and simple as a monk's cell, and yet a certain dignity was there, the dignity that is the expression of austerity. And against the sunset light rose the imposing figure of this old man, who asked nothing of the world but the freedom of his own soul, and had refused all those gifts of the world which would interfere with that sublime liberty. And in the same instant they both recollected by a common sympathy of thought the houses with which they were familiar in the great city that lay so near—the ostentation of rooms cumbered with useless articles which were significant of nothing more than the power to spend; the lives lived within them, exhausting themselves in the daily pursuit of trivialities,—and each felt the truth of Gordon's saying that the least part of the struggle they were entering on was the threat of poverty, for the poverty of the thinker and the worker was a thing of dignity to which wealth could not attain.

Gordon accompanied them, bareheaded, to the road.

"Come again, and come soon," he said. "Believe

me when I say that I am at your disposal always and I want to help you in any way I can."

"You have already helped us more than you know," said Margaret.

As they went down the hill they felt as though a silent benediction followed them. And they indeed walked to the sound of trumpets, blown by lips diviner even than the lips of joyous winds upon a day of sunshine.

IX

THE UNDERWORLD

THE mail next morning brought Gaunt a long letter from Paul Gordon. In this letter Gordon said that he had never expected to be drawn again into any kind of public activity: he had regarded himself as having earned the right to rest. But the conversation with Gaunt had changed his mind. He felt now that a new occasion had arisen which might rightfully demand from him any powers of service which might still be left to him. It was not clear to him as yet what form of service might be possible to him, but he would like to come to New York and talk matters over with Gaunt.

Gaunt at once invited him to be his guest, and a day later Gordon arrived. Gaunt arranged that Palmer should meet him the same evening at dinner. Gordon at once recognized the sympathetic qualities of Palmer's mind. The three men talked far into the night. It was one of those delightful talks which range easily over many fields of thought, touching various themes with lightness and grace, the only kind of talk which deserves the name of conversation, because it concerns itself with ideas over which full and flexible minds can join in happy contention.

It was not, however, till the next morning that Gordon mentioned the subject of his letter.

"If you are free to-day," he said to Gaunt, "I want you to take a little pilgrimage with me. I'm not sure that you have yet grasped some of the elements of your problem, and I can best explain them by a study of facts."

"I am in your hands," said Gaunt.

"Very good," said Gordon. "But before we start I warn you that our pilgrimage will not be a pleasant one. Let me ask you one question: do you know New York with any kind of exactitude and completeness?"

"I'm afraid not," said Gaunt. "To tell the truth, I've only lately realized that for seven years I've gone up and down in this little section of the city, and that is all."

"It's not surprising," said Gordon. "It is a common characteristic of city-dwellers. A city so large as New York or London is, after all, only a series of villages joined together by the loosest kind of municipal bond. Men dwell in their own villages, the rich in one, the poor in another, knowing next to nothing of each other. We complain, and justly, that when brilliant men of letters visit us, and go home to write books about us, they invariably convey false impressions, and arrive at absurd conclusions. Of course the reason is plain. They see just one of the many villages of which New York consists, and their kind friends who entertain them take

particular care that they shall not stray beyond the bounds. Here, for example, is an excerpt from a recent article by an English visitor, which I thought worth preserving. Read it."

He drew from his pocketbook a carefully folded press cutting, and handed it to Gaunt. The writer of the article was evidently in love with America. He praised indiscriminately all that he had seen. According to his account there was no vice in New York, no visible drunkenness, no dire poverty. Every man earned excellent wages, and if he did not it was his own fault. No wonder a million immigrants flocked every year to the harbour of New York, recognizing in the gigantic Statue of Liberty, which guarded the magnificent waterway, a hand that beckoned them to plenty and wealth. America alone among the nations of the earth provided a table in the wilderness at which the starving millions of the Old World found a welcome and an inheritance. And so forth, through a thousand words or more of panegyric and indiscriminate adulation.

"Well?" said Gordon, as Gaunt handed the paper back to him.

"Oh, of course, it's flamboyant nonsense," said Gaunt.

"Exactly," said Gordon. "But are we any wiser, any more just, any more ample in our vision? You remember that when a clerical conference lamented the scanty attendance at the churches, Phillips Brooks naïvely remarked that he attached little im-

portance to their complaints, for he himself never saw an empty church. Of course not, but he forgot that every one is not a Phillips Brooks. Men see what they go out to see, and nothing is easier than to deny the existence of what they don't want to see."

"Yes, that's true," said Gaunt, "and I take the reproach to myself."

"Oh, I don't mean to reproach you," said Gordon, "although for that matter the reproach touches me as much as you. My point is that the very constitution of these great modern cities makes for specialized forms of life. In a certain sense, it cannot be avoided. Men naturally fall into a groove, live in the company of their social equals, and after a time forget that a universe of strange things lies round about them, just outside the groove. But with you and me it should be different. We are aiming at things that should affect the general life, and we must needs seek a thorough understanding of our world. You don't expect the soldier in the ranks to study the strength and capacity of fortresses, the roads and by-ways and river-fords of strange countries, and all the thousand details of a great campaign. But the great captain must know these things, or his campaign will be a failure. It may be that you and I are only captains in a very small way, but not the less we must know our facts, if we are to do anything."

Gordon put on his long black cloak, and the two

men went out. They travelled eastward, ever eastward, till they left the cars at a point a little south of Fourteenth Street.

“Now,” said Gordon, “I want you to observe carefully what you see. It’s many years since I first discovered this district, and since then it has altered for the worse. Yonder lies the New York we know, with its churches, colleges, and clubs; its hosts of pleasant and refined people; its green parks and mansions; its thoughtless, pleasure-loving throngs; its orgies of social display; its almost insane extravagance. Now look at this New York.”

On every side rose towering tenements, the bastilles of poverty, containing hundreds of rooms into which sunlight and fresh air never penetrated. The streets were narrow, crowded, unsavoury, and it was noticeable that there were few children in them. Upon the faces of the people, as they went to and fro, there was a peculiar pallor, such as flowers have which have been left a long time in the dark. The people themselves were not ill-dressed; there were none of those figures, clothed in dreadful rags, which might have been seen in a London slum; nor were there the bestial faces, soddened with alcohol, and disfigured by ferocious passions, which Paris can display when she vomits up a Commune from her foul abysses. But there was something even more pitiable—a certain dull hopelessness which characterizes creatures long subject to ill-usage—the look one sees in the eyes of a beaten dog or a

starved horse. Both men and women walked with eyes turned downward. They had a furtive, stealthy air, as though they feared something which they could not see. Here and there windows in these vast populous towers were open, and from every open window came the endless whirr and click-clack of sewing machines. One could fancy the whole district bestridden by some gigantic and relentless slave-master; some monstrous figure, whose cruel eyes watched every room, whose vast hands, thrust through the vain secrecies of walls and doors, held men and women to an interminable task, or dragged them forth to feed the maw of some horrible machine whose appetite was never satiated.

"This is the New York I want you to see," said Gordon. "Tell me what strikes you about it."

"I see no children," said Gaunt. "Where are they?"

"They are all at work," said Gordon. "These children never play. There are sixty thousand children in New York shut up in tenement houses like these, or even worse places, not one of whom knows what a game is. Most of them will never go to school, in spite of all the efforts of truant officers. Even baby fingers can earn a cent an hour in sweated labour, and these little ones begin a life of slavery in the very moment when they leave their cradles."

They were passing at that moment the door of a tenement house. Out of the door came two grotesque creatures, who appeared two small moving hills of clothes. They were a boy and girl, perhaps

about nine or ten years of age. Upon their frail shoulders was piled up a heap of garments which would have been a sufficient load for a strong man. They strained and swayed beneath the burden. The boy was bowlegged. The girl was flat-chested, under-sized, and spindly. The face of each wore the same expression of dull endurance. Gordon stooped and said a kind word to the two unchildlike children. They simply stared at him. Kindness was a thing they had never known, and it was unintelligible to them. It was clear that they regarded the old man with vague fear, and suspected him of some design upon them.

“And there are sixty thousand children like that in New York,” Gordon repeated. “And within one square mile of where we stand there are six hundred thousand people of whom those tiny drudges are the types.”

“Why, it’s overwhelming,” said Gaunt. “Is no one doing anything for them socially or religiously?”

“Oh, something is being done, of course, but hardly anything in the right way. There are lots of little societies of good people who come down from time to time and squirt a little rose-water over this fœtid mass of life, and come back with a fine report that the wilderness has really blossomed as the rose. I did that sort of thing myself,—I’ll tell you all about it some day,—so don’t suppose I speak slightingly of these kind but futile folk. I was very much in earnest, and I don’t doubt that I did some

good, but at last I came to see that rose-water did not alter things. Do you know how these people live? They live in foul, unlighted rooms, some of them not more than twelve by eight and not six feet high; yet in these rooms you will find eight or nine people living, cooking, eating, sleeping, working. Think of what it means—year in and year out this remorseless labour, with a working day of from fourteen to fifteen hours, and then tell me of what use little rose-water clubs and missions are in this Inferno? They must make the devil laugh.”

The old man's voice shook with indignation. If he looked like a prophet as he had stood in the red sunset light at Riverside, he looked trebly so now, as he lifted his hand in accusation against these impenetrable fortresses of poverty, these creations of a heartless greed.

They went on in silence for a time from street to street. The same scenes met them everywhere—always the same dull look of infinite fatigue in the faces of the people, the same frowning buildings shutting out the light, the same sense of lives dwarfed, imprisoned, bound upon the wheel.

“Why don't they revolt?” cried Gaunt. “How is it that the poor don't all turn robbers and settle their debt with society that way?”

“They will some day,” said Gordon. “And even now they're settling their debt with society in ways more terrible than robbery. Why, there's fever and every kind of disease in these squalid rooms.

There are people with smallpox on them working upon hundred-dollar suits of clothes which will soon be upon the backs of rich men, and the smallpox will go home with the suit of clothes. It is stated that two hundred million dollars' worth of garments are manufactured in New York each year, and nine-tenths of all these garments are stitched and sewn in dens like these. Half the disease of New York is nurtured here. These tenements are the barracks of the armies of death, and from them the destroying hosts go out silent and unseen to reap a fearful harvest. . . . But let us sit down somewhere. I've miscalculated my strength a little. I am tired."

A few minutes' walk took them to a restaurant of the poorer class. It was a long, narrow room, with sanded floor and bare tables, but it was clean and the food was wholesome. Gordon drank a cup of coffee, and presently began to talk again in quieter tones.

"I never knew until to-day how horribly I have failed in life," he said, sadly.

"No one would say that but yourself," Gaunt eagerly responded.

"In this matter what other people say has no weight whatever," said Gordon. "They can't possibly know another man's standard of achievement, and achievement can only be measured by aspiration. I aspired to do very great things once. Do you know why I failed? Partly, of course, through my own inefficiency, but really through a perversity

of judgment which I was unable to conquer. The Church calls me a rebel, and yet my life has been undone through a blind, excessive loyalty to the Church. I imagined that all real work for the world must be done through the organisation of the Church, and that organisation could be remodelled by the intrusion of new ideas, so I began with theology, and you know the result. After my deposition I went on with my mission work, encouraged by all kinds of golden dreams that men would rally to me, that I should lead a movement, that the Church would at last come to my point of view, and each of these dreams in turn proved false. In other words, I tried to do exactly what you are trying to do now, until after ten years of lonely experiment I made a discovery. I discovered that the Church had turned her back upon the real facts of life."

"In what way?"

"In every way you can imagine. Thirty years ago she turned her back upon the prophets of a new science, who were opening new heavens and a new earth to the astonished eyes of men. She refused to listen to them, she derided and denounced them, and the result was she lost the leadership of thought among all intelligent men. To-day she turns her back precisely in the same way upon the new scholarship which devotes itself to the investigation of religion. She does not so much as ask whether these great scholars are right or wrong; she simply does not choose to listen to them, and the result is

she has lost the leadership of religious thought as she lost the leadership of scientific thought, and intelligent men prefer to do their own thinking upon religion without any guidance from the Church. But, worse than all, she has lost the knowledge of her own mission. She is totally unacquainted with the nature of those ideals which once made her a living force, and by which she has the right to exist. Look at New York. Where do you find the most churches? In the localities where wealth is most evident. Christianity has openly become the church of the rich. It is the inevitable result of a paid ministry; how can it be otherwise under a system which encourages all those elements of social rivalry and display which are found in the world of commerce? Yes, you can find churches enough in Fifth Avenue, but as you travel eastward the church spires become fewer, and always fewer. Isn't it evident that the Church has practically given up trying to reach the poor? And in every American city the story is the same. The Church constantly retreats before the invasion of poverty. Downtown churches are constantly sold for immense sums of money, and the wealth so gained is employed to build gorgeous religious club-houses in the suburbs among the comfortable and wealthy classes. Then, in turn, these classes, encouraged by the selfishness of the Church, forget the existence of the poor, and the result is districts like these, rotten with disease and poverty, full of forgotten and despairing people, for whom

life is hell. Oh, that I could have my life over again, how differently would I live it! But it has taken me half a century to learn wisdom, and now it is too late to apply that wisdom. I am an old man. But you are young, and, perhaps, I may yet do something to redeem the past if I can bequeath to you the wisdom won out of a life of errors."

Gaunt was profoundly moved. As he thought of Gordon's history and character, the courage of the one, the purity and nobleness of the other, his heart went out in love and admiration to the old man. He laid his hand gently on the old man's hand, and said:

"Believe me, you shall find in me an obedient and loyal disciple. What is it you would have me do?"

"For the present, nothing more than you are doing. After all you must find your way yourself, you must make your own experiment. But I think you will learn more rapidly than I; if I mistake not, you are already near the end of the experimental stage."

"But tell me," pressed Gaunt, "am I taking the right course?"

"Every course is right as long as a man follows right alone."

"Is there nothing less enigmatic that you can say to your disciple?" asked Gaunt, with a grave smile.

"What we have seen this morning, has that no message?" said Gordon.

"A message all too terrible. It is ineffaceable."

"And its meaning?" said Gordon.

"Its meaning is bitterly plain. I begin to see the absurdity of my idea of ever touching these miserable lives through a church organized as mine is. They will not come to me, and I know not how to go to them. Between us there is a great gulf fixed."

"Yes, that is one thing, and a very important thing too," said Gordon. "Yet, contradictory as it may appear, I wish you to continue the experiment. Get the poor into your church, if you can—not of course these slaves of the tenements, for nothing could draw them from their miserable retreats, but such poor as are accessible to you, in your own neighbourhood."

"I see another thing, too," Gaunt continued: "the almost incurable levity of our temperament. And yet—no—it's not quite that: it's rather a kind of buoyant thoughtlessness, a dislike to pierce below the surface of things, a habit of ignoring unpleasant issues. We lack gravity of mind. We are intoxicated with prosperity, we are reaping its rewards so rapidly that no one stops to ask at what price, no one wants to examine the dread foundations of crushed and ruined lives on which that prosperity rests. The very existence of this city of filth and squalor, of misery and disease, in the midst of another city of unparalleled luxury and extravagance, is the proof."

"And there you are not quite just," said Gordon.

"I don't grant the incurable levity of our temperament."

"How would you describe it?"

"It's nothing worse than the temperament of youth. Youth often appears thoughtless, and yet there is no more certain fact than that youth is peculiarly susceptible to idealism. As a nation, we are a race of idealists; we are so because we are young. Is there any country in the world where any new idea is welcomed so enthusiastically? Where is there any people so ready to follow any kind of leader who appears to have a message? Mormonism, Zionism, Christian Science, and a hundred other curious and even absurd forms of faith—each can get a hearing, can build itself into a power, can attract multitudes of adherents. And all this can go on in the midst of a people supposed to be governed solely by the worship of the almighty dollar! Why, the accusation is absurd. If Americans adore the dollar, it's simply for want of something better to adore; and even then it's not the mere possession of money that attracts them, but the power which it implies. Give them a nobler ideal, and they'll respond to it as only a race of idealists can. And there lies your hope, Gaunt. You are dealing with a young nation."

"Doesn't your own experience in the Church contradict you?" said Gaunt.

"I am not speaking of the Church, but of the nation—a very different thing," said Gordon. "The

Church has wilfully made herself the refuge of all that is conservative and reactionary in American life. Of course, when I spoke of youth in the nation I didn't mean young men; but let me ask you, nevertheless, do you find young men in the churches? Very rarely are they there in any numbers. Nine-tenths of the people in the churches are over forty. You'll find more bald heads in a church than in any other assembly of equal numbers gathered in any auditorium or for any purpose between Boston and San Francisco. The Church of the future must be found outside the churches."

"And what is your picture of the Church of the future?"

Gordon was silent for several minutes, and in his eyes there was that withdrawn look, which had already impressed Gaunt so powerfully. He seemed to be gazing into inscrutable distances, traversing illimitable realms of thought and vision, listening for the low-breathed words of some prophetic revelation. When he spoke again it was slowly, as a man in some mesmeric trance might speak.

"It will not be called a church," he said. "It will have neither creeds, nor forms, nor subscriptions. Its law will be freedom; its condition, service. It will unite all men who love humanity in the common service of humanity. It will be a society of equals. It will worship Christ, but neither as God nor man; rather as a Living Presence in all men, making all men divine. It will attract everybody;

for it will include everybody. Men will not be able to afford to stay outside; to do so would be to renounce their heritage as men. It will be based on universal ideas. It will make the slum impossible, for it will make impossible the greed and neglect which produce it. It will be terribly just, so just that unrighteous men will fear its disapproval far more than any other form of punishment. It will be infinitely pitiful, so pitiful that the life most bruised will be certain of its consolation. And I think it will be called . . . it will be called The League of Service, and its emblem will be a mother with a child in her arms."

The voice died away in an awed whisper.

"The League of Service." The words seemed to fill the dingy restaurant with light. The light spread, until even the dreary bastilles of poverty were illuminated, and their roofs were plumed with sacred flame.

And Gaunt knew that in that moment a great thing had happened. An Ideal had entered the world, an Ideal which he knew was worth living for and dying for.

X

THE DISSIMULATION OF MARGARET

WHEN Margaret Gaunt had spoken so cheerfully of giving up her house, in which all her married life had been lived, she was guilty of dissimulation. It was the kind of dissimulation of which all good women are guilty, for what good woman is not constantly engaged in suppressing herself for the sake of those she loves? "I'd really rather not take a holiday this year," says the tired wife, who knows the economy forced on her by narrow means; or, "I really *like* sitting up at night, it doesn't tire me at all, and you, dear, have your work to think of," says the mother when a sick child has to be watched and nursed through midnight hours; and she says these things with such a show of sincerity and conviction that she finds herself believed. Perhaps she is a little hurt to find herself believed so readily, but, if she is, she takes care to hide the wound. It is only one wound more upon a heart that has endured so many, and, after all, the great thing is that those she loves should be happy and content, and take their day upon the seashore or in the woods, and sleep when all the world sleeps, as is their right. And it is a little hard, as years go on, to find the child taking

pleasure with a thoughtless joy, and saying: "Oh, mother won't be lonely if we go our own way, you know she likes to be alone"; or, perhaps, the husband, used to leaning on her strength, quietly assuming that that strength has no limit of endurance. And is she tired? Suppose you should wake up in the hour when the gray dawn breaks, and the fitful wailing of the sick child is hushed at last, will you find no marks of fatigue in the mother's face? Tired, so tired that every bone aches and cries for sleep; but she will never say so, and an hour later you will find her so bright and active that the memory of those drawn features and relaxed hands on which the cold dawn light fell will seem a thing you dreamed. And would not she also, oh, thoughtless child, love to lie upon the warm sea-sand, and rest beneath the green arches of the woods with you—she who was once as young as you, and recollects a good time "long time ago," when she was never vexed with unpaid bills, and stoves that wouldn't burn, and servants who wouldn't work, and all the complicated details and annoyances of household management? But she will never say so. She will let you go on thinking that she is never happier than when she is baking bread and making pies for you to eat, and stitching clothes for you to wear; and if any one of stricter vision should call you selfish, she will at once rise up in your defence, and do vehement battle, and declare that it is not selfishness at all, but just your natural right to the joy of life,

It would be a dreadful world if those with whom we have to live in closest bonds, saw all our defects with a vision never less than accurate; or, seeing those defects, spoke of them as a stranger might, with a judgment that was mercilessly just. And so it is one of woman's great arts to dissimulate, and it is her finest charm and grace: an art which the inherited traditions of renunciation through many centuries have wrought to such perfectness that only now and then do those she loves suspect the illusion, and when they do she will blush for its discovery.

On such a theme what pages might be written, which it would not be good for men who dwell in lonely homes, out of which the dead have passed, to read alone at night; or beside the camp-fires in strange foreign lands, where sons think of distant homes and vanished faces; they might produce that remorse too terrible for tears which makes life itself seem unendurable. And so let us rather thank God that this is woman's nature; that she is content to sacrifice and be forgotten; that, in her, dissimulation is but the expression of an unselfishness so profound that it makes a grace of falsehood, and turns a weakness into an illustrious kind of fortitude and courage, beside which the thing we call courage on a battlefield appears a coarse grotesque.

Margaret Gaunt, being a good woman, was no wiser than her sex, and so, when her husband chose a new path for himself, she followed meekly, school-

ing herself to think it was the very path she would have chosen. She met him with gay smiles, talked lightly of the Settlement girl and the kind of home she had established in the slums; but all the while her own heart clung desperately to this home of hers, which was the monument of her own taste, discretion, and womanly pride. There was not a room in it which did not appeal to some memory, some tender sentiment. Here and here things had happened, the small memorable things that make up a woman's world, and each was like a tiny shrine in which a lamp burned. There was one room in the house which she and her husband never entered save on tiptoe, and they never went together. If one found the other there by accident, the one would go away silently without daring to say a word. For there had been born her one child, there he had died, and the silence of death had never left the room. She would often go there when the evening shadows fell, and recall that brief ecstasy of motherhood, and almost fancy she saw a little golden child sleeping in the sunbeam that fell across the bed; and Gaunt always opened the door of the room for an instant as he went up to bed at night, and stood listening, as if for a sleeper's breath; but though each knew what the other did, neither had dared mention it. They never mentioned it, yet it was a bond between them; and had they been in any serious peril of drifting apart, the memories of that room would have stayed their feet. If there was

one thing more bitter than another to the heart of Margaret in the thought of leaving this house, it was that some one else would live in that room, some other child, perhaps, strong and sturdy, before whose happy laughter her frail ghost-child would be driven out. If she could have taken that room with her, she would not have grieved so much, although every room had its own fragrance of association; but that a stranger's feet should tread there seemed an insult and a sacrilege. And yet, you see, she was a woman of placid brows and cheerful speech, of the kind called practical; and there were a great many people who thought they knew her well, who never even knew she had had a child, who came with the spring flowers years ago, and went away with the summer heats.

And then there were other things, too, in which Margaret practised her gracious art of dissimulation. For instance, she made a great deal in her talk with her husband of her difficulties with her hired help. But that was simply her method of preparing him for the dreadful moment when she meant to do without any help at all. For if her husband knew nothing about how the money went, she knew. You can't resign a fixed and ample salary, and go on living just as though you had it; at least, you can't do it honestly. Her "poor babe of genius," as she often called him in a kind of maternal irony, might suppose that he could easily earn enough money by his pen for his own simple

wants and hers—which was no doubt true; but when you added two hired girls and a man, each gifted with stupendous appetites and a long-practised power of wastefulness, why, then the problem took another phase. So she quietly dismissed her staff, and got cheap occasional help instead, and he never guessed the truth at all, and never learned its inwardness, but accepted her statement without question that she had found it necessary to make a change—so easily is man hoodwinked by a smiling face in woman. For, of course she made a jest of it, and almost made him feel that it was a kind of special Providence that left her servantless,—the house was so much quieter without them,—while all the time her one desire and purpose was to save a little money against the hour of need.

But these were trifles compared with the strain put upon her powers of dissimulation by affairs at the church. There was scarce a Sunday now when something did not happen that tried her patience. All sorts of spiteful gossip came to her, and false reports, and often wounding words would be spoken to her which brought the angry tears into her eyes. Things that no one would have dared to say to Gaunt were said to her, in the expectation that they would reach him through her, and so inflict a double wound; but they never did, for she hid them in her heart and pondered them in secret, but never let him know. And it is surprising how much can be said without words; how contemptuous pity or

aversion can manage to convey a world of pain by a cold glance, or the shrug of a shoulder, or a capacity for not seeing you in the street or taking another road when you appear. It is not pleasant to be asked with such singular pointedness how your husband's health is, that the inference is conveyed that the questioner is thinking of his mind rather than his body; nor "Is he better?" in the tone of one who assumes that he is in the last stages of decay; nor to hear a soft-purring female voice proclaiming in a discreet whisper, "My dear, how I pity you"; and Margaret's blood burned under these feline amenities. But Gaunt, poor man, never knew why her colour was so high when she came from church; he imagined that it was the rose of health, not of anger, that flamed upon her cheek, and congratulated her, telling her how well she looked. And she smiled back at him, as though it were the most natural thing in the world to endure the smart of petty insult, and say no word about it.

For instance, there was Mrs. Small, the wife of Deacon Small, a large, plain woman, who emulated the bluff manners of her husband, and made it her boast that she always said what she thought. That kind of boast usually implies an entire incapacity for understanding what other people think; certainly it did so with Mrs. Small. By dint of long cultivation in what was no doubt a natural gift of rudeness, Mrs. Small had earned for herself the reputation of a censor of everybody's methods of

life, and she found the church an admirable arena for her exertions. She never failed to let Margaret know when she thought the sermon was too long, or when she disagreed with it.

"If your husband preached shorter it would be much better for his health, and for our comfort, too," she said, bluntly, one day. "He forgets that he is preaching to the tired business man, who really can't follow a long sermon. The business man likes it short and simple."

"Likes it predigested, like Grape-nuts," retorted Margaret, with smiling irony. "But you see there are other people in the church beside tired business men, who are quite capable of doing their own intellectual digestion."

That was not a wise speech of Margaret's, for Mrs. Small, like most stupid people, did not understand irony, and was enraged by it. So she went away and said she was very sorry for the minister, it was evident that his wife did not appreciate him, for had she not compared his discourses with Grape-nuts?

Mrs. Small was also of opinion that there were a great many things which ought not to be mentioned in the pulpit at all, and, as these prohibited themes happened to include about nine-tenths of the subject-matter of the Bible, it was a little difficult to know on what subjects a minister might preach at all for her edification. It sounds a little incredible, but it is, nevertheless, true, as many people will remember, that when Gaunt introduced the recital of the Ten

Commandments with responses on the first Sunday of the month, Mrs. Small expressed her opinion that the Decalogue was "coarse"; that it was offensive to her fine female sense to hear murder, and theft, and adultery mentioned with such brutal frankness, for while that kind of thing might be all right for depraved Jews in the time of Moses, it was totally unnecessary in New York, where, of course, such things never happen. She was even more angry when Gaunt preached one morning on the woman who was a sinner, for on that particular morning she had with her in her pew an engaged couple of quite mature years—they were each close on forty—to whom such a theme must have been most awkward, and a provocation to disagreeable blushes.

"We don't come to church to hear about such things," she said, angrily, to Margaret; "the Sunday papers are bad enough."

"Do you find them so?" retorted Margaret, which was again an unwise speech, for Mrs. Small was a great reader of Sunday papers, a fact of which Margaret was perfectly aware.

Then Mrs. Small assumed an almost proprietary interest in Margaret's house, which she often visited, not from any love for Margaret, but for the opportunity for criticism which the house afforded. She would pretend to admire its taste, and have an artistic interest in its furniture, after which she would remark with an air of patient meekness:

“Well, I don’t see how you can afford all these nice things, anyway; I know we can’t have them. My husband won’t have anything that isn’t quite simple.” The implication, of course, was that Margaret was extravagant, whereas she was simply one of those wise modern women who have discovered that ugliness is no cheaper than beauty, and the Smalls were people who didn’t know the one from the other, but chose the ugly things from a natural love of ugliness.

Margaret made the most praiseworthy efforts to live at peace with persons of this description, but the trouble was that they were so arrogant in their inferiority that they would not let her. They could not help wishing to humble her, because in their hearts they were jealous of her. When Gaunt began to think and act for himself in the ways that we have seen, Mrs. Small and her tribe became really venomous in their indignation. They lost no opportunity of veiled or open insult, all of which Margaret endured in silence so far as her husband was concerned. That baffled maternal instinct, whose shrine was the room with the closed door where her child had died, now flowered anew in defence of her husband. It became the first duty of her life to shield him from petty irritations, while he made his way toward new heights of thought; and but for her enfolding combative maternity, perhaps he would never have reached those heights at all. But he never knew the cost to her. No trace of agitation marred the

calm beauty of her face; for him her lips had only smiles and sweet encouragement, which was another triumph of dissimulation.

What grieved her most in those weeks of crisis, however, was the manifest failure of friendship among those whom she had trusted. It seemed as though she leaned on no one who was not a broken reed that pierced the hand which leant upon it. There were the Taskers, for example, people whom she had genuinely liked, and to whom she had shown much kindness, especially to the wife, who thought herself delicate and was always in need of service. They, like herself, were childless, and lived a somewhat lonely life. For this reason she had been drawn toward them, had invited them often to her house, especially on Sunday evenings and special occasions like Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. But from the hour when the trouble had begun in the church they stood aloof. They nearly always found some excuse to avoid visiting the house. On the one or two occasions when they came, they were painfully embarrassed and restrained. If Margaret had not had a wholesome sense of the ridiculous, she would have been much more hurt than she was; for it was a truly absurd sight to see the little man trying to avoid the burning question, yet always coming back to it like a moth to a flame: beginning explanations which ended in nothing, speaking with an unusual assumption of authority on subjects of which he knew nothing, and always falling back

on his favourite phrase that things "act and react." She humorously christened him Act-and-React, and called him by that name when she discussed affairs with Palmer, which she often did. But at the back of her mind there was a sense of hurt, a pang of bitter disappointment. If these people, to whom she had given so much real affection, were only fair-weather friends, whom could she trust? If, at the first strain, their friendship broke down, where was a truly loyal friendship to be found? She did not see then, what she recognized long afterwards, that church friendships are of an order by themselves; they are after all but official friendships. The friends who come to you thus are imposed upon you by an accidental relationship; they are not deliberately chosen by that process of affinity which constitutes any real friendship. Besides, with people as fluid as Tasker, no real friendship is ever possible. No amount of kindness can overcome radical feebleness of character, or turn it into steadfastness and constancy. It is a lesson not easy to learn, and Margaret found it no easier than other people do. She shed a good many secret tears over it. For a time she felt as though there was no such thing as disinterested loyalty in life. Then her better sense prevailed. She remembered Palmer and Gordon. She began to recognize that disillusion is not the only lesson in life—life has its revelations, too, but disillusion must precede them. As we journey toward the higher things, the company

improves; and if we have fewer friends, we have in them the true comrades of the spirit, whose alliance with us is beyond the shock of circumstances.

There was also another compensation which Margaret never recollected without a thrill of gratitude. As those in whom she had trusted gradually withdrew, another class of people came nearer—people like Mrs. Holcombe, whose worth she had never recognized. Her friendships had been among the richer members of the church, not from choice, still less from any kind of social snobbery, but simply because these friendships had been imposed upon her by the situation. The new note of militant democracy which Gaunt had struck naturally offended these people, and they were quick to declare their displeasure. They were for the most part very pleasant people to know, but their social ideas were conventional, and Gaunt's unconventionalism irritated them much more than any kind of heresy would have done. But it soon became clear that the new note he had struck was very welcome in other quarters. There was in the congregation a considerable number of quietly obscure people of whom Mrs. Holcombe was the type: people who fought hard battles in secret, and needed sympathy; to them Gaunt's later teachings, being broadly human, spiritual, and touched with a tenderness of which they had never thought him capable, were as a brook by the way to thirsty lips. Margaret came to know these people little by little, and it filled her

with a sense of shame and regret that she had not known them earlier.

It was through contact with these people that Margaret arrived by another road at the conclusion Gaunt had already reached: viz., that the first aim of any true ministry should be to seek after those who knew most of the hardness of human life. "For they cannot recompense thee,"—the divine words were often in her thoughts,—that strange reason for giving feasts, which, nevertheless, seemed so simple and axiomatic to Him who uttered it, that He did not so much as offer the least explanation of it.

There was Mrs. Holcombe, for example, with her tall, fine figure, and white hair, and patient eyes; what a life hers had been! Margaret drew the story from her one afternoon, when the falling shadows invited confidence—that hour which women choose for the exposition of those secret thoughts which shun the garish day. It was an old and common story: a husband weak rather than bad, who had consumed her property, ruined her life, and at last, after an act of fraud, had disappeared. Mrs. Holcombe told the story without a single word of blame or anger. After the crash came she found she had just enough left to live on, with grinding economy, and the house where all her married life had been passed; and so she stayed there, with no company but her memories. There was another reason, too, which Margaret found infinitely pathetic. The forsaken wife still cherished a faint

hope that her husband would reappear, and, therefore, she remained in New York, that he might know where to find her. There was not a day when her eyes did not search for his face among the restless passing throngs in New York; no wonder her eyes had grown dim with long patience, for she had searched twenty years in vain. She had even gone to hospital wards and the poorhouse on Blackwell's Island from time to time, on the same hopeless quest, and to many other refuges of broken men, where she imagined that he might be found. He had wrought her great wrong, she expected nothing from him, yet there was not a night when she locked her door without the painful thought that she might be locking him out in the dark streets; not a morning when she would not have welcomed him had he come to that door, the veriest beggar, clothed in rags. And what could Margaret do but draw the forsaken woman to her bosom in a long caress—how different a caress from those shallow, quickly-forgotten conventional caresses which she had bestowed on many a careless friend who had now forgotten her? So Margaret also came to touch the realities of life, to understand the tragedy and heroism of obscure lives, and her nature was both sweetened and deepened by the knowledge.

And there were other people, too, whom she came to know and love, drawn to them by the new need for sympathy which existed in her own life. There was a little crippled woman, nearly blind, earning

a precarious living by her needle, who had lately found her way into the church, attracted by the new note of sympathy in Gaunt's preaching. She usually chose a dim corner of the church where she could be unobserved, and no one noticed her. But one day she hobbled down the aisle to Margaret's pew, and pressed into her hand a little parcel, containing a specimen of exquisite needlework for her use, and no gift Margaret had ever received touched her so deeply as this offering. And she was more touched still when the little old lady began to speak in gratitude of all the help she had received from Gaunt's ministry, for that was a kind of language to which Margaret had long been unaccustomed. And there were two humble men, named Plane and Scarlett, who gave her a letter signed with their joint names, in which they assured her that they prayed for her and her husband every day, and bade her be of good heart, for all would come out right some day; with much more to the same effect, expressed in rude everyday phrases, which were the best they knew, and much more moving in their unaffected sincerity than more polite and scholarly phrases would have been.

So one day Margaret made a little supper for Plane and Scarlett at her house, and invited the little, old crippled lady whose name was Smith, and Mrs. Holcombe helped to entertain them; and she found their simplicity and goodness of heart so charming that she felt quite reconciled to the fact

that Mrs. Somerset had struck her off her visiting list, and Mrs. Tasker had found her delicacy of constitution so great that for three months she had not been able to take the journey to the manse.

So, you see, there are compensations in every lot. And Margaret's great compensation at this time was the discovery of all kinds of beautiful things in human nature, as represented by humble folk, which made her gradually forget the discoveries she had made of all sorts of mean and ugly things in people by no means humble, whose code of manners and morals did not include kindness, nor charity, nor constancy in the hour of need. And about these discoveries there was no need for dissimulation. She spoke of them joyously to her husband, and his face grew glad as she spoke, for he recognized in them an augury that the path he was taking was the right path. Perhaps it may sound a little paradoxical, yet I doubt whether John and Margaret Gaunt were ever quite so happy as in these difficult days, when they tasted for the first time the blessing of the poor; and daily leaned on each other with a sweeter confidence, and found that through the very breaking up of shallow friendships there was revealed to them the deeper treasure of unselfish love.

No one minds being forsaken by the unworthy, if the worthy remain with him. Both husband and wife proved now the truth of Palmer's aphorism, that the defection of the unworthy is the occasion of the worthy.

XI

RENUNCIATION

THE LEAGUE OF SERVICE—the words sang in Gaunt's ears night and day, they set the rhythm of his thoughts, they were written in shining letters upon the sky of his dreams. It was an ideal magnificent in its very simplicity. And the more he pondered it, the more clearly he saw that mankind had always been in search of this ideal. It was present in every religion, it was indeed the root of all religions. Even in its most mutilated form, whenever it had appeared, it had instantly appealed to the hearts of men. When religion cast it out, it found fresh incarnations in those great secular movements which bound men together for common ends, overspread continents, and created secret confederacies among nations which outlived forms of government and changes of dynasty. It had poured its armies of missionaries into barbarous lands, it had set men fighting behind barricades against intolerable tyrannies, it had made heroes and martyrs out of all who had embraced it. For if man was inherently selfish, he was inherently unselfish too, and was always ready to respond to an ideal which appealed to the highest and best in himself.

It was in this latter thought he found his hope. After all, the cardinal characteristics of man did not alter, and among those characteristics the power of unselfish action was as evident as the strength of selfish greed. For if every age revealed man as a selfish animal, continually struggling for his own ends, each age also revealed man as capable of sacrificing himself to his fellows upon any call that he found imperative and authoritative. It might be that this was a selfish and corrupt age, dominated by commercial avarice, but there had been other ages not a whit better, in which men had arisen who had forced the world into higher paths. The cry of the Crusader never rang in vain. Give men a cause worthy of their sacrifice, and men never refused the sacrifice. Was America harder to be moved than all other nations which had preceded her? He could not believe it. He remembered Gordon's words, that Americans were a race of idealists, and the more he pondered the saying the more he recognized its truth. And so he dreamed a vast dream of an America destined to lead the nations in the path of triumphal altruism, having first combined all its forms of religion in one simple synthesis, formulated in that magnificent prophetic vision of Gordon of a church freed from creeds and forms, whose single dogma was the law of service.

But between the dream and its realisation there is much hard country to be traversed—a terrible and desert country, strewn with the bones of idealists

who have failed. Gaunt therefore began to advance with caution. He took Palmer into his confidence, and night after night, when New York slept, the two men sat together discussing plans and schemes.

"We must have definite principles rather than a definite plan," Palmer constantly reiterated. "I don't believe in machine-made campaigns. That may be a Moltke's idea of German warfare, but it isn't God's idea of spiritual warfare. In this warfare the man who wins is the man who does not know where he is going. He is content to start right, and leave the rest with God."

"And what are the principles?" Gaunt replied.

"The first is that you can do nothing within the Church: there I am in complete agreement with Gordon," said Palmer.

Gaunt still found it difficult to accept this principle, because he was more of a churchman than he himself knew. He had been bred into reverence for the Church, he had breathed its atmosphere all his life, and in spite of all that had happened he still loved it. It gave him a homeless feeling to imagine himself shut out from it.

"You must start fresh, unhampered by tradition," insisted Palmer. "I don't undervalue the Church, it is full of good and kindly people. But they are all of the conventional type. They have always travelled on a good state road, and as long as you keep to the beaten highway they will follow you. But

the moment you enter the wilderness they will balk at it. They will be afraid."

And Gaunt knew that it was true. With what infinite difficulty had he forced upon his church a few trifling innovations! Palmer, with kindly irony, reminded him of how trifling these innovations were.

"You've got rid of your piffing vesper service, and established an evening service of the popular type; that's a very modest achievement, but it has cost you weeks of argument, and, after all, there are not a dozen of your older members who really approve the change. You've established a week evening service of the same type, with even more vehement opposition from the older members. That is the total result of three months' anxiety and labour. And you can't go much further, remember."

"Well, it's the thin end of the wedge," said Gaunt.

"Yes, and the wedge is now flattening itself against impenetrable masonry."

Gaunt smiled a little sadly at the retort, for he felt its truth. He silently reviewed his experiences, and all at once their meaning was made clear to him. He saw now that the element in churches which was fatal to any real advance was the element of littleness. They were managed by little people, governed by little ideas. He himself had been constantly engaged in doing little things, and so were most ministers. And to do these little things, to reconcile disputes, to keep people sweet-

tempered, to manage small clubs and societies, demanded as much nerve and skill and patience as were needed to conduct the national government. And it seemed as if there were something inherently enfeebling and belittling in the very atmosphere of a church. Men who knew how to conduct great businesses with skill and success no sooner sat upon the board of church management than they lost their sagacity and power of initiative. In their business houses they would have divined the need for some vast change of strategy by a kind of intuition, and would have acted on it without a moment's hesitation. They would have taken broad views of things, proved themselves wise and energetic captains of industry, and have known how to meet emergencies with brilliant daring. But in a church nothing could be done without tedious argument. More words were spent over a matter of a few cents than would have been needed in the business office for the expenditure of thousands of dollars. How was it? What did it mean? And Gaunt saw that it was this belittling atmosphere of the Church which was to blame. Every ideal was narrow, parochial; there was no element of imperial thinking. How, then, could he hope to create within the Church any sentiment for an ideal so new and catholic, so broad and imperial, as this ideal of a universal League of Service, as the one sufficient synonym of all religions? And he knew that he could not do it.

"Yes, you are right," he said at last. "But think

mercifully if you can, of my reluctance to accept your view."

"I respect your reluctance too much to think harshly of it," said Palmer. "I myself have experienced it. Years ago when I broke away from the organized Church I did so with infinite misgiving. I shall never forget the desolation of that hour. I seemed to have left behind me the warm hearthstone of home, to have made myself an outcast who sees nothing confronting him but a homeless waste, and the years stretching out before him, bleak and sterile, and interminable. But I was consoled by the thought that I was free. The road might be bleak, but an invigorating air blew over it, and I soon found myself acquiring new strength, and moving with a sense of liberty that I had never known. Freedom never disappoints her lovers. All other loves fail, but hers—never."

"Well, so be it," said Gaunt.

But although he spoke cheerfully, there was moisture in his eyes, when he recollected all that the Church had been to him. He knew that those memories would never leave him. All his life he would see the dim aisle and painted windows, would hear the soft surge of familiar music, and feel the thrill he had so often felt on entering the pulpit, conscious of the waiting gaze of many hearers. For whatever faults may be alleged against the Church, it imposes a quiet fascination on its children, which they are never wholly able to destroy. It calls them

with so many voices, and each is a memory. It creates a nostalgia which endures even when the nostalgia of country is forgotten. In the moment of renunciation Gaunt almost forgot all the faults of the Church, as a man forgets when the last parting comes, all the errors in the woman he has loved, and recounts nothing but her virtues and her fairness. He remembered with what a passion of intoxicating hope he had entered on his work at Mayfield Avenue; with what pride he had watched the growth of that work; how he had brought his young wife there, and all the kindness of that far-off time, and he realized, as he had never done, how much the Church had meant to him. Sleeping and waking through all these seven years the Church had been with him. He had pictured himself growing old in its service, inheriting a larger reverence and authority with the years, and the last years proving sweetest in their complete fulfilment of his purposes and hopes. He had even fancifully pictured to himself at times the last scenes of all; how his final illness would be announced in hushed tones from the pulpit where he had so often stood, how its stages would be followed by anxious hearts, how the funeral hymn so often sung for others would be sung for him, but surely with a deeper feeling than was ever known before, and with organ notes that had more of wailing in them; how his body would lie in state beneath the pulpit, and silent throngs would pass by, and leave their offering of

tears and flowers, and he would overhear their low comments of affection and remembrance. All that he had imagined, and now he knew that nothing of it was true, or ever could be true. He would go away, and the place that had known him would know him no more forever. And if he came back, behold another would possess his heritage, and the old forms of worship would be going on, but he would be forgotten, or remembered only as a recusant.

For a moment, a fractional but intense moment, these thoughts and fancies raced through his mind; they passed, and with them the weakness that begot them. For a moment he envied those whose lives lay in smooth places, whose feet moved discreetly in the ordered ways that led to honour among men, and then his manlier mind prevailed.

It was as though he felt upon his face that cold, invigorating wind of freedom of which Palmer had spoken, the wind that calls the soul to the open places of the world. And then that thrill which he had so often felt in watching the life of the vast city, that life in which men took chances and disasters with such a smiling courage, such a strenuous eagerness of joy—that old strenuous thrill shot through his heart afresh with a violence that was almost painful. Surely in a cause so great he could not be less courageous than this host of men, whose incentives to exertion were so much less than his. And suddenly, with that thought, it seemed as

though the past itself sank out of sight, and he could have laughed aloud at those morbid fancies which a moment earlier had possessed his mind. A new joy was born in his heart—the joy of going on. It is the most vital of all joys, the oldest, the noblest, out of which have been born all the adventures of the world—shared alike by the seaman daring strange seas, the Crusader, the pioneer, the soldier, and the spiritual captain—greater than them all,—whose beacon-light is truth, whose goal is wisdom.

He was recalled from his reveries by the voice of Palmer.

“Well, that is something settled,” he said. “And now for the second principle which should guide us. Here, I know, you won’t hesitate even for a moment. You must begin with the poor.”

Yes, there was no contradiction possible on that point, since all history proved that all great movements began among the poor.

“You admit the principle too easily,” said Palmer. “You’ll find that very few people will agree with you; that, in fact, the trend of modern thought is all the other way. We don’t object to pitying the poor, and doing something for them if we have the opportunity, but who regards them as the one class truly capable of new ideas? Yet it is really so, and that is why Jesus, with an infinite sagacity, went to the ranks of poverty for His apostles. Wesley did it, too; all great reformers have done it. They knew that the sap rises from the root. We, less wise,

imagine that the sap permeates downward from the branches. Can you mention any great reform that has begun among men of the higher classes?"

"I can think of none," said Gaunt. "But I can think of many movements which in the end were led by men of the higher classes."

"In the end—yes—when the sap had risen. The fishermen come first, however, and then the emperors."

Gaunt laughed. "What a splendid professor of church history you would have made, Palmer."

"I dare say," said Palmer, "I could have made it interesting. However, let me be serious on this point, because I regard it as vital. I don't want you to go to the poor out of pity; if you do, you will fail. I want you to have a genuine faith in the capacity of the poor for religious leadership, for then you will succeed. You've just got to believe in them, to recognize the potency that is in them. And you'll find that all sorts of influences will be exerted to draw you another way, and if you yield to them you'll lose your battle."

"What kind of influences?"

"Well, your own aristocratic tastes—for one thing. Oh, you need not laugh—you know you've lived like an intellectual aristocrat for a good many years, and you've set up tendencies in your mind which are not easily destroyed. I never reflect without wonder on the sort of things Wesley did, when I remember the sort of man Wesley was. For he was an intel-

lectual aristocrat if ever there was one, scholarly, and fastidious to a fault. Of course he had plenty of pity for the poor, as a man of his philanthropic nature would have—he had it even in his Oxford days. But it was not until he was flung pell-mell into the arms of the poor by the force of circumstance that he learned the lesson which made him the greatest religious reformer of modern times. What was that lesson? Why, just this, that the poor were more accessible to religious ideas, and infinitely more capable of religious passion, than all the gentlemen of England put together. So he took them with all their ignorance and lack of manners and made them preachers. He trusted them, and learned to love them. He found them capable of the kind of heroism which the times demanded. They made the movement. They became its officers and leaders; and they amply justified his faith in them. By and by the movement permeated upward—the sap rose. But it began among the common people, it was generated in their crude enthusiasm, it succeeded by their sacrifice.”

And so the conversation ranged from point to point, and with each step Gaunt became more sure of himself. If Gaunt halted for a moment, Palmer spurred him on with ever new analogies and observations drawn from wide world-knowledge and experience. Very few men of all those who know the details of Gaunt's subsequent career, know how large a part Palmer had in shaping it, how this silent

man, whose voice was hardly ever heard in public, watched over the soul of his friend with loving jealousy, and guided his course with the discretion of a large wisdom and a tireless love. A book has yet to be written on the silent friends of great reformers, the men who stood behind the scenes and were content to be unknown. If ever it is written, as it should be written, it will become one of the great books of the world.

In these midnight conversations the plans of the new movement were discussed and settled. In these discussions Margaret Gaunt took a large part, and here her practical intelligence proved of great value. Sometimes Gaunt chafed a little under her criticism, and good-humouredly remarked that her function was evident—it was to put the brake upon the wheel; to which she replied, as gaily, that as long as she did not apply the brake when the coach was going *up* the hill he had little cause to complain. It was Margaret Gaunt who insisted that the movement must be started in some conspicuous way, because in New York publicity was absolutely necessary to success. Palmer, in his enthusiasm for principles, was content to begin anyhow; he was indifferent about the exact point at which his lever should touch the world, being quite assured that once applied the lever would do its work. Gaunt took the same view out of humility. The meanest kind of mission-hall would have contented him. But Margaret insisted against them both that a big idea

must be interpreted in a big way. Ocean liners wanted sea-room. She instanced Gordon. The League of Service was his idea, and there never had been a man better fitted to interpret it to the world. How was it then that he had done nothing? Simply because he shut himself up in a little mission-hall in an obscure district, as if he wished to be forgotten. He had spent all his sanctity and genius upon a few hundreds of people—he, who ought to have been the spiritual captain of thousands.

“Listen to me,” she said. “If Mayfield Avenue Church is too small for your ideas, how can you suppose that an obscure mission-hall below Fourteenth Street will be big enough? It’s all very well to talk of small beginnings, but this is a day when small beginnings have small endings, too. Depend upon it, there’s nothing so respected in New York as audacity. I don’t worry myself whether New York is right or wrong; but I know that there’s excellent authority for not hiding a light under a bushel. To-day there’s no choice but to be conspicuous or forgotten.”

“When Margaret quotes Scripture, there’s no chance for me,” laughed Gaunt.

“It’s a very good Scripture, anyhow,” retorted Margaret. “I never did believe that there was much virtue in humility, at least in that kind of humility which makes men do little things because they’re easier to do than great things. That kind of humility looks to me rather like cowardice.”

They argued the matter a long time, until at last Margaret's view prevailed, for the longer they studied it the more sound and sagacious did it appear. Undoubtedly it was true that New York respected only big ideas which were interpreted in a big way—it was characteristic of that megalomania which infected all the thought of the city. It was a city of immense industries, businesses, and trading corporations, and the power of each had been built upon the widest kind of publicity. Politics were guided by the same instinct. The politician took care to engage the largest halls, to address as many thousands as he could reach, to organize an adequate press report of his ideas. Why should the children of light be less energetic and sagacious than the children of this world? Here was an idea far greater than politician had ever uttered, a scheme that would mean far more in the national life than half a century of politics had meant, a reconstitution of the entire religious life of the people, the creation of a spiritual confederacy which would in time dominate both politics and government, and perhaps supersede them; and did not this also demand publicity of the widest kind? It was a grandiose conception—to flash a new idea, a living and transforming thought, simultaneously upon the mind of an entire nation; to write it on the heavens, as it were, so that no man in the loneliest backwood or the most distant city, should be able to escape its message; and then for America to become the religious leader of the world,

to give the world the Final Church, which should include all men and absorb all religions, and should be indestructible because it was based on pure eternal truth. . . . Well, if this final triumph was never reached, still this should be the aim. And to reach this aim, even to take the first step toward it, there must be a scheme of action full of daring, which the world could not ignore.

“We must begin in Madison Square Garden,” said Margaret, with quiet emphasis.

At this both Gaunt and Palmer vehemently dissented. They declared such an idea impossible and absurd.

But Margaret was not discouraged. She went on to impress her ideas with such clearness and precision that at each stage they appeared more and more practicable. It was the most central public building in New York. Poor and rich could reach it easily, and it was the kind of building from which the poor would not be deterred. It was probable that the poor could be better reached, and in larger numbers, in that vast auditorium, associated with every form of pleasure, than in any hall of less commanding reputation in their own exact neighbourhood. It was said that no human voice could be heard in it; but that was nonsense, since politicians spoke there constantly. Then the very vastness of the venture would appeal to the imagination of the city. People would throng to the hall in thousands out of mere curiosity, if for no better reason. And so the League

of Service would be created in a day. At the first sound of the trumpet an army would respond to the call. And then the Press, that omnipotent organ of publicity, unable to ignore an event so wonderful, and itself, perhaps, converted to the ideas of the League, would disseminate those ideas from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and they would pass around the world, like seeds blown by a great wind, which fall into a thousand soils, and belt the globe with verdure.

“Yes,” she concluded, “the big thing is always more practicable than the little one. I have much more faith in you than you have in yourselves—faith enough to believe that you will succeed.”

And so Margaret really became the prophetess of the new movement.

As objections arose she overcame them one by one, buoyed up by her faith. Perhaps in the bottom of her heart she would still have preferred the old quiet ways; but having once renounced them, her surrender to the new idea was complete.

“If we are to be poor, we may as well be poor to some purpose,” she said. “Let us sell everything we have and make the venture.”

And so, one night in Gaunt’s quiet library the last touches were put to the great scheme, and the last sacrifice determined on. They resolved to ask no one for money for its initiation. By the sale of all their property and the realisation of some few securities which they held, the Gaunts calculated

they could raise a few thousand dollars. Palmer, fired by their example, was ready to turn into cash about fifty thousand dollars' worth of investments, which represented the savings of a lifetime. With this capital at command they could make a start, and for the rest they had a boundless faith. If they failed, they would have the consolation of knowing that it was in a great cause; but their faith thrived upon their sacrifice, till each reached the sublime optimism of the enthusiast, who regards failure as impossible.

XII

FAREWELL THE OLD

THE Mayfield Avenue Church was crowded to its utmost limits. It was the first Sunday morning in February. On the previous Sunday, Gaunt had announced that on this Sunday he proposed making a statement which affected the future of the church and his own relation to it. This announcement had had the effect which might have been expected. Curiosity was whetted to its keenest edge, and speculation ran high. The Press, which had been silent for several weeks, awoke into sudden activity. Far and wide paragraphs had been circulated containing more or less exact information relating to the church and its minister. During the week the telephone on Gaunt's desk had been ringing incessantly. Reporters had dogged his steps, letters from former members of the church had reached him, asking for explanations. To all these people Gaunt had made the same reply—let them be present on the morning of the first Sunday in February, and they would hear all he had to say; until then he intended to maintain absolute silence.

Roberts had been among the first to seek an interview with Gaunt. He came early on the Monday

morning after the announcement, precise and prim as ever, yet plainly agitated. "What was the nature of the expected statement?" he asked point-blank. Gaunt quietly answered him that he would hear in due course; but this reply was very far from satisfactory to Roberts. He ventured to hope that Gaunt was not about to do anything rash or ill-considered.

"Not at all," replied Gaunt. He was at that moment giving the closest consideration to his statement, and had been engaged in the same consideration for weeks past.

"Ought not such a statement to be made first to the deacons?" urged Roberts. They were the authorized managers of the church. They were all tried friends. They would be glad to advise with him, and so forth.

Gaunt had his own opinion about the friendship, which he did not state. On the other points he spoke plainly.

"I need no advice," he said. "I do not recognize any special right of the deacons to stand between myself and the congregation in this matter. What I shall say affects the entire congregation, and it is to them I prefer to speak."

Roberts' agitation increased each moment. It was in part resentment at Gaunt's independence. Ever since the refusal of the salary he had been chagrined by the knowledge that Gaunt had escaped from his control, that he had no real hold over him. It was in part fear. Who could foresee what a man

so eccentric as Gaunt might say? Why, he might rip up the whole past; declare the entire story of the series of mean economies which Roberts had inaugurated; repeat things that happened in the secrecy of deacons' meetings; in fact, expose Roberts and his party to ridicule and blame. Or, again, he might be about to propose some revolutionary policy to the church. Had he not already discontinued the vesper service on his own initiative, and covered the neighbourhood with undignified placards, inviting people to a week-night service which was in the nature of a crude revival meeting? Had he not already attracted to the church a number of people whom no one wished to see, people of the Plane and Scarlett type, who could add nothing to the financial strength of the church, whose very presence, indeed, dimmed its social prestige? And now, no doubt, some other mad scheme was afoot, some wild appeal to the people, the effect of which would be disastrous to the dignity of the church. Again Roberts felt, as he had so often felt, a certain incalculable element in Gaunt, something that baffled him, that made him impotent, that dismayed him.

The one thing which he did not suspect was that Gaunt meditated resignation. He knew perfectly well that a minister rarely resigned a church without another in view, and he shrewdly calculated that Gaunt's position was such that very few churches would desire his services. For he had talked with Jordan, and he was aware that Gaunt's reputation

was greatly compromised by what nine men out of ten would describe as his "eccentric behaviour." And the churches wanted not eccentric men, however gifted, but safe men. A man in Gaunt's position must needs stay on until he had worn out his congregation or found some too credulous church willing to entrust its destinies to him. But that he should resign, that he should go out into the world penniless, that was a supposition quite incredible to a man of Roberts' temperament, to whom all forms of unselfishness are insanity, and all self-sacrifice imposture. Yet, what Roberts could not see nor suspect was already evident to most people. It was particularly evident to Tasker, who called on Gaunt and spent nearly an hour in timorous remonstrances. The little man was genuinely grieved at the turn affairs had taken, and he also hoped that Gaunt was not about to do anything rash. Not but what a bold stroke might succeed, but then there were other things to consider. For instance, it might not. On general principles he favoured the safe course. No doubt there had been some misunderstandings, but then they were not all on one side. These things acted and reacted. Of course Gaunt would do what he thought right—and at this the little man's voice vibrated with a kind of Martin Luther "Here-I-take-my-stand" accent; but then other people must be considered, and it was better to be cast into the sea with a millstone round your neck than to offend one of these little ones.

To which exposition of incompetence Gaunt listened with amused interest, wondering all the time how it was possible for men of Tasker's temperament to go through the world at all, and contrive to make money enough to live—especially that world of New York, where the man who did not know what he wanted usually got nothing at all.

So the week passed, and the morning of the first Sunday in February had come, Gaunt's last Sunday in the Mayfield Avenue Church, and the church was crowded.

The doors were no sooner open than people began to assemble. Some of the first to arrive were people from distant suburbs, former members, who knew very little of the later developments in the church. These were soon beckoned into pews occupied by old acquaintances, and wherever they came a buzz of conversation broke out.

"What does it all mean?" was the one question bandied to and fro, to which all kinds of conflicting answers were returned.

"Does he mean resigning?"

"We think so."

"But why? What have you been doing to him?" said one irascible old gentleman, who had been a great admirer of Gaunt in the early days of his ministry. Thereupon some one began to whisper to him a long explanation, which evidently afforded him no satisfaction, for the irascible old gentleman declaimed in a loud voice that they were a parcel

of fools, who didn't know when they were well off.

He would probably have said much more, but at this moment Mrs. Somerset swept into the pew, with a sense of calm proprietorship, although for months she had not occupied it, and at once elevated her lorgnette, with an inimitable insolence, as much as to say: "Dear me, who can all these strange people be who have dared to invade the seclusion of a church where *I* worship?"

Still the crowd flowed in, to the evident surprise of Roberts, who moved up and down the aisles pale and anxious. Very soon every pew was filled, and chairs were being placed inside the communion rails. Among the late comers were several men prominent in the higher circles of New York life, whose names were passed from lip to lip in excited whispers, as they were recognized. With them came also men of quite another class, plainly dressed in decent ready-made clothes: men with the sturdy aspect of superior mechanics, with thoughtful eyes and good foreheads. There were many young men and a few fashionably-dressed women who made a point to miss no notable event in the life of the city, the kind of women who adore Wagner and theosophy one week, and run after the latest preacher or boy-violinist who may happen to be the fashion, the next. Every moment brought its sensation, and the climax came when four reporters were grudgingly afforded places just beneath the pulpit, and

some one started the rumour that the quiet old gentleman in the corner beneath the gallery, who had the air of a substantial farmer, was the greatest millionaire in the world, and that his neighbours were two celebrated editors. For New York, that city of sensation, much more avid than the ancient Athens for any new thing, had divined by some swift intuition that something strange was fated to happen to-day, and that behind the suggestive paragraphs which the Press had flung far and wide, there was something concealed much more important than the possible resignation of a noted minister.

Still the people came, till now every chair was occupied, even the sacred precincts of the choir gallery were invaded, and the vestibule was filled with people for whom no seats could be obtained. As the time for the commencement of the service drew near, a solemn hush fell upon the great assembly. And then, as though a magic wand had passed over the congregation, some of those more serious elements which had hitherto been concealed began to manifest themselves. A subtle change passed over the faces of those who had come through mere curiosity; the look of levity, that look of vivacious shallowness so common in a New York crowd, died away, giving place to grave interest. It was as though everything in the aspect of these faces had deepened; something real was urging its way through the veneer of the artificial, so that the lines grew sharp, the very eyes had deeper colour, the

fashion of the countenance was changed. And now, too, the nobler and graver faces in the crowd challenged the observant eye. There were many such, the faces of men and women who had looked upon the tragedy of life; whose eyes had known the terror of solitary thought, and retained the shadow of that terror. What did they expect? They could not have said; but yet they betrayed the consciousness of some vast anticipation, as though from some high tower of silence they waited for the day-spring. And in some subtle, wholly inexplicable manner, they seemed to communicate their own emotion to the crowd, till that waiting look suffused the entire congregation. It spread like an invisible wave, submerging in its flow all meaner elements, so that at last the silence became almost painful in its intensity. And then, with a shock that thrilled the nerves, the first low note of the organ shook the air, and the strain was relaxed. The service had commenced.

Handel's *Largo* had been chosen for the voluntary, that majestic and triumphant expression of human desire and yearning which no familiarity can cheapen; the slow, mighty strains filled the place with a sea of sound, and gradually passed into the familiar chords of the Old Hundred, at which the whole congregation rose.

“Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,”

sung the entire congregation, and with the last line of the hymn Gaunt entered the pulpit. He wore no pulpit robes; he had laid them aside for the first time; and their absence accentuated the firm lines of his slight figure. He was pale but composed; only the hands, tightly clasped before him, suggested the nervous strain he suffered. As he stood there, perfectly silent in that sea of sound, a strong impression of great loneliness was created. He had not the majestic height of Gordon, he had not his classic beauty of feature; but some of the older men there, who remembered Gordon as he was in his prime, were instantly reminded of him as they looked on Gaunt. There was the same height and breadth of brow, over which the dark hair fell in a tangled cloud, the same grave and sweet expression of the lips; but the chief likeness lay in the sense of intensity, of aloofness, which the face conveyed—that unmistakable glow and solitariness which one recognizes on the faces of all great enthusiasts. Those who had not known Gordon simply noted that Gaunt had the face of a dreamer, the deep magnetic eyes of one who saw visions; a poet's face, thought some; a musician's face, thought others; only here and there were those who gasped the truer diagnosis, and said, "A Prophet's face."

To write these things takes much longer than it did to realize them. The impression thus created on a thousand minds was rapid, instinctive, instantaneous. Gaunt lifted his hand slowly and uttered

a few words of simple invocation. His voice, a high sweet tenor, of unusual clearness, floated over the crowd like the soft stroke upon a silver bell, and compelled attention. It ceased, and once more the strain was relaxed. People settled into their seats with low rustlings. The reporters sharpened their pencils; the artist for a daily journal produced his drawing block and began to sketch the preacher. It was once more a typical New York crowd, eager, curious, avid of sensation, whose interrogatory eyes seemed to say: "What have we come out into the wilderness to see?"

The service moved on in its usual stately course. There were two anthems, sung exquisitely by the quartette, for in Mayfield Avenue Church fine music was a tradition. But this morning they attracted no attention. The people listened indifferently, almost impatiently, watching for the moment when Gaunt would speak. There was but one sensation: when the hymn before the sermon was reached Gaunt directed the attention of his hearers to the order of service in their pews, whereon was a hymn not found in the ordinary hymnal; but it was the most suitable he could find for the occasion.

The hymn was "Rescue the Perishing."

He read the first verse slowly with intense emphasis:

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save."

The members of the quartette, two of them celebrated concert-singers, looked at each other in sympathetic disdain. The organist turned to them and smiled. When Gaunt had given them the hymn for practice on Saturday night, the organist had remarked with some heat that the tune wasn't even music, it was mere gimcrack amateurism. The quartette, of course, shared his views, and hence their ironical glances. He felt his organ was disgraced by the performance of such doggerel, and he played the air as badly as he dared. But to his surprise every one seemed to know the hymn. They sang it with such heartiness that the organ was in danger of being drowned.

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying——”

What memories the hymn evoked! The thoughts of many in that throng went back to the great spiritual movements of an earlier time, when that hymn, sung by thousands upon thousands in vast halls, had conquered the most fastidious, penetrated alike cottages and mansions, and had even invaded whole cities with its simple pathos and infectious melody. The thoughts of others went back to hill-side farms, and shingled meeting-houses in the lonely fields, and, perhaps, to mothers and fathers long since dead, and brothers and sisters long since separated, all of whom had once sung that hymn. And the thoughts of some, it may be, invoked painful memories of friends and children, gone far hence, no one knew

where, into the desert-places of the world where folly finds a refuge, and dishonour the shelter of obscurity. So all sang it, even the fashionably-dressed women who knew no God but Wagner; and somehow, before it was done, the organ was pouring out its fullest music, and the members of the quartette were leading and dominating all that wave of sound, and had forgotten their disdain.

"Back to the narrow way patiently win them,
Tell the poor wand'rer a Saviour had died,"

sung the people, and then came a great silence, for at last Gaunt had risen to address them.

He took no text; he began abruptly with a question: Did they believe in the spirit and meaning of the hymn which they had just sung? The perishing, the fallen, the wandering—they were everywhere. There was not a street in New York in which they might not be found. The tragedy represented in these words was found in Fifth Avenue palaces as well as East Side slums. For wherever men had not the right ideals of life they were perishing; wherever they sinned against those ideals they were fallen; wherever they forgot them they were wandering.

The hymn spoke of rescuing the perishing—did they believe that rescue was possible? Of course they would say that they did; it would be inconsistent with their pride in human nature and the orthodox creed of Christianity, to say otherwise.

But men only really believed what they practised. Had they ever really tried to rescue any one, who, from whatever cause, was perishing, or fallen, or wandering? Did the Church itself conform to the ideal of a vast Rescue Society, affording its help to those who needed it most? Was it not evident enough that the chief function of the modern Church appeared to be not to capture the sinners, but to coddle the saints—and poor saints at that, he added.

A smile went round the congregation. The closing epigram stuck, and the reporters noted it, as a capital headline for “the story” that would adorn the papers next morning.

Gaunt was so intent upon his theme that he did not notice this demonstration. He went on with unruffled gravity to develop his address. He drew a rapid, vivid picture of the complexity and confusion of New York life: one set of people half-frantic with the pursuit of pleasure, another of gold; the flaring, splendid city, where even the night brought no hours of stillness, pouring out its life in a passion of work and waste, and all the time men and women falling by the way, crushed, unnoticed beneath this flower-decked Juggernaut of gold—genius sucked down into the mire of shame, talents thrown away, honour despoiled; and towering over all, the Church, august, magnificent, but dumb, helpless, deafened by the clamour, and more and more forgotten by the thoughtless crowd who mocked its

impotence. And then, with a burst of passion, he pictured how the best men of all countries, weary of the Church, were combining in their own way to help the world which the Church had forgotten. America had its labour unions, entirely independent of the Church; Russia had its secret revolutionary tribunals; France had had its "Christs of the barricades."

"Think," he cried, "of what has been going on in Russia for fifty years. Picture to the mind that immense army of heroic men and women, who have tramped in chains all the three thousand miles from Moscow to Siberia upon a road of infamy, suffering every indignity, exposed to shameful insult, living and dying in an exile worse than death, and all for what? That some day, through their sacrifice, justice and liberty might be won for Russia. Oh, it is no longer under the Cross of Christ that the great sacrifices are being made for the regeneration of mankind; it is under the flag of politics; it may be even under the blood-stained flag of revolution. And what road of wounds have we ever trodden for the sake of mankind? We, the representatives of a church whose symbol is the Cross? Alas, is it not true, even of the best of us, that our religion has been a gratification—rarely or never a sacrifice?"

He paused a moment, his face tense and pale, his voice vibrating. Reproach, pity, accusation all mingled in its tone; and through all there throbbed

something deeper, a certain wailing note, the sob of the soul.

Then he began to speak again in more even tones. What did these things mean? They indicated a world-wide movement, whose dominant note was hostility to the Church. One day it was Russia, another it was France, but the same thing always: the story of men seeking to deliver their brethren from bondage without reference to the Church, because they had learned to regard the Church either as effete or else as the friend of wealth, the ally of tyranny, the enemy of progress. Yet the Church probably contained the majority of the best people on earth, people who were kindly, charitable, and incapable of wilful cruelty. What could explain such an almost incredible paradox? Simply this, that the Church had forgotten, except in isolated lives and instances, the original mandate to seek and save the lost. It existed for self-culture, not for conquest. It had lost its world-vision, its early flame of propaganda. It was content to maintain its life by the accretions of the hereditary good, the people to whom church-going was a tradition, though even that tradition was fast losing its authority. And worse than all, and at the root of all, was an absolutely wrong conception of what membership in the Church of Christ meant. It meant with many a creed; with others a profession of faith or experience. But this was never the intention of its Founder. He attached no importance to what

men said, whether it was about themselves or Him. His test was at once more severe and more simple. It was to follow Him, to do the things He did, to reproduce His spirit and His life. In other words, the one unalterable ideal of all membership in a Christian church was *service*. To live for others, actively, positively; to be always thinking of them, toiling for them, suffering for them, and if needs be, ready to die for them; to do this, each man for himself, not leaving it to the occasional hero, or paying missionaries to do it for us; this was the one eternal ideal of Christianity. Because the Church had forgotten the ideal of service, she had failed; she had but to recover this ideal to attract to her multitudes, of men who were now hostile to her, not because they disbelieved her truths, but because she herself had denied them.

And then the climax came, with the same abruptness which had marked the opening question of his address. For a moment Gaunt stood perfectly still, slowly letting his gaze sweep across the eager congregation. It was a long gaze of farewell, of renunciation; and those nearest to him read its meaning.

“The Church in its present form cannot conquer the world. The form, therefore, must perish that the spirit may be freed. Let us demolish all but the imperishable foundations; let us build a new church whose only creed is love, whose only test is service.

“To this great end I pledge my life.

“To accomplish it my first step is clear. From this

church, and from all churches, I pass out to-day and forever.

“A month from to-day, on the first Sunday of March, I shall endeavour to interpret the ideals I have announced in practice.

“I shall invite all who feel the need for such a movement to meet me in Madison Square Garden, where the first meeting of the League of Service will be held.”

The sensational moment for which the congregation had so long waited had come at last. “A League of Service”—“Madison Square Garden”—involuntarily a thousand lips repeated the words, some in pure astonishment, some in consternation, not a few in derision. The reporters alone were exultant: they had found a much bigger “story” than had seemed possible. The church buzzed like a hive. No one heard the last hymn announced. It seemed to peal forth of itself, as if the soul of the organ had found a voice—it alone responding to the daring of the voice that had just ceased.

“Onward Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war.”

During the singing of the hymn Gaunt left the pulpit and the church.

XIII

AN INTERVIEW

GAUNT left the church by his vestry door, and walked rapidly through the deserted streets to Central Park. He felt an imperious need of solitude. Not then could he have spoken even to those who most shared his intimacy; he was realizing that in all the great moments of life, whether of triumph or defeat, lover and friend are put far from us. Hitherto his course had been largely shaped by others—by Palmer, by Gordon, by the practical but daring counsels of his wife. He had been conscious of a force not born within himself, that had carried him whither he would not, a wind of God that had taken him up and borne him afar. He was conscious of that still; but now he resumed the captaincy of his own soul; and with a sense of awe and utter humbleness he realized that henceforth he must guide others, he was the appointed leader, and he sought the baptism of solitude for the strengthening of his spirit.

The winter sunshine filled the Park; the air was crisp and sparkling. Already the faint footsteps of advancing spring could be heard, as one who hears beneath the ice the flow of living rivers. His own mind caught at the parable. The ice of con-

vention which had long imprisoned his heart was breaking, the living waters of a new faith and purpose were rising. A gush of thankfulness, which was almost ecstasy, flooded all his nature. Hope, an angel with furred bright wings, walked beside him, talking with him in a joyous language.

To men upon the brink of great battles God allows such hours, for without them great battles could not be fought. Ecstasy visits man but rarely; it is the sacred wine God keeps for the great occasions and the sacramental feasts of life. Gaunt drank of it now, and tasted its divine inebriation. He trod on air, his feet were among the stars. Failure seemed impossible, conquest certain. And if success came, it would not be his; he was but the vehicle of some Higher Power, his warfare but the vindication of mighty strategies designed long since in the council chambers of the Infinite. He rested in that thought, conscious of his entire relinquishment of self. Henceforth he was a surrendered man, his life a surrendered life. In the eternal rhythm of things he had found his place; no longer would he know the vain perturbations of pride, or enmity, or inordinate desire; whatever happened he would not know them, for he had found the peace that passeth understanding. The battle might go ill or well, but for him the issue was assured.

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In the meantime the sensation created by Gaunt's action was immense.

"It is a dreadful mistake," said Tasker, in a lamentable voice. "If he had only consulted me."

"He is intoxicated with vanity," said Small, in angry tones. "Madison Square Garden, indeed! You mark my words, he won't attract a hundred people, and it holds twenty thousand."

"He's mad," said Roberts, vindictively. "I told him so long ago. I saw it coming on; and warned him. The church will never recover from to-day's disgrace."

All over the church people gathered in groups discussing the affair. The verdict appeared general that Gaunt was mad. It was the bigness of the scheme that stunned them. Had Gaunt merely resigned to accept another call, or to enter on some evangelistic work upon a humble scale, they could have understood it; but the idea of Madison Square Garden, of a League of Service which was meant to absorb all churches, and supplant them, overwhelmed them.

There were others, however, to whom the very bigness of the idea was its attraction. Within an hour of the close of the service there was a hasty editorial discussion in the office of the most influential newspaper in New York. Its editor had been one of those who had heard Gaunt.

"He will go far—he has a great idea, and he believes in it," was his outspoken comment.

He was a man accustomed to handling big ques-

tions in a big way. In the public life of New York no man exercised such influence as Butler of *The Daily Light*. By many he was accounted cynical, by others unscrupulous; but no one ever doubted the singular penetration of his judgment. He possessed in its extreme development that journalistic sense—a kind of sixth sense—which discerns instinctively the course human thought and events are likely to take. Again and again he had taken up causes which seemed insignificant and unpopular, and in a few weeks had made them the burning questions of debate throughout the nation. As he listened to Gaunt that morning, he had again discerned such a cause. He was not religious in any conventional sense, but like most intellectual men of his calibre he took a deep private interest in religion. Those who called him a cynic had often been surprised to find in his editorials a kind of prophetic note, which seemed wholly at variance with his caustic and biting style. The fact was that his cynicism was but the reverse side of his moral earnestness. He knew too much of the seamy side of life to have much respect for men and their motives; but, perhaps that very knowledge made him all the more vigilant to discover a man whose motives were really pure, and all the readier to welcome him.

He had gone to hear Gaunt that morning in search of a sensation, but the simplicity and directness of Gaunt's address had first charmed him, and then set him thinking. He had expected the usual common-

place of the religious enthusiast, and he had heard them too often to attach much value to them. They were almost always the fruit of ignorance and fanaticism. But here was a man who had genuine ideas, and, as he soon perceived, ideas based on wide and clear deductions. He listened with the interest that any intellectual man has in the exposition of real ideas. The leaves of his own life were turned back. In the first flush of his youth he had been attracted by the ministry, and had been designed for it by his father, himself a famous minister. But he had sorrowfully confessed that there was too much in his father's life to make the idea of the ministry attractive to himself. He had seen his father persecuted for heresy, suffering all kinds of humiliations at the hands of little and ungenerous men, triumphing over them in the end, it was true, but at what a price? He had died at fifty, worn out with the long contention, and it was at his father's death-bed Butler had renounced the ministry. He entered the eager world of journalism, rose rapidly, and at forty occupied the editorial chair of *The Daily Light*. But his interest in religion had never left him. He had struck many hard blows against mere religiosity, but never one against religion. And now, as Gaunt spoke, he found his own early ideas of religion miraculously reinvigorated. A Church wholly freed from creed, wholly based on service—yes, he had once imagined such a thing possible, a thing to dream of, at least; and here at last was a man who

believed in it not as a dream, but as a practicable reality.

There was another thing, too, which attracted Butler. He knew, better than most men, for from his desk he touched the centres of thought in every country, how true it was that in every country there was a revolt against organized forms of religion. The legions of that revolt could be counted by millions. What if the time had really come to interpret this revolt, to rescue it from the cold shadows of negation, to weld the idea into a vast constructive force? What if the man had come at last capable of this crusade, a crusade which would appeal to all the thinking people of America, and not of America alone, but of all lands not heathen?

His blood thrilled at the thought, and then ran cold with caution.

The supreme journalistic sense was now thoroughly awake and vigilant. He was tempted to play for such tremendous stakes, but he must be sure that he made no error in his judgment. He listened to Gaunt with the keenest criticism, weighing every word, watching every gesture, absorbed in the endeavour to read his soul. He satisfied himself of Gaunt's sincerity and the dynamic force of his ideas. But there still remained one question. They were big ideas, but could he interpret them in a big way? Then there came the abrupt announcement of a League of Service, and a movement which needed nothing less than the vast auditorium of Madison

Square Garden for its inauguration! Butler's heart shouted in him. He saw at a glance all the possibilities of the new movement; he felt rather than recognized the advent of the "psychologic moment."

"He will go far; he has a great idea. I believe in it," he said. "And I will support him," he added.

That was why there was a hasty editorial consultation in the office of *The Daily Light*, while Gaunt was communing with his soul in Central Park.

"Give it headlines, and two columns at least," he said. "I will write an editorial on it. This is the biggest thing that has happened in a generation, I tell you."

"No bigger than the insurance scandals, surely," said the sub-editor.

"Pooh, that only touched men's pockets. This touches their thoughts, themselves, their souls. In a month's time nothing else will be talked of from New York to San Francisco."

The incredulous sub-editor went away endeavouring to fortify himself with the recollection of other occasions on which his chief had proved mysteriously right when every one else had supposed him wrong; and Butler sat down to write his editorial.

It was a striking editorial: every one acknowledged that next morning. It was one of those perfectly balanced pieces of reasoning and generalisation which can be achieved only by trained skill, at

its highest point of efficiency; yet it had heat in it, a flame of passionate conviction, all the more impressive by being restrained.

Butler noticed with a grim pleasure that at all events he had not misinterpreted the sensational value of the incident, for three-fourths of the New York papers gave full reports of Gaunt's address, with more or less sympathetic comments.

Yet, it must be owned, Butler was not without certain qualms of misgiving. He knew too well the levity of the New York mind, its strange caprices, the rapidity with which it enthroned popular idols, and the recklessness with which it forgot them. It came to him suddenly that it was ten chances to one that Gaunt was not the sort of man who knew how to organize victory. And this was a case in which victory must be organized. He resolved to see Gaunt at once. It was late in the afternoon when Butler arrived at Gaunt's house. He found him seated at his library table with Palmer, and both men were busy over an immense pile of letters and telegrams which had arrived since the morning. Gaunt hastened to thank him for his article, commenting on its generosity.

"Well, it is about that article I have come," said Butler. "You will not need to be told that I agree in your position. But we are only at the beginning of the battle, and if I am really to help you I must have some knowledge of your plans of campaign."

He spoke in dry, clear tones, with a certain busi-

ness-like precision. Gaunt felt a sense of disappointment. He had imagined from the article that its writer was capable of enthusiasm: he saw before him a middle-aged man, with a pale, serious face, a fine head partly bald, fringed with iron-gray hair, and rather the appearance of a clever lawyer than of the prophetic exponent of religious ideas. Butler easily guessed the nature of Gaunt's impression.

"Oh, I'm a very practical man," he resumed. "For all I know you may be one, too; but I imagine you are better able to conceive great ideas than to equip them with practical forms."

"I am afraid that is true, in the latter clause at least, and my only consolation is that my friend Palmer is less practical than I," replied Gaunt.

"Probably that is where I may be of service," said Butler.

He then began to engage both men in conversation, using all his diplomatic skill to draw out their thoughts. An hour passed, they were still talking, and not once had this vigilant inquisition into Gaunt's ideas and character been relaxed. Yet so skilful was Butler that Gaunt had been conscious of no inquisition. He had yielded himself up wholly to Butler's interrogations, with a sincerity and modesty which deepened Butler's regard for him, and quickened Butler's sense of Gaunt's intellectual qualities.

"And now," said the great editor, "I think we understand each other. May I presume upon a very

short acquaintance to give you some practical hints?"

"Certainly. You will increase my obligation."

"Well, then," said Butler, "don't be above using plain and rough weapons. I don't ask you to lower your standards in any way; but recollect the world is a pretty rough place, dominated by practical forces, and therefore impatient of purely abstract ideas. Do you mind telling me what is the nature of that pile of telegrams and letters which I see upon the table?"

"Not at all," said Gaunt. "Most of them are full of kindly enthusiasm; not more than two or three are hostile."

"But do they put no questions?"

"Why, yes. Almost everybody wants to know what I propose to do."

"Exactly. They approve the idea, but they want to reduce it to practical forms."

"Isn't it early to ask that?"

"Not at all. Do you know what every one in New York is asking to-day? They are saying, Is this man a dreamer or a man of action? Oh, I know that to be capable of great dreams is the noblest distinction in the world—all great men have been dreamers who have dreamed true. But the men who have really moved the world have been men who knew how to *make* their dreams come true. I need not give you instances—you can easily supply them,—but I suppose Loyola is as striking as any.

He had his dream, and as long as he lived in his dream, he was stoned out of every city he entered, and was regarded as a madman. Then he came down to practical details, organized an order, bent the whole force of his character to the task, and before he died had conquered the world. My friend, you have to organize. Keep your dream—Loyola kept it; you are worth nothing without it. But make haste to give it practical form, for the world will only listen to the dreamer when he speaks with authority and condescends to details.”

“I think I see some of these details clearly,” said Gaunt.

“Well, describe them.”

“They are but suggestions as yet: they won’t bear much handling. The idea of an order of some kind; yes, that is imperative. We must create a bond, a sense of unity, of fellowship. That is where the Church is strong, and we cannot better her experience.”

“A fellowship—that’s your better word, isn’t it? But of whom, and for what?”

“A fellowship of all who love in the service of all who suffer.”

“Capital,” said Butler. “Make that your motto. Remember I’m an editor, and your words will be taken as evidence against you.”

“And I think we must have something to distinguish us, some outward badge or sign.”

“Not the friar’s garb, I hope,” laughed Palmer.

"No, it must not be anything that separates men from their fellows. It must be something that men can wear at their work, women in the house, youths at college. Something so small that it cannot be thought ostentatious: yet so significant that it tells its story."

"Yes, that is also good. Men love badges, especially Americans," said Butler. "Besides, I've always thought it a great advantage to get a man into such a situation that he is bound to confess his religion. When a man is very anxious to conceal his religion I always conclude that he has none to conceal."

"I think that is as far as my thoughts have gone," said Gaunt, simply.

"Well, it's as far as I want you to go at present," said Butler. "You've given me material enough to go on with for a day or two, and when I'm through, I'll come for more."

"But you're not going to publish all I've said," said Gaunt, in some alarm.

"Well, not all; just enough for present purposes. Do you know, sir, that there's a whole month to be bridged over before your appearance in Madison Square Garden? A month is a long time in the memory of New York—time enough for the greatest men to be forgotten. Now I don't propose that you shall be forgotten. Remember I don't claim to be a religious man, and please don't count on me to wear your badge when you invent it. I am merely

an editor whose work it is to interpret the ideas of the world, and to get before the other fellow in the business if I can. I believe in your ideas. I'll even go so far as to say that if ever I formulate a religion for myself again, it will be on your model. But that's neither here nor there. I am going to take up your cause because I believe that the mind and conscience of the world are ripe for it. I am only anxious on one point—and you know what that is. Get your whole plan into working order as fast as ever you can, so that when not a couple of hundred people through telegrams and letters, but twenty thousand people with the living voice ask you in Madison Square Garden: 'What would'st thou have us to do?' you may know how to answer them with the categorical imperative."

The fagged, lined face had grown very serious during this speech; it now broke into a pleasant smile.

"I'm afraid I've taken the liberty of preaching to you. Well, I can't help it. An editor is always preaching, and besides, it runs in my blood. My father was a minister."

Butler made ready to leave the room and was already at the door, when something in the denuded aspect of the room struck him. There were no pictures on the walls, no rug upon the polished floor, and the bookcases showed large gaps.

He turned back, and then said, with some hesitation: "I would like to put one more question if you

will let me? This is not for publication. How do you propose to raise the sinews of war for this campaign?"

"Palmer will tell you; he knows all about it," said Gaunt.

"We have raised between sixty and seventy thousand dollars. That will serve us for a start," said Palmer.

"We? Who?"

"Gaunt and I," said Palmer, with quiet dignity.

Butler understood. Palmer had taken little part in the conversation, and naturally Butler's mind had been wholly taken up with Gaunt. He now looked more searchingly at Palmer, and at once guessed the secret Palmer would have wished to conceal. So this was how the money was being raised? Palmer's manner showed his share in it; Gaunt's denuded library told its own tale. If Butler had had any misgivings in lending his powerful support to Gaunt and his cause, those misgivings had vanished utterly. For he saw that which never fails to move and attract even the most worldly man, the spectacle of self-sacrifice. In a sudden flash of memory he recollected all the men whom he had supported from time to time—politicians, candidates for office, the vendors of new social ideas, men of letters,—all of them men of conspicuous gifts, but how rarely had he found in them the least element of self-sacrifice! He had found much hungry vanity; even in the best of them he had discovered that their apparent ab-

sorption in ideas did not prevent a very astute recognition of the commercial value to themselves of those ideas. But here were men who seemed to be wholly free from that spirit of self-seeking which so constantly poisoned the idealism of American life. They had given all; they asked for nothing. He was not, as he had said, a religious man, but he knew his Bible almost by heart. And he found himself breathing, as it were, the pure atmosphere of the Gospels for a moment. He remembered that the distinctive quality of Jesus had been just this: that He had given all to the world and asked nothing of it, and because He had given all, had won all.

There was a certain wonder in his gaze as he looked upon the two men, sitting in the denuded room. He had seen many strange sights in his long experience of men, but he had never yet met men like Gaunt and Palmer. He could hardly have supposed it possible that such men could have lived in that seething whirlpool of frantic self-interest which was called New York. If he had already admired Gaunt, and respected his ideas, now he did far more: he was willing to recognize his right of spiritual leadership.

"I suppose you intend leaving this house?" he said.

"We leave to-morrow. I ought to have told you," said Gaunt.

"Where do you propose living?"

"In Washington Square. At first I wanted to live

in the slums, in close contact with the poor, but I have been overruled, as I now think wisely. I shall need a central house, for it must be accessible to all sorts and conditions of people. And I shall need a large house, for it must be a sort of Hospice for all forms of distress. Palmer is joining me in the venture. Do you approve?"

"Heartily," said Butler. "You couldn't do a wiser thing, and it modifies my hasty suspicion of your organizing ability."

Gaunt laughed cheerfully.

"Oh, it was not my idea, I assure you. It was my wife's. You see I have good advisers, and I should like to add you to the number."

"I rather think I've already added myself," returned Butler.

Butler shook hands heartily with the two men. He went away with more of elation in his thoughts than he had known for many years; for he saw now that he had not only judged rightly in regard to the fundamental ideas of the new movement, but that he was not mistaken in its leader.

He no longer said, "Gaunt has great ideas." He began now to say, "Gaunt is a great man."

XIV

THE HOUSE OF JOY

THE plan of living in Washington Square was, as Gaunt had said, due to the practical intelligence of his wife.

For her own part, she was as willing as her husband to live in the barest rooms in the poorest quarter of the city. The less they spent the more would they have to give, was her prudent principle. But as the new movement outlined itself before her with increasing distinctness, she perceived that it probably would embrace all classes. Of course the movement must go to the poor first. She heartily believed in the principle that all great religious movements began with the poor. But they do not stay there. Besides, the very conception of a League of Service implied bringing the rich into contact with the poor. It meant the mobilisation of wealth in the service of poverty, of culture in the service of ignorance. Therefore the location of the movement must be central, and for that reason she insisted on Madison Square Garden. For the same reason she now thought of Washington Square for their own home. It was the most central location in New York, and it was close enough to the poor to retain the idea

that the first object of the movement was for their benefit.

Here Palmer came to her aid in an unexpected fashion. He and his sister had long lived in Washington Square, attracted by the old-fashioned spaciousness of its houses, from which fashion had long since departed. The one luxury they allowed themselves was a house with large rooms; in every other respect their life was as simple as life in a log-cabin. They had never furnished the upper part of the house, and had resisted many tempting offers to let it for office purposes. It now occurred to them that the house might be easily adapted for the purposes of the League.

They both hailed with delight the idea of Gaunt's coming to live with them. From that idea there was evolved the larger idea of something in the nature of community life. Esther Palmer was one of those gentle and reserved women who endure loneliness of life without complaint, but who are all the time looking for some object which can give a larger interest to their thoughts. She had long ago given up all visions of marriage; she lived for her brother. But there were many hours in each day when he was absent, and she felt the lack of some positive exacting duty. She read much, painted a little, studied music with some success, but none of these employments really filled the void in her life. One winter she took a course of classes in biology, less from any real aptitude for science than from the desire to fill

her time. She attended to her brother's correspondence, sometimes wrote at his dictation an essay for the heavier magazines, and at all times followed his legal studies with much more appreciation than women are commonly able to display for severe and technical themes. She had come almost to the verge of middle life without losing her girlish grace and freshness. Her face was a perfect oval, with a Madonna-like sweetness and composure, belied a little, however, by the wistful expression of the eyes. She was in some danger of becoming a blue-stocking; under proper guidance she might have become an authoress. But the years passed, and her devotion to her brother gradually swallowed up all other interests; and yet, in her heart, she still yearned for some broader avenue of activity, some interest that would lift her out of the happy monotony of her life.

The idea of the League of Service at once appealed to her, and as Palmer developed his plans, she discerned the value of the idea of community life.

Why not make their house not only Gaunt's home, but the expression of a new ideal of living? Fellowship should surely have its expression not only in public ways, but in the method of their own life. Gaunt himself gave the last formulating touch to the idea when he spoke of a Hospice.

She at once plunged into the scheme with delighted alacrity. The old house was transformed. The large dining-room was made a refectory, and

they resolved to keep open table. Most of the familiar furniture was sold, and replaced by furniture of the simplest type. A long, plain, oak table occupied the centre of the room. Rugs and carpets were replaced by a bare, stained floor. The walls were painted white, after the fashion of the old conventual refectories. At the end of the room, facing the tall windows, was the large engraving of Velasquez's Christ on the Cross which had formerly hung in Gaunt's library; this was the one touch of art which they permitted. The upstairs rooms were treated with the same simplicity. Some were meant to be occupied by any workers or assistants who might give themselves to the cause. Others were reserved for cases of distress, for the broken man who had no place to lay his head, the penitent daughter of shame who needed immediate rescue, or the deserted child. For, above all, the house was to be a Hospice. It must keep an open door to all the world. It must typify in its own way the ideal of fellowship.

A Hospice—the very word kindled Palmer's enthusiasm.

"It's something that has ceased to exist, even in Catholic communities, in any vital form," he said. "There was a time when the religious houses of Europe were the houses of the people, dispensing generously to all comers, and making no distinctions. Catholicism has lost the ideal. Protestantism never had it. We will revive it."

"I am afraid we shan't look like nuns and monks, however," laughed Margaret. "We all look too happy."

"Of course," said Palmer. "And that's where the novelty comes in. Religion has never yet gone into partnership with Joy. It has been afraid to. I suppose it is because Religion has always seen men and women plastered over with dreadful theological labels; but we see them just as men and women."

"Let us call our Hospice the House of Joy!" exclaimed Gaunt.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Palmer. "That's the note we want to strike. We've heard too much of the pains and penalties of service; let us emphasize the truth that a life of service is the only joyous life."

So, to the great astonishment of passers-by, the door of the house bore upon its white surface the inscription in golden letters,

THE HOUSE OF JOY.

And certainly, if ever house knew the presence of joy, it was this old house in Washington Square in that week when the Gaunts came to live in it. They and the Palmers passed from room to room with the interest of children, examining the simple fitments, expatiating on the uses to which they would put them, the four happiest people in New York. Those rooms had doubtless known many merry gatherings; light feet had danced upon the floors, brides had come

down the great staircase with lips athirst for love, song and revel had filled the rooms, but in all its history no such joy had dwelt there as in these days. Outside New York span like a roaring wheel, with its willing martyrs bound upon it, its crowds of men and women who sought with tortured lips some living spring in the whirl of sterile, empty days, and sought in vain; inside there was a great peace, and the water of contentment, and the bread of perfect fellowship.

The life within did not belie that daring legend on the door. It was indeed the House of Joy.

One of the first visitors they received was Gordon. Gaunt had recognized him in the congregation in Mayfield Avenue Church on the occasion of his farewell address, and among the letters which had most cheered him was one from Gordon. The old man was delighted with what he saw: it was a realisation of his own early dreams.

"It makes me young again to see all this," he said. "I am very far from saying, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace.' I am much more inclined to say, 'Now, Lord, let me live and work.' I am tempted to join you."

"Why not?" said Gaunt, delightedly.

"I am afraid I should not be worth my salt. Some one once proposed that all ministers should be taken out and shot at forty. I'm eighty years old."

"Eighty years young," said Gaunt. "You were young enough to conceive the movement; you are young enough to serve it."

"If I thought I was," he said, wistfully.

"Think you are, and you will be," retorted Gaunt, with a gay laugh. "I will quote you your own doctrine, that the men who have most to do live longest. Their work vitalizes them, you know."

"That's the worst of advising other people," said Gordon. "They invariably return the advice with interest. However, tell me what I can do, and let me consider it."

"You are already our prophet," said Gaunt. "All the prophets wrote books, I believe, or are reputed to have done so. Write our prophetic books for us, express our ideas; there are none of us who will have the time when once the work begins."

"Alas, I am but a discredited prophet," said the old man.

"Rather a prophet who has lived long enough to outlive discredit and get his message published at last," said Gaunt.

The old man was silent for a long time. He felt that he had become enamoured of loneliness, that the solitude of his life at Riverside had become necessary to his power of thinking; but now that a call to positive service had come to him, his heart quickened in him with a swift revival of its early fires.

"Old men have no time to debate," he said at length. "They hear too clearly the voice that says, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' I will come, if you will have me."

And so one more was added to the community of the House of Joy. One of the smaller rooms in the topmost story of the house was assigned him, to which he brought the more indispensable part of his library; and from that little room in the coming days went forth many of those pamphlets which did so much to disseminate the ideas of the League, and to stir the hearts of men throughout the world.

These were very busy days in the House of Joy, in which there was scarce leisure to eat; yet Gaunt was conscious of an enthusiasm of spirit which he had never known before. He was incapable of fatigue, and he knew that the explanation was that his work was now absolutely congenial. He had always imagined that when he resigned his church, the resignation would leave behind a long groundswell of regret. On the contrary, he now experienced an immense sense of relief. He grew younger every day, and looked younger. He often recollected Gordon's phrases about the exhaustion that attended a life spent in trifles; he saw now that very much of his previous life in the Church answered to that description. What had continually chafed and irritated him was the atmosphere of pettiness in which he had been compelled to work. He had had to fight for even the most reasonable and insignificant innovation against the timidity of men like Tasker and the dislike of men like Roberts. How many sleepless nights had he spent over things of no real moment—the recollection of unkind words, the small diploma-

cies that held together men of opposite temperaments, to say nothing of those constant irritations which arose in guiding the course of various organisations, each one jealous of its neighbour. He was now a soldier relieved from tedious task-work, who hears the trumpet sound, and is filled with the gaiety of battle. He breathed freer, walked with firmer step, moved erect, conscious in every thought and act of a great liberation.

In the meantime, Butler was conducting his propaganda in the Press with consummate ability and tact. He published a series of articles on the decline of the authority of the Church in all civilized countries, which attracted great attention among all intelligent men. In these articles he offered elaborate proof of the general revolt against the Church. Both France and Italy had been compelled to disown the Church because the Church no longer represented and expressed modern needs. In both countries the men who shaped opinion, the real leaders of the nation, were agnostics and even atheists. In London, which might be regarded as the centre of Protestantism, not more than one million people out of five millions attended public worship. England had taken the alarm. The leaders of all the churches, united by a common danger, had published a manifesto, protesting against the increasing desecration of the Sabbath. In America the case was much worse, because while the lessened authority of the Church was more evident, yet there was no percep-

tion of danger. He published a census of church attendance in some of the most prominent districts of New York. The census revealed the fact that not more than one per cent. of the leading churches of New York had full congregations. Some of the churches which figured most prominently came off worst. In one leading Fifth Avenue church, seated for two thousand worshippers, and formerly the scene of a famous ministry, the congregation numbered less than five hundred. Even in Brooklyn, "the city of churches," as they were pleased to call it, more than a million persons never entered a church.

From some of the New England cities, but especially from the Middle West, he obtained reports, carefully compiled by special commissioners, which proved much more disastrous. One leading denomination in Chicago, with many churches, occupying fine sites, could report not one as even moderately prosperous. In one the galleries had been closed for several years; they were no longer needed. Another had been without a minister so long that the congregation had wholly deserted it. In others, whose size witnessed to the success of earlier days, the present congregation was a discouraged handful. And yet on any given Sunday night the places of entertainment flared with light; the theatres were crowded; concerts were thronged; and Pleasure and Frivolity reaped their fullest harvests.

He drew a striking, and even pathetic, picture of

the condition of the minister in these churches. He deserved sympathy, for he was a brave man, conducting a forlorn hope that led to nothing. There were thousands of ministers who knew they were beaten men, but were incapable of understanding why. Some of them, in despair, adopted sensational methods, and indulged in what might be called "illicit preaching" to attract the crowds, and those were the only men who succeeded. The man of finer taste, of deeper spirituality, of real scholarship was not listened to. He bore his defeat in silence, and often died of it.

It was a notorious fact that the best men no longer entered the ministry. The bishops of the Anglican Church in England had publicly deplored the fact, and all who had anything to do with universities and theological seminaries in America were perfectly aware of it. Why was this? Cynics would no doubt reply because the rising youth of America had discovered that much more money was to be made in any other profession than the ministry. But that was a libel on youth. The real reason was that the youth of brilliant parts had discovered that the ministry was an intolerable bondage. Such men would gladly give themselves to the ministry if it afforded them an opportunity commensurate with their powers, and would be content with its modest rewards; but they declined to become the slaves of an institution that robbed them of the right to think freely, bound them by antiquated precedents, and ground out their

lives in piffing trivialities. The result was that the men of real energy of intellect and brilliant powers of initiation refused the ministry, and more and more the greatest function in the world, that of the prophet, was given over to inferior men, who performed their tasks mechanically, and were wholly unable to express the ideas which agitated thoughtful people.

Yet America could not live without a living church; the fortunes of the Republic were bound up with the fortunes of the Church. All history proved that the decline of religion in a nation meant the decline of the nation. Let the present processes go on unchecked for another quarter of a century, and the end was clear. The dawn of the year 1930 would reveal a Pagan America: an America from which the last vestige of Christianity had vanished, leaving pure Paganism as the one governing principle in the national life.

Day after day these striking articles appeared in Butler's paper. Had they appeared in the religious press they would probably have attracted little attention; but appearing as they did in the most authoritative daily journal in America, written as they were with both sympathy and knowledge, and expressed in language at once caustic and temperate, they attracted the attention of the whole nation. They were reprinted in a thousand journals. They were discussed in business offices and clubs. The expression "Pagan America" fixed itself upon the popular

memory. The evening papers took it up, and published sensational episodes and statistics of New York misery and crime. Sickening details were given of squalor and vice, and the question was asked occasionally in real earnestness, but often in derision, "What is the Church doing?" The term Pagan America found its way into the comic papers, which presented their readers with barbaric pictures of what might be supposed to happen in 1930 when America had reverted to type. Music-hall singers used it as a catch-word in their songs, associating it with the most banal and vulgar ideas, and often with thinly-disguised profanity and indecency. The gilded youth of New York asked one another over their cocktails, "Are you a Pagan?" and found a new form of wit in christening a new and complicated cocktail a "liquid Paganism." But beneath all this characteristic levity there sounded a note of real alarm. It was as though a sudden gulf had opened, toward which the entire nation was seen rushing at a frantic gallop. Sober and serious men of all shades of thought, who had already been alarmed by the constant revelations of corruption and fraud in the great insurance societies, in the municipal and political world, began to realize for the first time that all this gangrene of chicanery, which was eating out the honour and life of the nation, had its origin in the decay of the religious sentiment. These things could not have existed had not the restraint of religion been relaxed. Religion, therefore, be-

came the urgent question of the hour. And the form which that question was bound to take was precisely the form Butler had foreseen: was it yet possible to free the genuine spirit of religion from its decaying forms, to rescue it from enfeebling theologies and traditions, to make it once more a genuine impulse and inspiration in the lives of men?

One day Dr. Jordan sought an interview with Butler. He brought with him a resolution of protest against Butler's articles, requesting that it might be published in *The Daily Light*.

"Certainly I will publish it, if you wish," said Butler, "but I think you are ill-advised to request it."

"You will find that the protest is signed by twenty ministers, some of them among the most prominent in New York," said Jordan, stiffly. "Probably they know their own business better than you do."

"That is precisely what I venture to doubt," replied Butler. "You know it is the looker-on who sees most of the game."

He gravely examined the names of the signatories to the protest.

"I see your own name here, Dr. Jordan. Suppose you give me your own views, for I imagine that the protest is your work."

"Yes, sir," said Jordan, pompously. "The protest emanated from me, and I am not ashamed of it. In my opinion your articles are calculated to damage the prestige of the Church."

“Prestige is a small matter, Dr. Jordan. It is merely the mirage of false pride. The only vital question is whether or not these articles are true.”

“They may be true in point of fact,” said Jordan, “but they, nevertheless, create a false impression.”

“You must forgive me, Dr. Jordan, but I am only a plain man, and I can’t for the life of me see how a thing that is true can produce an impression that is false.”

Butler’s tone of banter offended Jordan’s dignity and made him angry.

“Oh, I’m not to be put off with words,” he exclaimed. “I know what you mean to do. You mean to support that pestilent fellow Gaunt. I wouldn’t wonder if he wrote the articles himself. It would be just what might be expected. The man who can’t manage to stay in the Church no sooner leaves it than he usually proceeds to foul his own nest.”

Butler turned to his desk, and began the correction of some proofs that demanded his attention. Without looking up, he said in quiet tones: “I allow no one to shout in my office, Dr. Jordan. You have said things which I am sure you will be glad to forget, and I prefer to forget that I have heard them.”

“I don’t want you to forget them,” blustered Jordan. “I warn you that the entire Church of New York will prove hostile to you and your precious protégé. Therefore I repeat——”

“Pardon me, but you will repeat nothing of what

you have already said. Repeat it outside if you like, and get those to agree with you who will. I am busy. Good-morning."

Jordan had no option but to go.

"Then you will not print my protest?" he said. "I ought to have known that editors only publish what agrees with their own views."

"On the contrary, I will print it, with pleasure—even with malicious pleasure, if you like. But you will find that it will do you little good."

Jordan left in a white heat of rage.

"There goes a fellow," thought Butler, "who ought to have lived in the days of Torquemada. He'd burn his best friend for a difference of opinion. I'm perfectly sure he'd crucify me with pleasure."

Butler related the incident to Gaunt the same evening, and Gaunt's comment was characteristic.

"Don't be hard on Jordan," he said. "He's really a good man, who works with vast industry for his church. But he suffers from constriction of vision, which isn't altogether his fault. There's a curious fact in optics which I came across the other day, which explains Jordan. It is stated that people who live on the prairies or on the African veldt have an extraordinary range of vision, because the eye has to accommodate itself daily to vast spaces. People who live among walls, on the contrary, have very short vision, and the prairie dweller, if he comes to live in a city, soon finds his eye accommodating itself to the narrower range. Well, that's Jordan's

case. He's always lived among walls, church walls, I suppose, and knows nothing about open spaces."

"You are more charitable in your view of him than I am," said Butler.

"Not more charitable; only a little more exact," said Gaunt. "You see, I know him better, and you know the proverb, 'To know all is to forgive all.'"

"I suppose you would say that our business is to get Jordan and his kind out into the open spaces?"

"Oh, he'll have to come out when the walls fall down," said Gaunt, cheerfully. "They're already beginning to tremble, thanks to your seismic efforts."

And this was the truth of the matter, as Butler thankfully admitted. There lay upon his desk hundreds of letters from ministers in all parts of the country, many of them infinitely pathetic in their confession of patient failure, and their eager hope that at length the dawn of deliverance was near. Many similar letters had reached Gaunt, and they gave both Butler and himself a new respect for the American ministry. Contrary to all previous expectations, they began to perceive that the strength and possibility of triumph for the movement lay in the ministers themselves. No doubt men of Jordan's type would be obstinately hostile; but there were others, especially the younger men, whose temper was wholly different. These men were not blind to their conditions. If they were involved in the failure of the Church, it was not so much their

fault as their misfortune. They had been set to perform an impossible task with machinery that was wholly out of date. Gaunt knew the type well: men of sturdy manhood who had fought their way through colleges and seminaries by indomitable sacrifice; who had stoked furnaces or worked on rail-ways to earn money for their training; who were of an incorruptible courage, and because they were courageous, fought on silently and made no complaint. But they knew quite well why they had failed. They knew that they had never had the freedom requisite for success, and these men would rally to the movement.

So day by day the press campaign went on, and daily the public interest deepened. During this month of February Gaunt had become the most talked-of man in America.

XV

THE VISION

THE month was near its close; the first Sunday in March was now imminent. With the approach of this day which meant so much, a sense of great solemnity and awe fell on Gaunt's mind.

Little by little, in the incessant conferences which he had held with his friends, he had drawn the lines of his scheme firm and true. There had been moments of hesitation, when he had felt himself entirely unequal to the magnitude of the task that awaited him; but his dominant mood was peace. He felt himself in the hands of a destiny stronger than himself; he was swept out upon an unknown sea, yet the course which the little boat of his life had taken was so definite that he could not doubt the presence of some invisible steersman. For the obverse side of his liberation was surrender; he had gained liberty only to resign it into the hands of One wiser and stronger than himself.

It seemed to his friends, and at times to himself, that his whole nature had undergone some mysterious process of reconstruction. Intellectually he was the same man, but morally he was a different

man. His whole character was sweetened and softened. And yet there was no element of conscious effort to which he could attribute the change. That was the strange thing over which his mind often meditated with sincere wonder. He had not worked, but had been worked upon. The force which had reshaped him was an external force; it did not arise in himself, it owed nothing to his own volition. Was it new birth—that inexplicable miracle which Christ Himself could not explain: the blowing of a wind whose sound is heard but whose source is secret; which passes through the sterile places of the heart, and leaves behind it fertility and life? It seemed so to those who knew him best. There began to be apparent in him a certain mystic quality. It manifested itself in a curious combination of charm and authority, so that without the least demand on his part all those with whom he came in contact accepted his leadership. He conquered men because he had conquered himself; or, perhaps, it would be truer to say, because he had been conquered.

Perhaps nothing in his after life afforded so severe a test of his character as these four weeks of waiting for the lifting curtain. He was modest under the immense notoriety that had suddenly come to him through Butler's press campaign; but it says even more for the change that had been wrought in him that he was patient under the daily provocations which he endured from those whose hostility to him became the more open as his notoriety increased.

"They don't understand, poor fellows," was his only comment on many an insulting letter.

Cranks of every description waited on him; he had never guessed before how many mad people there were in the world.

One propagandist lady desired to know his views on marriage, and when she found that on this point at least he was severely orthodox, proceeded to deliver for his benefit a ranting half-hour lecture on the servitude of women. Marriage, she affirmed, was "an unholy institootion," designed in the days of woman's innocency for her perpetual enslavement, and she called on Gaunt, in excited tones, to set women free. It did not appear precisely from what woman was to be freed, or what she was to do with her freedom when she got it; the only apparent thing was that the poor creature had found her own life bitter, and Gaunt did his best to soothe her. But she proved too obstinately pugnacious for such kindly arts, and flung out of the House of Joy, with the shrill assurance that every woman in America would henceforth be Gaunt's relentless enemy.

A crank of a totally different order was a mild-mannered gentleman with tired eyes and a subdued pulpit manner of address, who was a long time in coming to the point. This gentleman appeared to be the author of a railroad scheme in the distant West which was to be conducted on purely philanthropic lines, no shares being issued to any one who was not

a Christian man whose character and money were alike without taint. Under these unusual conditions of railroad construction he proposed to build a truly Christian railroad, and he thought it would be an admirable thing if Gaunt would allow a prospectus of this most original scheme to be distributed through Madison Square Garden, coupling with it a request that Gaunt would be good enough to mention the enterprise in his sermon. It was very hard to convince this amiable gentleman that railroad enterprises, whether Christian or otherwise, did not furnish a fit theme for religious addresses.

"I know that most people would think so," he remarked, in gentle deprecation. "Indeed, I have already interviewed several ministers in New York on the subject without success. But I thought you were a different sort of man, sir."

"Not different enough for that, I am afraid," Gaunt replied.

It was a long time before this mild-mannered enthusiast could be persuaded to go away, and when he went it was with the sorrowful conviction, which he earnestly impressed on Gaunt, that the greatest opportunity which he had ever had of doing good was escaping him.

Then Roberts wrote him a bitter letter, in which he accused him of having wrecked Mayfield Avenue Church by his ambition and eccentricity; and Jordan waited on him with vehement prophecies of impending financial and moral bankruptcy.

It seemed that Jordan had really come to get matter for a so-called interview, which appeared a few days later in a "religious" journal. In the interview there was scarcely a sentence which Gaunt had really uttered: it consisted entirely of a series of bitter and derisive comments upon Gaunt and his movement. He was described as a man whose conversion to spiritual ideals was so recent that most reasonable persons would be cautious in accepting the conversion as genuine. Every one knew that any attraction he had exerted was based solely upon a reputation which he had been able to build up for literary scholarship, and it was probable that he knew a great deal more about Browning than he did about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What men wanted was the old Gospel, pure and unadulterated, and Gaunt had never yet given any evidence of loyalty to the old, old gospel, which alone was able to make men wise unto salvation. He had notoriously failed in his own church, and it was not until that failure was evident and humiliating that he had suddenly posed as a religious reformer. Again, all reasonable men would be extremely slow to accept as a new religious leader one who had not been able to retain the loyalty of his own congregation. As for the House of Joy, it was a fantastic name for a fantastic and mischievous social adventure. It would end, as all other schemes for community life had ended, in failure, and probably in disgrace. It was quite evident that Gaunt's mind was slightly un-

balanced, and that the present notoriety which he had attained was not favourable to his recovery. He had now become an adventurer, who preyed upon the credulity and fanaticism of weak-minded Christian people.

There was much more of the same sort, followed by a letter signed by Roberts and said to have been prepared in consultation with his fellow-deacons, in which what he called "The True Facts of Dr. Gaunt's Case" were set forth. According to these facts the real reason why Gaunt had resigned the Mayfield Avenue Church was nothing more nor less than this, that his ministry had been a failure. It might be only a coincidence that the late pastor of that influential church had become a reformer only when he had failed as a preacher; such coincidences certainly might happen, but Dr. Gaunt's former associates in the Mayfield Avenue Church knew him too well to regard them as accidental.

Butler smiled grimly when Gaunt showed him this article.

"It is what I expected," he marked. "When a man walks in the sunshine the snakes come out to bite his heel; success makes enemies."

"Poor fellows, they don't understand!" said Gaunt.

"For that reason it would be folly to try to enlighten them. I suppose your first thought was to answer this venomous stuff?"

"I did think of it."

“Well, think of it no more,” said Butler. “You will get plenty more of this kind of thing before you are through. It’s a good rule with such antagonists as these never to argue, never to contradict, and generally to forget. Besides nothing makes them so conscious of their own inferiority as silence. In matters of controversy, when a man is obviously very anxious for you to speak, don’t.”

But the article, with its calculated malice, nevertheless, had its effect. It went the round of the so-called orthodox religious press, and the champions of orthodoxy arose in their wrath. One of those champions, an old theological professor, whose classes Gaunt had had the misfortune to attend for a year, came to see him. How well Gaunt remembered those classes! The professor had thought his duty accomplished when he informed his students how many times Abraham was mentioned in the Scriptures, and had delivered to them without the least explanation the cut-and-dried dogmas of mediæval theologies; but not once had he ever made them feel the real message of the Gospel, or enabled them to see what the life of Jesus meant.

The professor came to see him in no friendly spirit, as was soon evident. With his white hair, narrow brow, and spare form, he presented a venerable figure, but it was soon manifest that years had done nothing to soften the asperity of his temper, or to enlarge his thoughts. He also spoke of the old Gospel as if it were a mystery which he

alone understood, and accused Gaunt of betraying it.

"On the contrary," Gaunt remonstrated, "I have gone back to it—to a Gospel much older than theology, and older even than the Church."

But it was useless to argue with the old man, who was convinced that he lived in the period of the world's final apostasy, which conviction he supported by strange references to the big horn and the little horn in the Book of Revelations, and the beast who came out of the sea, and the woman in scarlet raiment.

"Let us part as friends," said Gaunt.

But the old man drew away from him in anger, exclaiming that he would take the hand of no man who was a traitor to the truth; and so Gaunt once more had to answer: "Poor fellow, he doesn't understand!"

There were other visitors, too, of a very different type: people who came late at night because they had only the scanty leisure of the workingman. Many of them were of that intelligent and thoughtful type which may be found on Sunday nights at the Cooper Institute—men with calloused hands that spoke of hard work, who had used their narrow opportunities of culture in mastering the principles of social and political economy. They were all of them hostile to the Church, and Gaunt soon discovered that the primary attraction he had for them was that he had broken with the Church. But if

they were hostile to the Church, they were far from hostile to religious ideas. They regarded Jesus as the greatest of thinkers and reformers, who was crucified by the capitalist classes, who distorted the meaning of His Gospel, suppressed its real teachings, and finally manufactured out of it a weapon of tyranny. The more Gaunt saw of these men, the more his heart went out to them, and he found in their interest in him the brightest possible augury for his work. They were socialists in theory, and some of them might be justly called anarchists; but there was one distinguishing quality which he found in all of them, a real passion for humanity, a vehement desire for human betterment, a true sense of the part which collectivist ideas must play in the future reconstruction of society.

"These are the best Christians I have yet met," he said to Palmer.

"Of course," Palmer answered. "In their own way these men are feeling after the same social ideas which Jesus formulated; if Jesus came to New York, as He once came to Jerusalem, in the raiment of the carpenter, it is among these men He would probably find His first disciples."

But of all his visitors, the one who left the deepest impression upon him was a burly, ill-dressed man from a great manufacturing city in New England.

It was on the Saturday night which preceded the opening of his mission in Madison Square Garden, and Gaunt, who had hoped to keep his evening free

from all interruption, met his visitor with some reluctance.

The man's appearance and manner were not prepossessing, but the moment he spoke Gaunt was aware that he was no common man. He spoke in short, abrupt sentences, using from time to time vivid and picturesque phrases. It seemed he was a self-constituted street-preacher in the city where he lived, and his history was remarkable. He had been a drunkard, a gambler, and an atheist, until he was forty, and not once in all those years had entered a church. One day he was working in the house of a good woman, who asked him about his soul. He hotly resented the question, and only a sense of respect for the character of his questioner prevented him from making an angry and insolent reply. He left the house, but the question remained with him. He became acutely miserable. The Sunday morning came.

"If I had a decent pair of pants, I believe I'd go to church," he said.

His family greeted the idea with laughter. He repaired his clothes, however, as he best could, and went to church.

"Sir," said he to Gaunt, "I give you my word, I was so ignorant I did not understand a single word of that service. The minister seemed to be using words I had never heard, and talking about things way off from me. I grew angrier each moment, and sad, too, for I knew I badly needed some kind

of help, for I was miserable. Then the lady who had already spoken to me, saw me and came to speak to me. I went home with her, and she prayed with me.

“ ‘Do you feel any better now?’ she asked.

“ ‘I can’t say that I do,’ says I.

“She seemed disappointed, but I was worse hurt than she was. I went to the drink again, but it was no use, I was more miserable than ever. Then I ordered all the infidel books I knew, but I found they didn’t interest me. All the while, I should say, I was reading the Gospels a bit at a time. They seemed all a jumble to me, but now and then something spoke to me out of them—just a whisper, as if it was Jesus Himself. But nothing came of it; it was like the praying, I didn’t feel any better; so at last I resolved to commit suicide. I went out on the bridge at night, I stood in the way of the cars, in real earnest over this suicide business, but somehow I couldn’t do it. At last I got to a point where I had to do something or go mad. So I chose a night when no one was in the house, went into my room, and put my loaded pistol on the table, resolved to have the thing out with God. I didn’t know how to pray. I didn’t know the right sort of words, so I fell on my knees and said something like this: ‘O Jesus, I don’t know where you are, and I don’t know whether I’ve got a soul, but if you are anywhere round, and can do anything for my soul, you’ve got to do it quick. Here’s the pistol,

and here am I, and I mean business. I don't know what it is to be saved, but I know that's about what I want, and I've got to be saved in five minutes, or die. So now you know my case, and you know what you've got to do, if you can do it anyway.'

"Then I said amen, like I'd heard the preacher say, and I waited."

"Well," said Gaunt, who by this time was roused into the intensest interest.

"It was the longest five minutes I ever spent, sir. I was in such agony that the sweat rolled off my face, and I'd a strong mind to be done with it. But each time I reached out for that pistol I thought: 'No, you gave Him five minutes, and five minutes He's got to have. There's no good comes of not playing fair.'

"Then, all at once, I felt that Some One had entered the room. I darsen't lift my head, but I knew He was there. It was like as though something gentle touched my head, a kind of little soft wind, like you feel when anybody passes quite close to you. And then I looked up and it seemed to me the room was filled with sunlight. It was like the finest June morning you ever saw, when you wake early and find the room all ablaze with light, and can't sleep any more. 'Glory!' I shouted. 'I do believe I'm saved;' and I was. I didn't know how He done it, but I knew as well as I'll ever know anything that Jesus had been in that room, and had stooped down

and touched that dark soul of mine, and left His sunlight behind."

Tears ran down the man's face as he told this story. And then he went on to tell Gaunt its sequel, how he was delivered from his vices, how he sought out other men that he might save them, how five years ago he had bought a cart which he wheeled into the market-square every day at noon in all weathers, and preached his plain gospel of instant salvation to all who would hear him.

"Sir," he said, in a voice broken by emotion, "I'm only a poor, ignorant fellow, but in those five years I've seen two thousand men saved just as I was. And here in my city are scores of ministers, all good men, and with all kinds of learning, and they've never seen a man saved like that in years. Sir, how is it? Surely God had rather use a man with knowledge than a poor ignorant man like me, if only he'd let God use him. And so, sir, I thought I'd run up to New York, just to tell you this, by way of encouraging you. If God can use me in my poor way, He can use you in a much bigger way, and I believe He will, if you'll let Him."

Gaunt would gladly have kept this strange guest with him all night, but he refused.

"No," he said; "I must get back by the night train. I've got my work. But I'll tell my men I've seen you, and we'll all be praying for you to-morrow night."

The more Gaunt reflected on this story the more

it affected him by its simple truth and pathos. But it did more than affect his emotions: it was to him a spiritual revelation. All that Palmer had said to him long before about his own sense of Jesus as a living Presence came back to him with overwhelming force. Here were two men of widely different type: the one highly cultured, the other quite ignorant of all that the world calls knowledge; yet each had experienced the same revelation of Jesus as a Personal Friend; nay, far more, as a Saviour capable of loosening the bonds of sin and creating new life in the human soul. He saw now, not quite for the first time, with intense lucidity of vision that the real dynamic of all service for others lay in this experience of Jesus as a living Saviour. It was for want of this dynamic that so many schemes of social service had failed, and without it his great League of Service would fail too.

What if this man's experience—his crude challenge to the unseen, the immediate response, the room filled with sunlight,—was in the nature of the miraculous? Surely enough had occurred in his own life to make him tolerant of miracle. Had not he, in the rapid passage of his own life in these days, in all its unfolding of event, been conscious of an Unseen Steersman? Besides, there was always the fact to be reckoned with that for twenty centuries all kinds of men had testified to the same kind of experience which had suddenly lifted this man from the depths of despair into a world of infinite light

and joy. Cromwell had made the same confession; Augustine and Francis, Bunyan and Wesley, and millions of humble people whose names had perished. And then there was that remark about preachers which the man had made—how was it that these men, students of the Bible and its accepted expositors, had never witnessed that immediate deliverance of men from the bondage of their sin, which he, ignorant street-preacher as he was, had seen in two thousand instances? Could it be because they had never experienced this miracle in themselves? Was it possible to preach religious truth, and yet miss the supreme spiritual secret which this man had discovered—the secret which gave him, with all his intellectual deficiencies, a power over the human soul which they never knew?

A great horror fell upon the mind of Gaunt. The hour was late, it was near midnight, and he alone was awake in the house. He went upstairs silently to his room, and stood for a long time looking out upon the Square. The sky was bright with many lights; across the corner of the Square rushed a train upon the Elevated Railway, like a sinuous comet; vast buildings, the Babel towers of this modern Babylon, starred with shining windows, rose against the skyline; and on all sides surged the subdued roar of this restless city, with a sound like the sound of many waters. And this was his battle-field, this the immense city which he proposed to conquer. Hidden beneath its multitudinous roofs

were those who would hear him on the morrow, those who looked to him as a prophet; and beyond those formidable battlements lay a continent populous with cities, and in all of them men half-interested, half-sceptical, who wondered what the morrow would bring forth. God help him, what had he to say to them? With what secret was he armed that should prove stronger than the selfishness and lust and greed which in all these cities had built the smoking fires of Moloch, and kindled the red hells of Mammon, and driven the weak and helpless through the flames?

He fell upon his knees in an agony that seemed to rend body and spirit asunder. He prayed in broken words. He spread his naked, tortured soul before God. And his words, each one torn and bleeding out of his own heart, were even such words as his strange visitor had used in his extremity. They were a challenge to the Unseen, a re-utterance of the old cry of men, whose echo never leaves the world: "O that I knew where I might find Him."

Hours passed. He had fallen asleep as he prayed, worn out with his emotions. And then he woke, quietly as a child wakes. He did not rise from his knees, he did not look up; he did not wish to. But he was sensible of a strong light that seemed to roll in upon his soul, wave on wave. He felt no sense of wonder; it all appeared sweetly natural, a thing long expected. He breathed an atmosphere full of delicious warmth and comfort.

There was a sense of shadows melting on a misty sea. A long beach, yellow in the light, spread at his feet. A boat, with a red sail, slipped through the mist and came to anchor. A fire of coals burned upon the beach—he could see how the air quivered over it, where the flame and sunbeams met. And beside the fire stood a Figure, white-robed and motionless. . . . He moved. He lifted His hand, pointing silently to the distant hills, blue in the dawn, and said, "Follow Me."

"And when the day was now breaking Jesus stood on the beach. The disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said, 'It is the Lord.'"

Gaunt rose from his knees, moved slowly to the window, like a man uncertain of his footsteps, because his feet are still tangled in the soft mesh of dreams. Outside the window lay the great city as he had seen it hours before, but surely in the interval something wonderful had happened.

The great blocks of building, like battlemented towers, still ranged themselves against the skyline; here a dome broke their order, here a spire; but rising over all, enfolding all, stood the figure of a Man.

His robes, of thinnest gauze, fell across the city; His arms were outspread; and behind His head the stars clustered like a crown.

He stooped, as though He would take the whole vast city to His bosom. His face was very strong and very pitiful, and as He stooped, it seemed doors

opened everywhere, crowds of worn and haggard people filled the streets, and hands were stretched upward to Him, and a cry of gladness filled the air. Then the Vision gradually withdrew; it faded out among the stars; but still the people stood, and watched, and stretched out their arms to it.

Was it a dream? It may have been; but Gaunt knew that it was a Dream born of Truth.

Behold he also had challenged the Unseen and had his answer.

And he knew then that that which he had waited for all his life had come to pass. Henceforth he was certain of the Presence of a Living Saviour in the world, for he also had met Him.

He went to his bed, and slept like a little child.

When he woke the morning light shone across his bed, and the Day had come.

XVI

THE CROSS OF STARS

THAT one slight figure, a mere black dot, under the gaze of twice ten thousand eyes, looked pathetically insignificant. It seemed a thing impossible that any human voice would reach so vast a throng, still less that any single man could dominate this great assembly with the qualities of the orator.

For Butler's press campaign had borne its fruit in the vastest assembly ever gathered under the auspices of religion in New York. Hundreds of people had travelled long distances to be present at the service. They had besieged the doors early in the afternoon, and had waited patiently through long hours. Substantial business men, and men whose faces bore the tan of outdoor life, jostled one another in the crowd. The millionaire and the artisan sat side by side. College youths thronged the galleries, equally ready for reverent attention or mischievous interruption. Many ministers were present; they sat in groups, from time to time conversing in eager whispers. What had they come out to see? No one knew, but each felt the moment pregnant with possibility and surprise. And then came that

sudden silence, that most thrilling of all moments when ten thousand human creatures draw a long, shuddering breath, realizing that at last a moment long anticipated had arrived.

“Let us pray.”

The clear, high tenor dominated in an instant the eager crowd.

“Our Father, which art in Heaven.”

And the multitude found its voice in the familiar petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. At first the response was ineffective; but it slowly swelled in volume, ending in the Amen with a sound like that of a breaking wave.

A cornet gave the air of “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” Had the old hymn ever been so sung before? For there was no one there who did not know it, and none for whom it had not memories. And then, without preface, Gaunt began to speak, and a sigh of relief rose from the crowd when it realized that every word was distinctly articulated, and that his voice, which seemed so light, nevertheless had a certain clear, singing quality, which reached every ear.

He spoke very simply, at first traversing the familiar ground of his last address at Mayfield Avenue Church, which Butler had widely circulated. Those who had expected some sensational utterance, or some vehement attack upon the churches, grew restless under a sense of disappointment. It soon became evident that Gaunt’s purpose was constructive and not destructive. His address was confessional

in tone; the apology of a strong man for the nature of his life. And as this tone deepened, the restlessness subsided. He painted for them, in a few deft touches, what Christianity had been to him, and what it had become. He uttered no word of blame or criticism of others; he quietly described the development of his own mind and thought. It was the sort of speech that a man might have made in the intimacy of a college room to a trusted friend. Yet nothing could have been more effective. He was simply taking that vast audience into his confidence.

“Was Christianity played out?” he asked.

And then, with a gesture that seemed to gather all the units of the multitude into solidarity, he replied: “This audience is the most convincing answer to the question. It is the proof that the most vital of all interests in human life is the religious interest. Christ is not dead. He only sleeps. He may awake at any moment. And this is the day of resurrection. From the tomb of outworn tradition and convention He is coming forth in the indestructible vitality of ideas which cannot die. The rust-worn hinges give way, the doors roll back. Behold Him, for He is here!”

So vivid were the words that it seemed as though an actual vision met the eyes of the silent crowd. They leaned forward, surprised, thrilled, expectant.

“It is even as the greatest poet of modern thought has said,” he continued: “The good Lord Jesus has

not had His day. It has only dawned. It will come by and by. The eastern sun shines upon an empty tomb, and the day grows strong.' ”

A wave of strong emotion swept across the multitude. The college boys in the gallery hung forward open-mouthed. The rhetorician had often triumphed in this vast auditorium; but every one felt that here was more than rhetoric. Here was a believing man, a man wholly convinced, and his power of conviction dominated the minds of those who heard him, compelling their assent. There was every kind of mind represented in that great array of men and women—the curious, the flippant, the sceptical, the serious, the hostile,—yet at that moment each realized with more or less of intensity that religion was, after all, the most vital thing in the world. Perhaps the noblest power of the orator is to suggest the presence in other minds of thoughts which they themselves do not discern, to give them form, and to interpret them. It was precisely this triumph that Gaunt achieved.

The passionate moment passed, leaving behind it tingling nerves; and then in clear, incisive tones Gaunt began to analyze the reason for the apparent failure of existing Christianity. It was the most difficult part of his task, and he knew it. Had he been bitter or satirical, he must have failed. He would at once have antagonized the larger part of his audience, for the larger part was nominally Christian. He took, instead, the one course which

could have succeeded. He appealed to the best instincts of his audience, to the nobler part in their hearts. He spoke the truth, but it was in love.

“Were they, the Christian people, really contented with their own conventional Christianity? Could they conceive nothing better? If their Master should then and there enter that auditorium, dust-stained, weary, bearing on His shoulders the heavy Cross, would they welcome Him? Would they even recognize Him. Or, if they did, would not their easy-going Christianity shrivel up in shame before this authentic Christianity, which meant derision, mockery, goodness sacrificing itself for the ungrateful, love stooping to the lowest tasks of service, and at last the blood of a great sacrifice poured out willingly for a world that did not understand its sublime anguish and renunciation?”

And once more the note of passion vibrated through the hearts of those who heard. Many eyes were turned instinctively toward the doors of the auditorium, as though they expected to see the actual entrance of the Master with the Cross.

Gaunt stood motionless, with extended arm pointing to the door. The silence was intense. It was so complete that, far away in the distant galleries, a woman's sob was distinctly audible.

“Yet we must meet Him,” he said, in low, thrilling tones. “We must meet Him at the final Judgment. We are meeting Him now, for the throne of judgment is set in the sunset-clouds of every

day, and is in our hearts when the book of each day's life is closed."

It was very simply said. Others had no doubt said it before. But as Gaunt said it, it had an authority of a revelation. The wonderful voice trembled, the spare figure, with outstretched arm, stood tense and rigid; his face glowed with awful fire.

Again the woman's sob was heard from the distant gallery. It was followed by a long, shuddering breath in the immense audience, as of the wind sighing in the boughs of innumerable trees.

For a moment it seemed as though the pent-up emotion of the multitude would relieve itself in some hysteric outburst. For many there it was a moment forever memorable and awful. It was as though the veils of use and custom were suddenly rent in twain, the forms of religion were dissolved, and the very soul and essence of truth stood revealed.

And then, in a voice perfectly composed and calm, Gaunt resumed his exposition of ideals. He sketched rapidly the condition of New York, of America, of the world, in relation to religion; the indifference which sprang from ignorance or despair; the impotence of religion to touch in any real way the lives even of those who accepted its truths; the enormous social problems that threatened the very existence of the Republic; the call of the times to all good men and women to combine to reinstate religion as a vital reality in the govern-

ment of the world. Could they effect this reinstatement? It looked impossible; it was really easy. It became easy when the actual life of Jesus was accepted as the model of all human life. Christianity was really nothing more nor less than following Christ. It was not a mode of thought, but a rule of life. And what he had to propose that night was the union of all who loved in the service of all who suffered. He proposed the creation of a new social force, the League of Universal Service.

It was for this moment that Gaunt's friends had waited with eager anxiety. Butler, particularly, knew from long journalistic experience the value of phrases: how it was in the power of a phrase, rightly uttered at the psychologic moment, to shatter creeds, to create parties, to start far-reaching movements. Accustomed both to measure and create public opinion, he knew that the critical moment had now arrived. And he had prepared for that moment in a way peculiarly his own, without any consultation with Gaunt.

It was a way which Gaunt would not have approved, and that was why he did not consult him. It was daring, sensational, spectacular, but Butler knew that there were moments when a great multitude could be profoundly moved by such a method. And so, unknown to Gaunt, he had conspired with the authorities of the Garden to erect a vast Cross, studded with electric lights, in the dark shadows on the back of the stage. A curtain covered it from

view, and beside the curtain stood two men, who had received their instructions from him.

“And so I propose,” Gaunt reiterated, “a League of Universal Service—whose emblem is the Cross, whose motto is the union of all who love in the service of all who suffer.”

And at these words Butler knew his hour had come. He lifted his hand; it was a preconcerted signal.

And then in swift silence the curtain lifted, and suddenly there flashed out, high in air, above the astonished multitude a vast Cross, blazing with many lights.

A cry rose from the multitude—a cry of wonder, delight, surprise. All over the vast auditorium men and women rose to their feet staring and startled, as if a miracle had happened. Gaunt turned swiftly, saw the flaming splendour, and sat down, overwhelmed, his face in his hands. For a moment it seemed as though Butler’s daring had been miscalculated, as though it would result in confusion. Then a happy thought seized the man with the cornet. He turned to the quartette who had led the singing, and the next moment they rose to their feet.

The cornet rang out, like an inspired voice, in the strains of “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”

And then the emotion of the crowd broke loose at last. Ten thousand men and women were on their feet. The crowd needed no prompting. With that unanimity possible only in moments of intense

emotion, they felt the spirit of the hour, and in the presence of that Cross of starry lights sang:

“When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

It was the birth-song of the League of Service

The hymn ceased. The great multitude stood silent, uncertain what to do. It was noticeable that no one left the hall.

Gaunt rose once more, his composure restored.

“I take it that you endorse my ideal,” he said. “If you do, resume your seats. Let me explain in a few words precisely what it is I mean by the League of Universal Service.”

The great audience once more became silent.

“Those who suffer are many,” he said; “those who love are yet more numerous. The vital principle of the League is, as I have said, the union of all who love in the service of all who suffer.

“You will notice that in this ideal there is nothing antagonistic to any existing church. I have no quarrel with any form of creed that helps men toward right living, or any organisation that admits the Mastership of Jesus Christ. I make my appeal alike to Catholic and Protestant, to Unitarians and Trinitarians. I would not even exclude the Buddhist and the Mohammedan. I make my appeal to men of no fixed religious creed, who, nevertheless, admit the

principle of altruism in human conduct. The bond is not words but deeds. The aim is the expression of a spirit and principle, not of a theology. It is a vast confederacy of kindness which I contemplate. Of that confederacy there can, however, be but one head. Jesus Christ alone has the right to the primacy of this confederacy. It is His, because no one has loved mankind as He loved, no one has done for men what He has done, no example of self-sacrifice and love can equal His.

“You will ask me if I have any precise and definite plan of action to lay before you?

“I have.

“I desire first to enrol formally all who are ready to join the League, as one would enrol volunteers for war, if a great national peril threatened us.

“Those who so enrol themselves will pledge themselves to allow no day to pass without some positive act of service for others.

“In every district of a city, or in every town or village where the League is established, the members will meet for a weekly conference, in order to determine the best means of organized effort by which the principles of the League can be applied to the needs of their locality.

“The societies of the League thus established will pledge themselves to use all their influence for every work of social betterment and for the return to all public offices of men of good character irrespective of all party considerations.

“I propose further that each member of the League shall contribute a small sum—let us say a dollar a year—to the common treasury of the League. I have been warned that this proposition is perilous; the only peril that I can discern is that the funds so raised may be used for improper purposes. Let me say, then, that neither I, nor any of those now associated with me, will touch one cent of this money. It will be used in its entirety for the work of the League, and every cent will be strictly accounted for.

“This is not a rich man’s movement. It must not be financed by rich men. It is a people’s movement. It exists for the people, it must be supported by the people, and hence I fix the annual subscription so low that the poorest can afford it.

“I propose further that every man and woman joining the League shall wear some simple badge. Men are proud to wear the Grand Army badge. They should be prouder still to wear the badge of the Grand Army of Jesus Christ, to belong to the divine Salvage Corps of Humanity.

“And to-night I have found what that badge should be.”

He pointed to the illuminated Cross.

“It shall be a Cross with stars upon it. The Cross shall symbolize the sacrifice Love makes for others. The stars shall symbolize the light eternal that shines upon the road of Service. ‘And they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, and

as the brightness of the firmament forever and ever.' ”

If inspiration still means anything in human life, surely this was Gaunt's inspired moment. He had been ignorant of Butler's device. It had taken him by surprise. But when the Cross blazed out above the people, when they rose as one man and sang, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," he felt once more, as he had so often felt of late, that he was the servant of events rather than their creator. He shared the deep emotion of the crowd. He realized that all great movements are born out of emotional moments. The barriers of conventionalism, which he might in vain have sought to break down with words, had suddenly fallen of themselves when the most sacred symbol known to man suddenly flashed upon the crowd. It was the very suddenness of the vision that had shaken men, that had lifted them out of themselves, that had given the concrete form to his idealism. Twenty centuries of love and heroic passion, interpreted in the noblest lives known to history, saluted them in this illumined Cross. And in that moment he had suddenly realized that no truer, no more poignant and suggestive badge of the League he wished to form, could be found than in a Cross of Stars.

Gaunt's declaration that the Cross was the symbol of the League marked the triumphant moment of this memorable evening.

Once more the vast audience rose to its feet.

It was a simultaneous movement, a spontaneous recognition of the birth of a new world-force. In the perfect silence which ensued Gordon stepped to the front of the steps.

"I am an old man," he said. "My life may be a matter of moments. I wish to give every moment that is still mine to the work of the League. I ask for the privilege of being the first to write my name upon its muster-roll."

"And I will be the second," said Butler.

And then, from every part of the hall, men and women pressed forward in a continuous line.

An hour passed, and still the enrolment went on. Again and again the crowd broke into a song, returning at intervals to that great hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," which alone seemed to express the deepest sentiment of the hour.

Many had left the auditorium, but so vast was the throng outside that their places were immediately filled by newcomers.

"What's it all about?" asked one of these newcomers, a roughly-dressed man with a stentorian voice.

"It's a kind of League," replied a boyish voice from the gallery. "You're to pay a dollar and love everybody."

"I guess that's cheap at the price," the man with the stentorian voice replied. "Put my name down, mister."

To these late comers Gaunt again expounded the

objects of the League. Brief and fragmentary as these expositions were, yet they made their impression.

It was near midnight. Gaunt, unaware of physical fatigue, still stood at his post, welcoming each fresh volunteer. And still the Cross of Stars blazed overhead, as in conscious triumph.

At last the meeting closed.

Butler's usually impassive face glowed with emotion.

"Five thousand persons at least must have joined us," he said. "At this rate, in a year we shall have a million."

He gathered up sheet after sheet covered with names.

These names represented almost every phase of society. The addresses given were Fifth Avenue mansions and East Side tenement houses.

"Come," said Butler, as he led Gaunt away, "there can be no sleep for either of us to-night. I must go at once to the office. You will do well to go through these lists immediately and enumerate them."

The cornet gave the first bar of the Doxology. There were still in the house some thousands of people to sing it.

And so, back to the House of Joy went Gaunt and his little band of workers. It had been a night of triumph.

The League of Universal Service was founded.

And as Gaunt once more looked from his window across the Square, he knew that the vision he had had of a Christ stooping over New York in yearning love, was no hallucination.

The stars shone clear, a soft wind whispering of spring moved among the trees in the Square; but though he saw no longer a Divine Man, whose diaphanous robe trailed in dim light above the city, yet he heard more clearly than he had ever heard the irresistible Voice which proclaimed: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"Master, this is Thy City, and this is Thy work," he cried. "Use me as Thou wilt, but only use me."

And again the voice replied, "Lo, I am with you always."

And the stars paled, the eastern glory grew and widened.

The day was once more at the dawn. It shone upon that long path of labour and endeavour which Gaunt must tread to make his dreams come true; and Gaunt bowed his head, and accepted his vocation.

XVII

OLIVIA'S CHOICE

THE leaven of the new movement spread fast, especially among the churches. What at first appeared fantastic and sensational soon proved itself to be a vindication of reason in relation to religion. It was a return to reality, the sudden emergence of the essential and imperishable elements of religion.

To multitudes of men, especially those men who composed the younger ministry and membership of the churches, its effect was like the awakening from a dream. What had the ministry been teaching? What had the churches been doing? Both alike had been moving in an unreal world. No wonder church attendance had declined. The average man felt no need of the Church because the Church did not understand his need.

“You can make men believe, but he who believes against his will is worse than an atheist,” was one of Gordon’s pregnant sayings.

“It is not doctrines that inspire conduct, but conduct that creates doctrines,” was another.

Gordon had been saying these things all his life, and had suffered for saying them. They had been

hard sayings, which only a few elect souls could receive. But he now found that the world had moved, after all. His teaching, long neglected and derided, became the gospel of the hour. He became, as Gaunt had prognosticated, the prophet of the movement, and his words were everywhere quoted, commented on, and endorsed.

"We have treated Christianity as something to be thought about," he wrote in one of his books; "whereas, it is not a system of thought at all, but a code of life. Jesus lives in the eternal memory of the race not alone by what He taught, but by what He did. Others could have preached the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus alone lived it. To live a virtue is greatly more than to attain to the clearest vision of what virtue is. It needs a diviner inspiration to live one day well than to write a gospel. The only real claim to inspiration which any gospel has, is that it can help a single man to live a single day well."

Teachings such as these, widely disseminated and backed up by the conspicuous example of the League of Service, were bound to have their effect; but the chief reason of their potency lay, after all, in the ripeness of men's minds to receive them. Gaunt had not judged wrongly when he had announced a universal revolt against the existing Church. But behind every revolt there is some ideal of reconstruction. To deny is really to affirm.

"Men hate because they love," Gordon wrote. "Hatred is simply love reversed. He who hates a

thing because it is bad is already in love with something better. Hatred is the shadow thrown by love."

And so, as the great controversy went on, it proved to be.

But because hatred must precede love, the immediate effect of the movement was immense dissension. This dissension made itself felt first, as was natural, in the churches. And among the first to feel the ferment was Jordan's.

Jordan himself contributed to this effect in no small degree by his vehement denunciation of Gaunt. In this, however, he failed in his usual astuteness, and mistook the temper of his church. He had occupied a position of supremacy for so many years, his authority had been so long unquestioned, that any revolt against that authority seemed incredible, and hence he stubbornly refused to recognize the signs of the times. But as the weeks passed, the proofs that his authority over his congregation was weakened became too evident for denial. His geniality forsook him; he became anxious. Sleep failed him, and he grew querulous. And then, to complete his discomfiture, he found the spirit of revolt active in his own household.

The Jordan household consisted of a sick wife and two children, Robert and Olivia. Robert had long ago left home, after a series of bitter quarrels with his father. At sixteen Robert had been a high-spirited and lovable boy, with no worse vice than a

certain proud impatience of restraint. At eighteen he had gone to college, taking with him no better moral ballast than a narrow traditional theology which had never commended itself to his intellect, and had long been repugnant to his heart. A year at college had turned him into a freethinker. His freethinking at the worst was but the effervescence of a youthful mind; but with the common vanity of youth he had been proud to parade it as a symbol of liberty. If the boy's father had possessed any real elasticity or sympathy of intellect, no great harm would have been done; but Jordan possessed neither. He did not attempt to argue with his son; he commanded his obedience. He had never known in himself the ferment of a youthful mind, and he could not comprehend it in another. A sympathetic father would have recognized in this ferment of undigested ideas the signs of a growing intellect; Jordan saw in it only the evidence of dire apostasy. He refused to let the boy return to college on the ground that he was responsible for his son's moral safety and must, therefore, keep the boy under his own eye. Of all courses which he could have taken, this was the unwisest and the worst. Cut off from the natural comradeship of youth, spied upon and hindered in all his pursuits, left without regular employment, and treated with habitual sarcasm, the boy soon fell into evil courses, less from a liking for evil than a warm detestation of what passed for good in his father's house. The end came suddenly,

when one night, coming home late, the boy found his father's door closed against him. The next morning he had disappeared. Enquiries proved vain; he had never since been heard of. Too late, Jordan would have given anything to have opened the door to the boy against whom the door had been locked on that night of anger; but beyond a tightening of the mouth and some fresh lines upon the forehead, Jordan gave no sign of what he felt. The name of Robert was never spoken in his father's presence. It was from that night of the closed door that the mother's sickness began—a sickness beyond the reach of medicine.

In the secret forlornness of his heart, Jordan turned for comfort to his daughter. Olivia Jordan, like her brother, was high-spirited, but of a much more ductile nature. When Robert left home she was too young to understand the causes of the disaster, but she recognized the ceaseless, incurable grief of her father, and her heart went out to him. She had shared his confidences, as far as he was capable of imparting them; she had been educated into his view of things: and the mere power of daily contiguity had shaped her character into a fashion consonant with her father's habits of thought. She had grown into a beautiful and thoughtful woman: conventionally active in church work, popular among the people, and much loved for her graces of disposition and person.

Olivia Jordan had been present at the great meet-

ing in Madison Square, and had been profoundly impressed. It proved the turning-point of her history. From that moment she had become her father's unwilling judge. It is a terrible hour for parents when the personality which they have created assumes its own rights, and is no more plastic to their control; that hour had now come for Jordan. Olivia heard in silence her father's public and private criticism of Gaunt. She heard with a divided, and latterly with a dissenting, mind. She had so long trusted her father's judgment that when she at last reached the point of questioning it the process of revolt was swift. Night after night, as she lay sleepless, it seemed as though some power not herself, a power at once acute and malicious, pieced the past together, illumined it, analyzed and dissected it, and finally combined its elements into dreadful coherence. She realized the treachery of such thoughts, but she could not help herself. Again and again, by an effort of the will, she dismissed them; always they returned again like a pain which increases after each interval of postponement. The father whom she had always regarded as wise she saw now as foolish and misguided. Yet it was not for her to say so. Even though he were a thousandfold more wrong than he was, yet it was her duty to be silent. But she had no sooner reached this conclusion than the mind ran back again like a returning tide, and she felt her silence a worse treachery than the plainest speech could be. She

grew pale and thin with the constant agitation of her thoughts. Her cheerfulness left her, and she went about her household tasks with leaden feet. For a long time her father had been too absorbed in his own difficulties to notice her dejection; but she knew that the time must come when her secret would be laid bare, and at last it came.

On a certain evening Jordan had entertained at his house a number of his clerical friends, who called themselves satirically the S. P. Club, or the Club of Superior Persons. The club met once a month, nominally for the discussion of theological questions, really for the purpose of comradeship. At the dinner-table that evening Gaunt and his doings were the theme of conversation. It was soon apparent that not a single member of the club was friendly to him. He himself and his work was the subject of much humorous derision, but behind the humour there rankled an element of acrid hostility.

"He's quite mad," said Jordan. "I saw the signs of it long ago and warned him. He'll end where most charlatans end, in a madhouse."

"If it were only madness!" said one of the party. "For my part, I can't stop at that verdict. He has the disastrous sanity of the anarchist."

"Oh, he's sane enough in the ordinary sense, I suppose," retorted Jordan. "He, at least, knows how to play for popularity."

"Father, is that quite fair?" asked Olivia, in a voice that trembled.

"Why, what do you know about it, my child?"

"I may not know all that you know, father, but I am sure that Mr. Gaunt is honest."

Jordan flushed angrily.

"The worst men in history have thought themselves honest," he retorted.

"And surely the best, too," she replied, in a low voice.

There was a long silence, and then Jordan turned the conversation with a laugh.

But it was clear that he was both angry and disconcerted.

"I think you had better go to your mother, Olivia," he said a moment later. "She may be wanting you."

Olivia flushed and left the room.

Two hours later, when the meeting of the club was over, Jordan called her. He was in a good humour now, as he usually was after a club night, when he had been strengthened in his own opinions by hearing them expressed by others.

"And so my little girl has become a controversialist," he said, with a smile. "Sit down, my dear, I want to talk to you."

Olivia silently obeyed. Her face was pale, and she could scarcely control the nervous movement of her hands.

"I suppose, my dear, it's quite natural that you should have been impressed by Gaunt's speech in Madison Garden. I own it was effective. But do

you think it was quite nice of you to contradict me so flatly at my own table in the presence of others, my child?"

"No, father, it was not nice of me at all. I am sorry that I did it, for I saw that it upset you."

"Well, my child, that's enough said. It's all I expected you to say, and I was sorry less for myself than that those who heard you should have a bad opinion of your judgment. So now we'll forget all about Gaunt and talk of something else."

Olivia sat silent for some moments. Then she said, in a low voice: "But, father, I want to talk to you about Mr. Gaunt. I've wanted to for a long time, but I've been afraid. I am sorry that I spoke when I did, but you must not think that I did not mean what I said. I did mean it, and I mean it still. I think Mr. Gaunt is a very noble man, and I can't think you are quite just in the way you talk of him."

Jordan's face hardened at the words.

"You mean to tell me you believe in a man whom I have every reason to dislike and condemn. In other words, you set up your judgment against mine?"

"But why do you dislike and condemn him, father? Do you condemn him only because you dislike him?"

"That is not a question you ought to put to me."

"But, father, I can't understand your feelings. And I'm dreadfully afraid you are wrong. Oh, it hurts me to say it, but I must say it. I have

always taken your word for law. I have done so sometimes against my own judgment. But I am no longer a child, father. There are matters on which I must think for myself, matters of right and wrong, and this is one of them."

"And since when have you commenced the dangerous process of thinking for yourself?"

"Father, please don't speak like that. I cannot bear satire from you."

She left her seat and knelt beside him. The action, so gentle and dutiful, touched Jordan. He laid his hand on her head and said, in a gentler voice: "Well, speak to me freely. I will try to listen patiently. What are the thoughts that trouble you, Olivia?"

"They are thoughts that have grown up in my heart ever since you took me with you to hear Mr. Gaunt in Madison Garden, father. I have struggled against them. Oh, believe me, I have struggled day and night, because I feared they would offend you. But they have become too strong for me. They rise out of myself, they will not be denied. That night when I heard Mr. Gaunt, I felt that he spoke to me, that what he said was the voice of my own soul—I felt that I had never been truly religious. I hadn't understood what it meant. But then I knew. It came to me suddenly that the path he trod was the path of truth. I tried to laugh away the impression. I heard all that you said against him, but still his voice called me, and I saw him beckoning me to

the path he trod. There are some things which we learn from the inner voice. That night the inner voice spoke."

"Well," said Jordan, "go on. You have never understood religion. Do you know what that means in relation to me? I am not only your father, but your minister. Do you wish to tell me that I have failed to interpret to you the meaning of religion?"

"No, I dare not say that, father."

"Then what is it you have to say?"

"I don't know how to put it, father. It's not that you have not taught me a great deal, but it is as though I had suddenly seen a fresh light. It's like turning a corner in a road, all at once you get a new view which you did not imagine to exist. I see now that religion is self-sacrifice and service. It's not thinking about things, but doing them. That is where it seems to me that Gaunt is so right."

"And I am so wrong, I suppose?"

"Father, don't make me say that."

"You have already said it by implication."

Jordan rose from his chair, and began to pace the room. A harder heart than Olivia's might have pitied him in that moment. His face had grown pale and set, but it was less with anger than dismay. He had lost one child through the harshness of his temper; was he to lose another? A great fear clutched his heart. But it is characteristic of men like Jordan that the harsh egoism which has been the habit of years cannot be set aside even when it

threatens total disaster. It must be gratified at the price of tragedy.

For some moments his mind wavered. He knew that his daughter was now a woman, and had a right to her own opinions. He would have granted that right on any other subject but her approval of Gaunt. But on this subject his mind was inflamed, his temper was exacerbated. He had made himself the public opponent of Gaunt; what a position of ridicule would he occupy if his own daughter should espouse Gaunt's cause! And at that thought self-love turned the scale in his contending mind. And with self-love came a gust of angry pity for himself, a swift, agonized perception that in some way life had gone wrong with him, and would continue to go wrong. With some men such a vision might have proved corrective. It might have suggested caution; it might, at least, have been a warning against rash and angry action. But its only effect on Jordan was to harden his heart, to render the will more obstinate, to call forth in the name of self-respect that assertion of authority which had already wrought so much havoc in his life.

He spoke suddenly and sharply.

"Olivia," he said, "let us understand each other. Is there anything else in your mind on this painful subject which you have not expressed?"

"Yes, father, there is."

"What is it?"

"I want to join the League of Service, father."

"Then understand once and for all that I forbid it."

"But why, father? You cannot deny that it does good. You surely would not forbid me doing good in a way that seems possible to me."

"I do deny that it does good. I regard the League of Service as ridiculous and fantastic, and Gaunt as an impostor. I have taken my side, and I will not allow myself to be made ridiculous by my daughter taking the opposite side. You can find plenty of ways of doing good without joining Gaunt's fanatical movement, if you wish to. Go, and work in any way you will; do anything you like; I will not complain. But this thing I forbid you to do."

Olivia had risen from her knees now. She stood very straight and pale, her hands clasped before her. Her face and figure, her fair hair gathered in a simple knot, her clear brown eyes, her white dress, conveyed an indelible impression of virginal strength and purity.

"Then, I must disobey you, father. I have obeyed you all my life, but here my obedience must end."

"Olivia, do you understand what you are saying?"

"I understand."

"Do you understand that if you join the League of Service you can no longer live in this house? I could not bear that."

"Father, do you mean that? Say you do not mean it. You shut your door once—on Robert.

Will you shut it on me, too? Oh, father, why inflict such suffering on yourself?"

"Ask yourself who inflicts the suffering. It is not I."

"It is you, father. I can live here, and love and care for you as I have always loved and cared. What will it matter that I give some of my time to the service of the poor? Am I to be made an outcast for that?"

"It does matter. I tell you I could not bear it. If you go, my house will be desolate; it will be made desolate by your self-will. But I could bear that better than to see you here, knowing all the time that you were defying my wishes."

"It is not self-will, father. Oh, I would yield to you if I could. But I am so sure that this is my path, the one path I must tread. I have struggled not to think so. I have even prayed that I might think otherwise. But it is useless—the conviction has grown in me in spite of myself. And I cannot silence the inner voice. If I did I should never again be happy, and I should have no right to happiness. I know that there is such a thing as obedience to parents—I have never been undutiful. But there are other duties, too: duties to one's self; duties to one's own conscience; and whatever duties I might fulfil, I know that if I left these duties undone I should be miserable. There comes a time when one must live one's own life—it is such a little life; it is all we have. And when that time comes

it is the voice of one's own soul that must be obeyed—and I have heard the voice."

"Then it must be so. It appears to be the fate of parents now-a-day—at least it is my fate—to bring up children who rebel against them."

"If it is rebellion, father, it is the kind of rebellion of which all lovers of truth have been guilty—all honest men and women. Don't you see that in this matter I have no choice? Would not you, in my place, do as I am doing? Why do you press me so hard? If I had committed a crime, you could not be harder on me."

"And it is a crime you are committing, Olivia. A crime against common-sense. But go—leave me—I can endure no more. Sleep over it, pray over it if you can—to-morrow it may be you will think differently."

"I cannot think differently on this subject."

"Then you know the consequences. There is nothing more to be said."

Jordan turned and left the room. For some minutes Olivia stood perfectly silent; then the relief of tears came. She fell upon her knees and prayed. The house grew very still; the awe of midnight filled it.

What was her prayer? It was the prayer which the divinest of all sufferers uttered in the crisis of His fate—most pathetic, most human of all prayers: "If it be possible let the cup pass from me; but if not, O Father, Thy will be done."

Olive trees bathed in Paschal moonlight, the heavy shadows of the night in a deserted garden, the far-off complaining of a brook of tears—this is the scenery set for the world's divinest tragedy. Our Gethsemanes, it may be, are touched with no gleam of poetry; they are dull enough to the casual eye; they befall us in the heart of cities, within hearing of the mirth of streets; they seem to exist for ourselves alone, and there is no sustaining and invigorating sense of a world waiting for decision, of future ages being made richer for our pain. Yet they are not less authentic, and though we do not know it the world does wait tremblingly the issue of our struggle, since it is by the solitary victory of the individual over self, and by that alone, that the better future of the world is shaped.

Olivia Jordan's Gethsemane found her that night in her father's house.

XVIII

THE YOUNG APOSTLES

THE summer months had come, those months in which cities are supposed to be "empty," when churches are closed, and a truce is called to their activities. A brooding, stifling heat-cloud rested over New York. The nights were terrible—nights when the lifeless air made sleep impossible. Far off in summer woods, beside placid lakes or blue seas, the exiles from cities gathered in gay crowds, congratulating themselves on their escape from the brazen furnace of interminable streets, and forgetting the multitudes who remained at their posts, unable to buy themselves out of the cruel conscription of daily city drudgery. "New York is empty," said the papers; never was there sentence more ironically false.

For Gaunt and his workers the summer brought no surcease of toil. Day by day the League of Service sent its messengers among the poor, for there was much sickness in the narrow streets and airless tenements. Day by day, also, the mere growth of the movement made rest impossible for Gaunt. From every city of the Union came reports of its success. Every mail brought the names of new adherents, and hundreds of requests for prac-

tical direction in the formation of local leagues. Gaunt struggled on through July, grappling with a task beyond the strength of any dozen men, and the end of the month found him pale and worn. But if the flesh proved weak, there was no defect of spirit. His prevailing mood was one which almost approached to gaiety—the indomitable cheerfulness of one sustained by the force of vitalizing ideals. Palmer watched over him with more than a brother's care, and noted with anxiety his growing pallor. At last one day Palmer came to him with a new idea.

“Do you remember the talks we used to have about the great religious reformers and their methods—Wesley, for example?” said Palmer.

“Certainly,” said Gaunt. “It was through those talks we came to the discovery of our own path.”

“Well, there is still room for discovery,” said Palmer.

Gaunt laid down his pen. He was sitting at a desk loaded with the morning's mail, rapidly noting the contents of each letter, and dictating brief replies.

“That's right,” said Palmer, “let your correspondence go for the time, and let us talk.”

“Well, what have you to propose—something new and daring, I'll be bound,” said Gaunt, with a smile.

“No, it's not new, and it's hardly daring. But first tell me whether there is anything in the last week's mail which has particularly struck you.”

“Oh, it’s all striking, for that matter,” said Gaunt. “It’s a wonderful thing to say, but out of a hundred letters I seldom find one that is commonplace. They are almost all intimate expressions of sincere souls. Most of the writers are young.”

“Anything else?”

“Yes, a considerable number are from young men of religious enthusiasm. Here, for example, is one that is typical. It’s from a young minister. I’ll read it to you.

“DEAR SIR: I do not know how any serious and good man can dissent from the ideas which control your work; I believe that all such men, either implicitly or explicitly, must agree with them. But the difficulty for me is the method of their practical application. Let me put my own case. I entered the ministry on an impulse of devout enthusiasm as I suppose most men do; for those who enter the ministry with self-seeking motives are, I believe, very few. I hope I shall not be misunderstood when I say that the ideal of the ministry appealed to the heroic fibre in me. It seemed to be the grandest of all earthly vocations to build up the living kingdom of God among men, and such a work appeared its own exceeding great reward. Certainly, at the time I entered the ministry I was in that exalted mood to which any form of self-sacrifice, or self-immolation, for an ideal, seems a positive attraction rather than a deterrent.

“My idealism was somewhat rudely handled at the theological seminary, as you will understand; but I consoled myself with the thought that I was only in the position of the painter who finds the hard technique of art a very different thing from the vague dream of art which impels his feet to the studio of the master. At all events my idealism survived. I told myself that soon I should be in a church, and there the atmosphere would be very different. Like the painter, when once I had mastered the difficulties of technique, I

should emerge into a free world, where I could breathe and work with unimpeded joy.

“At last the hour of my deliverance came. I was the minister of a church. It was a church that stood high in general repute, and my prospects were much brighter than those of scores of men who started with me. I entered on my work resolved to build this living Kingdom of God among men, to preach nothing but the truth as the truth was revealed to me, to give the whole strength of my mind and body to the task, to make religion a reality in my own life and the lives of those committed to my charge. By slow degrees it dawned upon me that my church was out of sympathy with ideals which were the very breath of life to me.

“It was clear, to begin with, that my church did not want the truth in the sense in which I used the term. They were content with traditional truth, but with truth in any living form they were totally unacquainted. Certain doctrines or forms of words were to them symbols; they were used to the symbol, but the moment I used language which transgressed the symbol they were offended or alarmed.

“Again, it was clear that they did not regard religion as having any practical bearing on the actualities of daily life. Religion was for them a series of propositions and assumptions dealing with matters which lay beyond the province of the reason. It was a romance of the imagination and the emotions. It could not be conceived in the terms of plain conduct.

“Please do not think that I speak in any spirit of contempt. I will say at once, and with the utmost sincerity, that the people who composed my congregation were almost all good and kindly people. They were good to one another and to me; they were charitable to a variety of good causes and institutions; they lived on excellent terms with one another. But it soon became clear to me that they would have been just the same kind of persons without religion as with it. Religion had furnished them no doubt with a series of valuable restraints for conduct; but it had wrought no vital change in their characters. It was not an experience; it was only an external creed. Well, it might be said, surely there was

enough good material here, in any case, out of which to build the Kingdom of God? I can only reply that I found it otherwise—quite otherwise. For the very virtues in which these people excelled had bred in them an immense complacency. They were wholly satisfied with themselves; so much so that they could conceive of no need for improvement. And, being for the most part people of middle age, occupying assured and comfortable positions in society, they were equally satisfied with the world as it was. I do not like to say it, yet it is true, they had been so long flattered upon their superiority, that they expected flattery from the pulpit, and became irritated at the least criticism. My predecessor, a very amiable man, had flattered them for years, not intentionally or basely, of course, but simply as an expression of his own amiability. You will understand what I mean. You will understand how the spirit of complacency thrives on such food, until without knowing it people become Pharisees, proud of being not as other men are, a select coterie out of real relation with life.

“Again and again I tried to awaken in them what I may call a consciousness of humanity. I sought honestly to show them the world as it was, and its needs. They simply did not choose to see it. ‘You want us to do this or that for the poor,’ they said. ‘Well, there are other churches to do that; it is not our work. Why give us repulsive details about poverty and vice? We come to church to be strengthened in our faith, not lacerated in our sympathies.’ It seemed to me a poor kind of faith which needed so much strengthening. My idea of a church was an army, always ready to be mobilized for active conquest. Their ideal was a select club, existing for its own edification. Surely the most singular feature in a democratic country is an oligarchic church; but such is mine, and such are most of the churches of this city. And beside this, there is another thing to be noted. Kindly as my people are, yet they are absolutely selfish in the demands they make upon their minister. They require perpetual coddling. They want you to run to them at every call, and they resent your absorption in public work if it interferes with your power of attention to them. And so I have come to the melancholy conclusion that the church, that is my church, is

only playing at Christianity after all. It does nothing; it makes no kind of impact on the world. If my church were blotted out by some catastrophe, if it were dissolved tomorrow, its loss would make no appreciable difference in the life of this city. The individual members would be, so far as I can judge, just as well off without religion as with it, for their religion is little more than a social bond. Is it worth my while to give the strength of my manhood simply to maintain something that is so miserably negative in its results? I am now thirty, the next twenty years are everything. But if I could live twice twenty years in my present conditions, I believe nothing more would happen than has already happened.

"I entered the ministry with a brilliant dream of an onward march, through many difficulties, to ultimate conquest. My march has ended in a *cul-de-sac*.

"Perhaps I am in error through pride. I try to think of all the fine things which have been said about doing the duty that lies nearest to your hand, and being content to make a few souls the happier. But it seems to me that this is merely the doctrine of idleness and a false humility. If Jesus had argued thus, He would have remained all His days in Nazareth. He certainly would never have entered into conflict with the Pharisees, and would never have been crucified.

"What am I to do? The only justification I can have for putting that question to you is that I regard you as my spiritual master. Give me anything to do that will mean active conflict, and I will try to do it. I have the better part of two months at my disposal this summer. They are yours, if you can use them. I want no holiday. The best of all vacations for me would be a plunge into the practical realities of life.

I am, yours truly,

GEORGE DEAN."

"An admirable letter," said Palmer. "And, as you say, quite typical. Its writer appears to be a

strong and observant man, who feels his position a bondage. To such a man the worst of all tortures is futility—the sense that, work how he will, his work ends in nothing.”

“It was my own torture, as you know, until I found the way out. I believe that there are hundreds of men in the ministry to-day who feel just as this man feels.”

“And that brings me to my point,” said Palmer. “What do you propose to do with men of this kind? Here is a great force going to waste; don’t you think you can utilize it?”

“We certainly ought to do so. What is your plan?”

“My plan is simple, and, I believe, practical. You and I believe in evangelism in the broad sense, don’t we? And we have had our dream of various kinds of brotherhoods. Well, here is our opportunity. What we want is a revival of the mediæval system of preaching friars. The press is all very well. But it can never supersede the living voice. It can never equal it as an agent of conviction. It is the impact of personality that tells most in propaganda. Wesley knew his business when he sent out his bands of workers, who entered villages and cities in the spirit of conquest, and lived their truth before the people as well as taught it. Now what I propose is this: let us gather together a hundred men of the George Dean type, and use these precious weeks of summer by sending them out, two and two, into the smaller

towns to conduct missions, to rehabilitate the religious sense by their teaching and example."

"By outdoor preaching, you mean?"

"Certainly. It is the most striking method of preaching, and it is the only way of reaching masses of people who under no circumstances will find their way into halls and churches."

"I heard a famous preacher declare not long ago," said Gaunt, with a laugh, "that the weather in America made outdoor preaching impossible."

"What nonsense!" said Palmer. "He should read Wesley's *Journal*. Wesley found that even pouring rain was no obstacle to outdoor preaching. But our summer weather! Scene: A village green at the close of an August day; big, leafy elms; a soft, cool wind; every one out of doors—what better opportunity do you want?"

Gaunt was silent a few moments. Then he said, abruptly: "We'll do it. We'll begin with Dean."

The issue of this conversation was that within less than a fortnight Gaunt had about twenty men at work upon the lines sketched by Palmer. They were nearly all ministers, and all young. They had all been accustomed to employ the summer months in sport and recreation. More than half were the pastors of city churches. Hitherto they had taken the summer months as their rightful rest-time, and who could blame them? But a new spirit had touched them. The mere spectacle of Gaunt toiling on at his post through the hottest

weather was to them a lesson and a rebuke. "Life is too short for rest," became their motto. There was all eternity to rest in.

It was beautiful to see how this new enthusiasm seized upon them. They were quite ignorant of the kind of work to which they were put. Not one of them had ever spoken in the open air. But their enthusiasm atoned for their ignorance, and they soon learned by experience. They went in pairs to the smaller towns, asking nothing of the people, and night after night took their stand on some open green, and exhorted the people in plain and simple language to enter on a life of holiness. There are many who will never forget the picture of such services as these: the silent crowd in the warm dusk of summer evenings, the fireflies weaving skeins of flame in the dark air, the soft passage of the wind in the high trees, the melody of some familiar hymn and some fresh young voice, pleading for the noblest ideals of life with beautiful sincerity and sometimes with prophetic fire.

For these young apostles it was a Galilean idyll, a passage of poetry. It was all so different from preaching in churches, where every word was anticipated and was received with languor or indifference.

"The sermon-saturated pagans of the pews" was a phrase which Gaunt had once used about the customary church audience, and perhaps that phrase explained the difference. For in these open-air

audiences there was a receptivity to ideas altogether new and delightful to men of the George Dean type. The people who assembled came together not in obedience to custom, but on a living volition. If they listened it was because there was that which interested them; and they were free to leave when the preacher ceased to interest them. Hence there was a vital sincerity in these meetings which is rarely found in churches. And this reacted on the speakers themselves. They lost the professional element, the professional preaching voice; they soon learned to speak simply as men to men. They found that phrases could not take the place of thoughts. They had to use the plain and definite language of the common people. And they found that, having now a definite aim before them, they achieved definite results. Scores of people, often hundreds, pressed forward to enrol themselves in the League, after each service.

Perhaps nothing contributed more to the success of this movement than the obvious disinterestedness of its apostles. The mere fact that they asked nothing from the people made a deep and good impression.

"What are you doing it for?" asked a reporter, bluntly, of George Dean.

"Because we love to do it," he replied.

"But who pays you?"

"We are not paid. It is just our way of taking a vacation."

"I never met any one who preached without being paid for it before," he replied.

"Our pay is the love of the people," Dean replied.

The reporter went away, greatly wondering.

"It seems like a bit out of the Gospels," he wrote in his story of the interview, for he was a youth who had once read his Bible, and had only ceased to read it because he found no one who practised its teachings.

And the chance phrase was true: it was the same message of conquering love which was spoken to these hushed crowds that was spoken long since beside the shores of Galilee, and the same summer stars watched the scene.

Toward the end of August Gaunt himself joined his itinerant apostles. At the request of George Dean, Gaunt came to Dean's own city and began open-air preaching.

It was a prosperous city in New York State, one of the earliest Dutch settlements, which still bore that aspect of solidity and sobriety which the Dutch have left everywhere upon their handiwork. Old, red-brick houses with gardens sloping to the river; narrow streets with venerable elms; sleepy comfort; decorous restfulness—such was the older city, in which men had walked who had left records in the history of Indian massacres and martyrdom. But of late years another city had grown up, throbbing with commercial enterprise, a city of vast factories,

filled with a multitude of toilers. In the very centre of the city rose a green hill, with pleasant shade trees, and this hill Gaunt selected for his preaching. His fame had preceded him, and an immense multitude gathered to hear him; and there night after night he stood, taking a delight in this unconventional preaching which he had never known within the decorous walls of churches. And simply because all the richer people were far away in the places of pleasure, his congregation consisted in the main of the poorer folk, to whom August brought scant relief from labour. And not only the poorer folk came, but the socially outcast. At the sound of the nightly singing the saloons emptied, and men and women of wrecked hopes drew near, and hung upon his words.

It was at the close of one of the addresses that an anxious-looking woman came to Gaunt with a request that he would come at once to her house to visit a lodger who was ill. Gaunt went with her. The house was a dilapidated frame house on the outskirts of the city, and the interior, not less than the exterior, bore the marks of poverty. The staircase was worn and dirty, the paint dull and defaced, and the room in which the lodger lay was a dark room with little furniture. The lodger was a young man of athletic frame. He lay with one arm beneath his head, the wet hair falling over a high forehead, the eyes closed, the face unshaven and flushed with fever. Gaunt looked at him keenly,

troubled by some fugitive recollection of the face, which instantly escaped him.

“What was his name?” he asked.

“He gave the name of Smith,” the woman replied.

“How long has he been here?”

“About two months.”

She then went on to tell all that she knew or suspected about the sick man. He had some position in the great electric works of the city, she did not know what, but he had lost it when he became ill. He was very well spoken; college-bred, she imagined. He was kind-hearted, brought her children little presents, but he never went to church.

“He told me once he didn’t hold with church. I told him that was a pity, for it was better anyway to go to church Sundays than get too much to drink, which he sometimes did. Not that he was really bad and wild, and that sort of thing. But he seemed one as had had a trouble sometime, and when he got thinking of it, he’d go to the drink. Somehow I don’t think he gave me the right name. He called himself Smith, but I noticed that some of his clothes were marked with a J.”

Gaunt stooped yet more closely over the flushed, unconscious face, trying to recover that fugitive likeness which met him there. Then all at once there came to him the memory of Olivia Jordan, and with it the sudden conviction that this was her brother. He had never seen the lad in his father’s house but once. That was years ago. And he had never

known what had happened to him, except that he had left home. Olivia, in the various talks which he had had with her since she had joined the Sisterhood of helpers of the poor, had never alluded to her brother. And yet now there came to him, with that strange rekindling of past scenes which may well lead us to believe that nothing once seen or known is really forgotten, the clear picture of young Robert Jordan as he had once seen him, and he felt sure that this sick man was he.

He looked round the room for some means of identification. Presently he perceived a little row of books, and among them a college Virgil. He opened it, and found, as he expected, the name of Robert Jordan written in the flyleaf.

That night he wrote to Olivia Jordan a full account of his visit. By the next mail came a reply, saying, briefly: "Don't say a word to father at present. I will come."

Olivia came and at once took charge of the sick man. Day by day she and Gaunt ministered together to him, until the time came for Gaunt to go to another city. He left, promising to return in a week, when they would consult upon what might be done for the poor fellow, who was slowly finding his way back to the life he had found so bitter.

On the day that Gaunt left he woke to consciousness for a moment. He said "Olivia" in a low, awed voice, and instantly slid back again into the phantom fever-world.

"He will live now," said Gaunt. "Please God, you and I will see a prodigal son come home."

"The trouble is not with the prodigal son, but the prodigal father," said Olivia, bitterly. "I wonder whether every prodigal child has not something to blame the father for."

"Hush!" said Gaunt. "You must not indulge those thoughts, Olivia. If your father still loves his boy, as I am sure he does, love will prove stronger than either pride or anger."

"I pray for that, but I cannot hope it," said Olivia.

"Perhaps the noblest kind of prayer is that which has least of hope in it," replied Gaunt. "The greatest of all recorded prayers is, 'I believe, help Thou my unbelief.' To go on asking when we expect to receive nothing is a much greater thing than to ask expecting to receive."

"Isn't that a most heretical saying?" she replied, with a sad smile.

"It is, at all events, the kind of heresy which helps men to endure," said Gaunt.

And with that word he left her.

XIX

BUTLER'S INQUISITION

GAUNT did not return to Olivia and her brother as he had intended; he was recalled to New York by an urgent letter from Butler. This letter discussed certain new developments of the League, which may now be briefly described.

In six months the League had enrolled close upon two hundred thousand members. Its success had thus been instantaneous and beyond expectation. Each member had contributed the dollar asked in annual subscription, so that there was now ample means for the prosecution of the work. It was this fund that sent out the young Apostles, which equipped certain mission halls in the poorer districts of New York, and which maintained the Sisters of the Poor—a group of noble women, of whom Olivia Jordan was one—who gave six hours of each day to every form of personal service among the destitute. The badge of the Cross of Stars had become familiar in New York.

But both Gaunt and Butler had seen for a long time that all this social work, excellent as it was, was remedial not radical. They knew that they

were dealing with the results of wrong, not with the causes. During all these months Butler had been conducting a quiet but thorough campaign of investigation into the causes of social misery. By the end of the summer his investigation was complete, and hence his letter to Gaunt.

It was an exquisite September morning when Gaunt returned to New York. As he looked upon the city, bathed in the fresh gold of the dawn, he felt something of that thrill which the provincial felt twenty centuries ago when he saw the white wonder of Nero's palace flash across the Tiber, which the Gascon feels when he approaches Paris, the dweller among pastured stillness feels when he beholds the vast disarray of London. No wonder men were intoxicated with the charm of great cities. No wonder that they inspired a sense of limitless freedom, in which the irksome bonds of personal responsibility seemed dissolved. Beneath broad and empty skies, in the open places of the world, it was natural that men should realize the presence of unknown powers—that they should quiver with spiritual apprehension, that they should seek to reconcile their conduct to invisible and awful standards; men had always built their altars in the silent groves and on the bare mountain tops. But here all was human, palpable, the work of men's hands. In these immense highways of houses, these streets echoing with wheels above, and veined with fire and speed below, in this incessant march of life, as of an

endless pageant, perpetually renewed, there was no breathing space for individual life. The individual was overwhelmed in the mass. And hence the perilous exhilaration—the sense that nothing mattered, neither duty nor piety; that men could be and do as they willed, and that no higher Power watched or cared. What was the individual but a pebble carried outward by a great torrent, that wore it down into a shape common to a million neighbour pebbles? And Gaunt, fresh from those great outdoor audiences in small cities, with their receptivity to ideas, felt anew how little there was to hold to in these millionfold personalities ground smooth in the attrition of New York—how in the very nature of things men in such conditions became subdued to the element of greed and lust and wrong in which they worked.

“God help me,” he prayed silently, as the cab speeded along Fifth Avenue and Broadway. “It is in the city that my problem lies, my battlefield; for it is in cities that the whole corruption of mankind begins.”

It was still early dawn when Gaunt reached Washington Square and the House of Joy, but the household was already astir and at work. Palmer met him with a shout of welcome.

“And so you’ve had a great time,” he said.

“Yes, thanks to you. I feel as though I had never learned how to preach till now. Next summer we’ll put five hundred men in the field.”

"How about Olivia Jordan?" said Palmer. He flushed slightly as he uttered the name.

"I left her nursing her brother. He's doing well, but it will probably be some weeks before he is quite recovered."

"And then?"

"Then I must see what I can do with Jordan."

"If the father were only like the daughter," said Palmer. Then he added abruptly, "You know I've seen a good deal of Olivia Jordan since she joined the Sisterhood. She's the best worker we have. There's something about her, she has such a gentle way with her, that the roughest people love her, and I know some who almost worship her."

"And you?" said Gaunt, with a humorous glance at his friend.

"Oh, I'm no exception," he said, gravely.

Butler entered at that moment. The great editor looked worn and weary. Usually he had spent August in his little house on Long Island, but this year he had not been there for more than a few days.

"You look tired," said Gaunt.

"Oh, I've no time to be tired," he replied. "I believe I'm made on the principle of the wonderful One-horse Shay: when I go to pieces it will be all at once, and all together."

Gaunt hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, and followed the two men into the quiet room at the back of the house which served him for an office.

"And now," said Butler, "let us get to work. First of all you'll be interested to hear that while you've been away I have refused a donation of fifty thousand dollars from William Stonecroft."

"Stonecroft? What made him offer fifty thousand dollars?" said Gaunt.

"An uneasy conscience," said Butler, drily. "We've grown powerful enough to be offered bribes. However, that's an incident," he added, "though it has its significance. I should have refused in any case, because our principle is that this is a people's movement, which must be supported by the people."

"Isn't Stonecroft a member of Jordan's church?" asked Palmer.

"He is. That is where the significance lies. Now let me tell you all I have ascertained about Stonecroft, and you may take his case as typical of the kind of problem we have now to face. He is a member of Jordan's church: good. Jordan would no doubt tell you that he is an exemplary member. Certainly he gives largely to all church purposes, and is a regular attendant at worship. The man is charitable, and if you met him you would be charmed with his kindly manners. Now for the other side. He has a large dry-goods store, as you know, and employs a great number of girls. The other day a young girl of my acquaintance, a beautiful, well-educated girl whose father had been unfortunate in business, applied at his store for a situation. It was a last resource. She had been brought up in

the lap of wealth. When reverses came she resolved instantly to work for her living, and knowing Stonecroft's reputation as a religious man, applied at his store for a situation. The manager met her with compliments. Yes: he could give her a situation at once. He then offered her five dollars a week.

"'But,' she said, in alarm, 'I couldn't possibly live upon that.'

"'Well,' he replied, with a brutal smile, 'you can take a companion; all the girls do.'

"She stared at him for a moment, not in the least comprehending what he meant. The man continued smiling, and the smile at last enlightened her. She burst into tears, and, hot with shame, left the store.

"That's count one against Stonecroft. He pays his girls wages on which they cannot live virtuously, and he knows it. Probably, however, he never thinks of it. He has long ago become blind to the sources of his wealth.

"Count two, is that he is the proprietor of some of the worst house property in New York. Some of his houses are used for immoral purposes. Again, I say, that though he must know this, yet he probably never thinks of it. No doubt some agent manages his property for him, and he takes his money without scruple."

"You are quite sure of these things?" said Gaunt.

"Absolutely," replied Butler. "I can give you the exact facts not only about Stonecroft, but about a

dozen other men in similar positions. You'll find all the details in my portfolio."

"Well, what are we to do?"

"That is what I am coming to. But first let us understand the problem. You and the rest of us are all busy in saving lost people. Has it never struck you that such work is like baling out a pool, while the river still runs into it? We have to begin further up in the sources of the river. It is men like Stonecroft who manufacture the misery we are trying to heal. Of course that is obvious. But the question is how to touch men like Stonecroft. They present the most extraordinary psychological problem of modern society. They go to church, they are charitable, they are pious—yes, I grant that—I don't believe Stonecroft is a conscious hypocrite. For that matter I don't believe any one is—the worst man probably appears quite a decent fellow to himself, even when he is doing his worst actions. The root of the whole anomaly is that men like Stonecroft have never really learned to apply religion to common life. Their natures are built in water-tight compartments—in one religion, in another business greed—Sunday feelings in one, week-day cuteness in another—and the Sunday man is quite a separate person from the week-day. And the society in which they move is composed of persons of the same order. So it happens that no one blames them, and naturally they themselves are the last persons to recognize the inconsistencies in their own position."

"I suppose it is no use to suggest the law?" said Gaunt.

"None whatever. Palmer knows that."

"Yes," said Palmer. "I have reason to know. It is not that there isn't law enough to touch men like Stonecroft, but that you can't get it enforced. The trouble all through America is that the law is in advance of public opinion. The good people make good laws, the ordinary people forget them, and the bad people defy them. The result is that there is a compromise all round. The compromise means that any one who is strong enough and wealthy enough can buy immunity from the law."

"Yes, that is about the truth," said Butler. "You may take it as certain that you can't touch Stonecroft by any process of law. But there is one weapon that can touch him. That is publicity. If he was a genuinely bad man that weapon would be useless too; but he isn't a bad man. He's good in spots. He really values his religious reputation. It is, therefore, through his religious reputation that I propose to touch him."

Butler opened his portfolio, and laid a mass of carefully docketed papers upon the table.

"I have here," he said, "details, about a dozen men, of whom Stonecroft is one. They are all leading members of New York churches—and by-the-bye, Gaunt, one of them is your friend Roberts. He's not a very bad case, not nearly so bad as the rest; but he's bad enough to be noticeable. He also has

been deriving part of his income from some of the worst property in New York. Well, what I propose to do is this. First of all I shall send to each of these men a detailed statement of all that we know about them. The statement will be too accurate to admit of any dispute—I have taken care of that. I shall demand that they at once do the right thing. This gives them a chance. If they don't take it I shall then begin the publication of a Black List in *The Daily Light*. I shall publish their names, the sources of their income, the sworn witness of those who have suffered by them, and I shall continue to attack them till public opinion forces them to reform. Of course, this is an extreme measure, but I think it will be effectual."

"What about libel?" suggested Gaunt.

"Oh, they won't dare to prosecute. They'll be too much afraid of the exposure. You only have to remember half a dozen recent exposures of the same kind in commercial life. In each case the accused parties remained absolutely silent. Men of this kind will suffer almost any kind of defamation rather than face cross-examination in the witness-box."

Butler rose from his seat, and began to pace up and down the room.

"Excuse me," he said. "I believe I've got nervous these weeks. I can't sit still for long together. You see I've had to work far into the night to put this business through in addition to my other work.

And night in New York has been very like hell for the last month."

"And I have been having such a good time," said Gaunt, contritely.

"My dear fellow, you've worked in your way, I in mine. You couldn't have done my work and I couldn't have done yours. Let us each be content with Browning's famous line,

"All service ranks the same with God."

There was a moment's silence, and then Butler broke out passionately: "It's been a horrible piece of work. Good God, it makes me sick to think of it! Gaunt, how is it that a church which is founded on the example of the most just and pitiful life that was ever lived can have become the refuge—nay more, the peculiar property—of men like Stonecroft! For that is what it really means. These rich men have bought the Church. They have bought the ministry. And the process has been so silent and so subtle that neither the Church nor the ministry is aware of its own corruption."

"It can only be that the ministry has failed in honesty," said Gaunt, sadly.

"It's worse than failure. It's betrayal," said Butler. "I know as much as most men of the processes of corruption in the national life. I know, we all know, that the unscrupulous rich buy the railroads, buy the senate, buy the law; but I confess to a sickening sense of horror at the knowledge I now have that they have bought the Church. And

they have done it with a diabolical adroitness. You won't find a single man in Jordan's church who will say a word against Stonecroft. One year he gives the church a new organ, another he subscribes ten thousand dollars towards a new parish house. Does Jordan need a holiday? Stonecroft in the kindest and most delicate manner gives him a cheque and sends him off to Europe. Is some one overtaken with misfortune? Stonecroft comes down with an ample donation. Does a young man want a situation? Stonecroft procures one for him. Every one is soon under obligation to him, and pray who is going to enquire into the sources of his wealth when he uses it so generously? Why, I wouldn't trust myself to be honest in such an atmosphere. I believe that I should be corrupted with the rest. It would soon seem as if mere gratitude made criticism impossible."

Butler continued walking up and down with angry strides. Presently he resumed: "But let that pass. Here's the case as I see it. Things have gone so far that it is useless to expect ministers to recognize the situation. I can't blame them; they've grown up in the environment, and are mastered by it. Whenever a minister does recognize the situation and speak out, he has to go. I know a great Western city where half a dozen ministers have been driven from their pastorates in the last half a dozen years, for no other reason than that they, for righteousness' sake, put themselves into opposition against the

rich men of their churches. No; the individual minister is not strong enough to fight this battle alone. Therefore we must help him. I propose to re-establish the Inquisition."

Gaunt and Palmer both laughed at this climax, and even Butler's lips relaxed in a grim smile.

"Oh, the Inquisition was an excellent thing, if it had only been properly conducted," said Butler. "My Inquisition will be conducted on strictly modern principles. I can get on quite well without tortures and burnings; publicity will serve my purpose. I shall begin my operations with Stonecroft, and if I don't mistake that is his hand upon the door-bell. I have summoned him to be present here at nine o'clock."

The words were scarcely spoken before William Stonecroft entered the room. He was a tall elderly man, fresh-complexioned, inclined to stoutness, immaculately dressed in light summer costume. His manner was genial, kindly, almost fatherly. He might have stood for the portrait of a model philanthropist.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," he said, and his voice radiated good-will and sincerity. "Ah, Mr. Gaunt, I'm pleased to know you, sir. I've followed your work with the greatest interest. It's a wonderful work. I would have been glad to subscribe to it, but I understand from Mr. Butler that it is one of your principles not to receive large donations. A mistaken principle, I think: for why should the rich

be debarred from helping in such a good work? Eh?"

"If you will sit down, Mr. Stonecroft, I will try to answer your question," said Butler, quietly. "It was because I wanted to discuss the whole matter with you, that I ventured to ask you to meet us here this morning."

"I shall be extremely pleased to know your views," said Stonecroft. "I have about an hour to spare—not more, for I live very little in New York now. I prefer the country."

"Perhaps it is because you live so little in New York now that you are not quite aware of certain things which are done by your authority," said Butler. "If you will allow me to speak for just ten minutes without interruption, I think I can make quite clear to you what I mean."

A shadow of apprehension passed over Stonecroft's face, but his manner still remained genial.

"Certainly," he said. "I shall always value the opportunity of hearing a person of Mr. Butler's eminence speak on any subject in which he is interested."

Butler took from his portfolio a bundle of papers, and having carefully arranged them for easy reference, at once began to speak. He gave full details of the condition and uses of the house property which Stonecroft owned. Some of it was almost ruinous, without decent conveniences, crowded by the poor, who nevertheless paid exorbitant rentals.

Some of it was rented for immoral purposes, at yet higher rates. He gave chapter and verse, the names of tenants, the amount of rent paid in each instance. He then passed on to the management of Stonecroft's huge store. He gave the story of the girl and her interview with the manager, as he had already given it to Gaunt and Palmer. He supplemented it with similar facts. He closed his arraignment with one brief sentence. "What do you mean to do about it? Here is vice in the process of manufacture," he said. "It may be that personally you know little of what is going on under your name. But you are the richer by what is done. You are responsible. While we try to remedy wrong, you produce it. If there were no other reason for refusing your donation, this is enough. And so again, Mr. Stonecroft, I ask you, what do you mean to do about it?"

As he spoke the colour left Stonecroft's face. He looked ten years older. The moment Butler finished, he sprang to his feet.

"By what right," he cried, "do you interfere in my private affairs?"

"By the right of Christian justice. And because no affairs are private which involve the lives of other people."

"I deny the right, all the same," he retorted.

"Oh, let the question of right go, if you like. My only urgent question is what do you intend to do about it?"

"What do you?" said Stonecroft.

"I want to give you the opportunity of putting things right. I want you to look to the condition of your house property. I want you to pay the girls in your employ wages sufficient to maintain them in self-respect. You are rich enough to do these things. You believe yourself a Christian man, and therefore you ought to do them."

"But, man, you don't know what you ask. I can't pay more than the current rate of wages. No wealth could stand the strain of such a reform as you ask. And if I sold my houses who would be the better? They would be bought by some one else who would prove a harsher landlord than I."

"Surely that has nothing to do with it. It is your duty we are discussing, not the duty of other people."

"Then I say flatly, I can't do it. You are asking the impossible."

"Right is never impossible. It may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Mr. Stonecroft, do you realize that ever dollar bill you have in your pocket is stained with the blood of innocence, that your yacht is paid for by the price of shame, that your country house is built over the pit of hell? Would it not be better to be poor and just than rich and what you are—a manufacturer of vice?"

"I tell you I can't do it," he replied.

"Then I reply, you must."

"And who will make me?"

"I will. I propose to give you one month in which to consider the whole question. I believe that you have enough natural kindliness of heart, enough natural sense of justice, if you will but consider the matter thoroughly, to come to my point of view. If, unfortunately, you come to an opposite decision, I shall publish in *The Daily Light* all the details about your position which I have discussed this morning."

Stonecroft rose without a word. He was too stunned for further speech.

When he left the room Butler said, grimly :

"I think the Inquisition will prove a success. I rather think it has made its first convert."

XX

THE POOL AND THE RIVER

BUTLER'S "Inquisition," as he called it, during the next few weeks, continued its work with remarkable vigour. In his heart Gaunt was not wholly sympathetic with Butler's methods. His nature was too tender, his spirit was too loving and charitable, for the exercise of judicial functions. He often thought that moral suasion would have succeeded just as well; that, in fact, men like Stonecroft might have been persuaded to righteousness. But he knew, nevertheless, that the facts were against him. Had he not himself preached for seven years to Roberts, and yet Roberts was on Butler's Black List? And he had preached plainly and boldly enough. His conscience acquitted him on that score. And yet, in spite of all, Roberts had gone on his own way and had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

This was the eternal anomaly, and his soul was saddened by it. How explain it? And the more he thought of it, the more clearly he saw that the moral failure of the pulpit lay in its lack of authority. The preacher preached professionally, and, therefore, no one thought of taking his words seriously. Moreover, he had no power of enforcing

them, being himself the paid servant of the men whom he addressed. It was different in mediæval times when the Church knew how to enforce its laws, and did so relentlessly. It was different in the days of Jonathan Edwards, when the terror of an unseen world lay on men. But the fear of the unseen had long ago been dissipated. The vision of a great white throne, of a judgment seat, of a hell for evildoers—all had melted like a pageant in the sunset clouds, and there was left only the hard, bare sky. Slowly he began to see that social redemption could only be achieved by the restoration of moral authority, and he could not but admit that Butler's work was an effort to create a centre of moral authority.

As for Butler, he had no doubts.

"If you had been an editor as long as I have," he said one day to Gaunt, "you would know that life is a pretty rough business, and cannot be carried on without rough measures. You've not got over the debilitating effects of being a minister yet, my friend."

Gaunt laughed at the word "debilitating." "That's about the last word my critics would think of applying to me," he said.

"Oh, you're improving," said Butler, sardonically. "But you'll never quite make up for the lack of locusts and wild honey in your education. You've had too much of soft raiment and king's houses, you know. You've got rid of them, by the mercy

of God, but you can't get rid of their effects all at once."

"I rather thought a famous editor knew more about those things than a poor parson," Gaunt retorted.

"Oh, yes, an editor no doubt gets a pretty fair share of the rewards of life when he succeeds, but that's not what I mean. What I mean is this, that you've never until recently handled life with naked hands, and I've never done anything else. You've been brought up in all sorts of notions about the beauty and kindliness of human nature, because in a church human nature seems to the average minister an amiable thing, delicately nourished on angels' food, with some defects, no doubt, but with no brutal instincts. So the average minister, living in a sentimental world, sees everything through the glamour of sentiment, and speaks and acts accordingly."

"And an editor?"

"An editor has no illusions. Take my life. Ever since I was sixteen I have been handling life with naked hands—forgive the repetition of the phrase. I've mixed with thieves and pickpockets; followed the clue of repulsive crimes; discovered corruption where I looked for rectitude; found men self-seeking, greedy, unscrupulous. Life, as I have seen it, is not an amiable affair at all; it is a strong, brutal, terrible thing. It's a tremendous battle, in which the fiercest passions are at work. Oh, it can be heroic,

too,—that I know. But fear lies at its base. You must make men afraid of something if you want to make them move to a higher plane of living. The soldier fears to be thought a coward; therefore he flings his life away. The merchant fears the rod of justice; therefore he controls his greed within the bounds of law. In the highest state of development men fear the rebuke of conscience, they fear the disapproval of God, and then you get the saint. The love of God is the last word of wisdom, no doubt, but the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. My particular work just now, as I conceive it, is to put the fear of God into the hearts of men like William Stonecroft.”

“What about Stonecroft?”

“Oh, he’s a good case. I think he’ll come round to our point of view. I’ve kept careful track of his doings, though, of course he doesn’t know it. He’s dismissed that brute of a manager. He’s closed one of his houses, whose evil reputation was notorious. Stonecroft is an easy case, because he is at heart a good man. He sinned not wilfully but through criminal carelessness—the carelessness of the man who grows wealthy too fast, and leaves to others the management of his affairs, and doesn’t trouble about details. If I had only to deal with men of his order I should have no trouble, but I’m no prophet if we are not going to be up against the worst kind of trouble with some of the other men on my list before many weeks are over.”

Gaunt grew serious at once. "Tell me what you mean," he said.

"I've nothing very definite to tell you at present. I am only conscious that a storm is brewing. From what direction it will break, I can't tell. Here, for instance, is a letter which shows the sort of spirit which is at work."

He handed Gaunt the letter. It was typewritten and anonymous. It was composed with a sort of sober violence, a cold unexaggerated vindictiveness, much more impressive than any wild and whirling words would have been. The writer remarked that he and many others were aware of all Gaunt's plans and movements. They had nothing to say against his work as long as it was confined to its own proper sphere of religious activity. He warned Gaunt that if he passed beyond that sphere of activity there were those who would remorselessly crush him. They had the means, they would find the way. For the present they contented themselves with warning him that he was in greater danger than he imagined. If he made it necessary for them to strike, they would strike hard and mercilessly, and the blow would come in such a way that no precautions he might take would enable him to avoid it.

As Gaunt read the letter his eyes flamed. If he had at all hesitated in his approval of Butler's campaign, he now hesitated no more. The letter had an effect precisely the contrary of that intended by

the writer. Instead of intimidating him, it kindled in him the spirit of battle.

"Have you any guess who the writer is?" he said.

"None whatever." Then, noting the anger in Gaunt's face, he added: "Now don't take it too seriously. I have received hundreds of such letters in my time. It may mean anything or nothing; it may be an idle threat or a serious menace. It is impossible to decide which. The only certain thing is that we've hit somebody pretty hard and he's angry."

"But it's dastardly."

"Of course it is. You don't expect the devil to play fair, do you?"

"What do you intend to do?"

"Go on, just go on. In the course of a day or two, I shall begin a series of articles in *The Daily Light*. I shall use this letter later on, if the occasion demands it. It will be a valuable bit of evidence on the character of our opponents. We're in for a big fight, but I've not a doubt as to the issue. I know you think I've rather a poor opinion of human nature; well, let me confess that I have one supreme faith; it is that the great multitude of plain folk are always on the side of right, when they once know what right is."

"That's a great creed," said Gaunt.

"It is a justified creed at any rate," said Butler. "I've never found it false. There's an inextinguishable moral sense in man, in spite of all our philoso-

phers. The curious thing is that it is most vital in the people who are roughest and most ignorant. As man goes up in the social scale he loses it. I suppose this is the result of wealth. All revolutions have their birth among the common people. It is from the womb of labour and hardship that all the Christs come. And it is the poor alone who have the vision to recognize the Christ when He comes."

A day or two later Butler began his memorable series of articles in *The Daily Light*. In his first article he defined his policy. He began by stating what was perfectly obvious and familiar to all American citizens: viz., that law had everywhere fallen into disrepute. It was notorious that a rich man had means of either coercing, buying, or influencing the law in his own favour. America was practically at the mercy of the rich men, many of whom were scoundrels of the worst kind. But if law failed to touch the lawbreaker, there still remained another tribunal, the tribunal of publicity. He proposed, first of all, to give a just and impartial account of the various abuses which worked injustice and suffering in the common life. Those who were guilty would recognize their offences in those articles. If the recognition of the offence produced penitence and reparation, he was content. If no such results followed he would proceed to publish the names of the offenders, with full details of their misdoing, and leave public opinion to deal with them in its own way.

These articles at once produced furious comment in *The Yellow Press*. Both Butler and Gaunt were mercilessly caricatured and ridiculed. Who was Butler, jeered the Press, that he should take it upon himself to be the censor of New York? They took leave to remind him that tyrannical Puritanism died a good many decades ago in New England, after making the life of the people miserable by its exactions, and that America would never permit its resurrection in the persons of a fanatical editor and a crack-brained parson.

"You see," said Butler, as he read this article to Gaunt, "the writer of that anonymous letter was right when he said that he was perfectly aware of our plans and movements. I have not mentioned your name, but our antagonists recognize my manifesto as coming from the League of Service."

"I am proud that they should do so," said Gaunt. "All that I am afraid of is that some of our workers may be exposed to insult and violence—particularly the women."

"Oh, it hasn't come to that yet, and it won't for some time," said Butler. "Of course it may happen, but I shall know well in advance. At present our antagonists will be content with ridicule of our motives and personal defamation."

To this attack Butler replied with a personal article. He stated that he had not the honour to be called a Puritan; he was simply a plain citizen, who was fighting the battle of the plain people. He

would not be deterred from his duty by either ridicule or abuse.

And, then, day by day he followed up his first article with others, in which the social sores of New York were remorselessly exposed. He drew vivid pictures of the methods by which vice was manufactured; how insufficient wages made virtue nearly impossible for hosts of women workers; how the life of crowded tenements—dark, airless, and insanitary—provoked a violent passion for excess of some kind in the lives of multitudes who felt themselves unjustly deprived of the joy of living; and how behind all this phantasmagoria of social misery there stood men and women who drew from it the sources of their luxury, who lived delicately, who had houses at Newport and yachts upon the Hudson, who took all the joy of living as a right, and never so much as thought of those who were sacrificed to produce the pleasures they themselves enjoyed. He dealt most trenchantly with the condition of the women workers of New York. In its pride and love of boasting the Press had shouted itself hoarse in affirming that America was “a woman’s country.” No doubt the women of good birth and ample means had a good time; they had too good a time, for it made them vain and selfish. But what of the other kind of women—the great host of toilers? As a class they were shamelessly underpaid, and in many instances as shamelessly overworked. The doctors of New York could tell a tale full of horror, if they

chose. The keepers of houses where such women boarded could tell a yet more terrifying story.

And then he proceeded to elaborate his parable of the pool and the river; the pool of misery which a hundred charities and philanthropic societies were endeavouring to bale out, and the river of wrong forever flowing into it, so that in the end nothing was really accomplished. And this river of wrong often rose in the churches and philanthropic societies themselves, though no one seemed to see it, or if he saw it had not the daring to declare what he saw. The very men who gave money for the relief of social misery were often themselves the silent accessories of the misery they sought to relieve. It was, therefore, the conditions of social misery that must be ascertained, and that implied examination of the sources of wealth. To rescue people from a leaky ship was no doubt humane and heroic; but would it not be far more sensible to stop the leaks, and to make it impossible for the leaky ship to put out to sea? And so from day to day he pursued his formidable indictment. He wrote as he had always written on moral themes, with a restrained fire and passion; always lucid, rational, sober in statement, but with a deadly incisiveness and force. It was these elements that gave him his power, and never was that power so manifest as in this memorable series of articles.

They were widely quoted, of course. They gave occasion for certain other cities to loudly profess

themselves not as New York, whereat Butler smiled grimly, and related for their benefit the story of the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, with emendations and applications of his own.

But the most remarkable thing was that after the first outburst of *The Yellow Press*, that great agent of public demoralisation fell wholly silent. Gaunt was disposed to regard this as a victory, but Butler soon undeceived him.

"It's an ominous silence," he said. "It means a storm."

"I rather think it means that they are waiting to see which way the wind blows," said Gaunt.

"Not a bit of it," said Butler. "I don't say they won't pretend to support me, if they should conclude that it would pay them to do so; but it is far more likely that they will conspire to crush me. Indeed, I have reason to know that is what their silence really means."

"Have you had any more threatening letters?"

"No, but I've found that they have tried quietly to buy the control of my paper. Fortunately that is impossible. Have I ever told you the history of my paper?"

"No; I would like to hear it."

"Well, I worked for years at journalism, saving every cent I could, always in the hope that I might some day get a paper of my own: for a mere editor is in a position much more insecure than that of any minister. He is, of course, entirely at the mercy

of the proprietors of his paper, who may change their policy at a moment's notice or may differ from their editor in opinion, or may sell their interests. A mere editor is the least independent of men. So I saved and saved to obtain independence, and for years limited myself to two very plain meals a day. Then a fortunate legacy gave me my chance. I started my paper, putting all I had into it. For more than a year ruin stared me in the face. I had finally to sell a quarter share to save myself, and from that day the tide turned. But I kept my three-quarters interest, though I almost starved to do it, in the first six months of the partnership. It was worth starving for; it was the price of freedom.

"Well, the other man with the quarter share has been to see me thrice in the last week. Each time he came on the same errand. He wanted to buy a controlling interest, and offered me a sum for it that would have made me a rich man for life. He wasn't very adroit about it. I read his purpose in his eyes. Of course he's been got at by the other side."

"Which means that the other side is thoroughly alarmed."

"Of course. And you'd say so if you knew all that went on in my office."

He paused a moment and smiled at some recollection. Then he added: "The task of a Grand Inquisitor isn't pleasant, but it has some redeeming elements of humour. The latest form of humour on the part of one of my black sheep is to hire an ex-

pugilist with a cudgel to wait for me at the door of the office. He's a good-natured sort of pugilist, and innocently let his designs be discovered by one of the men, who indulged him in certain potent cocktails. It seems he didn't know me by sight, and was extremely anxious to make my acquaintance. When the cocktails had done their work I sent for him to my office, and behaved so beautifully to him that he actually began to regard me with affection. Conspirators should be very careful to understand the antecedents of those they employ. It seemed that my ex-pugilist had a daughter who was as the apple of his eyes, and that Olivia Jordan had been kind to her when the girl lay sick. When he knew that I was in the same swim with Olivia, he became quite maudlin and professed that he wouldn't harm me for the world. I asked him what wages he earned as a professional sandbagger, and he told me with engaging frankness; also the name of his employer. I promptly doubled his wages to go on waiting for me at the door of the office. He's still there. He's a ferocious-looking scoundrel, but he has a most alluring wink. You should see him wink at me when I go in and out."

Later on in the evening Butler came to see Gaunt, bringing William Stonecroft with him. Stonecroft's demeanour was quite altered. His surface geniality had vanished.

"You know my errand, no doubt," he said, speaking slowly and heavily.

"I have been expecting you," said Gaunt, "and am heartily glad to see you."

"You expected me?"

"Yes, because I felt quite sure that you meant to do the right thing, and would do it."

Stonecroft's face flushed. "I think it was because I felt you had that kind of faith in me that I've found strength to fight the hardest battle of my life," he said.

"But it has been a hard, hard battle," he continued, and as he spoke the dulness in his voice dissolved, and he began to speak with energy. "I give you my word I had no idea of the existence of the sort of things you laid to my charge. Of course that's no defence, because I ought to have known. I see that now, and I marvel that I didn't see it long ago. Up to about ten years ago I was only moderately rich, and I looked after my affairs with jealous scrutiny. Then I found myself wealthy, and like most wealthy men thought I had a right to enjoy my leisure. I made my riches in New York, but I ceased to live in it. That was the beginning of the mischief."

"I think I understand," said Gaunt.

"No, I doubt if you do, or can. At all events, I am sure you can't understand the temptations of such a position. Do you know what it means to live in a green nook of the country, with all the pleasures that wealth can give you? Well, I will tell you what happens—your soul goes to sleep. The days

pass so noiselessly, life moves on such an even keel, that you forget the very existence of a tragic world. If you think of it at all, it is with a complacent commiseration, as if of something far off and unreal. Then your moral sense becomes lethargic, and as for your power of sympathy, there is nothing to call it out. That was how I lived—with my soul asleep. But I've learned my lesson,—thank God, I've learned it,—though it has been a terrible one."

His face was tragic.

Then he continued. "Do you remember how you asked me that day what I was going to do? I went away in great anger, but night and day that question haunted me. I found myself reviewing my methods of life, and the more I considered them, the more unhappy I became. At last I saw one thing clearly: I saw that a man ought to live where his money is being earned. The moment I arrived at that conclusion everything else became clear to me. I was taking the rewards of labour without labouring—that was my sin; and nothing could be right with me until that sin was renounced. Having reached that decision, I knew what I had to do. I have spent the last month in New York, and have gone thoroughly into my affairs. Some of the worst abuses have been remedied. Be patient with me, and I promise you that the rest shall follow.

"The best guarantee that I can give you for that promise is that at Christmas I shall return to New York for good, and go to business every day as I

used to do when I was relatively poor and struggling. I have let my country house. I intend to live among the people who henceforth will work not only for me but with me: and I will make it my business to make them sharers in all the good that I enjoy, as far as it is possible to me."

Gaunt and Butler were both deeply moved. Gaunt stretched out his hand to Stonecroft in warm regard—it was some moments before he could speak. When he spoke, he said, in a low voice: "Mr. Stonecroft, a few weeks ago when you offered me money for the League of Service, we refused it. I want to ask you now to give us something better than money."

"What is that?"

"Give us yourself. Join the League, and work with us. You have earned the right."

"I shall count it the greatest honour of my life," he replied.

And so that night there was written on the roll of the League a name that has ever since been a synonym for stainless honour and widest charity, the name of William Stonecroft.

XXI

HOME AT LAST

THE conversion of Stonecroft soon became public. Indeed he himself courted publicity by writing a long letter to *The Daily Light*, in which he earnestly pleaded the cause of the League, and insisted on the new principle of conduct which he had discovered, viz., that those who make money in a city should live among those whom they employ. His letter naturally attracted great attention, and among those who read it was Dr. Jordan.

Jordan was an obstinate, but not a stupid man. The astuteness which had enabled him to manage a church with success through so many years, also gave him some power of reading the signs of the times. Stonecroft's letter startled him. He began to ask himself for the first time whether he had not been mistaken in his estimate of Gaunt and his work.

When a man of Jordan's temperament begins to doubt his own infallibility, the disintegration of the said infallibility is rapid. Hitherto Jordan had had abundant faith in himself, and had justified it. Amid a hundred contentions and disputes, some of them paltry enough, but others of real moment, he

had never once found himself seriously mistaken. He had always chosen his ground with care, had measured men and occasions with cautious perspicacity, and had uniformly found himself upon the winning side. He was now to discover that astuteness and wisdom are very different things. In the presence of elemental forces astuteness is a vain thing; it is little better than a child's trick. Wisdom would have recognized in the sudden and wide triumph of Gaunt's principles the upheaval of the elemental in men's thoughts; but this wisdom—the gift of the seer—Jordan did not possess. And so it needed the sudden conversion of a man like Stonecroft to make him aware of the truth of things.

On a certain Monday morning Jordan sat in the room at his church which he used as a study. It was a large, comfortably furnished room, surrounded by bookshelves. In the earlier and happier times of his life he had made but infrequent use of this room, preferring to do his intellectual work at home. But his home had become a desolation, and in these days he found its silence unbearable. He had driven his son away, he had virtually expelled Olivia; but their reproachful ghosts seemed to haunt the house, their footfalls lingered on threshold and stairway, their voices echoed in the vacant rooms when the darkness fell; until he had grown afraid. He had hardly confessed this fear to himself; he had hitherto, in spite of his suffering, had no misgiving about the course which he had pursued; he saw himself rather

as a martyr, a man who was punished for the follies of others, not for his own.

But now, as he sat in his church-study on this Monday morning, he became conscious of a new movement in his thoughts. His egoism was crumbling, his faith in himself had begun to waver. He was in the position of the man whose creed rests not upon broad principles, but on the alleged accuracy of numerous details; consequently a man for whom the disproof of a detail is the dislodgment of the whole structure of belief. If he had been mistaken in his estimate of Gaunt, it followed that he had been mistaken in his treatment of Olivia. He had treated Olivia harshly; if in her case he was wrong, perhaps he had also been wrong in the harshness which he had shown toward his son. His pride struggled against the thought, but the hour for pride was over. Stonecroft's defection—for so he still called it—had inflicted a fatal wound to his pride. Here was a man of great wealth and social influence, the one man in Jordan's church who more than any other had stood for the old order of things, a man moreover of great astuteness of mind, not in the least liable to fanaticism—and he had suddenly become the public advocate of Gaunt's views. Jordan groaned in genuine bewilderment of spirit. And he had no longer the vigour to resent the blow that had fallen upon him. He had even begun to realize, with a pang of torturing humiliation, that it might be deserved.

The bell rang. Jordan roused himself from his gloomy reverie; a visitor was climbing the stair. The visitor was Stonecroft.

"Good-morning, Doctor," said Stonecroft. "I thought I would catch you early, before your day's work began."

"I am always glad to see you," said Jordan with a briskness of manner which was noticeably forced.

Stonecroft sat down, and for some minutes the conversation ranged over conventional nothings. Each man was acutely conscious of the question which waited for discussion, but each shrank from introducing it. At last Stonecroft said abruptly, "Well, Doctor, let us come to business. I want to speak to you frankly about the League of Service."

"You know my views," said Jordan, stiffly.

"I know what you have announced as your views," corrected Stonecroft.

"Isn't that a somewhat insulting distinction?"

"It is not meant so," said Stonecroft. "At the time when Gaunt began his crusade it was perfectly natural that you should take the stand you did. I entirely sympathized with you. But many things have happened since then. I should underrate your intelligence if I supposed that you were so bound to the fetich of consistency that you felt obliged to hold to your first view of the case simply because you had publicly announced it—quite irrespective, I mean, of the deductions which may be made from later developments."

"I am not aware of any later developments that demand a change of view on my part," said Jordan, with a flash of his old obstinacy.

"Doctor," said Stonecroft, earnestly, "forgive me, but is that quite true?"

"No, it isn't," said Jordan, with a sudden capitulation which surprised himself. "I will confess that your own conduct has been so surprising that it has raised doubts in my own mind."

"Doubts as to my conduct or your own?"

"Both," said Jordan. He was silent a moment, and then his misery spoke. "I am full of unhappiness," he said, in a low voice. "I am no longer sure of myself. In twenty-five years of public life I have known many conflicts of opinion and principle, but I have never known the misery of the divided mind. I have never known hesitation: hesitation has been peculiarly abhorrent to me, as the worst form of weakness. That which I despised in others I now endure. I am ashamed of myself and of my confession. I do not suppose that you or any man can understand the pain I suffer."

Stonecroft rose, and laid his hand on Jordan's shoulder. "Yes, I can understand," he said.

"I can understand because I have endured the same torture. Do you suppose it was an easy thing for me to do what I have done? You call this torture the torture of the divided mind. Yes, it is that, but I suspect that it might be more truthfully described as the torture of pride. It was my pride

that was put upon the rack; it is really your pride that is there now. I believe that of all hard things in life, the hardest is for a man who has always moved with the easy stride of complete assurance to say, 'I am wrong, I have done wrong.' The stronger a man is by nature the harder is it for him to say it. But oh, the relief when it is said! My friend, you have often preached to me; now it is my turn to preach to you—do the hardest and bravest thing of your life: have the courage to doubt your own wisdom."

"But it's not altogether pride with me," said Jordan. "I am not sure; that is the trouble."

"Well, then, let me put you a question. Have you ever taken the pains to study what this League of Service means at close quarters? Have you examined its aim and work?"

"I have regarded it as a piece of unworthy fanaticism."

"Regarded it? Yes, that is the mistake. You have stood aloof, and measured it from the height of your own supposed omniscience. I did the same. Would it not be wiser to take nothing for granted, not even your own omniscience?"

"Well, what would you have me do?"

"Simply cease to judge and begin to examine. Get rid of misleading words—fanaticism is one of them—and weigh facts. I will make you a definite proposal. Give me this week. Let me show you the kind of things this crusade is actually doing. If at

the end of the week you still disapprove, you will at least have more than theory and prejudice to support you; but I shall be greatly surprised if you don't find yourself on our side before the week's ended."

"Don't assume too much," said Jordan. "I will promise you the week, but as for myself, I can promise nothing."

"Very well," said Stonecroft, cheerily. "That's understood. I'll call for you this evening about six o'clock, if that will do."

"That will do," said Jordan.

Jordan sat silent a long time after Stonecroft left him. His dominant feeling was a sense of overwhelming surprise at his own conduct. He had expected Stonecroft's visit; he had intended to make it the occasion of lively controversy. On the contrary, he had capitulated without a struggle. More than this: he had exposed his own heart in a way which seemed incredible. Was it possible that these were the acts of Robert Jordan—that taciturn, reticent Jordan, who had always put a severe restraint upon his inner feeling, who had never even to his wife or child made a full exposure of his own soul? And he had done this to a man whom he had never even regarded as an intimate friend. He, whose every act had been the fruit of calculation, had allowed himself to be mastered by an impulse of confession, wholly foreign to all his previous instincts. And yet he was conscious of a sense of relief, as of a burden lifted from the heart. What

did it all mean? Another might have told him, but as yet he had no vision to discern the truth that what he was experiencing was the birth of humility. His egoism was upon the cross, and through all the cruel anguish a soft voice whispered, "Lord, it is good for me to be here." It was as though a city had fallen, leaving erect a single belfry, which rang out to the awful sunset the thrilling Angelus—a high thin note of mysterious consolation amid disastrous ruin.

A letter lay upon his desk in Olivia's handwriting. It had lain there for days unopened. He had vowed in the hardness of his heart to refuse all communication with the child who had deserted him; but now he took up Olivia's letter, and slowly broke the seal. So much had happened that was contrary to his will, that it seemed of little consequence if he once more obeyed his impulse rather than his habit. So he broke the seal.

The letter bore no address and was very brief.

"Dear Father [it read]:—If your son should come back to you in love and honour, would you refuse him? Robert is alive, and he loves you. But he will not, cannot, come to you, till you say 'Come.' Will you say the word? He has been ill; he is now well, and his one desire is reconciliation with you. For myself I ask nothing. Do with me as you please; I plead not for myself, but for Robert. To-morrow I shall be once more in New York, and will await your reply at Dr. Gaunt's house in Washington Square.

Your child, OLIVIA."

He looked at the date upon the envelope. It was a week old. So then his children had come to New

York, they had waited no doubt for some sign from him, and all the time their plea for kindness had lain upon his desk unread. "Robert is alive and loves you"—yes, and he loved Robert. He knew it now. The old affection, the old pride in his boy, the old hopes that he had cherished for his success in life, all those feelings that had once been his delight returned upon him now in torturing vehemence. Once more he had let occasion slip, he had failed to know the hour of his visitation, he had mismanaged his life with a folly truly tragic. He had lost his boy once through harshness which he no longer justified; he had lost him a second time through mere obduracy, so stupid that no defence was possible.

Vaguely he became conscious of something that defied human calculation in these happenings. He heard over him the dark wings of fate beating the expectant air, he felt round him the fast-closing web of destiny. And yet, as these phrases flashed through his mind, he knew that they were false. Destiny, fate,—these could not explain the paradox of his tragedy. What could? And as he groped for a reply, he felt as though a Hand closed over him, a Power not himself was breaking him sinew by sinew, and he knew the name of that Power. He fell upon his knees in a great horror of darkness. His prayer was characteristic. "God be merciful to me—a Fool," was all he found to say.

Toward evening Stonecroft called for him. "I make one stipulation," said Jordan. "I will go

wherever you wish to take me, but I will not meet Gaunt."

"I have no intention that you should," Stonecroft replied. "It is a movement, not a man, that I wish you to study. I simply wish you to see some of the things that are actually being done by the movement, that you may form your own estimate of them."

Jordan nodded his assent. Presently, as the carriage rolled eastward, Jordan said abruptly, "You've not told me your own story yet. I should be glad to hear it."

Stonecroft thereupon began to narrate how his acquaintance with the League of Service had begun; his anger against Butler and his resentment at Butler's interference; the gradual awakening of his own conscience; his determination to examine for himself those causes of offence which Butler had enumerated against him, and all those subsequent stages of his thought, until the hour when he had acknowledged his wrong and had determined on its reparation.

"But surely it is a monstrous thing that Butler should claim the right of interference with your personal liberty. You must have felt it so?" said Jordan.

"I did. I was never so enraged at anything in my life. But the more I thought about it the more I came to see that Butler was right—right not only morally but socially."

"I confess I can't follow the process of your thought."

"Yet it's quite simple," said Stonecroft. "If Isaiah or Jeremiah had been editors of a great newspaper in Jerusalem, I imagine they would have done precisely what Butler is doing. I gather that they made it their business to interfere a good deal with the liberty of the individual. And the ground of their interference was the same as Butler's, viz., that all individual liberty is conditioned by the general social welfare, and that the right of a community to happiness takes precedence of all individual rights."

"But Butler threatened you?"

"Well, I both needed and deserved the threat."

"If I had threatened you, you would have attacked me," said Jordan, bitterly.

"My dear Doctor, you would never have threatened me, and you know it. The most you would ever have done would have been to preach a sermon on social duty full of glittering generalities, which I should have promptly applied to some one else. That's the vice of the pulpit—it deals with mankind in the mass, it is afraid to deal with individuals. It grows eloquent about the tragedy of the poor man's one ewe lamb, but it never takes the rich thief by the throat and says 'Thou art the man.' Oh, don't think I am blaming or deriding you. I know the difficulties of your position. But those very difficulties make it necessary for men like Butler to do what you cannot do. Doctor, I have

lived fifty years, and for twenty of those years, I have attended your ministry. In all those fifty years Butler was the first man who spoke to me as an individual, honestly, searchingly, and without fear."

Jordan did not reply—no reply was possible; but his thoughts were painful. For he knew that Stonecroft's accusation was true. The heroic, the prophetic element of a public ministry—that element which creates men of the Knox and the Savonarola type, the masters of the conscience, the dictators of morals, the regenerators of society, that element was not in him. His ideal had been to go smoothly, to conciliate all men, especially the wealthy, to avoid offence—ah, how mean it all seemed, and how unworthy! Once more his pride was on the rack. Stonecroft had virtually condemned his whole ministry as futile, and he wondered how many more of his hearers scorned him in their hearts even while their lips praised him.

The carriage was at that moment passing a shop outside which a long line of people waited. The rain was beginning to fall, but they stood silent and meek, moving a step at a time toward the door of the shop. No one appeared to take any notice of them. Well-dressed persons hurried by, upon their errands of business or pleasure, without so much as a glance at this abject throng. But as Jordan looked more closely he saw half a dozen men and women passing along the line, speaking earnestly to man after man. And as the white electric light flashed

upon them through the driving shower, he saw that each of these busy people wore upon the bosom a simple cross of quaint design.

“Do you know what that means?” said Stonecroft. “That long line of miserables are waiting for bread. They have no homes. They will sleep under Brooklyn Bridge or on the park seats, or anywhere they can to-night.”

“And who are those persons talking with them?”

“Members of the League of Service. Gaunt has lately opened half a dozen shelters—those men and women with the cross upon the breast are giving these poor creatures tickets for a free bed and breakfast in the shelter.”

“I didn’t know Gaunt did that sort of work,” said Jordan. “I thought that his movement meant little more than oratorical fireworks in Madison Square Garden.”

“And that is why I wanted you to come with me to-night,” said Stonecroft. “The League of Service is the union of all who love in the service of all who suffer.”

The carriage stopped. “We must walk now,” said Stonecroft.

They turned down a narrow crowded street. Saloons flared upon every hand; evil faces were numerous; the whole aspect of the street was repellent and even dangerous. Twice they passed windows that were boarded up.

“Those were saloons,” said Stonecroft, “and the vilest in the street. We have closed them, and we are not loved for it. Some day there will be trouble over it—so our women workers say.”

“Do women work here?” said Jordan.

“Why not?” said Stonecroft. “It is here that the misery of life is greatest, because the vice and crime are greatest. Therefore this street is the headquarters of our Sisters of the Poor. A woman, you know, is much safer than a man in such a district as this. Her best defence is her goodness; even the worst respect that.”

The words sent a pang through Jordan’s heart, for he remembered that it was this very Sisterhood that Olivia had joined. For the first time he realized what her life must mean: a life of self-denial and hard toil, and even of peril, amid scenes of misery and degradation.

At last they stopped before a plain and dingy building. It had been a dance-hall, as the half-effaced sign declared. People were passing into it by twos and threes; some of them with smiles and cheerful feet, many more with a furtive and half-reluctant air. Stonecroft and Jordan entered, taking seats in the darkest corner they could find, from which they could be observers without being observed.

Presently a group of half a dozen women, all dressed alike in plain gray, and each wearing on the breast a silver cross, took their seats upon the plat-

form. A moment later they began to sing to a soft and almost inaudible piano accompaniment:

“Stealing away, stealing away,
Stealing away home to Jesus.”

The words were scarcely a hymn—they were rather the long plaintive sigh of a weary human heart. The congregation, which now quite filled the hall, listened in perfect silence. The majority of faces in the crowd were hard and stolid, many seemed visibly bruised by the buffetings of circumstance, all were care-worn and weary; but as the simple melody rose and fell a soft light seemed to fall upon them all. “Stealing away—home—to Jesus—” surely it was the inarticulate cry of their own souls they heard in the plaintive words. And then, without announcement, one of these gray-garbed women prayed, in a voice that seemed but a continuation of the music, so soft was it, so finely toned to the spirit of the hymn. The prayer was simplicity itself; it was like the prayer of a little child. Perhaps that was why it moved the people so much. Perhaps the hardest and roughest of them had memories of little children long since estranged or lost. Perhaps that was why it was that Jordan felt the smart of unaccustomed tears in his eyes; for his thoughts went back to a small white room in which Olivia had slept as a little girl, and a white bed beside which she prayed.

The prayer ended, and another hymn was sung.

There was no address, no sermon. Palmer had taken the chair in the centre of the platform, but his duties were merely nominal. He called upon one and another of his strange audience to speak, until the speaking became free and general. Jordan sat entranced. He had never heard speaking like this. Men who by their own confession had been drunkards, thieves, and outcasts, rose, and in heart-felt words, and often with streaming eyes, narrated how they had been saved and delivered. A suicide told of how a woman's hand laid upon his arm, as he was hurrying to his doom, turned him back to life and hope. "She's here now, God bless her! She's sitting not far from me, but she doesn't want to be seen." All eyes turned in the direction that the speaker indicated; Jordan unconsciously rose to look, but saw only a shy gray figure in the dim light under the gallery.

And then, while he thus stood, thrilled and excited, from this same dim spot under the gallery, a man rose, and began to speak in a low, clear voice, and with the unmistakable accent of culture. Jordan's face became deadly pale. It seemed as though a great wave had passed over him, blinding and bewildering him; and through this obliterating wave the voice reached him in snatches. "I was a wanderer,—a prodigal—I have come home——" so the phrases of the speaker reached him. And then, in an instant, the wave passed, and he knew the voice.

"Oh, my boy, my boy!" he cried.

It was all that he could say. He would have fallen, had not Stonecroft put his arm around him. In another moment other arms were about his neck. The shy gray figure was by his side, the long-lost son had found his father.

XXII

A TRAGEDY

THE anonymous letters had begun again. They had also become more definite in their threats, and more vindictive in their character.

Gaunt read them and laughed; but both Butler and Palmer regarded them as a grave menace.

The exciting cause of these new threats was not far to seek. Butler had succeeded by his trenchant exposures in *The Daily Light* in arousing New York to one of those brief passions of reforming energy which are so characteristic of the volatile city. Public opinion had been roused, and had furnished the necessary dynamic for the enforcement of law. There had been police-raids of houses devoted to gambling and worse things; saloons had been closed, and some of the worst offenders had been fined or sent to the penitentiary. One result had been the enrolment of thousands of new members in the League of Service. Many men of influence who cared relatively little for the religious aims of the League recognized its social value, and joined its ranks. The pulpits of the city rang with denuncia-

tions of public evils. Even the papers most hostile to Gaunt were silent, and others hitherto neutral had indulged in cautious commendation.

But in that dark underworld of vice and crime, whose kingdom Gaunt had invaded, there was the growing murmur of conspiracy and retaliation. The old Ephesian cry rose, "Our craft is in danger," and it was all the more to be dreaded because it did not utter itself in public clamour, but in whispered wrath. In that dark and evil street where the Mission stood and the Sisters of the Poor toiled, there were ominous signs of dissatisfaction. One night the windows of the hall were broken; on another night an attempt was made to fire the building. The gray sisters went about their work unmoved, but they noticed sadly that they now met more scowling than smiling faces. Butler knew the peril, but he recognized that the wisest way of meeting it was to show no sign of fear; for the first sign of fear is the coward's signal to attack.

Palmer was more acutely conscious of the peril than Butler, and for this there was a reason in his growing love for Olivia Jordan. The figure of the fair girl filled his thoughts, and often haunted his dreams. Again and again he woke in terror from the vision of her peril, but what could he do? She met his hinted fears with the confident and cheerful smile of a courageous child. Like Gaunt she smiled at threats, and that, indeed, was the temper of all these tender women.

"No one will hurt us," she said. "Our frailty is our protection."

Palmer listened, and began to understand why the records of martyrology are so full of women's names.

"You have disregarded our warnings," ran the latest anonymous letter. "You must now accept the consequences. The blow which we shall strike will be sudden and sure. You cannot escape it."

Gaunt, Butler, and Palmer each read this letter in turn. They were seated at a table in the little room which Gaunt used for consultation and correspondence.

"What do you make of it?" said Palmer, anxiously.

"It is of a piece with all the other letters," replied Butler. "They are written by one hand. This may mean that they simply express the intentions of an individual, or that they are the manifesto of a group of men. I suspect that the latter explanation is the true one."

"Then you think that there is a conspiracy against us?"

"I do, and more than that it is not a conspiracy of ignorant men. If any attack is made upon us, it will no doubt be made by ignorant men, but they will be the tools of intelligent and probably wealthy men."

"And what can we do?"

"Simply nothing, except sit tight," said Butler,

with a grim smile. "We can't wear chain armour under our clothes, it is out of fashion, and it would be a confession of weakness to invoke police protection. We must just take our risks and be of good courage."

About a week after this conversation Gordon died. The old man had been busy until his last hour. After a long day's work he went to bed at midnight, and died in his sleep.

When Gordon's will was opened it was found to contain one curious clause. He requested that the only service held for him should be conducted in the Mission Hall, which was within a stone's throw of the hall in which he himself had preached five-and-twenty years before on his secession from the Church. In his death he wished to be identified with the poor. He directed that his funeral should be of the plainest possible description; that his bearers should be six poor men chosen from the Mission converts, that Gaunt should conduct any service of a public character that might be arranged; and finally he expressed the desire that those who had loved him would not be betrayed by their affections into speaking any words of adulation over one whose mistakes had been many, whose acts of wisdom few, whose sole claim to recollection was the sincerity of his unfulfilled intentions.

"How like him!" said Gaunt, as he read these last instructions. "While most of us are filled with a lively sense of our value to society, I believe Gordon

had not the least idea of what his life meant to the world."

"He saw too widely to see himself," said Palmer.

"He sees now the intention of his life fulfilled," replied Gaunt.

Then each felt that any further words were sacrilege in the presence of that inscrutable and majestic mask of death.

Gaunt sat long that night in the quiet room where the dead man had worked, busy in the examination of his papers. These papers consisted of fragments of autobiography, notes upon various scholastic and philosophic problems, prayers, meditations, and diaries. As Gaunt read each faded page there came to him a new sense of the wonderful wealth of energy and wisdom compressed in such a life as Gordon's, and he remembered Palmer's saying that Gordon saw widely because he did not see himself. How rare was that temper! How few were those whose lives were not pivoted on egoism! He saw now what was the real secret of the majesty and sweetness of Gordon's character: it was his total self-effacement. He had striven, as all brave men must needs strive, for the things which they count worthy, but he had never made personal success his goal, or measured the worth of his quest by the degree of his success or failure. He had been so sure of the triumph of God's purpose that he had never imagined himself necessary to that triumph. Therefore, he had dwelt in peace, incapable alike of

the intoxication of success or the depression of failure. And, therefore, also he had kept the prophetic vision; for only those who see not themselves can see God.

Gaunt felt himself humbled before the testimony of Gordon's life. In the midnight silence he examined his own heart, and put to himself inevitable questions. Was not he in danger of this intoxication of success? Had not he unconsciously conceived himself as necessary to the fulfilment of God's intentions? He thought he recognized in himself what certainly no one had noticed—a certain coarsening of spiritual fibre since his cause had triumphed. It was not pride, it was not complacency; it was hard indeed to define it, unless as a certain dulling of the finer sensitiveness. Amid the agonies of his renunciation, when he let his old life go at the call of truth, he had, nevertheless, been conscious of rapturous moments of elation. They were the moments when his naked soul clung close to God, knowing no other refuge. But it seemed to him that his clinging to God was less ardent now. Did not this imply that he saw God less clearly, because he had looked from God to himself?

He realized now, as he meditated on Gordon's character, that those very qualities which had composed the noblest elements of that character were the products of outward failure. Fragrance from the bruised herb, wine from the crushed grape, a world's faith from the Cross of Desolation—so the

story of the world's redeemers had ever run. Assuredly if that story of the tragic centuries was to be believed, success was the one fatal calamity in life, defeat the true redemption.

Yet he could not honestly pray for defeat; he could not even ask for such a life as Gordon's, so far as its outward results went. But he saw now the thing he might pray for, and the goal he might strive for—it was complete self-effacement. He saw that he must no longer think of himself as necessary even to the movement which he led. No man was necessary to the divine purpose. He must count not his life dear unto him, he must be willing either to succeed or fail, to live or die, as God should decide—that was surely the last message of his great dead friend which reached the heart of Gaunt in that midnight hour. He bowed silently beside the dead prophet, and rose purified and refreshed.

In that intense hour Gordon preached the last sermon of his noble life. It was not preached in vain.

The effect of these midnight thoughts was a new spirit of composure in Gaunt's mind. It was most clearly manifest in his attitude to the dangers that threatened him. Hitherto his attitude had been one of cheerful defiance. He had been ready to challenge the enemy, he had felt something of that thrill of elation which all strong and courageous men experience in the face of danger. His courage still remained, but all lust of battle had left him. He

thought of his enemies with commiseration; it was their folly rather than their hatred which he saw. Things would happen as they would happen; as for him, he heard the mystic voice which said: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

The following morning was spent in consultation upon the best method of carrying out Gordon's last wishes. Gordon's connection with the League of Service, and his later writings in which he had advocated its purposes, had naturally given him notoriety. At the time of his death he was no longer a forgotten prophet, but rather a prophet who had come into his kingdom. Thus his death was a public event, and it was clear that it would be impossible to divest his funeral of a public character.

"There are at least five thousand of our people who will wish to show the last tokens of respect to Gordon," said Palmer. "In all probability you might treble that number, and it would be a safe estimate.

"The Mission Hall seats only eight hundred; it might hold a thousand," he added.

"That's not the only difficulty," said Gaunt. "Gordon wished to be numbered with the poor in his death. It is impossible to mistake his wishes. It would be entirely contrary to his wishes if we filled the hall with our friends—and his—but shut out the poor."

Butler had sat silent during this discussion. His face was anxious.

"Have you no counsel to give?" said Gaunt, with a smile.

"I had rather state facts," he replied, quietly. "It will be time enough for counsel when we get our facts clear."

"Well, what have you to say?" said Gaunt.

"First, that we are bound to respect Gordon's wishes. The service must be held in the Mission Hall, and the actual converts of the Mission are the first people to be invited. Gordon loved them; many of them loved him. It is quite extraordinary that he should have had so great an influence over them, for his visits to the Mission were not frequent. I confess that I feel a kind of noble pathos in the fact. Five-and-twenty years ago he tried to reach these very people and failed. In his last days he found the way to their hearts. We may mourn him deeply, but none will mourn him more deeply than these poor people. He was the prophet of the poor; the poor have a right to their prophet."

"Yes, that is certain," said Gaunt.

"But something else is certain, too," said Butler. "You can't get these poor people together in the daytime. They can only come at night. Therefore, the service must be held in the evening. That is where the element of danger begins. You know what the street is like at night. I have reason to think that the saloons will take this opportunity of revenging themselves upon us. It is a unique opportunity. They will have us all bunched to-

gether, and God knows what violence they may attempt."

"Do you really anticipate violence?" said Palmer.

"I do," said Butler. "You will remember what I told you about my friend the ex-pugilist. He knows all the movements of the district, and he tells me he is certain that our enemies meditate violence."

"Well, we must take our risks," said Gaunt, with a smile. "They are your own words."

"What if the risk is death?" said Butler, in a low voice.

"Then we can but die," replied Gaunt.

"Very good," said Butler. "I expected you to say that. But I thought it my duty to warn you."

"Thank you," said Gaunt. He grasped Butler's hand in a long embrace. Then the moment of tense emotion passed, and the three friends with complete composure returned to the task of planning the obsequies of Gordon.

When Butler had conjectured that many thousands of adherents of the League would wish to be present at Gordon's funeral, he had not overestimated the public interest. On the day after Gordon's death the Press was full of articles on his career, memoranda of his conversations, estimates of his character and influence, and these were almost wholly eulogistic. To Gordon had come the rare good fortune of having outlived the enmities which his early career had excited. Of his former antagonists but few were left, and they were no longer

antagonists. These also now joined in the general acclaim. Each mail brought Gaunt letters of appreciation for the character of Gordon, and in every instance the writers of the letters expressed the desire to take some humble part in the funeral of the dead prophet. As Gaunt read this vast mass of correspondence it became clear that in spite of Gordon's deprecation of any public ceremony, nevertheless his obsequies were bound to be attended with a great popular demonstration of respect and affection.

Once convinced of this, Gaunt did his utmost to make the demonstration effective.

He fixed Saturday night for the simple service in the Mission Hall, and invited all the people in the habit of attending the Mission, especially the known converts, to be present. Members of the League were requested to line the street, and to wait reverently for the conclusion of the service. At the close of the service the body of Gordon was to be conveyed to Madison Square Garden, accompanied by the members of the League in procession. In that vast auditorium, which had seen the birth of the League, the body would rest through Saturday night; early on Sunday morning it would be laid to rest.

"It is not often New York honours a prophet," said Gaunt. "Gordon would at any time have given his body to be burned for love of the people. I think he would be willing, if he could know, to give his

body to this brief honour, if a single heart might thereby be touched with a single good desire."

And now the Saturday night had come. The great city clothed itself with light, and through the brilliant streets rolled a glittering river of frivolity. But here and there in that vivacious crowd other figures were discerned, whose goal was not the restaurant or the theatre. They were people of earnest brows and sober dress; they were all moving eastward, and upon each breast was a Cross of Stars. They gathered from far and near; many had travelled from distant cities; they represented all grades of society; but the same glad and earnest look distinguished each. The common goal of all these pilgrims of the night was a plain mission hall, in which lay one who even in death drew them by the magnetism of reverence and love.

Beyond Fourteenth Street their numbers became apparent. They composed a multitude of many thousands. Yet there was not the least disorder. Each took his place in the long double line which garrisoned the street; each stood in perfect silence. Presently the whisper passed along the ranks that the service for Gordon had commenced, and each man stood with uncovered head, and the women bowed their faces in sympathetic prayer.

In the Mission Hall itself the scene was one not to be forgotten. The hall was completely filled with the poor. Such a crowd of tragic faces: some seamed with devastating passions, some simply worn

with years of fruitless struggle; such eyes—some sadly joyous, tear-filled, yet bright with new-kindled love; others pathetic with the pleading of defeat against the weakness of the will; such tokens of the ill-usage of life, in bowed shoulders, narrow chests, coarsened hands; here were, indeed, “the people of the Abyss”—the people of that populous, dim underworld, whose very existence is unsuspected by the well-fed and the happy. And yet in the general aspect of that strange throng there was more of hope than sadness. Deep-sunk as they were, the day-spring from on high had visited them, and on their patient brows the glow of hope’s morning burned.

And for this strange congregation, all that was meant by light and hope was represented in the quiet dust that slumbered in a flower-covered coffin which scattered on the air the fragrance of life—an emblem of beauty rather than decay.

Few of these people had known Gordon personally. Some had heard his voice on the rare occasions when he had spoken in the hall; some had grasped his hand; and here and there were those who had owed their souls to his entreaties and his prayers. But there was not one who did not understand the meaning of Gordon’s life. They knew that he had loved them, that he had suffered for them, and that his life had spent itself for their enrichment. To these who had never touched his hand, he was less a man than a symbol. He was the

symbol of love, of pity, of a more than human faith in them; of kindness in a world of hatred, of helpfulness and justice in a world which they had found hostile and unjust. And so from his silence there breathed the encouragement of brotherhood; and the fragrance of the flowers that covered him was a perfume blown from unknown accessible Edens which he had bade them enter.

The Sisters had begun to sing. Gray-robed, quiet-eyed, they stood behind the banked flowers, and it was as though the flowers sang—so soft, so tender, was the music.

“Beyond the parting and the meeting
I shall be soon;
Beyond the farewell and the greeting,
Beyond the pulse’s fever-beating,
I shall be soon.

“Beyond the gathering and the strewing,
I shall be soon;
Beyond the ebbing and the flowing,
Beyond the coming and the going,
I shall be soon.”

And then the voice of Gaunt, low, musical, intense, began to speak. Of Gordon himself he said scarcely a word; rather he spoke as Gordon might have spoken to them. “Beyond the gathering and the strewing”—ah, it was that they had to think of. With delicately tender touches he drew back the curtain of that unseen world. It was their world, the world where all who lived rightly would meet, when the weary comings and goings of this life

were over. They listened entranced. They seemed to see themselves, no longer disinherited, walking among happy throngs in tranquil light, and looking back with a kind of rapturous commiseration on the distant world which they had left. Oh, to be there, there!

“Beyond the parting and the meeting,
Beyond the farewell and the greeting.”

The voice of Gaunt broke into a sob, and ceased. Then, as though recalling him, and all of them, to the present, the choir began to sing the hymn of the League, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”

The doors of the hall were flung back. The hymn was taken up by the waiting lines of the Leaguers in the street. Like a solemn chant it rolled from lip to lip along that mile or more of mourners.

From the doors of the hall the Sisters came forth, singing. Behind them, all that was mortal of Gordon, followed, and behind the flower-covered bier walked Gaunt, Palmer, and Butler.

As they passed into the street a man pushed through the crowd and whispered a word in Butler’s ear. The man was the ex-pugilist. Butler’s face paled. He moved closer to Gaunt, shook his head, and the procession swept on.

It was just ten o’clock. Butler noticed that about a hundred yards from the Mission Hall where the street narrowed, the crowd seemed impenetrable. At this point the lines of the Leaguers were broken;

the crowd swayed dangerously, and there were shouts and jeering voices. Every window was wide open, and the people leaned out, mostly silent, some few shouting boisterous jests to the crowd beneath. The crowd was densest at a point where a saloon stood, which the League had closed.

Butler instantly recognized the danger point. It was to warn him that mischief would be attempted at this point that the ex-pugilist had sought him.

His first thought was for Gaunt. He seized the arm of Palmer.

“Close up round him, men,” he said, in a hoarse whisper.

Gaunt, quite unconscious of their intention, was at that moment about a yard ahead of his friends. His head was bare; he was singing with complete absorption the great hymn which had witnessed the birth of the League.

Butler and Palmer sprang forward to his side. But it was too late. At that moment from an upper window a pistol-shot rang.

Gaunt fell with a bullet in his breast. Fifty yards away, his followers, quite unconscious of what had happened, were still singing:

“When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

XXIII

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

HE lay in a narrow bed in an unfamiliar room. The walls were without adornment, the floors bare; there was scarcely more furniture than might be found in a monk's cell. The room breathed an air of austere cleanliness; it produced also the impression of loneliness. Two high windows let in the light; each framed a patch of blue sky. But for that reassuring patch of sky he might have imagined that he lay in some forgotten vestibule of silence, far from the human world.

He listened eagerly for some sound, however trifling, that might assure him that he was not utterly forsaken. For a long time—it seemed a whole day, though it was but a few seconds—no sound came. Then a bell rang in a distant corridor. He heard a quick footstep, the closing of a door, and the sound of water dripping from a tap. Then an obliterating wave of sleep rolled over him. At first he tried to push it back; then he yielded to it, though with infinite reluctanœe. He had the sensation of drowning, of sinking deep and deeper in some element that was strange to him and half-repugnant.

That sound of water dripping from a tap pursued him. It was a maddening sound. He had a recollection of something horrible he had once heard of: a torture by water, a thing much more terrible than torture by fire. Drip—drip—drop; a pause full of menace; then drip—drip—drop, again; and each drop became a sharp cold weapon, puncturing its way into the fibres of the brain. Then—oh, miraculous relief!—the sound became metamorphosed into a noise of running brooks, the rippling of waves along a lake shore, the regular throb of heavy seas breaking on a beach of sand. It was sunrise, and the brook glittered in the fresh light; it was noon, and the lake shone like glass mingled with fire; it was night, and the stars stooped like fire-flies, and shone reflected in the smooth, green slope of curving waves. And then, again, he heard that insistent drip—drip—drop of water from a tap.

The sound once more grew faint, and it seemed now that he was caught away by some swift wind; yet still he dreamed of water.

He saw great forests, "motionless in an ecstasy of rain," and his delighted body drank through every pore the delicious coolness. The silver drops smote his naked flesh; a dark cloud broke over him in torrents of swift rain; like Elijah the Tishbite he ran against a racing deluge, quivering with each shock and buffet of the storm, yet elated, strangely glad. There passed before him, like a rapid panorama, all the scenes which he had ever known,

associated with the memory of water. He was a boy again, plunging deep into the dark swimming-pool beneath the great elms. Now it was a trout-stream he followed, a clear, brown stream, flowing over golden pebbles; now it was a lake he saw, shining like a little pool of light amid dark woods. From these he was whirled away to scenes immensely distant, yet apparently near. He was sailing on a Swiss lake at sunset; he stood beside an English mountain tarn, over which cool, gray clouds gathered; he leaned from a Venetian gondola, trailing his hands in little waves full of soft, green fire. Always water—he could not have enough of it. Every nerve of his body cried for it. And, then, lake and river faded out; he heard no more the rippling sound of wave or current—only the drip—drip—drop of water from a tap, and he groaned.

Suddenly he became aware of a new element in these fantastic wanderings: was he not really engaged in taking farewell of the world? Yes, that must be it. His spirit, poised for flight, could not go till it had revisited every scene of former emotion or delight. He was like the youth whose fate calls him to a new life in distant lands, who spends his last hours in a pilgrimage of farewell to familiar scenes. He runs from room to room; looks long at each, as if he would impress upon his memory the exact position of each familiar object; paces silently along the garden paths, noting where each flower grows, recollecting childish games, happy follies,

tearful silences after rebuke—till every grass-blade in the garden, every object in the house, seems to be part of his life and part of its secrets. Even so, Gaunt felt his spirit move with the anguish of farewell about the house of life. He could not go until he had visited every place or scene once loved. He must impress them on his memory; it was the only treasure he could take with him into other worlds. Then he would go—content.

The thought brought with it no fear. Neither did it create any sense of wonder or anticipation. He had become a creature without volition. He lay quite passive now, like a tired swimmer who can strive no more. He felt a faint sense of disappointment that dying—if this indeed were dying—should, after all, prove an affair so commonplace. It seemed to him that in those days of health and strength, which were so incredibly remote, he had always thought of this hour as something intense, sublime, even ecstatic. There should surely be heavenly voices, soft music, the air winnowed by angel wings, the opening of the gates of dawn—and behold it was nothing more than the quiet sense of sinking in a soft wave, an infinite composure, a delicious relaxation of nerves and muscles tired with long effort. He found himself smiling both at his former terrors and his former hopes.

The strangest thing of all appeared to be the completeness and rapidity with which his relations to the world had altered. He remembered that he had

once been very eager and anxious about a multitude of matters, the very nature of which he could not recall. All these things seemed quite unimportant now. The world was like a ship that had sunk at sea; utter silence and oblivion had closed over all that strenuous, busy shipboard life. There lay round him only the silence of the stars, and the infinite curve of far horizons. It seemed incredible that he had ever lived among voices, tasks, duties, fierce exigencies, cruel perturbations; they had dwindled into such nothingness that he could hardly believe they had existed. If they did exist, which he doubted, he could not wish again to move among them. In some marvellous way he had attained to ultimate tranquillity; why should he renounce it?

Thereupon a long and painful argument arose in his mind. It seemed that far down in some dark corner of his consciousness a persistent voice bade him live. It affirmed his power to live. It affirmed his duty. He strove weakly to resist it. Yet all the while he felt as though the tide beneath him had turned, and was slowly drifting him back to the shores of life. He was no longer at peace, no longer sinking quietly in a sea of sleep. Something harsh and violent clutched at him; a weight of gray horror pressed upon his eyeballs; a flash of flaming pain ran along his nerves. He shuddered, cried, woke. His eyes took in slowly the reality of things tangible—stone-coloured walls, a yellow floor on which a spot of sunlight lay, two high windows, each with

a patch of blue sky. And once more he heard the sound of a bell far away, and the drip—drip—drop of water from a tap.

Suddenly he became aware of certain human figures that stood beside him and stooped over him. One was a grave, dark figure; there were two others dressed in white. They were speaking among themselves in a low whisper. He felt a strong desire to communicate with them. His lips framed agonized interrogations, but to his dismay no sound was audible. It was clear they could not hear him, for they did not turn to him; and yet it seemed to him that he was shouting. A horrible conviction seized him that he was already forgotten, as a dead man, out of mind. What surer proof of death could there be than this utter failure of his to communicate with the living? He summoned all his strength for a more intense effort at speech. The sweat stood upon his forehead, and the muscles of his throat ached. The effort was vain. He had not been heard. The figures seemed to dissolve, to withdraw, and at last entirely vanished. He was once more alone in some intangible and dim world, which impressed him by its vagueness and its vastness.

At first he was conscious of a quality that was almost pleasure. Time and space were alike gone. His body was volatile; it floated like a feather here and there upon the obscure winds. It seemed part of the vagueness and the vastness, a floating bubble on the waves of an eternal sea. The sense of pleas-

ure which he felt was derived from his own entire impotence. He was no longer required to strive and struggle; there was no goal that he sought to win; the imperious need for doing and acting, once so strong in him, was wholly gone. Things were done to him; things were done for him; he himself did nothing. He lay calm in effortless quiescence, he floated in an element of peace ineffable. He had no desires, no hopes, no fears; he was beyond them all.

They came back, however; this was the misery, that they always came back. Just when the sweet intoxication of his utter restfulness seemed complete, it always happened that the spell was broken. Something tugged at his heart-strings; a turning of some minute wheel in the loom of life knitted the reluctant nerves to tenseness, and he became again a creature who willed and strove. A sense of some imminent, tremendous issues in which he was concerned, tantalized him. It was like the far-off sound of trumpets in the ear of the stricken soldier on the field. He must needs rise and obey; his whole shattered strength re-united itself at that imperious sound; he dared not die. He fought his way, half-strangled, through the folds of that delicious enervation; he found his strength by an effort that seemed to rend him asunder; he felt a sudden scorn of restfulness. And then, once more, he saw a blue patch of sky grow into distinctness, and heard the drip-drop of water from a tap.

He woke half-weeping over his deliverance.

These ebbings to and fro of consciousness continued for a long time; at last there came a brief period of entire clearness of vision.

It was midnight. A shaded lamp stood upon the floor, casting oblique shadows. A woman with a kind, firm face bent over him and felt his pulse. His eye rapidly scanned the scene: the straight, narrow bed; the bare, stone-coloured walls; the dim light; the white-dressed woman stooping over him; and he realized he was in hospital.

"Have I been ill?" he whispered.

"Yes, but you are better now," she answered.

"Am I going to die?"

The woman did not answer.

She left his room for a moment, returning with the doctor. In that brief interval he had realized his condition. He had realized also that in a way the final choice between death and life rested with himself. "Man dieth not wholly, but by the death of the will," he thought; "therefore, God gives *me* the choice."

Instantly he made his choice: he would live. He must needs summon all his energies in the effort to live. The most primal of all instincts, this effort to live, reasserted itself in him. A great horror of physical annihilation swept over him. He was conscious of powers and faculties which called for expression in the world of men, of work not done, of work that waited to be done. The words of the

ancient king of Jerusalem leapt to his lips: "For Sheol cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day." He clung to life, as a man climbing out of some black chasm clings to every small projection in the precipice that is crowned with the upper day. In that strip of blue day, far above him, familiar faces shone radiant; from that bright summit voices of encouragement saluted him; and it seemed to him that God, approving his decision, put a strong arm around him and helped him upward. He smiled for joy.

Again and again he was swept back toward the abyss, but he never lost the vision of that shining summit.

As he grew stronger, his passion for the visible human world grew more intense, till it was almost painful. He found food for wonder in the commonest features of human life. The sound of wheels and footsteps on the street set him thinking of the mystery of locomotion. To move, to walk—by a mute signal of the will to set all this involved machinery of the body travelling hither and thither,—it seemed a miracle indeed to him, who lay there so inert and impotent. He fancied that if he ever walked again, he would count each step a special revelation of God's grace, and thank Him for it; and he blamed himself that he had been unthankful

for the precious gift of physical activity in the days of health.

He watched with painful eagerness for each succeeding daybreak. Night was his Gethsemane; each night seemed insurmountable, hostile, malevolent; a road of agonies. But, oh, the exquisite relief when the cold, blue light of day began to fill the room. It was as though a foe had departed, a friend had come. And how wonderful seemed the mere shining of the sun! Outside the window a great elm rose, and he watched, like an eager child, for the moment when the first ray of sunrise smote it. When the blue dawn-light became suffused with soft gray, he knew the moment near; when, at last, the first long golden spear of splendour pierced the bosom of the tree, and made each leaf a green, quivering flame, he could have clapped his hands; and had a company of angels moved amid the foliage, each brow aureoled with light, it had not seemed a greater miracle. When the day had thus come, he usually fell asleep, for then only did he feel content and safe.

He had gone back to childhood. Like a child he had become dependent upon others for all the offices of life. It seemed a strange thing at first thus to be girded by others whom he knew not, but he soon grew reconciled to it. He even found a certain comfort in his dependence. Through it he came to realize a more composed faith in God. For if these men and women, who knew him only as a patient,

were so kind; if their skill and vigilance were always at his call; if he could learn to lean on them with such reposeful confidence; how much more might he lean on God, who loves to bear the human burden?

And, in those hours, there came to him also a new and special sense of sympathy with all suffering. He had never before endured the violence of pain; he had never had any vivid sense of the tremendous part which pain plays in the lives of men. Now, for the first time, he realized the terrible significance of the Apostolic word, "The whole creation travaileth together in pain." The thought overwhelmed him. Yet its final effect was not dismay; it was a sense of comradeship with all the myriad lives that suffered. He had been made free of the City of Anguish. He had acquired citizenship with the children of pain and those who lay in the shadow of death. Henceforth he must prove his citizenship by new sympathy; himself initiated into the brotherhood of pain, he must prove his brotherhood in service. So vivid was his sense of this new duty that he questioned if any one could have a real sense of sympathy with suffering who had not himself suffered; and, perhaps, the clearest proof that there is a ministry in pain was this change of temper which pain had wrought in him.

How often had he heard of this or that man who had vanished behind the gates of suffering; and had heard without emotion, because his own vision could

not pass those gates. How often had he passed beneath the walls of a hospital, on joyous feet, with scarce a glance at the high windows; indeed, without recollection of what the place was and of all its poignant significance. But this could never happen again. Henceforth and always when he passed a hospital it would be on tiptoe and with bared head; it would be with a gush of silent prayer for all who suffered, and with a thrill of reverence for those who served within those walls; it would be with the awe of a disciple revisiting the hill of Calvary and meditating on the Cross. And so there came to him something more than an enlarged experience; there came to him a fuller sense of the beauty and sanctity that dwelt in human life; looking into the tomb where corruption lay, he had found a garden of lilies, had seen a vision of angels, had received new assurance of something immortal that stirred beneath the muddy vesture of mortality.

XXIV

PERFECT LOVE

“**M**ARGARET!”

It was a Sabbath morning, and the air was full of the sound of bells that rang for worship.

“Margaret!”

Gaunt lay very still, and over him bent his wife, Her face was worn with anxious watchings and waitings, but it still retained its aspect of sweet composure. And it seemed to Gaunt that it had become younger; it wore the delicate colours of girlhood, in spite of new lines traced upon the brow, and a touch of silver in the heavy braids of brown hair.

She stooped and kissed him, and each felt the kiss to be the seal of a new union.

He was silent for a long time, and then he spoke in a low voice.

“I have a confession to make,” he said. “In these long, long hours of thought it has come to me that——”

“Hush,” she said, laying her fingers on his lips, “I know what you are going to say. Let me make my confession first.”

“You can have none to make.”

"Yes," she answered with a smile, "I have a very serious confession. It is that I have sometimes grudged you to your work. I know that you have not loved me less for it, but it has seemed to me sometimes that you have not leaned so much on me as in the other days. And it was so sweet to be leaned on, to bear the burden, sharing it with no one. Oh, I know, dear, it all sounds so little, but sometimes I have been jealous of your work."

"And now?" he said.

"Now I know better. I am proud to give you to your work, and to be forgotten."

"Never that, Margaret!" he whispered. "Do you really know what I was going to say? I was going to tell you that I never loved you as I love you now. Come nearer, dear one, for you must hear my confession after all. I *have* let my work absorb me, I have let it seem as if I no longer leaned on you as I once did. But you are more to me, greatly more, than in the other days. Dear, am I forgiven?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she answered. "On that night when they tried to kill you I did feel—wicked. I wished you had never taken up the work at all. But in those dark and dreadful hours I found my consolation, for I came to feel that it was a proud joy for each of us to suffer in such a cause. I felt it, even when I saw my days stretching out before me desolate and widowed, and I thanked God that He had seen fit to make me the wife of a martyr."

“There,” she added, “that is my confession. I could not be easy till I had told you.”

Her arms were about his neck. The Sabbath bells rang outside, but sweeter yet than these bells which proclaimed “the bridal of the earth and sky” were the bridal bells that rang in each heart. For in each heart love had come to full fruition, for it had found the divine grace of complete unselfishness.

It is a worn truism that no one knows how much he is loved till disaster overtakes him, but it is also a beautiful tribute to human nature.

The news of Gaunt’s assassination aroused an outburst of love and sorrow probably unprecedented in the history of any religious leader of modern times. It was speedily apparent that evil had over-reached itself. It was impossible to find a single voice that approved an outrage so dastardly. Deprecation of the act, appreciation of Gaunt’s work and character, were universal.

In the days immediately following the outrage, there were many efforts made to discover the criminal. These efforts were entirely vain. All that ever came to public knowledge was that the room from which the shot was fired had been hired a week before the tragedy by a person whose identity was never known. It is probable that Butler knew the secret, but if so, he did not divulge it. His own indignant sense of justice would have counselled retaliation, but he knew that this was not Gaunt’s

spirit. When he was urged by Stonecroft to disclose what he knew, he replied: "It would serve no good purpose. It is sometimes wiser to endure a wrong than to punish it."

From that position he was not to be moved.

The wound inflicted on Gaunt was very serious. The bullet intended for his heart was deflected by striking the silver Cross of Stars which he wore upon his breast. This alone saved his life.

He meditated much on this singular deliverance during the slow days of convalescence. The more he thought of it, the more the conviction grew that he was a man set apart and specially preserved for a work that waited to be done. The many providences of his life knit themselves together into eloquent coherence; they culminated in this crowning intervention; and they begot in him a very humble but joyous sense of predetermined destiny. He saw the pathway of his life stretching onward, firm and clear; he would henceforth pursue it with unfluctuating zeal, conscious not alone of his own determining choice, but of a strong divine propulsion. Who could prophesy what that path would reveal, to what eminence of service it would lead him? One thing alone he saw with an absolute distinctness; it was the right path. He had found the synonym of all religion in the law of love and service. The Church, corrupted by traditionalism, must go; it could not long resist the disintegration whose havoc was already so apparent; but its vital and imperish-

able elements would reunite; they would assume a nobler form; and this new Church of the Future would become the universal Church of love and service. It would be broad enough to include the best elements of all religions; it would be the final synthesis of all that was good and beautiful in human life. His heart burned within him at the vision. He longed to be at work again, and this desire gave a new dynamic to his energies; night and day he dreamed now of the new fields of toil that awaited him, and heard the Future calling him.

Every afternoon his friends visited him, cheering and humbling him, not alone by the tenderness of their solicitude, but the tidings they bore of the love of multitudes who prayed for his recovery.

One day, Palmer and Olivia Jordan remained after the other visitors had gone.

"I have something to tell you," said Palmer, in a low voice.

"I think I can guess your secret," said Gaunt, with a smile.

They knelt beside his bed, their hands clasped.

"God bless you both," said Gaunt.

He was silent for some moments, thinking of his own married life, recalling its first lyric joy, and all the growth of steadfast trust which had accompanied its course.

"Count your love God's best gift," he said. "But I know you do. You will be the better fitted to

serve others in the degree that your own love is pure and deep."

"That is what we both feel," said Olivia.

He laid his hand tenderly upon the bowed head of the fair girl, then he drew her towards him, and kissed her brow.

"Your wedding bells shall ring me back to life," he said, gaily.

Gaunt's recovery was slow, but at last there came a blessed day, when the "shining summit" he had seen in his delirious dreams was reached. Leaning upon his wife's arm, attended by Butler and Palmer, he passed out of the hospital, driving through a world of sunshine back to his house in Washington Square. His physician had urged him to go to the seaside or the mountains for a few weeks, but he was eager for his own house, and yet more eager for his work.

"A man whose life has been spared by miracle can afford to trust God to complete the miracle in the gift of daily strength," he said. "The finest tonic for my condition is the recovered power of work."

On the night when he came home the house was filled with flowers. Among them was one emblem which at once attracted his attention. It was a large Cross composed of red roses, with yellow roses interwoven in the upper section,—a Cross of Stars in flowers. It was the gift of Dr. Jordan.

He stood long before it. Then he fell upon his

knees, praying in simple words that he might better understand the spirit of the Cross, knowing not its blood-red stain alone, but its starry joy.

Those who listened understood that this act was the rededication of Gaunt's life to the service of humanity.

Before the Cross they also bowed in silence: his wife, Butler, Palmer, Mrs. Holcombe, Olivia Jordan, and a few others who represented various branches of his work. As Gaunt finished praying, they, by common instinct, began to sing, softly,

"When I survey the wondrous Cross."

They sang it to its close.

Six weeks before it had seemed almost a requiem—a hymn of martyrdom. They had sung it in that hour when Gaunt had fallen.

They sang it now with triumph. They realized that all the wisdom of the ages was enshrined in it. Above all they realized that this man, whose prayer still lingered in their ears, had found this wisdom; that in him once more was wrought the eternal miracle of the life that grows by giving, gains by losing, lives by dying.

All can understand the pain of sacrifice; but there is a further knowledge when we comprehend its joy.

Gaunt had found the joy.

THE END

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