PHILOSOPHERS OF THE SMOKING-ROOM

FRANCIS AVELING

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CONVERSATIONS ON SOME MATTERS OF MOMENT

BY

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CONTENTS

THE PHILOSOPHERS OF THE SMOKING-ROOM

CHAPTER I

SUICIDE

THEY were sitting in the smoking-room, when the clergyman entered and took a place upon the lounge beside the Doctor, with a courteous "Good evening, gentlemen!"

It was the first night after leaving Liverpool, and the *Carinthia's* passengers were looking forward to a glorious, if probably uneventful, passage to Montreal. Last night they had come aboard late; and, hand-shaking and leave-taking over, had gone to bed. In the morning they found themselves already far from the land.

That curious ocean-voyage intimacy, the relic of sailing ships, had not yet broken the ice of casual acquaintanceship; but, in the smoking-room, the men at least, were beginning to feel their conversational legs.

After dinner the Doctor, the Poet, and the Priest

found themselves drifting, like straws in an eddy, towards one comfortable-looking corner, which they appropriated for the rest of the voyage. They had already exhausted the inevitable topics; and, under the soothing magic of the weed, were insensibly approaching the point where conversation becomes metamorphosed into a discussion of the underlying currents of thought.

Each, in his own way, was a keen observer, a student of humanity, a reader of the great book of the natural. But each had made his observations after his own fashion; and the lessons each had learned were unlike those of the others. Strong men they were, all three of them, including even the Poet; and stubborn—two of them at least. One could see that at a first glance. But enough! They need no introduction. You can find their fellows on every ocean steamer, in every town, in every parish for the matter of that. You can take that chair by the newcomer, and make one of the party, if you like. In ten minutes' conversation you will know them better than after twenty introductions.

"As I was saying,"—this the Doctor, removing his cigar from between his lips—"there's no knowing. The man may have seen his justification. . . ."

"One has no right to make suppositions," broke in the Poet. "According to the verdict, he did commit suicide: and the question is removed at once to the broader plane of fact. Any sentimental

person—though I never should accuse you, Doctor, of being mawkish—can find a dozen reasons for anything—you granting him as many 'ifs.' I admit that a suicide becomes a sort of demigod to certain minds; but that he can be justified in such a wanton misuse of his power, surely no one would admit."

"Pardon me again,"—the Doctor, little liking the abrupt termination of his speech, was sucking furiously at his weed—"there are many—nations as well as individuals—who hold a quite contrary opinion. For my own part, I can understand, and even approve, in certain combinations of circumstances. A man, it appears to me, has a right to do what he likes with his own. And his life is his own. From which I leave you to draw the natural conclusion."

"You refer," broke in the Parson, "to the doctrines of Epictetus." (He is evidently a bookish man. His stooping shoulders and carefully chosen phrases proclaim him at once. Look at him for yourself—spare, pale, and nervous. His thin and compressed lips give him the look of an ascetic. His nose speaks eloquently of inquiry. His dreamy grey eyes, peering out from beneath shaggy—and only just grey—brows, are fired by the argument and take on a look of keenness. The delicate scoring of his face —you cannot call them wrinkles—and his snow-white hair, incline you to age him more than the years. He is redolent of the leather of books and study-

chairs. Though he is exquisitely neat, you can fancy those long, nervous fingers grimed with the dust of bookstalls, unregretting. The stamp of breeding, school, university, is upon him, too: and his clothes fit as only a London tailor could cut them.) "Yes, there is an open door, swinging easily upon its hinges. But not everyone has the conviction of the Stoics or the courage to practise their teachings. Do you not think, sir," with an inclination of his head in the Poet's direction, "that such a doctrine is a blot upon the memory of men who could and did preach and practise so admirable a self-repression, so noble a contentment?"

"I am afraid that, to some extent at least, I agree with the Doctor: although I did say that no suicide could be justified in his action. Certain things are called wrong by the mass. To some small extent, at least, we are all agreed upon our principles of morality. But the common herd is beginning to look to new teachers; and religion grows decrepit and impotent apace. A life cut off in a fine frenzy of passion is a fit theme for an epic. Without wrong, to take the question to a broader plane, there is no shadow to relieve the lights of life, no contrast, no beauty."

"Ah! my friend; you speak of beauty. You would frame sordid scenes in bright colours and dress dismal thoughts in strong and flowing words. But you would retouch the sordid, and gloss over

the crude, and hide the ugly object of your picture out of sight. Would you compare the Ballad of Reading Gaol with the Christian Year. Would you link together Hecuba and St Elizabeth?"

"No," said the Poet, "I would not go so far as that. But I do contend that, in certain aspects, suicide is beautiful and therefore good. It may be true that mankind, as a whole, condemns it. But you would not commission the common herd to pass judgment upon a work of art. Nor would you limit genius to the pages of a rhyming dictionary or to the avoiding, in all cases, of consecutive fifths. What is generally bad may at times be good; and there are times when there is good in anything."

"I can give you a practical case," began the Doctor, "if you care to hear the story." He lit a fresh cigar; and, as the first meditative wreaths of smoke floated upwards, a murmur or gesture of assent from each member of the party showed that they looked for something interesting—something, at least, a little out of the common.

"Some years back, when I was a young man and very much down on my luck, I essayed to work up a practice in a London slum. It was a poor district—mean, sordid in the extreme—the inevitable result of a dumping of foreigners upon an already crowded centre of population. It was bad before the foreign stream had poured into the sewer of degraded and debased home humanity. It became a veritable cesspool of

all that is most vicious in the human animal. Apart from the ministers and the board-school teachers, who lived elsewhere, the most respectable members of society were the publicans, flourishing profuse and perspiring among their ranks of bottles and platoons of casks. Their merit was measured by their strength of arm and the astuteness with which they remembered a defaulting customer. . . . In this sink of human depravity, where the lords of creation herded together like soulless animals in the fetid and paralysing atmosphere of utter hopelessness, I found . . . one of my first patients. Reeling forth from the alluring warmth and light of the saloon-bar into the pitiless embrace of a winter's fog —that most dreadful of all the climatic curses of our island—an out-at-elbows stray stumbled at the curb and fell. . . . A policeman, sprung from nowhere in particular, bent over the prostrate drunkard; and I, scenting a certain fee, albeit a small one, from the force, made my way to the representative of the majesty of the law and offered my professional services. As I felt the feeble heart-beats of the prostrate figure and looked upon a face seared with evil living and bleared with bad spirit, I recognised with a start the ghost of a once familiar school-fellow. We, the drunkard and I, had been at college together. Together we had shared the high aspiration of youth and promise. Together we had left the sheltering walls of our alma mater, he to read the law

and I to walk the hospitals. Until he drifted quite apart in the current of his busy and successful career, we had kept up an occasional reminder of our early friendship. . . . At length I heard from him no more.

"Fewer and fewer references were made in the law reports to the brilliant career of one whose name —you will pardon my reticence—was fast becoming a household word. At last they ceased altogether. His own ominous silence and that of the papers was the calm that precedes the storm. . . . Then it was let loose. Rumours and innuendoes somehow found their way into print. Accusations and circumstantial details followed. Then there was a trial—or was to have been: for he never appeared to answer the charge. His young wife and child, his old father and mother, had only the memory of a husband, father, and son branded as a forger and a thief; for the world so labelled him. Scandal and society tore his character to shreds; and having done so, with a fine show of offended and shocked morality, proceeded to hide them away out of sight; and with them condemned to social darkness and silence all who had been connected with him. The way of the world! I make no apology for speaking strongly. This was the man, once my intimate, still my friend, lying huddled in the gutter before me as I knelt. What I have just been telling you rushed like fire through my brain. But it is a doctor's business to be cool and non-committal.

'You must help me to get him to the surgery,' I said to the officer; and together we carried the limp, repulsive form through the already packed ring of pallid faces, the few steps to my door—distinguished only from its neighbours by its new polished plate and its red lamp. To make a long story short, gentlemen, the week after, when he was clean physically and mentally, we had a general reckoning. The poor fellow cried like a child—not, believe me, for his own troubles, but for the devastation he had worked among those he loved. From the utter depths of degradation to which he had sunk he looked back and upward to what he had been; and in the bitterness of the comparison he asked me why I had not had the humanity to let him die. Just then I was called to an urgent case. My luck had changed. When I returned an hour later, I found him—dead, by his own hand. From the couch to which his terribly undermined and outraged constitution had bound him, he had managed to crawl to the surgery, and, having secured the fatal phial of which he was in search, thence to the table. He lay back in my own chair, the pen which he had grasped fallen from his nerveless fingers upon the floor by his side, his head hanging backwards with wide-open eyes—terrible, terrible. On the table lay a sheet of paper covered with writing. He had done his best; so he thought. 'Forgive me, dear friend, and write me not ungrate-

ful. It is this or worse for them—for me.' That man, gentleman, was noble, heroic. But I leave you to judge. He laid down his life—wasted, if you will, but still the best possession left him—to save his friends further shame and disgrace."

After a moment's silence, broken by the clicking of chips and ringing of coins and the voices of the card players at the tables, the clergyman broke the silence.

"Ah, Leopardi, with all your principles, how you failed!" He was evidently touched by the terse and graphic picture drawn by the Doctor—touched by the horror, the pity, the pathos of the thing. "Still,"—with the ghost of ancient precept struggling for mastery with his sentiment—"still, no matter how nobly the action was conceived, Doctor, no matter how unflinchingly he achieved it, he was wrong. His life was not his own. The wrong he had created was done and could not be undone. What distorted views of life had taken possession of his mind, what warped reasons, what a broken will!

"I gather from your words that you are of no Church, that you profess 'the religion of humanity.' Did not your friend—do not you—hold it to be more noble to suffer to the end, to strive, if need be, against a baser self, to endure?"

"To what purpose—in a case like his?"

The Doctor's answering question was followed by a meditative silence, but for the shuffling of cards and the clinking of money and glasses.

The Priest slowly removed his pipe from the table, where for the last half-hour it had been lying. He refilled and lit it; and, between the little clouds of smoke and volcanic eruptions issuing from bowl and stem, said:

"Doctor, you may be very good at curing men's bodies; but have you ever studied the diseases of their souls? And you, sir; and you,"—with a nod first in the direction of the Parson, then in that of the Poet—"don't you look at the matter from the comfortable point of view of the man in the stalls? Half-measures, both of 'em. The mighty currents are at work beneath the surface of the soul that seems so placid and so calm. The principles and decrees of truth are graven upon the very heart. It takes a practised hand to set the compass for the one, and practised eyes to read the worn and half-obliterated letters of the other. You start in horror at a murder. No man, you say, has a right to take the life of another. Your own rights—the individual rights are paramount. Yet you can hide the horror of the *felo-da-se*. And was his life his? Had he rights and had he no duties; no obligations towards others; no ties binding him to society; no responsibilities towards himself? No! The suicide is a coward at best; for while life remains there is always the chance of better things. He can retrieve the past. The future is before him—to be as he makes it. The present stress is no argument in his favour. If he

has brought it about, it is his to redeem. If circumstances other than those of his making have crushed him into it, he has it in his power to rise above circumstances. Your estimate of human nature is too low! He has his duty towards himself, to society, and to his Creator. Can any picturesque sentiment take the place of duty?"

His pipe was out now; and with it he pointed interrogatively at the Doctor as he paused for breath. He laboured under some strange excitement, and his heavy, clean-shaven face was rugged in its intensity.

"The Physician took up the challenge. "We are in deep waters, sir. What is duty? What claim has society upon one whom it has made an outcast? Who is God? The man is his own judge. He rises above all rights and claims, and answers to none but himself."

The Parson and the Poet looked aghast; but the Priest resumed: "And you have sat by the bed of the dying? Your hand has felt the pulsing ebb and flow of life; your eyes marked the quenching of the God-given fire? How have you read the text and missed the meaning?"

"There is no meaning. The enigma is unreadable. It is a puzzle with no solution; a riddle without an answer."

"You are right," sighed the Priest. "The whole page is a meaningless jargon of words to those who stop to conjugate and parse and analyse and derive.

The meaning is in the whole—and the simple only, who read quickly, understand. Just as you cannot dissect the soul out, at the scalpel's point, because it is all-pervading, so your art cannot attain what all humanity knows. Good heavens, man! Is the whole to come to this? The true reading is not in the text. The answer is not given with the riddle. You can only see the present in the light of the past. To understand it, you must possess the light of the future as well. Our human reason is enough to teach us this. Our syllogisms prove beyond the doubt. But the proof is inert, cold, dead. The fire of something more than intellect is needed to warm it—the spur-prick to goad us on, the electric stream to galvanise us into life. Like autumn leaves, the proud proofs and certain tenets of our reason fall to the ground. They turn and dance and writhe. They are ours—ours—ours; our very own, the fruits of our thought, the triumphs of our human reason. They fall as soon as they are born. They wither and shrink, in spite of our holding them so certain and so true. To keep them living on the branch wants more—far more—than reason. Gentlemen! You, sir, who know the old poets and their dreams, the thinkers and their work; and you, who, weaving from the beautiful, create; and you, to whom science has unlocked her doors; how can you gather together these scattered strands and weave them into the figured tapestry of truth? Is poetry, or beauty, or know-

ledge, your loom? Or are you seeking yet for the warp that you may weave the whole into one concordant picture?"

"In for a sermon," muttered the Doctor to the Parson, who returned: "It seems so. Rather out of place; but good matter, none the less."

The Priest had caught the whisper. "Yes, I confess"—with a smile—"you have set a chord vibrating. Don't blame me." And as he held a light to the ashes of his pipe he went on: "We are inclined to give up our piecing together, like children tired of a broken puzzle. And yet there must be, somewhere, a standpoint from which the whole is clear and proportioned. The old world is very beautiful, even if sometimes we are tempted to moan"—with a glance at the Parson—"'*νῦν δ' ἐχθρὰ πάντα, καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα.*'"

The Clergyman rose to the challenge—Browning for Euripides—"'Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be prized?'"

"Thanks; you have helped on the argument. The law, the harmony, is perfect. The discords are apparent only, and working together for the fuller burst of sound. But to what human ear are they tuned? What is the note of which they are the harmonics?"

"You have left the subject, Father," said the Poet. "We were speaking of the ethics of suicide."

"No. I was only working round it. Have you never noticed how the hawk circles before it strikes—

a wheeling speck and then a sudden downwards dart? But, from the ideal to the real, from the blue heavens to the prosaic earth. Suicide is condemned by every law, human and divine. It is an affront to the divine nature of man, and contradicts his reason. It is an injury to the social order from which we have no escape. It dares to dispute the ruling of God. . . ."

"Wait a moment, my dear sir." The Doctor was up in arms in all the importance of scientific panoply at once. "I can grant the first; though even that is couched in far-reaching terms. I contest the second, inasmuch as the social order is a pure fiction—a creation of the individual. The third—pardon a layman's lack of reverence for the cloth—I cannot but deny. If your God forbids the only escape from an impossible situation for which He is responsible, since He has brought it about, then He is a type of cruelty, a worse than tyrant. And, even as it is, what you call the divine nature of man is the very principle in virtue of which he decides to end his life. . . . I beg your pardon"—for the Parson was staring at the speaker in undisguised wonder—"for my vehemence; but I cannot tolerate a falsehood. I do not profess to believe in God."

"My dear sir," said the Poet, shocked at so outspoken a declaration of the lack of beliefs which, had he but probed deep enough, he might have found somewhere in his own heart. "Surely you cannot mean all that your words imply?"

"I have seen too much unnecessary suffering and pain," came the quick retort, "to believe in the God of my childhood; and I have never replaced any other in the empty niche from which I long since dethroned Him as an impostor—a fetish."

The conversation was taking a decidedly personal and theological tone; and the Priest had tact enough to perceive a gradual path which led away from it.

"Like the empty niches in the abbey front," he thought, rather than spoke, aloud. "And they have filled the west porch with images. Strange that the piety of the ancestors should have found some echo in the hearts of the sons of the iconoclasts."

"Of course they were not put up to be worshipped," explained the Parson, "as the former were; but merely for decoration and ornament."

"I know," replied the Priest. "The Church of England is still Protestant. Statues will not change it. Incense and the other 'points' cannot make it Catholic. There is really between St Alban's and St Etheldreda's as great a distance as between Spurgeon's Tabernacle and St Peter's in Rome. But I must not worry you, gentlemen, by introducing controversy."

"I flatter myself that I changed the conversation rather well," he thought.

"I am glad to hear you say so. As a clergyman of the Established Church, I am, of course, opposed to Romish abuses; but, in common with a—perhaps,

now—a majority, I like to see things really done decently and in order. Our Prayer-book is, as you know, very like your Missal and Breviary. Why should we not have flowers and embroidered curtains too? You see, I am tolerant, indulgent—I had almost said, sympathetic. Only last Christmas we introduced coloured stoles and the eastward position. They do not, of course, mean any sacrifice of principles."

"I beg your pardon," thrust in the Poet. "Each point proclaims and symbolises a Catholic belief. Don't you agree with me, Father?"

"Um! I can't say that I do altogether. The only difference I have been able to perceive is that the advanced Anglican is really at heart a little more pronounced in his Protestant attitude than his Low Church brother."

"Come, now; I can't allow that." And the Poet looked really distressed at the Priest's statement.

"All right, my good friend," smiled the Priest. "We shall have ample opportunity for talking the question over in the next few days. It's getting late, and I have still some Breviary to say." He took a fat little book from his pocket and patted it affectionately as he spoke. Then he knocked out the ashes from his pipe. "One subject, when it's as deep as that of which we have been speaking, ought to do for one evening. Good-night, gentlemen! Let us hope for fine weather and a good crossing."

A little chorus of "Good-nights!" answered him; and he left the smoking-room, followed, after an instant, by the others—the Doctor, to finish a fresh cigar on deck; the Poet, to gaze at the stars; and the Parson, to go to bed.

And so the smoking-room was left to its card players. Soda-water bottles popped. Money jingled and changed hands. Libations were made, and tobacco incense offered to unknown gods, until the electric lights were finally switched off, and the ship bore her burden of life in silence and darkness through the night.

CHAPTER II

THE ETHICS OF FISHING

THEY were a merry party indeed, playing shuffle-board on the after-deck. The Doctor and the Poet's Wife matched against the Poet and the Parson's Daughter; and the onlookers, besides our friends the Parson and the Priest, including not a few of the poker players of the night before as well as passengers of the gentler sex. The Poet and the Parson's Daughter are undoubtedly having the best of the game; and the little ring of spectators has evidently thrown the balance of its interest, as well as its admiration, in with the fair young lady who is busily engaged in running up a score for her partner.

Hazel eyes, with long lashes—the most important part of anyone's physiognomy, lashes. You are an observer of humanity, I presume; so, of course, such a remark for you is superfluous—good complexion and teeth, a wealth of wavy light brown hair, twenty-four last birthday, and owns up to it without the

necessity of searching the parish register. A healthy girl and a good daughter, I make no doubt, though the sparkle in her eyes and the set of the head just where it meets the neck incline one to make a mental reservation as to wilfulness. The other lady player looks glum. A type, evidently. Angular and pronounced, short cut hair, prominent features, tailor-made gown like the others, but hangs differently. Query: How did the Poet come to marry her? Her very dress is enough to warn off sentiment. What it is, being masculine, I hesitate to say; perhaps the hang of the skirt, or the aggressive collar, or the spotted tie; my lady readers will help me out.

She looks as if she could nag on occasion, too —women's rights and higher education. She should have drawn the Doctor in the matrimonial lottery.

Pardon the description, dear reader; and if it is not sufficient, paint in the rough outline for yourself. You have enough to go on, and can finish the sketch quite as well as I.

We shall go over to the side, and join the Parson and the Priest. One can see the game quite as well from there; and perhaps we shall hear something interesting. At any rate, we shall not be in the way.

"Oh, yes,"—the Priest is speaking—"the fishing is excellent, certainly, although one has to take some

trouble in getting at the best of it. You say you intend to spend some time in Quebec on your way back to England. Good! I'll introduce you to a friend of mine there who knows all about it, and has some good water. I am sure you will find that he will afford you every facility in visiting the lakes you mention ; and, as a brother angler, I can promise you the best of sport."

"You are very kind, indeed, sir. I shall be delighted to avail myself of the opportunity. How do the fish run?"

"Not a bad size—anything from half-a-pound to four pounds. I remember some years ago going out on a fishing trip to the very lake. We were three rods, three boys and two buckboard drivers. The road runs through the hills and forests from Ste Anne de Beaupre to La Malbaie. I don't recollect seeing a single house until we had covered half the distance. Then a typical backwoods dwelling, where the horses were put up for the night. We three, with Henri, Avila and Zephyre, and Ladislaus, our guide, embarked on a primitive path cut through the virgin woods to a log cabin near the first lake, where we were to spend the night."

"Is there no accommodation," ventured the Parson, "other than a log cabin, remote from everywhere?"

"It's better than a tent," laughed the Priest. "There is a fireplace in the camp, and they keep a

kettle and tin plates and mugs for stray fishermen and cariboo hunters. Well, as I was saying, Ladislaus made a fire while we went on to the lake. Scenery—beautiful: but the fish kept us busy: so busy that there was little time to spare from watching where the cast fell and netting the finny beauties. There's nothing, sir, like trout-fishing. Salmon can't touch it; black bass isn't up to it; maskinonge and ouananiche can't hold a candle to it. We hardly saw the wild beauty of the cup-like hollow nestling among the blue Laurentian hills that shaded off through a hundred tints to the green pine woods crowding on the lake, for the excitement of hooking and playing fish that would make even the devotee of Hampshire envious to look at.

"And when the sun ploughed long furrows of crimson across the water and touched the violet woods, and changed the rough log-house into a little fairy palace of ruddy gold curtained in purple shadows, though the trout were still rising, our inner man and the mosquito warned us that it was time to be moving. Our boys paddled the rough punt across the placid water to where, in front of the cabin, a thin wreath of impalpable smoke melted straight into the infinite through the still air. The little boat-ripples still caught the last rays of the sun; and as we passed from the open water to the mirrored fringe of dark, stiff pines cutting the shallows like a knife, we counted our spoil. Between the three rods

some two score fish—not so bad. When we touched the spongy margin of this immemorial lake, we found that Ladislaus, having put things more or less to rights for the night, had gone a-fishing on his own account. And so we ate our evening meal and smoked and talked: while the moon shone over the distant mountain peaks and turned the lake into a silver mirror and the green trees into mysterious ranks of silent sentinels gazing forever into its placid depths: until the flames of the camp fire began to die and the embers fade: until Ladislaus came back across the water with his catch and laid the fish in rows upon the grass—nineteen great beauties: how he caught them perhaps I had better not say: until we were too sleepy to talk any more of our plans for the morrow, and were glad to find the wooden bunks full of odorous sapin branches and sleep the sleep of the just—fishermen."

During this panegyric of the "gentle art" the game of shuffle-board had come to an end, and the little ring of spectators broke up. Euphon (for the young lady rejoiced in the name) drifted over to her father in company with her erstwhile opponent. Her Poet husband followed in their wake. His long black hair had straightened itself out in the sea air, and gave him a dejected appearance. He looked ill at ease, too, as though he were not quite sure of his wife's temper after a game which he had helped her to lose.

"So you have won, Euphon, my dear. A very

pretty game, too. Would you mind going an errand for me, my child? My friend and I have been talking about fishing. He is going to send me to a fairy lake in the mountains; and I want him to see my flies and choose out the likely ones. Run down to my stateroom and bring up the dry fly box. You will find it in the portmanteau under the bunk. That's a dear!" and he patted her shoulder caressingly as he spoke.

She went off smilingly to fulfil her father's wish. The elder lady pursed her thin lips and hitched herself together. (Have you ever noticed the "hitch" of the self-sufficient, aggressively argumentative person, on the scent of a wordy trail that may lead to discussion? If you have, you know what I mean.) The Poet saw and sighed silently. He knew what was coming.

"I shall be most happy to look through your collection, sir; but you will get a far better idea of what is likely to be of use by noticing the natural insects on the lake."

"I know. There is a theory that the fly ought to be life-like. But what of the 'Marlow Buzz,' or, as far as that goes, almost any salmon fly. They say the fish take them for prawns!"

Now was the chance of the short-cropped lady. Before the Priest could say a word, she burst in with: "I am surprised"—see the emphatic jerk of her head! —"that two gentlemen of the cloth should be so keenly

interested in taking the life of harmless fish. It's only a degree less cruel than hunting a poor fox, or cutting up a live animal, as those abominable vivisectionists do."

The Doctor, who had not played half-an-hour with his partner without summing her up pretty accurately, sidled over to the group to hear her caustic dressing down of the clergymen.

"Surely, madam, you would not grudge a poor disciple of Isaac Walton his sport."—Thus the Parson, polite and deprecating.

"I surely would. 'A worm at one end and a ——'"; she left the quotation unfinished. "You catch a great many more fish and you shoot a great many more pheasants than you can possibly use; and simply for your pleasure, you deprive your quarry of life. I call it murder."

"Now, really, my dear, that's rather strong," ventured the Poet; but his good lady turned upon him so withering a glance that the rest of his sentence remained hung up, as it were, in mid-air.

"Keep quiet, Arthur. I know quite well what I am talking about. My local committee of the S.P.T.I.A.L.* discussed the whole question last January and forwarded a resolution to the S.P.C.A. It really ought to be more seriously taken up. Wanton destruction of innocent animal life: I call it both cruel and unmanly."

* Society for the Prevention of Taking of Innocent Animal Life.

"My dear lady,"—soothingly the Doctor—"don't you think we can enjoy a leetle recreation in hunting and fishing without violating the laws of Nature?"

"And if I say 'yes'"—she wheeled on the speaker like a cavalry charge—"you will make me admit vivisection next."

"Oh, no! I don't think it would be so easy to make you admit that."

"Indeed you wouldn't. I don't intend to admit anything at all. As president of the S.P.T.I.A.L., I won't admit anything that is cruel or unkind to our dumb friends."

"But you don't mind eating them," the Doctor hazarded aside.

The Parson heard and noted. "Do you not think," said he, "that your ideas of 'cruel' and 'unkind' may be a little too broad? What if one does take a few more fish than one can eat? One's friends appreciate. . . . A single pike or an otter in the stream can do more damage than I with all the art I can command."

"But a pike is an unreasoning animal. A man only has a right to take what he needs for his food. How I wish you were all vegetarians!"

"What you have said"—the Priest joins issue now —"is very true and humanitarian. But if you give rights to animals, why not give them all the rights you possess: or, for the matter of that, why not

extend the same rights to plants, flowers, and weeds as well? Why not accuse the butcher of murder, and the greengrocer of furthering the interests of cannibalism?"

"You totally misunderstand me, sir. Ridicule of my principles is by no means a proof against them."

"I had no intention of using so blunt a weapon as ridicule, I assure you. But where are you to draw the line: or on what principle do you base your appeal for charity and consideration towards 'our dumb friends'? Is it because of their feelings or because of ours—for undoubtedly wanton cruelty to animals brutalises us? We cannot argue the question"—and he winked, positively winked, at the Doctor—"unless we are agreed as to our postulates and axioms. Let it be granted ——"

"I don't want anything granted," snapped out the lady, glaring at the Parson's Daughter, who had just returned with the box of flies.

"Thank you, my dear"—the Parson with a smile to her; adding, to the Priest, "In a moment: out of the wind."

The Poet's Wife sailed serenely on in her demonstration. "Nothing need be granted. Evolution explains the order of Nature. It tells us why animals have feelings. It proves that they have as much right as we have to be spared pain. Our rights grow out of theirs, just as our bodies were

evolved from their bodies and our minds from their intelligence. It is only a question of a little more or less; a correct valuation of the individual in its place in the great cosmic sequence."

The Poet looked frightened; the Doctor was stifling a yawn; the Parson's face was a study indicative of his partial assent. All three were shifting from one foot to another. They had somehow got into a row against the bulwarks, facing the amiable exponent of new teachings, and looked for all the world like three schoolboys—timid, lazy, and studious—called up to repeat an unlearned lesson; and at last in for the "wigging." The Priest looked like a schoolboy, too—but his expression was that of the lad who has caught his master making a false quantity or trying to get a sum that won't come right on the blackboard worked out correctly.

You remember when you were at school—unless you had a master with a brain like a penny-in-the-slot machine—how there were always sums that never would come right on the board; how the perspiring teacher flung chunks of figures, in the form of questions, at the gloating boys behind him, and tried to straighten out his mind and get one clear moment for thought; how he suddenly wheeled around—"Jones! You are talking again! Come here, sir! It is an extraordinary thing that you cannot —Hold out your hand!—behave"—whack!—"like a rational being"—whack! "I am surprised at you,

sir!" Whack! whack! whack! "Open your books, all of you, and work out the first five sums in Exercise thirty-seven."

You remember how, after administering this well-merited castigation, he turned to the board again, frowned at it, and then, as if forgetful of the fact that that sum, which was the cause of all the trouble, had no big R with a flourish after its answer, carefully and conscientiously rubbed it all out and retired to his desk to keep watch and ward over his curly-pated charges and see, at any rate, that they did their work.

The Poet's Wife did not, of course, stop for all these reminiscences of our schooldays. Her sharp voice continued to weave its ponderous web of big words until she was completely out of breath. Then she stopped—having said all she could.

The Priest began meditatively, warming up to his theme as he went on, and only occasionally interrupted by a word or gesture from one or other of the party. "I was asking for postulates, madam, and you have given me a complete argument as well. You have stated the case with admirable precision. 'Nothing that causes pain ought to be permitted, even if that pain be given to the lowest of sentient creatures.' That, I take it, is the sum of your position, if I leave out the support of the evolution and morality upon which it is based. We should never come to any agreement"—with a smile

embracing all his hearers—"if we argued. So, perhaps, if you care to hear it, I had better just state my own private opinion in the matter."

A unanimous reply, couched in various phrases and shades of tone, encouraged him to go on.

"For myself—well, my opinion is this in brief. It is never lawful to do wrong in order that good may in the long run come out of your action. If the means are bad, no good end can justify their use. Consequently, if it is wrong to take the life of animals, the nourishment of man is no sufficient excuse for doing it. But if, on the other hand, we have a right to eat roast beef and boiled mutton, it follows that it is not a bad or wrong action to kill a cow or a sheep—unless I kill some one else's cow or he kills my sheep. And thus it is not wrong *per se*, as they say in the schools, to do that which inflicts pain upon animals. Theoretically, I hold that all sport, in its best and truest sense, is legitimate; that one has a perfect right to ride to hounds, or shoot, or fish, or even to experiment upon living animals for the advancement of science and to promote the good of man.

"But there is another side to the question and other issues are involved. There is a practical application which we must not overlook. To give pain for the mere sake of causing suffering is the work of a brute—not of a reasoning man; and in proportion as man inflicts wanton torment upon

God's creatures, just so he demeans and lowers himself in estimation and in fact.

"But I would go further here. He who, in a spirit of wanton destruction, picks a single flower and throws it aside to be trodden under foot or wither and die, is tearing from his heart those best fibres that make man what he is—or, at any rate, what he may be—the noblest of God's works. Cruelty is like drunkenness. The more it is indulged in the less is the power to withstand it; and the cruel man is no whit higher or nobler, but less, than the drunken sot who grinds his organ for pennies at the door of some low beer-house.

"I quarrel, madam, with your principles: not so much with your conclusions. Though I do not go to the length of the Buddhist creed, I certainly would never approve of anything approaching downright wanton cruelty."

Everyone looked pleased; even the thin lips of the Poet's Wife pursed themselves into a sour smile, as the Priest ended: for he had succeeded, by putting the question in a fairly clear light and avoiding side issues, in disposing of it to the satisfaction of each. Moreover, he had suggested, rather than drawn all the conclusions. For a moment the topic became general. Then the party drifted off in sections—the Poet in the wake of his wife, as he had come. The Doctor persuaded the Parson's Daughter that the seagulls following astern in the

hopes of a meal were an interesting object of contemplation—for two. And the Parson and the Priest retired to the deserted smoking-room to look through the absorbingly interesting contents of the fly-box and tell fish stories until the gong went for tea.

CHAPTER III

THE SOUL DIVINE

"GOING in for the pool to-night, Doctor?" asked a gentleman whose prominence in the smoking-room was enhanced by the fact that, as a very old hand at the crossing, he constituted himself the life and soul of those interesting methods of making and losing money, which obtain on board ship as elsewhere. He occupied as well, on the same general count of being a superior old salt, the position of critic-in-chief of the cooking, of the habits and dresses of the passengers, and of the deportment of the officers. He was prophetic of the weather, a connoisseur in the decoctions produced by smoking-room stewards, kept a perpetual eye upon the doings of everybody, knew, or thought he did, with a lynx-like instinct as that of the detective, the occupation, business, standing, respectability, and credit of each; settled, with every assumption of authority—for he was generally appealed to in such matters—the rare questions that arose among the card players; was quite ready to give advice to anyone upon any topic whatever, and

gave it, asked or unasked, with a cheerfulness of invention, ridiculous had it not been so apparently serious, and impertinent were it not so obviously good-hearted. He was on friendly terms with all, from the Captain to the cabin-boy, from the Priest to the—if she was on good terms with anybody—to the Poet's Wife. Like Hammy in the tale, "there was no harm in him." Though always in evidence, he was never officious—there are some busybodies who are neither snobs nor bores—and though a shade of difference in his effect total would have rendered him an insufferable annoyance, he was voted an all-round good fellow because that one shade was lacking.

"Another pool, Captain?" said the Doctor, who had found out, in his observations of human nature, the direct road to this individual's esteem.

"Certainly; by all means. What is it this time? Half-a-crown? I'm good for it. Any other gentleman like to join?" he queried around the party in the corner. As no hands moved towards their owners' respective pockets, he planted down his single coin.

"Always ready, ha! ha! *Semper paratus*, you know. A good fellow that," as the "Captain" moved off on his quest for half-crowns, went on the Doctor, flicking the ash from his cigar. "Life and soul of the ship. Makes the kiddies laugh. Takes tea with the old maids on deck. Tips the stewards. Gives advice——"

"I know him," sighed the Poet and the Parson together.

"Everybody likes him, and most of them see through him. A good run to-day. Peters," he indicated a card-player at the other side of the room, "won the pool."

The Poet's eyebrows went up slightly. He was dubious as to the views of his other companions on the subject. The Parson's came down and met over his nose; but he said nothing.

The Priest divined the cause of the hiatus, and, removing his pipe from his lips, stood manfully in the breach. "He was in luck," he said, "but it's nothing to any of you—not much, anyway—whether you win or lose. The element of pure chance has a great attraction in any transaction; and, I suppose, it's quite legitimate to run risks of the sort when the loss would be trifling and the consequences harmless. But you know, Doctor, how the passion for risk takes other forms. Remember what we saw in the steerage this morning—the greasy cards, the ragged clothes, the few poor pence that meant so much to the emigrants. That's another thing. Or think of the vice among the really poor in our great cities, who, but for drink and gambling, might be both respectable and even, comparatively speaking, well-to-do. Little children in the slums with their buttons; half-grown lads with their farthings and halfpence; their elders with the

day's wage; a bottle of rank spirit, filth, low company and lower words. No wonder that the home is what one so often sees!"

"Bah!" said the Doctor, making a wry face; and the interjection shot from his lips as if it were some unsavoury morsel that had got into his mouth by mistake. "Don't I know them; brute animals, herding like brutes, and only differing from them by the detestable habits that no beast would indulge in. That such people should be human! There's nothing human in them, except that, monkey-like, they ape the vices of their betters and distort them out of all semblance to those of society. They're not human! They're machines—animals with gross appetites and carnal brutalness—a link in the chain that ends in a higher type, a better product—man."

Again the Poet's eyebrows went up and his eyes opened wide.

The Parson's face was moulded into a more apparent frown than before, as he said: "Really, my dear sir, you allow your dislike of the lower forms of viciousness to run away with your judgment. Those poor people, mistaken and degraded" —with a shudder—"as they are, have immortal souls, struggling, at times blindly, towards the higher light, kept down by unrestrained passions, by adverse circumstances, by their surroundings."

"Yet," put in the Priest, "their surroundings are their own creation."

The Parson went on unmoved. "We have a mission, we Christian ministers, to such above all others. They are the souls to be converted and saved—souls as precious in the sight of the Lord as those of any beings in the world. There is greater joy in Heaven over the home-coming of one of these than of all those that have never gone astray. In my parish at home we have organised——"

"Excellent, my dear sir, excellent," interrupted the Doctor drily, "and in the best interests of the progress of social development. I am quite ready to say that the Church helps on social evolution; but by antiquated methods and by means of well-intentioned—shall I say?—accommodations. But you all beg the question at issue by supposing your first principles, so to speak, of religion. The expressions of opinion one hears from your pulpits are based, I suppose, in some ultimate analysis, upon principles of some kind. And the principles upon which you build are gratuitous assumptions, arbitrarily laid down as truisms. You tell me that there is a God; that I am a free spiritual being as well as a material one; that I can know and communicate with a creator. Such are the foundation truths of all religions and theologies. But if I deny—not only in a set form of words—but really and in my mind fail to assent because the truths are not evident to me. . . . ? There are many men—good,

upright, Protestant laymen—who fear to probe their convictions too far lest they should touch the raw of doubt or the quick of disbelief. Back they go from parson's opinion to its justification, from this to the principles, and the principles are not solid. 'The human soul is a spiritual being, free and immortal,' for example. That, as a principle, does not hold water. I might just as well include myself among those human animals of whom we were speaking, and assert that there is no such thing as soul at all, except the result of a certain combination of material processes and combined forces that produce it as long as they are combined—and no longer."

"Oh, surely," broke in the Poet, "you feel that you have a soul, a wonderful mysterious being with all its vague aspirations and present joys: a beautiful harmony resulting from perfect notes. You must be as conscious of it as I am—as we all are. It is so personal, so real; with all its wealth of imagination and nobleness of conception. Read Homer, and tell me that he had no soul—or Tennyson or Browning."

"I regret infinitely that I feel nothing," said the Doctor, interrupting the rhapsody, and taking a match from the box of "Bryant and May's" before him; "and if I did, I should not dream of letting my feelings interfere with my common sense. As a matter of fact, I feel all sorts of things; but it

does not follow that they are true. And why should I make an exception here? No, my friend, I am not poetic and I am not religious. Too many hard, stern facts have been forced before my eyes to allow me to be either. When I assent—if I assent—I need proof; and proof, apparently, you are unable to give me. It is no use making an appeal to my sense of beauty or fitness. I take all that for granted; but I do not see that anything follows from it. I burn my finger. I know henceforward that fire burns. I avoid it. I desire to be rich and powerful. I imagine I am a ruler of men. I feel that I am all-important, the most necessary being in the universe. All that is absurd, and I know it, not from my desire or imagination or feeling, but because my reason tells me I am a fool to pay any attention to such tricking fancies. Prove your statement and I will accept it—not otherwise."

"But no one can prove it," replied the Poet, to whom the remarks were addressed, hopelessly.

"Proof," echoed the Parson; "proof is a hard word. We cannot have proof of everything; but we can be certain of our souls none the less; even if it is impossible to demonstrate them like a proposition of Euclid."

"I am not at all so sure of that," said the Priest. "If the existence and nature of the soul is not immediately evident—seen at a glance, as it were—for my part, I should say that it must be proved."

"But there is no one so absurd," interrupted the Poet triumphantly, "as to deny that he really exists; is there? Surely everybody is conscious and certain of the fact that he is."

"That is not the point." The Priest stretched out his hand for the match with which the Doctor was lighting a fresh cigar. "Thank you. . . . No, that is not the point—whether we exist or not. That, at any rate, we cannot deny. But the soul—what is it? Is there anything in me which is immortal besides the mere desire of living for ever? And if that is not evident, I quite agree with the Doctor that it requires proof. Everybody, it goes without saying, is not required to prove it. There are a dozen other ways than demonstration of being certain of a thing. There are many who have neither the time nor the opportunity nor the qualities of mind necessary to undertake a proof; and yet the conclusion is the common property of all. As a matter of fact, the whole question usually puts the cart before the horse. Instead of asking ourselves is it possible that we have a soul, is there any proof that a part of us is immortal, we should begin with the certainty that all this is true."

"Surely you can't mean that. I never heard the problem stated in such a curious fashion," said the Doctor, who had been following the Priest's words with such great attention that he had allowed his freshly lighted cigar to go out.

"I mean every word I say,"—and the Priest proceeded to justify himself. "There are few truths to which the whole human race holds so tenaciously as this. Take that for your starting-point, and explain it away if you can. The people who doubt, or profess to doubt—those who criticise and pick to pieces; well, read their writings or listen to their talk if you wish to discover their general state of mind. Sceptics, are they, or Agnostics, or Atheists? They may call themselves what they please, but they don't act up to their name. Every mother's son of them is as cock-sure, when it comes to doing things, as you or I."

"But who does live up to his belief?" urged the Doctor pugnaciously.

"No one, if you will; few in any case. But that is not what I mean. If the man acts he must have some sort of a motive. To deny that he thinks, or that his thought is spiritual and immaterial, is just about the same as to deny that he sees or that his sight apprehends colour. What would you do if a boy in school told his master that he was unable to do his sum because he had no immaterial faculty to reason with? Thrash him, I hope. Well, that is just what Aristotle would have you do with the sceptics."

"Yet he who knows how to doubt is half way to the truth," remarked the Parson sententiously. "No one would ever examine into anything if he did not have some little doubt lurking in his mind."

"And what of that, sir?" The Priest was pleased to have the Parson's statement as a peg for further explanation. "The child does not doubt, does he, when he asks, 'What is that?' or, when he gets the answer, 'Why is it so?' We have a natural bent towards wanting to know the reasons for everything. That is not the result of a doubt. But let me get back to my point. We were starting with the truth of immortality as certain. Where did it come from? Why do all people possess it? What is it worth? If you answer those three little questions aright, you prove the immortality of the soul. Now, where do you think it came from?"

The three to whom the question was addressed answered it each in his own way.

The Parson spoke first: "It is more likely than not that it is a persisting half-memory of some primitive revelation to man: a belief that is strengthened and supported in Christian countries by the teaching of the Bible."

"The result of a desire to live," opined the Doctor briefly, re-lighting his cigar.

The Poet looked wise as he replied: "If you ask me, Father, I should say it was quite natural for man to hold such a belief."

"There," said the Priest. "You have given me three answers to my question. Of course, if my reverend friend's opinion is correct, there is ample reason for certainty in the matter. I say IF, for it is

not an easy thing to show that there was any primitive revelation, unless you appeal to the teaching of the Church to-day. And you, too, Doctor, have given me a very creditable basis for an argument. Do you think it is at all likely that such a desire as this—intense, constant, universal, personal, as it is—can be other than natural? And if it is natural, don't you think that there you have the strongest possible presumption of a justification lying somewhere behind it? Your 'desire' and my friend's 'natural,' are the same thing in different forms. I prefer 'natural' myself; since it is the basis of desire. But, seriously, can anyone even think that what is universal, constant, and natural can be false? And yet it is admittedly not a self-evident truth. However, if it is natural it came from nature, or, in other words, from reason, since truth has nothing to do with any other faculty than the intelligence.

"And so I go on to answer my other questions myself. All people possess it because all people have reason, or mind, or human nature, whichever you prefer. It's quite possible that only a few are conscious of thinking out the subject; but, since the conclusion is natural, reason in all cases must have been at work upon the premises. And now ask what it is worth. A good deal, I think, if it is both natural and reasonable. Doesn't it appear so to you, too?"

The Doctor made himself the spokesman. "It's

rather a lot to grasp," he said. "Of course it's very persuasive; and there seems to be a great deal behind it. You justify the common certainty of the world by an appeal to the natural. But it seems to me"—he drew a long meditative whiff—"that it's not a proof at all; and, if it is, that it proves too much. Wouldn't it follow that all the evil passions of man are natural and reasonable, too? They are more or less universal, and——"

"As appetites, of course, they are reasonable and natural. They are only evil when wrongly applied, used to excess, or in an unreasonable manner. Take eating, for instance. Food, and the craving for it when we are hungry, is good and natural. But if we indulge ourselves to excess, we are gluttons. However,"—with a smile—"'aux moutons.' I did not advance it as a direct proof. I ought to have said that it was a fact, and that it had to be accounted for. And so when we ask, 'Why are we certain?' we are either seeking to find out how the certainty arose or else we are asking for a proof. I have been trying to explain how the certainty arose; and I think I have been on the right lines, and, perhaps, given some indirect proofs as well. But if we want to justify the certainty—which, mind you, we have got—then we must look about for evidence."

"But you can't have evidence of the soul," objected the Poet. It's not visible. It doesn't come within the range of our senses."

"You cannot see the electricity that makes that lamp glow," came the Priest's answer. "The light is the effect of an invisible force. Just so, if you are anxious to find the soul, you must look for its effects. Notice! The reasoning is *a posteriori*. That's an important thing. And to save a lot of talking, we will only look at one effect. When the reason thinks, it proves its immortality."

"How's that?" asked the Doctor. "I always imagined that thought was a product of the brain. 'The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile,' says Vogt."

"And you believe it?" queried the Priest. "Thought the immaterial comes as a result from the material tissues of the brain? A wiser man than Vogt has given a different solution to the problem of thought. The brain does not produce it. It limits it. What! Are mental states, as you call them, material? And what colour is anger, then? Or how many inches long is fear? Is love square or round? And how many pounds does truth weigh? How could you ever think at all if thoughts were extended? So different—not in degree, mind, but in kind—are the natures of thought and of material effects of whatever sort, that it is an absolute necessity to conclude that the subject of thought—the mind, not the brain—is a real existing being—joined to the body, if you will, but so different from it that the two are not even thinkable in terms of the

same order. The one we know as material by its properties, characteristics, and effects. The other, by its properties and action, we must, whether we will or no, recognise as immaterial."

"But science and evolution?" protested the Physician.

"Go for nothing,"—the Priest took him up—"unless you can show that thought, reason, will, can come from matter. Evolution begs the whole question, just as materialism begs it. Instead of looking at facts in the face—in place of finding out what thought is and can do, and what matter can do and is—you make a theory, and then try to explain every difficulty and mystery away in its light. No, my dear Doctor, I am more interested in knowing things as they are than in trying to frame hypotheses and explanations on a very insufficient basis, as to the process by which they came to be what they are. I am far more interested in myself here and now than in any far-off ancestor, be he monkey, anthropoid ape, or oyster."

"But science is against you. I don't say, of course, that Evolution has been demonstrated; but surely you will admit that it is as certain as if it were?"

The Priest laughed. "You'll call me a dry old fossil if I don't say 'yes'; so I won't say anything at all more than I have said already. The whole thing can be packed into a nutshell. Mind and matter are

mutually exclusive. If you have a reason and it works immaterially—which it does—it is an immaterial faculty, and belongs to an immaterial being. And if that is immaterial, it is immortal."

"That's a tall order," remarked the Doctor. "I don't quite gather how it follows."

The Poet was yawning and trying to hide the fact that his poetical imagination was somewhat bored by the dryness of the conversation. The Parson was tired, and, not being so careful as the Poet, had fallen asleep. The Priest—it was always a sign that he was going before long—took out his Breviary.

"It follows necessarily," he said simply. "An incorporeal substance can't corrupt. It might be annihilated—swept out of existence—as any created thing might; but there's no reason to suppose it will, and everyone to conclude the contrary. Corruption, as you know well, only means the severing of parts. And an immaterial thing has no parts; so it can't corrupt."

"But you said it could be annihilated," remarked the Doctor with animation.

"Certainly," replied the Priest. "If God made it, He can unmake it; and I don't suppose you will be anxious to prove immortality by saying that the soul was never made."

"God—God. Of course not. But you bring God into everything." The Doctor spoke almost petulantly.

"Naturally," said the Priest drily, as he opened his book. "He made all that there is. It is difficult to talk about anything and leave Him out. He is the First Cause. You can't know much about anything unless you know its causes. Who said that? St Thomas, I fancy it was."

"But still He may annihilate the soul?" the Doctor insisted, as the Parson woke up with a grunt.

"I've been having forty winks," he said sleepily. "Forgive my rudeness. The sea air makes one sleepy. I think I had better go off to bed." And he went.

As the Doctor took a fresh cigar from his case, examined it, clipped off the end and lit it, the Poet rose and said good-night. The Doctor resumed: "God might reduce the soul to its original nothingness—that is, if there really is a God?"

"Yes," replied the Priest, "He might. But why should He? Science does not know anything of annihilation. Why do you, of all people in the world, urge it here? If you have any conception of God, surely it is not that of an unreasonable being. And if the Creator is reasonable, it's monstrous to suppose that He creates us with an overwhelming desire only to be frustrated and disappointed; a universal belief, to turn out false and deceptive; a demonstration of reason, to lead us astray; and an incapacity of corruption by nature, to end in an annihilation wrought by His own action."

"That's very strong language to use," mused the Doctor aloud. "Perhaps, one of these days, you will allow me a little talk about God with you. Your philosophy, as your theology, seems to hinge on that one word. Yet the trend of modern science rather does away with the idea of a personal Creator and providential God."

"What you say is, unfortunately, only too true." The Priest rose as he spoke. "But science is out of her depth here. By all means: I shall be happy at any time to have the talk you mention. Of course the philosophy hinges on God. We read back to Him from His creatures, and then re-read creation in the light we have found in their cause. But I must be following our friends. It is getting late. Good-night, Doctor, and a good sleep to you."

"Good-night,"—and the Doctor, rising as the Priest left, sauntered over to the card tables. After a few moments he took a hand in a game of poker; but the thoughts conjured into being earlier in the evening occupied his mind more than the cards. At length, after staking on a flush which turned out to have a card of the wrong suit hidden away among the others, he sought the deck, and lighting a final cigar—his fourth—communed with himself and with the vast expanse of water and of starry sky, which lent an untold sense of infinity and mysterious power to his thoughts. The Priest's words were working in an alien—was it an alien?—soil; and what, in his

own favourite expression, were for him the broken toys of his childhood were coming once more before his mental vision out of the vast expanse of shimmering darkness, and stirring a dumb feeling of longing within his heart.

CHAPTER IV

GOD

THERE were at least three things that made the Doctor hurry up on deck as soon as the lunch was finished. First of all, it was a "long" lunch, a sort of amateur middle-day dinner, and he was tired of sitting in the saloon. The day was Sunday, and it was probably to add in some degree to its observance that the passengers lingered so over their meal. The Parson had performed Divine service in the morning, aided by the Poet's Wife, who, whatever her religious opinions, had no objection to constituting herself organist and choirmaster for the occasion. The mixed crowd on board, or most of them, at any rate, had honoured the observance of the Sabbath by putting in an appearance at the service. They had sung several of Moody and Sankey's hymns with great vigour and unction—those were the only hymn-books the *Carinthia* carried—and volubly answered "Amen" to those parts of the—very much abridged—"Order for Morning Prayer" to which the Parson treated them. They had listened

with decent attention to the lessons appropriately chosen for the occasion by the Clergyman himself—for he had no hesitation in carving out a special form of service when he saw fit to do so—and composed themselves for slumber, quite in the orthodox way, as soon as he gave out his text and had once got fairly launched in his sermon. And so, either because their devotions had fatigued them, or because they thought it the proper thing to dawdle on the Lord's Day, they dragged out the lunch in a feeble and vapid Sunday conversation.

The Doctor wanted a smoke—so he fidgeted. He was bored by the remarks of his next-door neighbour at the Captain's table—an elderly spinster who had put on Sunday manners with her Sunday bombazine—and so he rose from the table. The Parson and Euphon had gone—so he went.

He found the young lady and her father, half asleep after the morning's exertions, seated upon two deck chairs near the stern, and lazily watching the gulls as they wheeled in the wake of the ship. He lit a cigar, and stood speaking to them for some moments. Then he got a deck chair for himself, and sat down on the other side of Euphon. "What a bore it is, to be sure," he said, for he had no particular grievance on that score against the men creatures of the party, "that all the old cats on board are so confoundedly pious on Sunday. They don't mean it. To-morrow they will be at it again

discussing the last plays they saw in London, or the latest novel, or pulling their neighbours' characters to pieces, without a word of the cant they are turning on so strong to-day."

"I'm quite sure you don't mean what you say, Doctor," Euphon began, in her clear, sweet voice. She felt that it was her part to defend her absent, if crochety sisters. "I expect they are really quite good people. And there aren't very many on board, after all."

"I'm surrounded by them," grumbled the Doctor, remembering his experience at the luncheon table.

"If you had stayed for a month, as Papa and I did," laughed the Parson's Daughter, "in the *Pension des Etrangers*, you might have something to say. But here—why, there aren't three real specimens of the *pension* female on the *Carinthia*."

"One's quite enough," argued the Doctor, "when she monopolises you. But, as it happens, I do know the foreign boarding-house kind only too well. I still have nightmare visions of ancient ladies rushing about all day to see the sights, and only too happy if they succeeded in dragging some unfortunate victim in their wake; marking time in the evening with extempore concerts—save the mark!—and pressing everybody, voice or no, lines or no, into the service of misery. Oh! those concerts! Where the poor young men they have captured sit along the wall like patients at the

dentists, waiting their turn, and they compose themselves to their knitting or eternal embroidery, and click, click, click, and talk, talk, talk, while the star whom they have caught for the evening's programme —a young man with bleached-out hair and a wheezy voice—sings 'Alice, where art Thou?' to the strains of a *pension* piano. I know them; and I often wonder where they come from, who they are, and what they do when they are at home. I——"

But "Papa" had gone to sleep outright by this time, and Euphon, laughing heartily at the quaint picture drawn by the Doctor of the familiar boarding-house at home as well as abroad, said: "How hard you are on the poor old things. Don't you think they have their tragedies as well as their comedies, that there is something very beautiful to be found somewhere in the life of each, if you would only take the trouble to look for it? After all, we only see the surface. The wonder is to me that they seem to be happy at all. People are so strange. I should be simply miserable if I spent my life drifting about from one stuffy boarding-house to another—London, Nice, Rome, Naples, Switzerland, and back to London again. And I daresay they would be just as unhappy if they had to live for years in our dear little country vicarage."

"Of course they would"—there was a twinkle in the Doctor's eye as he spoke. "I can't imagine the lady at my table, who is probably boring the Captain

by this time, happy in any other rôle than that she plays."

"Then she is not a hypocrite," Euphon caught him up, smiling.

"Well, I'm not so sure. I don't call myself a religious man, but I can't quite stand the patronising way some people talk about the Deity. One might think," he added somewhat flippantly, "He was an old friend of theirs."

"Perhaps He is." Euphon took him quite seriously and gravely. "Perhaps He is an old friend, whom they have known from childhood, and loved and trusted. He may be very near them in their thoughts, and perhaps they are quite honest and in earnest when they speak of Him as they do."

"They may persuade themselves into all that," the Doctor persisted, in a less scornful tone; "but it is their cant and hypocrisy that disgusts me. It's a melancholy Sunday religion with most of them; and I can't always think they believe what they say."

"But why not?"—Euphon was quite a controversialist in sticking to the point. "They have probably been taught all about these things when they were children; and the Sabbath-day observance has most likely been the ordinary expression of their religious feeling all their lives long. I don't think it is hypocrisy or cant. I think it's very beautiful, even if it is only too little."

"There now, Miss Euphon, you have touched upon one of the very points I quarrel with the most. Why, granting that the one-day-a-week piety is the stereotyped form in which they have been brought up—why should they be taught their religion at all at such an age or in such a way? People think they have the universal solvent of all difficulties and enigmas in those quaint formulas of belief and prayer they learned at their mother's knee: whereas, really, those same formulas and prayers only raise the spirits of other difficulties and enigmas, and do nothing at all to solve the first. I consider it absolutely wrong, for my part, to teach children as true anything of which we are not quite certain. And, instead of doing that, we fill their little minds with fairy tales and myths. Let them grow old enough to understand the riddles before you put the answer in their mouths!"

"Oh! Doctor," and the Parson's Daughter showed her distress and disapproval in every line of her pretty face. "You really mustn't talk like that: you can't mean what you are saying. You wouldn't really keep the children from the knowledge of God and His truth. Why, you might just as well say, 'Teach them nothing at all; and let them find out all they are to know for themselves later on.' As long as they are taught truth, what does it matter when they learn it? Surely, the sooner the better."

The Doctor saw that he had said too much, and

was going to change the conversation, for he really regretted that he had so distressed his companion, and was quite ready to make amends by capitulating the point and paying a compliment. But before Euphon had finished speaking, and long before smiles smoothed out the marks of distress upon her brow, her father woke up. "Bless my soul, my dear, I have been taking forty winks, upon my word. How long have I been asleep, my child? And what is the matter, Euphon? Tears in your eyes! Has the Doctor been telling you some sad tale?"

Asked thus, point blank, the Parson's Daughter was on the point of replying, when the Doctor took it upon himself to make an apology. He was sincerely sorry that he had expressed his opinion so strongly, and caused the girl any, even momentary pain; for he was much struck with the simplicity and straightforwardness of her character. He admired her father, as a type fast passing away. And, in the few days spent in the society of both, he had begun to conceive an affection for the daughter that was altogether foreign to his heart. For he was a man whose dreary early surroundings would have spoiled him utterly, had he not an almost unbounded faith in the possibilities of human nature, and a keen sense of humour that just saved him from being an out-and-out misanthrope. As it was, he had simply neglected two parts of his nature, and they had, like an abandoned garden, grown awry. He had no

religion, and he had never been in love. The Priest and the Poet, with his wife, strolled up as he spoke.

"No, sir. Not a sad story, I am afraid. We have been indulging in a little controversy, and I fear—I am so outspoken"—and he positively blushed —"that I—I have been guilty of dogmatism."

"Dogmatism again," snapped the Poet's Wife under her breath, for she had caught only the last words. "Why is it that the less religion a man has, the more he talks about it?" And, aloud: "I had no idea you were a theologian, Doctor. Take my advice and be a humanitarian. Start a crusade to stop the mothers of the ignorant class feeding their babies with plaster of Paris. Join an anti-vivisection society. Do anything but worry about things no one comprehends!"

She was evidently in a very cross mood. That could have been predicted by a look at the Poet's face. It was a hopeless blank.

Euphon's colour rose. She looked straight at the Doctor. "Tell them," she said, "what we were talking about."

And so he did; but he gave prominence to what she said rather than to his own part of the conversation. Meanwhile, the Parson's hand went out caressingly and rested upon his daughter's shoulder. "Quite right, my little Euphon, quite right," he murmured. "With little theologians like you about, we shall not go far astray."

The Priest nodded his approval, but the Poet's Wife, heedless of consequences, joined in. "Quite right, Doctor. I agree with you. Get rid of plaster of Paris and patent foods for children; stop cruelty to animals; alleviate suffering; but for pity's sake don't run any form of religion down a child's throat. You know perfectly well"—she glared at the Parson and the Priest in turn—"that there are more objections to the doctrines you teach than points in their favour. England or Rome, it's all the same thing: priestcraft and man millinery."

The Parson opened his mouth to expostulate; but she gave him no time. "I know what you are going to say. I've read Martin Tupper and Pastor Chiniquy—not that I believe what they say. But this is an age of emancipation and freedom. The English-speaking races will not bow their necks to the yoke of tyranny—least of all to sacerdotalism. You with your 'Italian Mission,' and you with your slavish imitation of Rome"—with withering glances at the two poor clerics—"are undermining the freedom of the Constitution." She had worked herself up to a red-heat by her own words.

If you want to see the process for yourself go to Hyde Park or Clapham Common on a fine evening, pick your lecturer carefully, and wait.

The poor Parson quailed under her glance; but the Priest was accustomed to such polemic. He turned politely towards the excited lady. "And,

pray, madam, how does the profession of the Catholic faith interfere with the liberty of Englishmen? We surely have the liberty to believe what we please and to practise our religion as it suits us. I have as much right to speak in defence of, as you against, the Church."

"I suppose you have that," the angular female admitted grudgingly. "But you have no business to prejudice the minds of others."

"The Priest, I am quite sure, is not the kind of man to prejudice anybody," the doctor corrected, feeling that he was more or less to blame for the scene.

"Why, yes he is, on your own showing," retorted the amiable lady. "Isn't he continually prejudicing the minds of his people with sermons and instructions in favour of religion? Doesn't he fill the minds of all the children he can get to go to his schools with purgatory, and saints, and image worship? Isn't it the business of all ministers 'to compass sea and land to make one proselyte'? I should say ——"

"Pardon me, madam," and everyone looked relieved at the Priest's interruption. "Suppose we stick to one point. We shall all understand each other so very much better. I think I am right in supposing the dispute to centre in the truths of God and of Religion? Good. You say they ought not to be taught. Why not? Would you advocate every child sticking its hand into the fire to find

out by experience that it burns, or working out the law of gravitation for itself instead of telling it simply, 'If you are not careful you will fall and hurt yourself'? I think not. Now, what is it in religion that you dislike? Why should we not teach its truths—for they are truths—to whoever we can?"

The Poet's Wife felt that she was being driven into a corner, and looked to the Doctor for aid. But he was too prudent an individual to join forces with those of the lady, especially in the present company; so he closed his lips like a steel trap and said nothing. And she, with the last resource of those who have the worst of an argument, plunged into deep water at once and vehemently asserted: "I object to the whole thing. You know perfectly well that you cannot be certain of the truths you teach. Why, the very position on which all your religion rests is shaky; and yet you all teach it with a sublime contempt for any objections to it that crop up. You call them temptations and close your ears; and you tell people who have difficulties and doubts not to worry about them, but only to believe."

She was wound up for another ten minutes at least; but the Priest again, though not rudely, cut her short. "Oh! so the objection is God, is it? Now, that is exceedingly curious. You have hit on one of the worst objections you could for your

case. It does not need priests and parsons to persuade people to believe in God. They believe of their own accord. The priests are the natural outcome of the belief—not, certainly, the belief of the priests. Everybody believes in God. There never was a time when they did not. Never a race too degraded, never a people too educated, but they worshipped a god. Now, what can you make of that?"

The question was addressed to the Poet's Wife, but the Doctor answered for her, but guardedly: "A great many popular beliefs are without foundation. Why not this among their number?"

"Why not this?" said the Priest, turning to him. "Why not this? Because it is so absolutely universal that it must be naturally true. It is impossible to think that the whole human race has made a mistake. You start by taking its truth for granted before you try to prove or test it. And when you have tested it you find it borne out by reasonable proofs. Why, man, every human being treads one or more of the five paths of reason that lead to God, before he begins to put his thoughts out in order at all. And when he does come to test them he finds that he has all along been doing unconsciously nothing more nor less than what the greatest philosophers and theologians have mapped out so carefully for him. The natural workings of the mind must be trusted, if we are to trust anything at all; and the

uniform finding of the mind of man as a whole is God."

"Surely, Father, that is a rather sweeping statement to make. How do you account for the atheists and agnostics. Even if, as you say, at all times and in all places reason has led men to God, at all times and places, too, you find individuals who have not so been led. Can you account for that?"

"Certainly I can, and very easily," answered the Priest, not a whit disturbed by the objection to the conclusion he had drawn. "In most cases your agnostics—not atheists, mind you, for I question if there ever was such a thing, outside of a book, in the world—your fighting agnostics, anyway, are simply pig-headed fellows who won't take the trouble to look fairly all around the questions they so unhesitatingly pronounce unsolvable. I know of many such. They are very ready with pert objections to the truths of which they profess to know nothing, ever arguing in vicious circles, and quite persuaded, all the time, while they say they do not know, that they know a great deal more than anyone else. They make a fine display of high-sounding arguments with nothing in them, for the most part; and they neglect the elementary rules of logic. They won't make the natural inference, because they don't want to. They are as pig-headed as mules; and, fortunately for their neighbours, they are not very numerous. But away down at the

bottom of their hearts, I suspect, there is a something that you and I would call an idea of God. You remember Pyrrho, the sceptic? He would not believe in the reality of anything. Yet he dodged a stone when it was thrown at him in the market place, with the very sensible remark, 'that it was difficult to throw off human nature.' So it is, even for the would-be agnostics. I believe that's the real reason why they are so dead in earnest to persuade others. The man who is certain of truth, never tries to do much more than explain it. He who shrieks hysterically generally has a bad case."

"But surely, sir," said the Parson, quite pleased with the Priest's way of handling the subject, "all agnostics are not as you describe. There are some quite serious and even learned men who have written very forcibly against the theistic position. You cannot accuse all of being mere talkers for the sake of showing off their superior knowledge. Some even have been known to say how much they regret being unable to accept God and the consolations of His holy religion. They, surely, are sincere and earnest?"

"Oh! yes, of course," the Priest replied. "There are a few such, I have no doubt. Only, what of their minds? They are out of the normal. They don't follow the natural lines of thought, and when they come to examine the weight of argument—for there are clinching arguments that prove the natural

conclusion to be the right one—you always find that they have altogether neglected that particular part of their mental machinery which is fitted to examine this sort of question. They do not understand the terms, nor the process of inference. I very much question if this sort of sceptic could put in his own words at all any one of the theistic proofs. He can repeat them, like a parrot. But what do they mean to him? Nothing, obviously, since he is unable to appreciate their force. And so I say that these minds are not working healthily and naturally, just as I should say a man's eyes were not working healthily and naturally when he has the jaundice."

"That is a very serious thing to say," urged the Doctor.

"It is," replied the Priest; "but I have no doubt whatever as to its truth."

"And, suppose it is true—of course I don't admit it, but suppose you are right—an unintellectual assent, like what you say, is not of much use in persuading people who do not believe."—This the Poet's Wife, less excited and crepitant, but taking the very first occasion that offered to say her say.

"But no one, my dear madam," said the Priest, with an impatient little smiling frown, "ever would try to do such a thing. I was merely discussing belief in God in general, and pointed to the fact that common consent certified it as true: common

consent, mind you, natural and capable of being expressed in the form of definite demonstration, for it is itself the result of unconsciously perceived proofs."

"That is the same curious argument you used in speaking of the soul," mused the Doctor. "For my part, it seems to me that demonstration is required for these things, and not just a simple and supine acquiescence."

"And that's because you are so accustomed to looking at things critically," smiled the Priest sympathetically. "I believe we are not so far apart as you think, Doctor. You did not begin life with criticism; and I don't see why you should expect others to. When the stage for criticism comes; why, then it comes at the right time. Then is the time to review your knowledge and catalogue it, ask where it came from, what it is worth. You will find, if you do this carefully and free from prepossession, that you have reached your natural knowledge of God by five apparently different roads, which are really one. By the path of the insufficient and transitory, you have reached the Eternal and Necessary; through the caused, you have come to the Uncaused Cause of all things; from motion and things moved, you have passed to the Immovable Source of all motion; mutely observing the beautiful order and adaptation of means to ends, you have found the Last End—the Mind that planned it all;

and ascending intellectually through the graded perfections of the universe of beings, you are confronted at last by the Absolutely Perfect.

"Now, all these paths you may have trod unconsciously, but you have none the less thereby reached the one God naturally. When you review and criticise the natural process—unless, as I say, you are insincere, or prepossessed, or there is a mental twist that dissociates you from the rest of mankind—you will find no flaw in the procedure. Its value, attested by nature, will be no greater when it is certified by the mind's further survey. You will only have cast it into the form of exterior proof, and that, of course, may be a great comfort to you, as it naturally would be to the scientific mind."

"But . . ." began the Poet's Wife. But, as by common consent, the immediate subject was dropped and split up into several smaller conversations. So she pursued the topic with her reluctant husband in a monologue, quite loud enough to be overheard by all had they been paying any attention to her.

The Doctor tossed the burnt-out end of his cigar away and penitently asked Euphon if she would care to take a stroll up and down the deck. The Priest dropped into the chair she vacated and, at the Parson's request, enlarged upon the explanation he had been giving of the genesis of the philosophical knowledge of God. The interest of both men was keen, and they went deeply into the subject;

then drifted into minor politics and, last of all, ended up by telling each other fishing and other stories. Euphon found the Doctor humble and apologetic, and so seized the opportunity. His opposition was shaken by the Priest's calm logic and ready explanation; and the warm faith and trust of the young girl, which the Priest had gone far to justify in what he had said, weakened it still more.

"After all," he was saying, "the Priest has a great deal to say in his favour. I begin to think he may be right. These things are not found in any known department of science. They belong to philosophy. And of the real scientists, most have been theists and Christians. It is the second-rate men, the hangers-on at the fringes of scientific knowledge, who babble so much, and do so much to discredit their own statements."

"I am sure he is right," declared Euphon, with the quick intuition of the feminine nature. "It is as natural and true to believe in God and to try to realise what He is, as for me to picture my own dear mother, whom I never saw or knew. Sometimes I think how unhappy the true agnostic must be; and I pity him just as one pities the poor blind man who has never seen the sun or the green fields."

"What a good advocate you make," said the Doctor admiringly, for he felt two unaccustomed chords stirred within his heart—unfeigned admira-

tion for his companion, and a vague, reverential, half-recollection, of what might be God. The Priest's words and the comment of the Parson's Daughter sank together into his soul, and the creature began to stir in response to the thought of his Creator.

"I am sure he is right," reiterated Euphon, after a pause.

"I begin to think he is;"—the Doctor repeated himself too.

CHAPTER V

DRINK AND DRUNKENNESS

"THAT young man will shortly be drunk," remarked the Doctor, during a pause in the conversation. The smoking-room had not yet become entirely hazy with tobacco smoke; but the poker players had been going hard for some time, and the steward was busy—"Yessir; splitsodasir; rightsir; two Scotches? 'nemoment, sir! Yessir, inalfaminute; with angostura; rightsir!" In the corner are seated our four friends, contemplating the dregs of their black coffee and the empty liqueur glasses.

"He will be drunk probably after his next glass. And what a mixture he's ordering." He was looking at a lad seated at the next table but one, with a heap of chips and several empty glasses beside him, flushed with the excitement of gambling and with the extraordinary mixture of potent spirits that he had already managed to imbibe. A nice-looking young fellow—not more than nineteen, clean-cut and well set up.

There had been drinking in the smoking-room every evening, as a matter of course; but as yet it had kept within the bounds at least of respectability. This was the first palpable example, so far, of the evil effects of whisky. The Doctor's remark turned the conversation in the corner.

"What a terrible thing," said the Parson, "that a young man on the threshold of life, with the makings of a fine fellow in him, should sow the seeds of intemperance as that young man is doing. There are few curses so great in modern life as the vice of drunkenness."

"He will have a 'head' to-morrow," mused the Doctor, who had been keeping count of the youth's potations—"two cognacs, maraschino, three whisky and sodas, and now, upon my word, here comes his absinthe. Young fool! He ought to be birched for making such an exhibition of himself!"

The object of these *sotto voce* remarks was staking heavily on his hand; and the Doctor saw that he held three kings. Three of his fellow-players —well, it was not their business to teach him to play—dropped out and said nothing. One other steadily raised his stakes. They mounted regularly until there was a little heap of counters accumulated, representing a considerable sum of money.

"'Shthere 'ny limit 'nthish game? Raishe you ten bob," spluttered the youth thickly.

"I'll see you," came the calm reply of the older

man, as he laid his hand—three nines and a pair of queens—upon the table.

"I've had about enough of this," said the Priest. "We might go for a little stroll on deck?" He rose as he spoke, and with him the others. As they left the smoking-room, the tinkle of a piano and the rich clear tones of a contralto voice came up from the cabin.

The night was clear, the firmament studded with its million points of gold about the swelling moon. The black smoke from the funnels stretched back in a straight line over the phosphorescent track of the ship. The instrument, the voice, the regular thudding of the screw, the wash of the water as it sped past the side, wove themselves together into one melody. Alone, each sound was real. Together all seemed mysterious and unearthly. (Have you ever, from the Pincian Hill, standing back by the marble fountain, where a marble Moses nestles amid the rushes, looked out over the Eternal City, across the valleys and hills, across the palaces and churches and ruins to the great dome of the Heart of Rome, standing out against a blue Italian sky? Have you seen the ilexes and the palms, the roses and the lilies, the throng of many-hued students mingled with the crush of people about the band? Have you caught the heavy odours of the flowers, and heard the strains floating from a hundred brazen throats, and seen the green and the grey of the

olive trees and vineyards on distant Monte Mario? And was it real? Or did you fancy yourself a disembodied spectator gazing upon an ideal that a word, a movement, would crumble into dust before your eyes?)

The great dark ship, her engines thudding like a heart, her masts and stays clear cut yet faintly against the sky, the curling crests of pale fire sweeping away from the bow, the vast expanse of water bounded by the immensity of night, the warp and woof of sounds—it was vastness felt, communion with Nature in her majesty, wanting but a touch to crumble into mere machinery and commonplace. The four men all felt the awe and reverence of the ocean-night. The touch was a rough burst of laughter from the smoking-room. The momentary spell was broken. The mysterious bonds that Nature's deft fingers were weaving about their hearts snapped.

"It is too bad," said the Priest, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Bad, Father, I should say it is. Those men are nothing more than sharpers trying to bleed the boy. If he is drunk, it is their fault." The Poet was in earnest, and had jumped to the conclusion.

"Perhaps. I'm not so sure. In fact, I don't think it is that. The young fellow, far more probably, is trying to 'show off.' He wants to be

thought a man, to be admired as a hero. It is conceit or vanity that is to blame, I fancy; and he has gone too far now to pull up."

"It's a sin," said the Parson.

"A disease rather," commented the Doctor.

"Both, I think," answered the Priest, "since sin is a disease of the soul. And, though he seems to be making himself a beast in there just now, I hope—indeed, I think—that his fault is not very grievous. His disease is curable."

"Are not all sins grievous?" hazarded the Parson. "The distinction that you Romanists make seems to me a false one. I should like to hear you justify your theory of mortal and venial sin."

The priest winced at the epithet "Romanist." "Catholics," he said, "certainly do divide sins into mortal and venial. I appeal to you, Doctor, for a confirmation. There are some diseases from which one recovers; some infallibly lead to death. Why, even men who seldom or never bother their heads about wrong-doing, have a sliding scale of honour, in which a lie generally is regarded as the worst and most dishonourable act. We can't get it out of our heads that some things are more wrong than others. We can't suppose that God views all thoughts and words and actions in precisely the same way. Of course, I am not going to say that some sins are not wrong—or allow you to think that a wholesale permission is given to Catholics to commit what

we know as venial sin. Any sin—the slightest departure from right-doing—is hateful to God, and there is no conceivable justification for it. Nothing could make it right for me to do wrong, no matter how small the wrong was. This Catholic doctrine takes a far more profound view of sin than any other. No wrong-doing is ever permissible; no, not to empty hell and people heaven with saved souls. But our common-sense justifies the Church's division. We cannot conceive the effects of all sins to be the same. Just as some diseases are curable and some not, so we look upon some sins as bringing about death in the soul and some as weakening it only. Even you, sir," with a courteous inclination in the direction of the Parson, "would not, when the question is more practical than speculative, blame one sinner as harshly as another."

"Quite right," broke in the Doctor; "upon my word, if you believe in sin at all, you must admit the distinction. And just so—it is an admirable feature in the teaching of the Roman Church, my friend—the ignorant and ill-instructed can less easily commit sins than the learned."

"From which you infer," began the Poet, "that it is easier for the saint to commit his sins than for the sinner. Has it ever struck you, reverend sirs, in that light?"

"Indeed, it has," replied the Priest, sorrowfully. "The more knowledge, the more sin. The more

grace, the greater the fall. The rich man, rich in intellectual gifts, in opportunities, in the assisting grace of God; and the man ignorant and hemmed in by difficulties and temptations. Above all, gentlemen—I speak from experience—the Priest feels the truth of what the Doctor has said. His education, his training, his life, in the one scale; and his temptations, common to all men, in the other, *Corruptio optimi pessima.* His sin, other things being equal, is greater than that of others. Forgive me," he apologised, "for bringing in a personal element. But I cannot but feel the difference. One has only to look into the depths of his own heart—brushing aside the cobwebs and dust of disuse—to realise the truth."

"And you can excuse that sinner in the smoking-room?" said the Parson pharisaically, as a fresh burst of laughter, telling of the poor young fellow's disgrace, came, wafted with the smoke, through the open port-holes.

"Certainly, I can," urged the Priest calmly. "He has made a mistake. He has committed a material sin, undoubtedly; but, from what I have seen of the circumstances, were he to be struck down at this very moment, he would be among the sheep rather than the goats."

"Then you would condone drunkenness?"

"Condone drunkenness! My God!"—the Priest, the Pastor, the Confessor, the Fisher of Souls, was alert

on the instant—"My God, sir, have I worked among the poor in vain? Have I laboured and toiled and striven with no resulting knowledge, since I came, fresh from the seminary, into the cesspool of human sin and vice? Condone drunkenness? Rather would I stand in the midst of the crowded streets, and cry, like a prophet of old, against the curse that has been the ruin of the country; the curse that has dragged souls down into hell; the vice that, insinuating, like the serpent, guileful as the traitor's kiss, has betrayed innocent souls into the grasp of Satan. What is it that we priests have to fight? Sin. And what is sin and the chief cause of sins?—Drink."

"And yet, Father," said the Doctor, with a sly glance that was lost in the darkness, but his tone was unmistakable, "we all had our brandy after dinner with our coffee."

"And are we drunk, sir?" The Priest stopped in his walk, and wheeled upon the speaker, confronting him with his heavy, clean-shaven face. Instinctively, all four stood still. The sneer of the Doctor and the annoyance of the Priest made themselves felt. "Are you a manichean?" There was a general laugh, and the Priest went on: "Drink is not a bad thing. Drinking to excess is bad. Can you not see the difference, Doctor? Were any one of us in danger of drinking to excess, we would swear off to-morrow —at once. It is those who abuse the creature of God

that sin and perish. Am I not to eat, because eating to excess is wrong? To speak, since lying is a sin? Temperance, my friend; and total abstinence where it is necessary! But temperance in everything! Don't pick and choose. Behind every dogma and moral obligation of the Church lies a philosophy founded upon revelation and reason. Behind every philosophy lies common-sense. If I am a Catholic, I am not necessarily a fool; and if I am a priest, it does not follow that I am a charlatan."

"But I did not say——" began the Doctor.

"You did say," the Priest took him up sharply, "that we all had cognac with our coffee. So we did. Therefore, you inferred, we committed a sin. How does it follow? Either, to drink cognac is wrong or it is not."

"To drink to excess is wrong," hazarded the Poet, simultaneously with the Parson's "Drinking is a sin."

"Well," laughed the Priest, "I see I have two against me; and there is no casting vote. Forgive me, Doctor, if I spoke harshly. It seemed to me that you were either trying to accuse us all in unison or to take a rise out of me."

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you." For the Doctor, he was positively apologetic. "I was merely helping on the distinction for our friend. I don't know that I am prepared to admit any such a thing as sin at all. It requires so much to be supposed—God, the soul, free-will, law. In the last

day or so we have talked pretty frankly of these things—perhaps we will discuss them again later. But if sin is to be admitted as a factor in human life and character, I am prepared to agree with you that the Roman Catholic Church has the correct idea of it."

"One would almost think you had leanings," said the Poet. "I thought you were a professed atheist."

"Agnostic, you mean. Well, let it pass. It is either the Church of Rome or nothing—I speak, of course, for myself. There is no half-way-house, no makeshift, no Tom Tiddler's ground. If I were not a man who held that such things were unknowable, I should be a Catholic to-morrow."

"And I," answered the Priest, "were I not a Catholic, would, as far as I can see, be nothing at all."

"But, gentlemen," expostulated the Parson, "you seem to leave out of account those religious bodies of Christians that together make by far the largest part of the English-speaking world. You would have, on the one hand, nothing ; on the other, the Roman Church. That is, surely, a very unfair view to take of the question. Between those two poles lie a vast number of people, on essentials agreed together as Christians and only rejecting the errors of Rome and the corruption of dogma that has gone wrong. Would either of you think of denying that members of the Church of England, for example, were Christians —or Wesleyans or Congregationalists?"

"Really, sir, if you want my candid opinion of Protestantism you can have it in a nutshell." Asked point blank like this, the Priest could hardly refrain from an outspoken confession of what he felt. "The true, out-and-out private judgment man rejects everything that he cannot see and feel for himself. I do not say that any such exist—but first-hand evidence in all things is that alone which can persuade him: or at least he fancies so. The Catholic takes all his religion on faith. Having once satisfied himself as to the credentials of the Church, there is nothing left for him to do but listen and obey. Between those two poles, as you say, there is an immense variety of shades of thought. None of them are truly based upon the fetish of private judgment; nor are any dependent upon the infallible light of a guiding Church. The education of the members of the sects, their environment, associates, pursuits—a thousand causes go to make them what they are, comfortable, satisfied with their position, pleased with their mental outlook. But the Catholic, though all these things may play their part in the formation of his religious character, has an entirely different point of view. There are Protestants—I know some of them—who believe all the Catholic doctrines; but they are not thereby Catholics. It is more than the mere accepting of a teaching that is necessary. There is the why and the how it is received. The ultra High Church Anglican thinks himself a Catholic

when he burns incense before a picture in his bedroom. He does it because he likes it. A Catholic might do the same thing—also because he wishes to; but, as a Catholic, he must believe the truth that lies behind even his particular expression of it. And he must believe for no other reason than that because the Church teaches it. The difference is one of atmosphere and view-point. And it is the identity of view-point that welds all Catholics into the unity of Holy Church."

"I am sorry to say I fail to catch your meaning," said the Parson, professionally on guard. "I imagined that Romanists were coerced into unity by rougher measures than you indicate."

"I can only assure you that you are mistaken. In the meantime, we are drifting somewhat from the point." The Priest's remark was emphasised by the appearance of the original subject of the discussion at the opened door of the smoking-room. Supported by two of his companions, he made his way below.

"*Causa sublata, tollitur effectus*," quoted the Priest. "It is growing chilly on deck. We might go in again before we turn in for the night."

"Right," said the Doctor. "I want my nightcap, and a final cigar. Let us go in."

But the Parson thought otherwise, said good-night, and went off to his state-room. The Poet, making some apology in which his wife figured prominently, followed him.

The Doctor and the Priest entered alone. "I think we need not prolong the discussion," said the former, as he touched the electric button and asked for a whisky and soda. "I am quite of your way of thinking—if I am to grant the existence of sin at all; and it is difficult to see how one can refuse to grant it, since the idea is so forcibly brought home with the consciousness of wrong-doing and is seen in the havoc and misery of moral evil in the world as well. Won't you join me, Father [he slipped into the mode of address naturally, having heard the Poet], in a glass of grog?"

"Not to-night; thank you all the same."

For some time they sat together, intent upon cigar and a somewhat fussy pipe. The Priest could not get the latter to draw to his satisfaction; and so, after several vain attempts at taking the tobacco out with a rusty-looking knife which he produced, he laid it aside. They did not talk much. Both men were thinking, to the accompaniment of the usual noises of a ship's smoking-room—and thinking deeply, with the kind of thought that leads to silence. After a time the Priest rose and extended his hand. The other took it and shook it cordially. In the few moments of silence on the part of each, a current of mutual sympathy had been set up between them; the sort of sympathy that words often fail to bring; a union of souls that no language, though directly used with such intent, can conjure into being; that

lies behind and beyond the ordinary amenities of life, that crosses and recrosses like a silver strand through the grey and purple of the solitary task each lonely soul has to weave. Such sympathy is rare—but less unusual than we are apt to think. When the conventions of words and gestures fail, when soul cannot speak to soul in forms and phrases, then, out of the abyss that lies beyond, springs into being this mystic chain, knitting hearts together, fast in the bonds of thought and will. (I could tell you a story of how an individual went to see a long-absent friend. Their handgrips were cordial. A few commonplaces were exchanged. Each lit his pipe and smoked in silence. Then heart met heart in wordless colloquy; and the pent-up thoughts of years flew fast like shuttles between the two hearts, weaving new strands in the silken texture of God's best gift—divine friendship. Another grip of hands. A moving train, bearing one of them away—for a year, a decade, forever? Neither knew. But the work was done. The emotions that could not break through the fetters of speech were interchanged and each was satisfied).

"Good-night," said the Priest.

"Good-night, Father," said the Doctor.

CHAPTER VI

DEATHBEDS

"I HAVE a rather gruesome subject on my mind, upon which I want your opinion," said the Priest, dropping heavily into a deck chair between the Doctor and the Poet.

It was a beautiful afternoon. A great dome of blue sloping down to the iridescent disc of green water; the ship as steady as an hotel; and the sun just beginning to plough his golden furrow from the west, over the rolling Atlantic. The conversation between the Poet and the Physician up to the advent of the Priest had been spasmodic. The Doctor was eclectic in his types, and rather resented the domination of the lady over the obedient character of his companion. He had summed him up, long since, as "henpecked"—a man of great imagination and sympathy run riot to the point of making him agree with anyone with whom he happened to be. Here, you will observe, the Doctor was wrong; for the Poet had a few—a very few—convictions rooted

in the innermost depths of his being, with which even his good lady had nothing to do.

The Priest had a better appreciation of his worth; for he always spoke to him seriously, and gave due weight to any sentiment he chose to express.

"A gruesome subject, with which perhaps you too" —to the Poet—"may be acquainted. It has at least two sides of view; perhaps many more. I want the physical side from you, Doctor. What is it that causes death."

"That's a fairly large question to answer," said the Doctor, examining the tip of his cigar. "There are a good many things that will do it. Reduce to immediate causes . . . three, perhaps—heart failure, brain, lungs."

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," quoted the Poet.

"That's the anatomical chapter," said the Doctor.

"It is the most wonderful of poems," replied the Poet.

"Yes. Now we have the causes," urged the Priest, keeping to his point, "what is death? What have you up-to-date men of science to say? Anything new?"

"No. Death is the organism ceasing to function. The harmony is broken up. Something has worn thin and snapped. The muscles of the heart give out. The patient is dead."

"But it remains — the organism — as it was before?"

"Yes. The organs are all there; but their power is gone. The muscles of a corpse may be stimulated by electricity, but they can never move voluntarily. The dead body for a moment is an inert mechanism. Then it begins to break up; and soon even ceases to be that."

"But why should man ever die?" went on the Priest. "As long as he is an organism he ought to live. If life is a function—if it is the result of organism—it, surely, ought to persist as long as the organism itself. In other words, man, if life be a result of organic matter, can never die; for he remains a mass of organic and organised matter even after he is dead. You have no place for a soul in your science?"

"Science has nothing to do with the soul. If we have an idea of such a thing, it comes from feeling, or religion, or both. You cannot demonstrate it as you can dissect out a nerve for inspection."

"That," replied the Priest, "is what some scientists would say of God.—'We cannot see Him. None of our apparatus can produce Him, and none of our instruments can register or record Him.' All of which is quite true and obvious; so obvious that, were the contrary correct, God—and the soul, too—would be very effectually disproved. Now; let me be a man of war for a moment! If a registering

thermometer goes up in the night, what do you say? That the temperature has risen during the night. You note the effect—the expansion of mercury in a tube, the height to which it forced the index. But how do you know the cause? Only by inference. There is not a single fact of knowledge in the whole universe that does not postulate two things—fact and principle. The fact without the principle is worthless: and the principle without facts to which it can be applied, unfruitful."

"Oh! I grant all that," said the Doctor, with a smile.

"Well," the Priest continued, "grant a little more on the same grounds. You note change, and motion, and order, and contingency in the universe—grant God. You see and feel union in diversity, change, organicity, motion, the operations of digestion, sensation, thought, and will in man—grant his soul."

"But, my dear sir, what do you mean by your terms. What are you thinking of when you say God or soul? and if you have a meaning for your words, how do you know that you are right in employing it?"

"Steady," said the Priest, "one at a time. By 'God' I mean a person—that is, an intelligence and will, by whom all is explained: the first cause, from which all others derive their power; the unmoved source of all motion; the great and necessarily existing being, that makes contingent beings possible in reality or in thought; the mind whose archetype

ideas are the pattern to which all order and regularity and harmony are drawn."

"The man knows what he's talking about," thought the Doctor and the Poet. But their thoughts diverged here, the Doctor thinking on: "He is so exceedingly clear and precise." The Poet's continuation was: "for his thoughts are so beautiful and good to listen to." They let the Priest run on.

"And the 'soul.' The soul is the principle of life in man. It is something real. It is that which lives and gives life to the body. It is that by which man is man, and not an inert and dead mass of material. Whether it goes on existing by itself or not after the material body which it actuated ceases to live by it, does not enter into its definition.—That is another question. But to keep to this:—What you call life . . . By the way, do you know what that is? What we know as living activity, and by which we know living beings from not-living ones, is not the effect of the organism alone. The fact that the body is organic is due to life, not life to the organic body. And the soul, as the living principle from which life flows throughout the whole, is independent of the matter which it makes to live."

The Doctor, during this asked-for explanation, was fidgeting with his cigar-case, his watch chain, and his moustache. For he was excited; and now he interrupted the Priest's ready flow of words.

"Really, I don't quite grasp the truth of what you

are saying. I don't see at all why life should not be the resulting effect of the fact that the living matter is an organised body."

"And yet the dead organised body is not alive," came the quick retort. "Is the soul to the body like the harmony to the harp; or is it like the harper to his instrument? No, Doctor. If I ask you what is the difference between a human being and——and this pipe, for example, you would say broadly: 'One lives and the other does not.' If I went on to ask why one lived, you would answer 'organisation'; would you not?"

He paused for the Doctor's grudging "I suppose I should."

The Physician had no great liking for the Socratic form of argument, and feared—just a little, of course—being trapped by the seemingly innocent questions into admitting too much. But the Priest went on, punctuating his sentences with little dabs in the air with his pipe: "And, if I were to push you further back in the argument, what would you say? What is the cause of organisation? Would you say 'soul' at once or take refuge in 'an arrangement of the atoms'? You had better say 'soul'; admit a real principle of life without going any farther. If you don't, I will follow up with another question. What is it that arranges the atoms, since here they are not arranged as they are there? And then, unless you are prepared to throw nature overboard, and to

confess the utter ineptitude of either science or man's mind for ever reaching any conclusions at all, you will find yourself in the position of the boy who stoutly denied any acquaintance with Master Ethelbert Godolphin Smith because he had always known his bosom friend as 'Bert.'"

"Well," said the Doctor, "I won't give in, of course, but I'll think it over. The logic seems conclusive, and the conviction may come when I go through it, link by link, and find no weak ones in the chain."

"Don't you feel," exclaimed the Poet, waking up from a reverie, "that it is true. "I have never had the subject put so clearly before, Father; and the way you state the arguments has such a persuasive force."

"Umph! feel!" grunted the Doctor.

But the Priest began again: "I am sorry if it is only persuasive; for I think feelings must be distrusted, as far as we are able to rid ourselves of them, in questions like this. Still, I am pleased if you like the presentation—bad as it is—of the subject. It has far more than a persuasive power. It is logically convincing, once you manage to get hold of it at the right end."

"And supposing you get the wrong end," argued the Doctor.

"That's your misfortune, or your fault," retorted the Priest. "Like everything else, this question runs up and back to first principles; and first

principles are unprovable. No one can demonstrate the truth of the statement that two and two make four, or that substance underlies accidents, or that an immaterial thought necessitates an immortal soul. The man who cannot grasp a first principle is like the singer who is tone-deaf or the artist who is colour-blind. No one can argue with him. One can only be patient and try to explain. You both learned Algebra, of course? Can't you remember the torture of your youthful mind when you first tried to understand how 'A' was anything rather than a definite quantity? If you wish to think, you must think carefully or not at all. You must abstract from all that gives a bias to your thought. You and the first principle under consideration must be alone in the universe."

The Poet looked puzzled, while the Doctor assented: "There's something in that, too."

The Parson loomed in the distance, escorting his daughter and the Poet's Wife along the deck. Perhaps it should read otherwise. The Poet's Wife was escorting the Parson and his daughter. She, at any rate, was doing the talking; and, judging from her animated expression, it must have been an exceedingly interesting conversation, even if, as it apparently was, a somewhat one-sided one.

The moment the Priest saw the group, he changed the subject to the original question. "And now, Doctor, what, in your opinion, causes death?"

"A breakdown in the machine," replied the Physician.

"And how do people die—hopefully, stupidly, carelessly, remorsefully?"

"In the enormous majority of cases, peacefully and painlessly," said the Doctor.

"That's right," murmured the Priest, "the act of death cannot be painful. As the soul disengages itself from the body which it actuated, the dulled and nerveless senses can no longer stimulate to pain and anguish. Death is a falling asleep and a forgetting. The act of dying over, the newborn soul awakes to the marvel of its newer life."

The trio approached. Though the incisive lady saw her opportunity was gone for the time, "woman's rights" and "cruelty to animals" floated in the gentle breeze that moulded her skirts into folds no Grecian artist would have dreamed of copying, even if, *per impossible*, an English village tailor had set up his sign, "Ladies' Fashionable Tailor," under the shadow of the Acropolis.

"What a beautiful afternoon!" smiled the Doctor, offering his chair to the Parson's Daughter.

She repaid him with a smile in return. "I will not sit down, thank you. We have been sitting ever since lunch, and I want a walk. Papa, get a chair, or let me bring you one. I am going to walk up the deck with the Poet's Wife." (She did not really say "the Poet's Wife." She used a name you all know;

but I'm not going to let you into all my secrets. I might be prosecuted for libel.)

The four men looked after the ladies as they walked away—characteristically, with four different sets of sentiments. The father's eyes were full of undisguised affection for his daughter. The Poet followed the retreating figure of his wife with no less disguised relief. The Doctor seemed regretful. He could have stood the presence of the termagant if—for the Doctor was a wee bit susceptible—the Parson's Daughter had stayed too. The Priest was inscrutable. He was accustomed to look on humanity, more or less, in the light of items for whom it was his duty to do all he could. But he seldom distinguished between the individuals with whom he had to deal. If he gave two thoughts to the two women, he thought of their souls. He was used to speculating on souls.

Some people have the faculty of taking up a subject of conversation just where it was interrupted. He began: "The soul, torn from its earthly tenement, takes up its new life in an ecstasy."

"Of what are you speaking?" began the Parson.

"Of death," came the simultaneous reply of the three.

The Parson shuddered. "I have seen many deaths," he began. "It is a terrible thing. What can one do? How comfort the poor creature who is passing from time to eternity? 'In the midst of life we are in death.'"

"Do you remember," put in the Doctor, "the passage in 'John Ward, Preacher,' where the clergyman, his life-long friend, began to read the prayer for the sick over the dying man? And do you call to mind what his friend said on that solemn occasion? . . . 'the time for speaking thus has passed. It is now, with me, Archibald'; and there was a wistful look in his eyes as he spoke."

"Ah, yes," said the Parson. "I know it well. It is so true to life. We feel how inadequate are our words when we stand in the presence of the dark-winged angel. We are dumb; and the words of comfort that were on our lips falter on the threshold.

"Yet "—the Poet asserted his right to critcise—"that is the one time when they are needed most."

"Alas! you are right," replied the Parson. "And yet I always feel tongue-tied in the presence of death; it is too awful."

"That depends, surely," said the Priest softly, "upon how you look at it. Death, truly, is a serious thing to contemplate; but is it awful? I find that one can say a good deal; and when the Priest withdraws, after having furnished the journeyer with his 'food by the way,' after having, in the name and power of Jesus Christ, given him the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, after having put him at peace with God and with the world, he feels not seldom that he would be in the place of his dying penitent, rather than surrounded with the snares

and pitfalls of a world in which he still has to live. You have your experience, sir; you, Doctor, have yours; and I have mine. I can only speak, it is true, from what I know. But the soul that leaves the body fortified with the Sacraments and united to its Maker, has no fear, no anxiety, no terror. To such a soul, death is not the end, but the beginning of life. And that is why the birthdays of the Holy Martyrs and Confessors and Virgins are celebrated by the Church on the day of their entry into Life Eternal."

"You are supposing a good deal," said the Doctor. "Does the absence of fear prove the reality of a hereafter?"

"Certainly not," came the ready reply. "Do not think that I am trying to make an argument. If the soul cannot be proved immortal, I do not see that the comfort of the hope of immortality has any value. But in the other event, prove the soul a being that will live after death; join that, as a principle, to the experience which I have given you, and you have something more than a mere presumption. I have seen deaths not a few. I have learned of more; and, in the knowledge and certainty of immortality, I thank God that I am a Catholic."

"But don't forget, Father," put in the Poet meekly, "that we also are Catholics."

The Priest laughed. "I make every allowance.

The 'soul of the Church' accounts for all those who are in good faith outside her corporal communion. I am quite ready to admit you all"—the Doctor arched his eyebrows—"into that saving fellowship. In the 'soul of the Church,'" he explained, "are found all those who, not through their own deliberate fault, are outside the formal unity of the mystical body of Christ."

"But you surely make some distinction between the various bodies of Christians that are not Catholics?" protested the Parson. "Even you would allow that the members of the Church of England are far more like yourselves in matters of belief and practice than those of the Wesleyans or Baptists."

"Matters of belief and practice do not matter very much in this question," said the Priest, "unless the practice is founded on belief and the motive of belief is the right one. You put your point so that I can scarce deal with it without giving offence; but you will believe, I am sure, that nothing is further from my mind than the desire to hurt anyone's feelings."

"Certainly,"—"Of course you don't intend to,"—"What's he going to say now?"—came from the Parson, the Poet, and the Doctor, the latter's remark heard by himself alone.

"I believe," continued the Priest, "that a fundamental tenet of all non-Catholics is the personal right of the individual to the exercise of his own

private judgment. Each fact, belief, judgment, comes before him, and he accepts or not, according to the strength of the reasons which he apprehends. Now, you may call that belief, if you like—but it is rather more personal conviction or opinion. Anyway, it is a very different thing from what we mean by belief; for we don't judge at all, we accept. The Church teaches a doctrine. It is our business to assent to it. We may, of course, examine it if we will. We may even be surprised to find that we cannot see its force, or dismayed to perceive that it apparently contradicts our most cherished convictions, or opposes what we imagined to be a certainty. What of that? It is true. The Church, the unerring Church, guarantees it. Therefore we have not understood aright. We have read our own ideas too much into the words of the Church. We have exalted a probability into a certainty. We have given ourselves up to prejudice and opinion. It is we who are wrong. And the Catholic, taking refuge in the utter certainty of revelation through the Church of God, accepts, assents, believes. His own ignorance or wisdom does not trouble him. Simple or learned, he is too wise for that—for he has the wisdom of the Spirit of God, giving him the strength and light to perceive aright and hold firmly to the pillar and ground of the truth."

"But there," exclaimed the Doctor, "you bring in a factor that throws your argument out of gear.

What right have you to reckon with the grace of God?"

"The right of necessity! A right similar to that by which I read 'God' written across the face of nature. I shall not speak of experience here, for it is too individual, too personal, and therefore entirely untrustworthy as an argument. But granting the four basic truths of Christianity, all of which are capable of proof—God, the Soul, Revelation, and Christ—you are forced to the conclusion with an irresistible logic and a necessity of your reasonable nature."

"So," thought the Doctor, "the Catholics are Rationalists, after all."

"We have no other test of Truth," went on the Priest, "no greater touchstone, at any rate, than the necessities of our nature. Given the premisses, the conclusion must strike home with inevitable conclusive force. That is why I wish to know how people die, Doctor; those who have the premisses of life and reality before their eyes, and those who have never given them a thought. I could tell of cases in which reasonable faith and divine hope conquered the natural fear and bodily anguish of the supreme moment. I could speak of the natural sublimated to a kinship with the miraculous. But your paths have led you among other souls than mine. How does the Christian pagan die?—he who goes through life without an answering thought

to the words that fall often upon his ears and are not seldom upon his lips?

"Are there none such in your own Church?" queried the Parson, feeling that the Priest must admit the fact.

He did. "Of course there are—God forgive them! But, even so, the conditions are different. The great, the enormous majority of such are given the grace to make their peace with God. Their early years across which the light of earnest prayer and Holy Sacraments fall; the wondrous memory of the First Communion day; the forgotten, yet unconsciously stored-up records of the Divine Sacrifice, once so tenderly loved; all these things—any one of them—sweeps the silent chords of the poor human heart in harmonies so tender and so sweet that the day of great desire has already dawned, and the human soul once more goes out in love and abasement to its God. . . . There is the other side, another picture—I know it only too well. But, to sum up, the old saying is true: 'The Catholic Church may be'—mind you, I don't say it is—'a bad one to live in; but it is a good one to die in.'"

"Celibacy, fasting, interminable prayers, laws here and laws there interfering with your freedom at every turn;—I know of easier places to live in," grumbled the outspoken Doctor.

"But you forget"—this the Poet—"that all sorts of laws follow from the mere fact of your being a

man. The Church's laws are only an application and extension of those."

"Is Saul among the prophets?" laughed the Priest. I thought a Poet, of all people, was the last to defend law! Never mind! You have hit the point off admirably."

They were silent for a moment. The side subject had been sufficiently worked out, to the satisfaction of all but the Parson, who was meditating a suitable remark. The seagulls floated, apparently idly, through the air, keeping a sharp look-out with their beady eyes for any morsels which a charitable steward might throw overboard. Occasionally they darted downward in a cluster, and shrieked and fought over some stray floating thing. The ladies were approaching the group again.

"I have told you of one death," said the Doctor abruptly, veering back to the Priest's original subject. "It was, as I conceived, noble. The man was useless, and thought he could do no better." (Notice how the Doctor's opinion has modified.) "I will tell you of one other patient,—an old lady of sixty-seven. Disease—but that is of no particular interest to you. She was ill a long time, suffering, but cheerful always; and when her daughter told her it was hopeless, she only smiled. 'What did she want?' 'Nothing . . . perhaps, if it were not too much, a few fresh primroses.' 'Would she care to see the clergyman?' 'No, no; not unless he called

. . . as usual.' 'A chapter, then—the Bible?' 'Not just now.' And so the few pale golden flowers were brought, and placed in a glass beside her bed, where she could see them in the fading light. And as she looked, her drawn and tired face caught a glow from the faint-perfumed flowers. And ever, as she drew nearer to the end, she kept murmuring softly to herself: 'Flowers, God's own flowers. . . . From the green meadows . . . that I knew. . . . The lilies of the field. . . . They tell of Him.' They placed a single flower in her hand: a flower jewelled with her daughter's tears. And so they buried her; and wreathed primroses and violets and sweet common flowers over the low earthy mound that covered a tired heart, taking its eternal rest far from the noisy hurtling of the world. Yet she was no Catholic. Father, how would you explain her hope?"

"Thus," replied the Priest, touched, as they all were, by the Doctor's simple words. "No accusing ministers of the past rose to disturb her peace and hope. She had lived, let us suppose, blameless. She had done her best, and followed gladly, and in good faith, the light she had. To every one of His creatures God gives sufficient for their needs. And if she followed Him, priest or no priest, Bible or no Bible, she was in the great uncovenanted host over whom God's boundless mercy flows. We of the Church Catholic know that God has covenanted with us; and that in that covenant He will never fail. But

we do not limit His mercy to any shape or form; and though, in strict justice, we have no right to extend it beyond bounds, we remember that His Justice is His Mercy. They have met together and kissed. And therefore, though the Catholic Church is the most exclusive religious body in the world, requiring the absolute acceptance of every jot and tittle of her teaching as a condition for membership, that very teaching gives her children grounds for hope that the free and uncovenanted mercies of a loving Father are limitless and illimitable."

"So," murmured the Doctor, "Catholics are not only Rationalists, but Protestants as well."

The Priest heard him. "My dear Doctor, have you only now found that out? The Church has everything that is true, all that is good. Is truth found in Rationalism? Look for it in the Church. Is there good in Protestantism? Seek its source—the Church. And if you find, you discover more than a single good here and a single truth there. You find all the good and all the truth obtainable presented concordantly and harmoniously in one complete system, which is at the same time a religion, a theology, and a living spiritual force within the world." And there the conversation ended.

What the Priest had been leading up to never transpired. He had been led off the track, as everyone is always side-shunted, by questions

parallel to the one in his mind. Try for yourself. You will find out how impossible it is, as a general thing, to keep to any one fixed point. The ladies had come; and the Doctor, after a few moments' general conversation, threw his half-finished cigar overboard, and found himself pacing the deck with Euphon. The Poet disappeared under the sheltering protection of his wife; the Parson and the Priest fraternised over a first edition of the *Compleat Angler*, which the former produced from the pocket of his overcoat. And it is thus that souls come into contact and then drift apart—the common ground, an intellectual something that sets them synchronising, like the transmitter and receiver of a telegraph. Each a being utterly alone and isolated, yet made one with others by its thought; which is, if you take the trouble to think it out for yourself, a clear proof of a thinking God.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLERGY OF BOTH

"WHAT a curious difference there is," began the Doctor, as he meditatively lit his first after-dinner cigar and shook himself down comfortably into the corner, "between our friends the Parson and the Priest. They have both had much the same kind of training, and both, I suppose, have for years been engaged in the same work; and yet there is very little in common between them."

"Yes," said the Poet, "but it is a difference one always observes between the Roman Catholic clergy and those of our own Church. The former always seem to me to be a little inhuman. Perhaps it comes from their way of looking at things from a cut and dried logical standpoint. They always seem to be weighing the pros and cons of things, balancing probabilities, if they are moralists, and smelling out flaws in syllogisms, if they happen to be disposed to dogma. Some will reel out an endless string of authorities in support of their assertions; others are not satisfied until they have twisted their thoughts

out of human shape to speak in the chaff-chopping of logic."

"Well, that's not so bad a fault, after all." Perhaps the Doctor knew a little more of Catholics than he allowed to appear upon the surface of his conversation. At any rate, he spoke with a certain amount of conviction now.

"I'm thinking it's rather to the credit than to the debit side of character to be, or to try to be, accurate. I would rather be a logic-chopper myself than resemble many a parson I know, who can never give any good reason for what he thinks or says or preaches. If a man hits me fair and square between the eyes with a fact, I believe him. Or if he can prove that he is right, I'm ready to follow his lead. But if he's a sentimental sort of chap, who tries to force his opinions, or what he calls his opinions, down my throat, I want a reason. And the reasons he gives aren't good enough. One of that kind tried his hand on me the other day. Said I must believe in all sorts of things—hell-fire and damnation among others. I asked him why; and the only answer he could give was that we felt that it was all true. I told him I thought he was an honest man. He looked pleased. But I went on to say that I didn't feel his toothache when he had one; and, if I was to settle up my account by feelings, that I preferred my own to his. I told him my feelings were a long way better than any

he'd ever had—for me; and that if we were going to arrange things that way, he'd better leave me alone to get my own, and not come trying to palm off ready-made feelings that I didn't feel on such an old customer."

"But surely, Doctor, you don't throw feeling over as a guide to truth and action?"

"No; I never said I did; but I don't propose to be led by other people's. My own are good enough for me; and if any parson wants to pluck this brand from the burning, he'll have to do it by hard facts and good arguments. Now, that's just where the beauty of the Catholics comes in. They give you facts and reasons—pretty good reasons, too, most of them. The ordinary psalm-singer tells you to believe and you'll be saved. Believe what? He doesn't know; or, if he does, the next one you meet tells you something else. Why, even our good friend the Parson gets up a tree, like a 'possum whenever an argument drops on the table. But the Priest meets it, or does his best to. Anyway, he gives you the credit of being in earnest, and walks into your theories as if he meant business."

"But all priests are trained for that. Don't you know that they are made to study for years, so that they can trip up Protestants in argument?"

"I wouldn't say that to our Priest, if I were you," grinned the Doctor. "He's a bigger man than you are; and I expect they put him through a course of

boxing, too, so that he could knock Protestants out of the ring if they proved too strong for him in a wordy battle!"

You are wondering where the two people whose characters are being so lightly discussed have got to. Obviously, they are not in "the corner." If you really want to know, make a voyage of discovery. You will find the Priest in his stateroom, diligently reading aloud—at least his lips are moving—out of his greasy little book. He is not very interesting just now—but, if you look over his shoulder for an instant and glance at the page he is conning, you may see something that will astonish you. He is just saying the hymn for lauds. The first words that catch your eye—well, read them for yourself:—

> "Jesu, the balm of wounded souls,
> The only hope of contrite hearts,
> By Mary of Magdala's tears
> Wash out the stains that sin imparts."

In other words, he is praying: joining his voice and soul to the great perpetual prayer of the Church, the official divine service of the liturgy, said in every land and by every priest the wide world over. Though he cannot join in body with those privileged ones who lift the burden of the Church's perpetual praise before the altars of God, yet he joins in spirit, and is at one with the Living Church throughout the world in its timeless uplifting of hands in prayer to the Author and Giver of all good things. Leave

him undisturbed. He will be finished in a few minutes, and you will find him shortly in the smoking-room. And now make your way to the saloon. The Parson and the Poet's Wife: she, garrulous; he agreeing to every word, every statement, every sentiment. At any rate, that is what you gather from the conversation. He, too, will leave, as soon as he can get away, and will find himself on the road to the more congenial atmosphere of the smoking-room. But you are back before either arrives, and in time to catch the last words of the Doctor.

". . . And if you fancy there is no feeling in the priests, you make a big mistake. I know them. I've seen them. Down in the slums of big cities, reeking of disease and devilry. They know every inch of streets that a policeman daren't go down alone at night. I've got one in my mind this minute. A dirty, filthy place. Once it was a street of noblemen's houses. Now it is let out, room by room; and the happy proprietor of a single room sub-lets three of the corners. And I remember the priests. At any hour of the day, at any hour of the night, in fair weather and foul, half-worked to death. they came at the first stroke of the sick-call bell. And with all their mummery—I don't need to tell you I'm not a papist—the people trusted them, loved them, worshipped them. I've seen a Catholic priest go into a house from which no Catholic for years

had ever gone to church—a house from which a dozen smallpox patients had been taken away, dead or dying, as cheerfully as if he were going into his own room. What does he care? One idea possesses his mind—the glory of his work. And the people bless him for it and love him for it. What does he do? A few prayers, a whispered word with the sick, the dying, and the Sacrament—and the house might be heaven. The patient is caught up into an ecstasy. The parsons visit the sick—give them their due—but they can never do that. Upon my word, if I wanted to cure a patient, I'd send for the priest. I know its all humbug—but it works."

"But you wouldn't encourage superstitious trickery like that. I don't mean that all Catholics are superstitious, of course, but the poor and ignorant . . ."

"Are considerably better Christians than the rich and learned. If you knew those people as well as I do, you, . . . Hello! We've been wondering where you were all this time, Father. Take your seat and light up! Where's the Parson?"

"I saw him in the saloon as I passed," said the Priest, sitting down by the Doctor and drawing his refractory pipe from the tail pocket of his coat. With it came a rosary, and fell to the floor with a clatter. The Priest was in no way disconcerted, but picking it up, handed it, across the Doctor, to the Poet. "That's a rather beautiful pair of beads," he said. "I picked it up in a little shop the first time

I was in Rome; and it has been blessed by three Popes."

The Doctor's lips formed silently the single word "superstition," as he looked quizzically at the Poet; but the latter, taking the rosary from the Priest with one hand, fumbled with the other in the bottom of his waistcoat pocket, and produced—a pair of beads! "You see," he said, "that I am a Catholic too. The devotion of the rosary has always fascinated me. I quite approve of it as a form of prayer."

"Oh! oh!" came from the Priest. (If I had written twenty years ago, I should have said "Fie! fie!") "Picking and choosing! Picking and choosing! What would your clergyman say?"

"Well, really, Father, I don't know." You notice that the Poet, when the Priest is present, is of a very Catholic frame of mind. A moment ago he was employing ugly words; and yet, to his credit be it said, he was sincere.

The Doctor arched his eyebrows and lit a fresh cigar.

"Since the bishops have taken, in defiance of the 'Ornaments Rubric,' to discountenancing the 'Catholic uses' in our parish, our priests have become very tame. But the Bishops, fortunately, cannot touch us; and, if I choose to say the rosary, I have perfect liberty to do so. And that is the view taken by Father ——, our vicar."

"Quite so," replied the Priest, dryly, "undoubtedly you and the vicar know better than the Bishop."

"But the Bishop is quite wrong, you know. We are not obliged to follow his rulings in our private devotions."

"Quite so." The Priest was smiling while he answered for the second time in the same words; but the smile was lost on the Poet.

"Where did you study, Father," said the Doctor, irrelevantly. The Parson's figure loomed in the doorway of the smoking-room—and he decided, "now or never," to bring up the question of the evening.

"After I left the little seminary, I was sent to Propaganda," said the Priest, "and I was ordained in Rome after seven years' study there. I made all my philosophy and theology in Rome. Aye! but those were happy times!"

A chorus of salutations greeted the Parson as he took his seat with the rest. They were greetings mingled with no little interest, for he had picked up the young man of the other evening's poker, and introduced him to the company. "I have brought a Philosopher to share our corner—a Philosopher of the School of Epicurus." Followed introductions all round.

After they had settled down, said the Doctor: "You were saying . . . ?"

"That those were happy days," replied the Priest; "three years of philosophy—logic, mathematics, astronomy, metaphysics, ethics—three too short years; and four of theology. Then Franzelin, the

great Cardinal, told us we were fit to be trusted with a book! Um! He knew what he was about when he said that! How I wonder if all those who spent their seven years on the hard benches of the class-room knew how to use their books aright!"

The Parson mused. He had taken his degree at Oxford, and had passed the Bishop's Chaplain's examination in the usual way. But he was hardly prepared for the Priest's implied stricture. "Seven years is a long time," he said.

"Yes," replied the Priest, "a long time, but all too short. In seven years you get somewhere near the beginning. You follow up the end all your life. It was when he died, you remember, that the Latin Tutor took his last degree. Even three-score years and ten is short to learn the A B C of truth. When you come to consider, leaving the teaching of revelation aside, what do we know? Little, very little, I fancy."

"And you studied, sir?" This, with a sidelong glance at the Parson, from the Doctor.

"I? I studied at Oxford," came the reply. "A grand old school—and a school that has produced great men. I took my degree . . . but it's so long ago that it makes me feel an old man when I mention it. . . . Our new friend, the Philosopher, can tell you more of it now than I, for he has just come down."

The Doctor was not at all anxious to hear the Philosopher's views; and, as the young man was

reticent, he promptly set the ball of conversation rolling in another direction. "The hall-mark of learning is unmistakable. Each university has its own die for the men it turns out. Every school, even, brands its youngsters, as they brand cattle on the ranches out West; and though they tend to fade in time, and new brands are for ever being burnt on above the old, deep down in the consciousness are the raw sears that can never be totally effaced. I suppose every faith and every church brands its members in the same way. As a matter of fact, the mere influence of an individual often goes far to grave its mark on a plastic character."

"Undoubtedly"—the listeners nodded assent. Their minds were all working inductively to the Doctor's; and, though each was filling out the statements with his own experience and conjuring up who knows what a variety of pictures—personal, real parts of themselves—and therefore dreaming; his experience was so far that of all, that there was no room for denial. "I knew a class of children," he went on, "who quite unconsciously imitated the writing, not of their form master, but of the head. That, of course, is common. But what a long psychological process must have lain behind it: a process unconsciously going on, one might say unreasonably, almost."

"But, Doctor," said the Priest, "there are dozens of other examples, not so striking, but no less true.

Every person with whom we ever come in contact produces an effect on us. Like the tiny lines that the minutes and seconds we have forgotten have drawn about our eyes, until we find ourselves suddenly scored with the heavy graving tool of old age. We do not remember the people or the circumstances, we never noticed the effect at the time; but, none the less, our characters—our souls—were being scored and marked by a thousand tiny points; and when we come to look at them—they are furrows and ridges that nothing can smooth out."

"Yes," began the Parson, "that is very true—very true. But you are leaving out the personal factor. Do we not shape our own characters? Surely it is not all left to chance and environment?"

"Of course it is not," came the ready reply; "There is no such thing as 'chance.' If you could only keep tally of all the causes that come into play, you could predict with the most perfect certainty any event that is the work of nature. If you knew the great first cause as well, you could predict miracle too. It is ignorance that seizes upon the partial reasons and, arranging them alphabetically, spells out CHANCE. Knowledge is content to admit its limitations. Therefore knowledge is a theist. The true thinker is humble—and," he added in an undertone, "a Christian."

"I thank you for that thought," said the Parson cordially.

"Why doesn't the man go on," thought the Doctor, "and end his aphorism with 'the logical Christian is the Catholic'?" Aloud he said: "It's a good deal to admit it all at once. It sounds disjointed; but I daresay there's something behind it."

"It is the point of view of a good many," replied the Priest. "Naturally, all Catholics think so."

"Yet," broke in the Poet, "the majority of Roman Catholics are uneducated. Therefore their views are not of any great value. They echo the opinions of their teachers on everything."

"I wish they did"—the Priest was laughing. "But I'm afraid they don't. However, there's one thing certain, and that is, in essentials they are all agreed absolutely."

"A great many of your Priests are uneducated themselves," said the Doctor, as he reached over to the nearest table for the matches. The conversation was coming round to his point; so he gave it a gentle push forward.

"I don't know that they are much the worse for that—but it depends very much upon what you mean by the word education. They may not know much science. I'm pretty sure many of them cannot read Hebrew or Arabic, and certain that not one in a hundred could pass a good examination in the Calculus. But they do know their own work. There's no doubt of that. A priest's business is not to shine in society, not to have literature

oozing out at his finger tips. It does not much matter whether his sermons are good English or no, so long as he says what is orthodox. Question him in his own subjects—for he is a specialist—in the authoritative teaching of the Church, or on the most difficult cases in moral theology. You will get an answer. You see the priest is different from the Protestant clergyman." (It had come at last. The Doctor glanced at the Poet, drew a long whiff from his cigar, and leaned back comfortably.) "He has his definite work to do; to instruct his people and administer the Sacraments. Whereas the clergyman has simply to keep his people pleased with what he says. He can't be very definite, for he has nothing definite to go to. If he tries to be, half his congregation go to the church round the corner."

The Parson was shocked: also somewhat annoyed. "But, my dear sir," he said, "we, the priests of the Church of England, have something very definite to go to, as you choose to express it. We have our three creeds," ("Had," corrected the Priest in an undertone. "The Athanasian's already gone by the board,") "our articles and homilies. We have our Sacraments, our orders, and apostolical succession." The Doctor was enjoying himself thoroughly by now. He had the Parson and the Priest pitted together with a promising bone of contention between them.

"Anglican orders!" said the Priest. He was naturally a kind man and polite, but the expression

slipped from his lips in a tone very like a sneer. "I thought that superstition was dead and buried. How many people are even interested in the subject. The greatest prominence it ever got was when Rome condescended to examine and condemn it. We have lost all interest in the question. The majority of Englishmen don't quite rightly know what it means. Nine-tenths of your own people don't believe in it; and the few who do—well—I am afraid I'm stating the case brusquely—they are centuries behind their time, to say the least of it."

"You take it for granted that, because Rome has acted so far beyond her power as to condemn our orders, that they are therefore not valid. But that is no argument. What right had Rome to act in the matter?"

"The right, surely, of being the Catholic Church. I must ask your pardon for my vehemence a moment ago. But, even if you had Catholic and valid orders, what good would it do? There are many schismatic sects that do possess the Sacrament of Order; but they are no more Catholic than are the Mahometans. It is not particularly to our interest to deny your claim. We do not deny that of the Greeks, or Armenians, or Copts, who are out of communion with the centre of unity. And there is no reason, as far as I can see, for taking up a different position with regard to the Anglican body. We take it up, merely because we must. There is no way out of it."

"Do you think," said the Doctor, to whom "Anglican orders" was proving a rather dry and stupid subject, as it does to most people, "that it is because of your valid ordination that Catholic priests differ from the ministers of other denominations?"

"Partly so, I think," answered the Priest. "Partly so; but not altogether. The training, moral and intellectual, counts for a great deal. From boyhood to manhood is an important time in life, and the seminary has the man to shape and mould then. With a doctrine of grace such as ours, of course, more must be said than this. But, after all, the Sacrament does not give grace that must of its nature be permanent and govern every action or thought of the priest. It does give grace, undoubtedly, but it can be lost; and it gives a permanent right to those aids and graces which a priest needs in his clerical life, just as the character of Baptism gives a right to those graces necessary for his state of life to every Christian."

"So you would make the seminary training account for much?"

"Certainly, Doctor. You know well enough, I should think, what the training of a child means. All the time he is in the hands of his directors his character and mind are being formed to the one end. He is being prepared for the priesthood."

"Then you do force your students into orders."

—This from the Poet, who had said nothing for a long time.

"Not at all. A great many fail to go on. They are weeded out, year by year. One has no vocation. Another wishes to leave for reasons of his own. It is far too serious a step to undertake lightly—ordaining a priest—too serious for the candidate and his directors alike. The Levites learn to know what they have to face, and learn to face it."

"Yet," interrupted the Parson, "a great number of your clergy, even after all the serious preparation of which you speak, leave the ranks of the ministry; sometimes even leave the Church. How do you account for that?"

"First, sir, 'a great number' is a very loose way of speaking. A very small number of priests go wrong, comparatively speaking. It is astonishing, if you take the trouble to trace the 'great number' of lapsed priests to earth, into what a pitiful little band of unfortunates it shrinks. Protestant imagination, no less than the Catholic horror of a consecrated priest a renegade, magnifies the poor man and the enormity of his offence a thousandfold. On the other hand, it is not to be wondered at that some are to be found. There was a traitor among the Apostles. The miraculous appears in the enormous majority who fight against tremendous odds to the end."

Just then the steward came up. "Lady, sir. Your wife. Asking for you. In the saloon."

The Poet rose regretfully. He had been taking it all in, and wanted to hear a little more.

The Parson glanced at his watch. "I must be going too, I think. There may be something in what you say. But there is much for 'Anglican orders,' none the less." The wound smarted still; and the Priest almost regretted that he had spoken with the vehemence his conviction had prompted.

"Good-night, sir," he called out as the Parson was leaving the smoking-room. "I shall apologise and talk the question over with you, without listeners, in the morning."

The Parson smiled his forgiveness and good-night, and the Priest turned to the Doctor. "I must go, too, in a few minutes. Tell me, did I speak rudely to the old gentleman? I should never forgive myself—but one's feelings do so run away with one. I am so absolutely certain that there is no ghost of a case for them."

"Of course you were not indecently rude; but you did give it to him pretty strong," puffed the Doctor, as he lit a fresh cigar. "The thing's as dead as a door nail. You were quite right when you said no one ever bothered their heads about it. 'Anglican orders.' Fudge! Nowadays people are wondering whether there is a God—not what are the proper colours of the Sarum rite. It is nothing —or the Catholic Church—I haven't made up my mind which; but, provisionally, it's nothing. In the

thundering roar of questions like that one, surging hungrily around the solid rocks of reason and religion, the petty little squabbles between the sects are like the——like the squeaks of mice. One of the best reasons why I admire your Church is because she takes things calmly. She always says the same thing, with monotonous reiteration. She does not care what other people shriek out. By Jove! She has seen 'em all come and go. Systems of philosophy, theories of science, new religions. And she goes on, saying always the same thing, in the same tone of voice, while they all shift and change like a kaleidoscope picture."

"One would almost fancy you were a Catholic," said the Priest, pleased at this outburst and frank tribute of praise from the Doctor. He was filling his pipe as he spoke, and as he lit it, he went on: "I think I had better leave you to think a bit on the same tack. You can trust that wind. I am going for a turn or two before I go to bed. Only remember what the founder of the Church Catholic said. It fits in with your present frame of thought. 'The gates of hell shall never prevail.' Good-night to you, Doctor."

The man of science, doctor of medicine, and master in surgery, mused on by himself. "There is something in it, after all. What if those old fellows should prove to be right? He's pretty confident . . . and he's a rattling good fellow, that Priest. He will

be telling me to pray next. Well, I don't know that I'd mind if he did. 'Never prevail . . .' Well, it looks as if they hadn't yet. . . . Steward! Hey, Steward! Bring me a whisky and soda."

But the Priest was on deck; thinking and looking at the stars. Perhaps he was praying. I don't know.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOSED DOOR

THE Priest and the Poet are sitting beneath the awning, watching the oily swells as they come to meet the vessel's side. It began early in this voyage of our modern ark—filled with the species of human souls, each biassed after its kind and in fashion as its training and circumstance had first bent the bursting bud of reason—this intimacy between the Poet and the Priest. Perhaps the ghost of some far-off and half-forgotten desire took flesh and shape in the heart of the verse-maker; the memory of some dim religious fane, peopled by silent kneeling forms, and, in the heart's sight, filled with thousands upon thousands of adoring spirits; the faint refrain of some soft murmured litany floating, heavy with incense odours, up and through the vaults of stone; the agony of dumb expectation, while beyond the perfumed veil the tapers glowed like far-off mystic stars; the sudden rush of awe and joy stabbing the soul like the keen edge of pain; the silvery tinkle of a little bell, when paled the flaming barriers

of the world, and seen and unseen worshippers bowed low before the host—was it this? Or had some other voice spoken through the chorus of his verses to his soul? At any rate, he had seen enough of his companion to reverence his character: and reverence is only something more than love. To quote his own verses, he conceived that he had found a friend—and to a friend one can unloose those pent-up stores of emotion which day by day we human beings stifle in our breasts—

> "I call thee friend, for friendship hath that power
> To name eternal comrades whose lives run
> But for one instant woven into one.
> Eternity is cramped into an hour."

"O! Father, if I only could believe. It is all so beautiful and so wonderful."

"And all so true, my friend. Its beauty seizes on every feeling of the human breast and plays upon them all as a harper on the strings of his harp. And in these harmonies there are no jarring notes as there are in the chords when the world's rough finger plucks the strings. But it is not only beautiful—this faith of ours—it is good and noble. What motive draws the will so much as faith? And yet the will can only act towards good, or towards what it thinks is good. Where can you find a procession like that of the Saints of the Church Catholic, stretching on from the beginning to the end of time—the empurpled martyrs and the

spotless-robed confessors, the virgins and the holy women, the Stephens and the Louises, the Agathas and the Gertrudes—all motived by this one overwhelming desire of the true good for which the heart was made? And yet, what value is all this if it is not true. If it be a false beauty, like the miraged palms and fountains, deceiving and tricking our longing eyes; or if it be an unreal good, like those good things we cheat our souls with—earthly happiness, and health, and riches, and pleasures—we are undone, and our faith is vain. No! It must be true as well; and it is true. What sun but truth could dispel the cloud of doubt for Thomas? What but its certainty could turn a Saul into a Paul? What lie could escape the mind of an Aquinas? Look at the hosts of scientists and philosophers, the children of the faith, and tell me that it is not true. What but the common universal truth could appeal with such irresistible force to minds so far asunder as those of Newman and Manning, Aubrey Beardsley and Lord Brampton? Beautiful, good, true—the whole being of man is satisfied."

"I wish I could see it, Father: and yet, many years ago, I did very nearly join your Church. At least I went so far as to call upon a priest and tell him of my difficulties."

"Yes?"

"Yes. And he would not receive me then. He told me to give up reading books on controversy,

to study quietly what the Church taught, and to pray—no more. I suppose I really did not believe. The attitude, the atmosphere, was wrong. I asked to be made a Catholic because I liked Catholic things. I thought I had faith because I persuaded myself that I was certain of some truths . . . fancied I had proved them."

"And so you were going to give your patronage to the Guardian of Revelation? If those were the reasons that led you to the portals of the Church of God, my brother priest was quite right in not opening them when you knocked. But patience! Did you act on his advice?"

"No: I fear I can't say that I did. I rather drifted on to what I am now. And, after all, it is a very satisfactory position."

He had almost forgotten that he was talking to a soldier of the opposite camp, and that indefinable something came over him and choked his confidence. The Priest felt the influence, too. He saw that the psychological moment was gone.

"We have much in common, Father, and I am very comfortable where I am."

"Well, that's a good thing,"—the Priest exchanged his grave tone for a bantering one, and a smile curved at the corners of his heavy mouth—"if you are satisfied. But go on! Act up to what you are; and, who knows, perhaps you will have better luck next time you call upon a priest."

Had they realised then and there, these two—did any of us realise—how fast the shuttles were flying in the grim sister's hands, how busy were the shears about the strands of life, those icy barriers would never arise dividing soul from soul. But it is well we do not know the things that are to be. The cold hands of to-morrow would crush the joy of to-day, just as to-day's happiness may have soothed the bitterness of yesterday's sorrow. What would be left in life did its future path lie ever open to our eyes?

"Good afternoon, Doctor, have a chair? Where have you been, and what have you been doing with yourself all this time?"

"Me? I've been talking"—and he dropped into the deck chair beside the Priest—"to the Parson and his daughter. We have been having an after-lunch constitutional. By the way, can either of you do anything?"

"What do you mean—do anything?"

"Well"—with a laugh—"we've been talking over a concert. They always have one on board ship; it's part of the regulation crossing: and it's just as well to discover all the talent available."

"Our friend will read you a poem," said the Priest with a smile, while the Doctor carefully nicked the side of the tip of a fresh cigar and placed it between his lips. "Of course he will, something stirring—composed for the occasion."

The Poet warmed to the idea and then, as quickly, a cloud seemed to pass over the sunshine of his mental vista. "My wife," he suggested, "has several very good lectures—at least they were considered very good when she delivered them. Perhaps a part of one of them . . ."

"We can't run to a lecture, I'm afraid," broke in the Doctor. "By the way, what were you two talking about when I was coming up that made you look so serious. Did you eat any of that vile pressed beef for lunch? It's enough to ruin your machinery for a month and make you as glum as a psalm-singing devil-dodger."

"Oh! nothing, Doctor; we were discussing another theological point, that's all," answered the Priest quickly, trying to steer clear of the topic.

"Now, that's an extraordinary thing," said the Doctor. He opened his matchbox, struck a match, and held it to the end of his cigar, blowing the flame out with a puff of smoke when the weed was "going" to his satisfaction. He held the glowing splinter in his fingers, watching the grey ash come as the glow ran back to the charred wood. Not till the burnt match lay dead and cold in his palm did he flick it off and over the side with his finger. He was thinking.

"That's an extraordinary thing. Why is it we are always discussing theological problems? Whether we believe them or not; whether we toss our broken,

childish faith aside with our childhood's toys—those stiff tin soldiers, and gaudy tops, and flaxen-wigged dolls, that we once thought so beautiful and wonderful; or whether we wrap them in silks and lay them away in some drawer with lavender flowers, to be reverently opened once a week and talked to, and sung to, and wept over—it makes little difference—we always come back to them. They are the fixed points about which our thoughts always gravitate. We cannot think, without bringing in God or a fetish. We cannot will unless we run up against the soul. We cannot even speak without supposing a whole system of antiquated metaphysics. Now, with the old people in Maine, 'I want to know'—I may speak perfectly frankly, may I not? Yes? Thank you. I want to know why the Churches seem to have a monopoly of religion; why they leave us—the thinking 'men in the street'—out in the cold; why they constitute themselves the close-societies that have the right of refusing or admitting to Heaven. Surely, as Dr Holmes says, we laymen know as much, if not more, than the average machine-made, three-years-college-bred minister, who takes in a little while he sits on the benches of his class-room and dispenses religion for the rest of his life to men and women who, if they are churchgoers, probably hear as many as a thousand theological lectures, in the shape of sermons, before they find out that there is nothing in religion at all."

"My dear Doctor," began the Priest calmly, taking out of his pocket as he spoke his ubiquitous fat little book, bound in black leather, and somewhat greasy, "it is quite possible that the layman knows more than his minister, or his parson, or his priest, as the case may be. In our Church, at any rate, the fact that he often does is more than amply recognised. At Catholic altars illiterate men and women are venerated as saints—saints who knew and understood far more of truth, perhaps, than those who fed them with the bread of life; tender children and aged men, peasants and servants, illuminated beyond measure by the eternal light—the true illuminati of the world. Do we at least not recognise the truth for which you contend, whose fundamental principle is this, that the Christian Church cannot be led into error, that what the Church, the *ecclesia discens*, believes is the truth of God? For what fruit can a Catholic preacher look if he relies upon himself? Is it not the proverbial old apple-woman kneeling far off, near the door, whose faith and prayer makes the sermon? But, with us—for I hold no brief for the sects — the clergy are the dispensers of the mysteries, the appointed channels and conduits and instruments—no more. They are the pipes through which the water flows to a thirsty land, and they may themselves, while giving birth to countless flowers by their ministry, remain arid and parched. No sir. The Church has no monopoly of religion.

Every living soul can have its own monopoly of that, if it will; and if the portals of the house of God are closed to it, it is because that soul has closed them. Only the standard-bearers and the trumpeters and the commissariat are necessary: but the foot-soldiers of God recognise the blazon and know the trumpet call. They have but to speak the countersign, and the doors of the inmost citadel are open, and all that belongs to the great General-in-Chief is theirs."

"But, Father, what of the closed door?" said the Poet, regaining a little of his enthusiasm in the glowing fires of the Priest's words.

Have you ever seen a leaden sky suddenly glow with the reflection of the setting sun, when a great slantwise bar of gold, like a sword-thrust, cuts across the horizon and dyes the parted clouds in purple and copper and gold? When the Priest's mind was touched with the nobleness of his theme, as it was now, his heavy, placid face caught the ray of his thought and reflected the light that shone within his soul.

"The closed door, my friend? And why is it closed? Who closed it? It is a door that the pilgrim, seeking to pass, has closed long since and bolted and barred himself. Has he lost the key? Or have the thick cobwebs covered the lock, and the rust of disuse bound the smooth hinges fast. Is it a door that opens to the curious who

would see the living-rooms of the house and remain outside? Surely, it were better for such that he had never seen. Or is it for one to enter, an enemy of the Master of the house, and, being discovered, to be thrust outside again? No. The door is closed, and wisely. Knock, and it shall be opened! That is all."

"Not all, Father," said the Physician. "When faith is destroyed and rooted out of the soul, when we have broken our childish toys and thrown them away for ever, there is something more than a door to pass. There are solid walls, built at the confines of reason; and beyond them—nothing; nothing to hope for, nothing to pray for; a vast emptiness which the mind cannot traverse. I know that you believe—that millions have this faith in the unseen world of spirits and the intercommunion between it and the present. But for me there is no door, open or closed. Science knows no opening through those solid barriers that knowledge has erected. She cannot see beyond them. She can imagine no beyond."

The Priest had been fumbling through his little book ever since he had taken it from his pocket. "It must be in the *pars verna*," he muttered, as he put it away again; then aloud: "Now, look here, Doctor, what is the good of flinging science in the teeth of an ignorant old Priest? What has he to do with science, and what science knows or doesn't know? But I can tell you this, sir; that there are many

things which never enter into the mind of science at all; and yet without which not one single truth of science would be worth a halfpenny. Where would science be without the doctrine of causes? And where is science going for that? To a philosophy. What truth of science is secure without the principle of contradiction? And where is that to be found? As a principle of philosophy. Does science undertake to explain casuality? No, for it is the business not of science but of philosophy to investigate first principles. And what does philosophy say in answer to these questions? It says there is a barrier; yes, the barrier of our own limitations. But it tells us, at the same time, that there is much beyond. There are more things in heaven and earth than our reason grasps. Philosophy points to the vast beyond—not a vastness of nothingness, but a vastness of blinding light, so brilliant, so intense, that thought is lost in the infinite vista of an eternal reality. The old Roman poet touched a chord that finds a responsive echo in human nature when he penned his *flammantia mœnia mundi*—the flaming barriers of the nether world—from beyond which the messengers of religion come. . . ."

"You ask too much," broke in the Doctor. "You speak of a vast reality behind the world of sense; a reality that communicates with us. I know of no such communication. No heavenly message has reached me. You speak as the Priest, not as bring-

ing proofs in your hands. Besides, your Church, beyond all others, is the Church of the senses. By bell, book, and candle you thrust souls outside the pale and close the door upon them for ever."

The Priest was gazing dreamily upon the expanse of water, watching the floating gulls as circling round they followed the course of the vessel. But he had been following the Doctor's words closely, notwithstanding the far-off look in his eyes. "I cannot understand," he said softly, "how the doctrines and practices of the Church are so much misunderstood. Everyone considers himself competent to speak of them. Few—of those who say the most — understand at all. But, sir," — he brightened to the exposition—"you admit a reality beyond and behind the world of sense; and, by your admission, you must go further and admit a personal reality. The cause of the world must be a thinking cause, an intellect, a mind. It must be a cause that wills, else it would never act. If this mind-cause that wills and knows wishes to communicate with me or with you, what is there to prevent it? If I, a mere effect of that cause, can now by talking with you reveal to you my thoughts and feelings, is it that my Maker cannot do the same, and more? The possibility of revelation is established, certain. And the fact—to leave out all but the central sun of the whole—was consummate upon Calvary and in a rock-hewn tomb. The Church that

claims so much, the Church that treasured up the words that fell from the lips of the Nazarean, the Church that perpetuates His mission, was there. She saw and knew. Through nigh upon two thousand years she has borne constant witness. As Peter to the men of Judea, so now the deathless Church to the modern world—'This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses.' Two thousand years ago the weeping Church stood at the sepulchre. Triumphant she saw, and heard, and felt the Conqueror of Death. She left the empty grave to go forth with her message to the end of time. On the evidence of sense and reason she proclaims the fact of the Resurrection, and her jubilant pæan will not cease to resound until its ALLELUIA melts in the perfect harmony of the Celestial Hosts."

The Doctor was subdued before the Priest's faith, a faith that claimed so strongly to be based on reason. Still he argued: "And do you hold the witness of the Church, an interested witness, to be sufficient proof of so momentous a fact?"

"Certainly," replied the Priest, "without doubt. There is no fact of history that can furnish a parallel—no fact so well substantiated. The conversion of the world; the perennial existence of the witnesses; the wealth of tradition. Consider the strongest evidence for other facts. A mere handful of writers, whose statements can often be traced to a converging source; the difficulties of

criticism, the conflicting of detail. Here you have an ever-growing march of oral living tradition for which each witness is ready to answer with his life's blood. . . . But to return to the closed door —the excommunication of 'bell, book, and candle.' What does it mean?" He paused for the Doctor to reply.

"Why, a formal handing over of a soul to eternal damnation. You profess by excommunication to cut the soul off from the unity of the Church, from communion with your Christ and God."

"Oh! That's what we mean, is it? Well, my friend, you have a very mistaken notion of what you are defining. An excommunication is an official declaration. It is a legal penalty, depriving the excommunicate from certain rights and privileges of Church membership. I place the case in its strongest light. But suppose all this, it does not follow that the unfortunate person upon whom the sentence of excommunication has fallen will be lost. The Church does not damn: she cuts off the excommunicate like a plague-spot, to safeguard the health of the whole body and to secure his own emendation. More than this, if the anathema fall upon the innocent, it has no spiritual effect. He still belongs to the unity of the mystical body. Even here, Doctor, it is the soul that cuts itself off. It closes the door with its own hands. The Church

declares the door shut fast. Let us suppose a case. A madman incurs the minor excommunication—for the greater has practically fallen into disuse. It is unfortunate. It is sad. It is regrettable. But the man was not responsible for his acts and words. The excommunication does not exist. Nothing but the soul can shut out God from itself."

"You surprise me, Father." The Doctor's cigar was out, and he, looking back no doubt upon the days when the baneful cloud of doubt and distrust had not yet settled like a pall upon his soul, spoke with a reverence and a simplicity that showed the sterling worth beneath his assumed indifference. "If that is what excommunicating means, I admit to the full that it is both reasonable and necessary. Only I never saw it in that light before. I understood differently. Forgive me if I have hurt you by what I said."

"There is nothing to forgive," smiled the Priest, "except the length to which I have run on. I have some office to say, so I shall go down to my cabin now."

As he left them, the Doctor remarked to the Poet: "That is a good man—a man who has convictions, and who lives up to them. Perhaps there is more truth in his homely view of life and reality than in the"—he sighed—"dreams of materialism."

"He is a saint," broke in the Poet enthusiastically.

"With such a faith, and with such a knowledge, he may well be so."

"I quite agree with you," said the Doctor, as he tossed his cigar-end over the side; "but it requires thinking over." He too, to muse himself, left the Poet musing on the problems, old yet ever new, that had forced themselves again into his life. . . . "A saint. He speaks with knowledge and faith. Would to God I had such a conviction. . . . And yet . . ."

Courage, Poet! God is stronger than the mind of man.

CHAPTER IX

ATOMS AND MOLECULES

HAVE you ever paced the deck of a liner at night, alone? You remember, we left the Doctor two nights ago, cigar in mouth, employed in that occupation. It was something of a habit in him, brought about by his busy, yet solitary life. In this trait he was not unlike the Priest. Either could and did mix with people. Both were quite capable of busying themselves with their books or their thoughts when people were not to be had. But, if you have seen the night in its lonely grandeur; if you have felt, rather than perceived, the boundless ocean from which the strong salt air comes like a tonic to your nostrils, covering you, face, hair, hands, clothes, with the impalpable stickiness of brine; if you have swayed to the gentle rolling of a large ship as she passes over the peaceful rollers—you know what real loneliness means. Of course, there are people near you. Some one stands, a black figure silhouetted against the dark sky, upon the bridge. An occasional voice, or laugh, rings out loud enough to remind you that

there are some yet in the smoking-room. Far beneath your feet, the grimy toilers in the hold are shovelling coals into the furnaces, from whose funnels the thick, black smoke rolls away in heavy masses. But for all that, and for all the other human beings who are on board, you realise the sense of utter loneliness—a loneliness that does not come to you as a pain clutching at your heart, but rather as a sense of rest and infinite relief. It is the same as the overwhelming sense that sometimes falls upon you in great crowds; when you are walking in some densely peopled thoroughfare and suddenly are caught up into another world by the sense of aloofness from all the hurrying atoms of humanity. The Doctor had a vague memory of his previous feelings recalled, as he took a turn or so on deck before he entered the smoking-room and sat down in the corner between the Parson and Priest. They were talking about the weather, which had, as you know, been glorious, and about the sunset, a very fine one, which they had watched from the deck after dinner.

"Strange," said the Poet, "that it should be as you say, merely the effect of refraction."

"And not only the refraction of the light, such as you find in the prism," continued the Parson, who had been speaking. "There are a thousand forces at play in the heavens, painting the western sky with those beautiful colours—the thick strata of air, the moisture and particles of dust. It is the infinitely

small that produces such grand effects, and hangs those wonderful curtains between day and night."

"That is a pretty theory," said the Poet, who relished it the more because it was the less abstract. "Like that of the atoms," joined in the Doctor, "the atoms that go to build up the molecules, and the molecules that together form the mass. The most wonderful is the infinitely small—not the infinitely great. The eyepiece to the microscope teaches and charms far more than the telescope."

"And yet, though they charm," remarked the Priest, "like truth, they have no very permanent effect upon our minds. We see them by the aid of lenses, but we cannot feel them; and though we have, at any rate when we first gaze upon them, a sentiment of wonder and admiration, it soon wears off and gives place to the everyday stolidity of scientific fact."

The Doctor laughed. "Surely you are not going to tell us next that truth is inoperative? Why, I thought your whole philosophy and theology claimed to be truth—no more nor less!"

"Yes. That is its claim: to be the truth. But it must be truth so assimilated and made part of ourselves that it does not only remain a series of propositions, ticketed and filed away in the pigeon-holes of our mind. If we wish, we are at liberty to refuse to act, as if we had not the truth. Our will, you see, has something to do with it. Still, what I said is

true also. We never seem to really touch the things amidst which we live. We don't even get at the husks that surround them, really. Here am I, talking to you, and doing my best to lay my thoughts bare before you—trying to reach out beyond the circle of my individuality, that isolates me, into yours, which cuts you off, too, from any real meeting of souls."

The Parson fancied he had caught the Priest tripping, and exclaimed, in apparent horror: "Dear me! Dear me! That sounds like a subjectivism of a very pronounced type."

"It is a subjectivism," replied the Priest. "Every single item of natural knowledge I possess comes to me as an individual. My senses bring their reports, and my reason works on that data. And, since all human beings are alike in possessing both senses and reason, from the same data the same knowledge is obtained by all. That saves it from being a pernicious subjectivism, I fancy. Don't you think so? But let me explain what I mean. There is a point in the knowledge which we four possess, where it ceases to be common. The Doctor, for instance, knows a great deal that we don't. The language of my moral theology, even if I translated it into English, would not mean very much to you until you had assimilated all the data which have gone to make it what it means to an instructed Catholic. There can be no real union of souls in

knowledge beyond the point to which its common share goes."

"And that," commented the Poet, "means that we can know and love no one."

"It does not follow, I think," the Priest explained. "I can know you, or any human being, and feel an affection for him up to a certain point—never to the extent of being identified with him in knowledge or love. But why limit it to human beings? I should have thought you would have seen a possible application of what I have been trying to say. Suppose a being, infinite in the possession of all knowledge, perfect in goodness. Does it not follow that we can leave the narrow sphere of self to be united to Him? His knowledge would comprehend ours, and go infinitely beyond it. To the fullness, then, of our intellectual nature, we could be lost in His. If only we would stop to realise what that statement means, the whole of our being would go out towards Him in one act of affection. We should be united to Him in love."

"I've found you out already," laughed the Doctor. "Here have I been taking you for a hard-headed logic-chopper, without an ounce of sentiment in him; and now I discover that you are a mystic of the worst sort; talking of transcendental unions and harping back to God to get rid of a difficulty."

"Aren't you a little hard on the Priest, Doctor," ventured the Poet. "What he has been saying is

very beautiful. It is like golden strands that bind us all to the heart and centre of the universe. We are all linked together in knowledge and love because we are all united to God."

"You," said the Priest, "go further than I do. But, seriously, Doctor; I mean every word I say in its coldest logical sense. I am afraid I am not much of a mystic. Perhaps it would be better if I were. And the difficulty is a fact. No matter how well I know you, or in what great esteem I have you, there are always barriers between us. Why? Because of our limitations. Now, God is not limited: so that in Him each one of us finds all he has, and more. But there's more to be said for it than that. Have you never felt, or realised, or apprehended God up to the very full of your being? There are times, especially when we are alone with nature, when we seem to lose ourselves in another personality." The Doctor thought of the previous night, and said nothing. "Sometimes, when I have been off on an expedition. . . . Picture it! A dark tarn lying in the bosom of the mountains; the rugged grey peaks and the wreathing mists; the mighty curves of the heather-clad hills; the sense of loneliness and oppression; until you are lost in that other sense of standing in the presence of a mystery, of coming near to God."

"All that can easily be explained naturally," objected the Physician, puffing away diligently, and

nodding his head in punctuation and emphasis. "It is the presence of nature that affects you so; the grandeur and vastness of it. You put a construction on it that it won't bear, like the Indian who sees God in streams and hears Him in the wind. It is not possible to prove that you have any sense of His presence. At most you can say that you are powerfully affected by nature." He argued for the sake of arguing, for he still remembered.

"I think I can show you that you are wrong," said the Priest. "How do I come even as near as I do, though that may not be much, to your personality? I only see your gestures, hear your words, note the changes of expression in your face; and from it all—through it all—I vaguely touch the reality lying behind. And that is enough, in many cases, to give rise to a love that would stop at no sacrifice. Through your spoken thoughts and deeds I get at your real self. And in some such fashion, through the mountains and the hills and the rivers and the oceans, I get at God; and I feel Him as really—nay, far more really than I can feel you."

"Surely the theory you are advancing," remarked the Parson, "is a form of pantheism. It means does it not, that nature is God; or rather, that God is the soul of nature? You see Him in His works, just as you perceive our friend, the Doctor, and his soul, in his body."

"No, I do not think I am a pantheist," the Priest

answered steadily. "You noticed that I did not say that the vision of the Creator in His creation was the same as that of the human personality in the gestures and words of the body. From the one I argue to a principle within it that makes the body what it is—human. But in the other case, I infer a principle in nature, yet supremely without it, that makes it what it is—all in all. I might just as well have come to the soul and its God from a study of the human body alone. Only, the grandeur and sublimity of nature strikes a richer chord vibrating in the heart, and conjures up a more vivid realisation in the mind."

"Have you read *The Unnamed Lake*?" asked the Poet. "Who wrote that felt as we all do: for we are all poets at heart. You remember how all the forces of nature are personified, how—

'Dark clouds that intercept the sun
Go there in Spring to weep;
And there, when Autumn days are done,
White mists lie down to sleep.

'Sunrise and sunset crown with gold,
The peaks of ageless stone,
Where winds have thundered from of old,
And storms have set their throne.'[1]

That is a fine conception."

"Yes," said the Parson. "The poets come before the philosophers—Homer and Hesiod paved the way for Plato and Aristotle. First, the truth because

[1] F. G. Scott.

it is beautiful; afterwards, because it is good; and last, for itself."

"But Plato was a poet," corrected the Doctor. "And the good comes before the beautiful," since he followed Socrates."

"Are you trying to make a theory of the sequences of philosophy," asked the Priest; "or do you want the order in which it actually developed? I am of opinion that the poet is—as, indeed, all men are—naturally philosophical. The childhood of the race is repeated in the child. First of all, crude blocks of truth—more or less shapeless masses, facts, principles, knowledge, picked up bit by bit, unrelated and out of proportion, but truth none the less. Then the polishing and rubbing down, and smoothing of reflection, and—poetry! Afterwards the examination and revision, and refining and putting in order, and classifying and relating. That is philosophy, pure and simple. But all the fine building of the temple of learning was in those crude and disproportioned blocks of truth from the beginning. It is astonishing to find how few principles the finished science has been obliged to adjust; and how it consists, for the most part, only of those original masses of truth properly fitted each into its own place."

"Philosophy is not so persuasive as poetry," remarked the Parson, sententiously; "for the poets catch the true ring of human nature, and go directly to the heart of things."

"Don't the philosophers, too? According to the Priest, they not only do this, but do it more correctly than the poets," said the Doctor.

"Of course they do," the Priest made answer. "They do it more briefly and, note, more accurately as well. Plato, as you said a moment ago, was a poet who wrote in prose, and Caro was a philosopher who wrote in verse. But take Aristotle or the great schoolmen . . ."

"Barbarous, my dear sir, barbarous!"—This from the Parson.

"But exact," the Priest continued. "You would not have language a mere thing of beauty from the point of view of grammar. Philosophers like these had got beyond the stage of trying to be beautiful. Everything had to be sacrificed to truth. And if you read—St Thomas, say—in the light of that orb of truth which was his, and towards which he ever leads his followers, you will come to love the beauty of a style and language so admirably fitted to do the work for which it is used."

"One could never admire a style so jerky or a Latin so barbarous," insisted the scholarly Parson.

"Certainly not," the Priest distinguished, "until you have made it your own by assimilating it. It is a mistake to look for the Latin of Cicero in the thirteenth century; and it is a greater error to suppose that mediæval philosophy has not a language all its own. It all comes to what we were just now

saying. To appreciate the thoughts and personality of the schoolmen, we must think those thoughts from the beginning. We must, as it were, live their lives intellectually. The modern world, intent on other prizes, that may be reached without the aid of careful and exact thought, parts company with this great array of dead and gone thinkers long before the conclusions are drawn. The busy, preoccupied present treads other paths, and looks towards other goals. Is it to be wondered at that it should fail to grasp the true meaning of the ponderous tomes that sleep on in our libraries?"

"You are skating over the thin ice of subjectivism again," cautioned the Doctor, squinting at the end of his cigar.

"Eclecticism," corrected the speaker. "There is nothing to prevent a man from refusing to go on in any one path of thought, if he sees fit. Money may have more immediate attractions for him than the pursuit of truth. Look at those people at whist. The noisy party at the next table are playing poker. Those two over there, they seem to be engaged in a game of cribbage. The cards they are using are all the same; but they are not all obliged to play the same game. If every player gave his own subjective value to them, what sort of a game could you play? At each table the cards are used differently, and yet each player is using them in the proper way. So it is with principles and con-

clusions. If we agree to play whist, we must not look for cribbage scores, or worry about the pegs in the board. If we do, we shall probably lose tricks. And so, if we are on the look-out for truth, we must observe the rules of the game; and if we don't want to do that, if we elect to follow other rules—well, I think we shall probably never get to the goal at all. Just where those other rules come in, we shall have left the path and find ourselves wandering somewhere else."

"But all this has nothing to do with the vile Latin of the schoolmen," the Parson broke in.

"No. But remember"—the Priest apparently did not mind being interrupted—"remember that language is a means to an end, and that the best language is that which the most readily does its work. Of course, it is a foreign tongue until you have mastered it: but then you see its use and its object, and begin to admire it. I daresay English sounds very barbarous to an Italian when he first, with grammar in hand, listens to his master speaking it. Once he has learned it, it is very different. You really have no right to expect Thomas or Bonaventure to write in classical Latin. Their thought was not classic in that sense. It was too Christian. Still, if you wish to find out how entrancingly beautiful their language can be, go to their hymns. There is not much poetry in the world that will equal them."

"I have often noticed," the Doctor abruptly inter-

rupted, "how full the world is of misunderstandings. Your theory of personal limitations would go far towards explaining them. But the curious thing about a misunderstanding is"—he spoke reminiscently—"that it is most apt to arise just when one is doing his best to avoid it. And once a real misunderstanding exists, it's next to impossible to get rid of it."

"The barriers to the soul's expression rise high in such a case." The Poet ventured on this explanation, though what it meant probably no one knew but himself. Had he not been of so docile a nature, he would doubtless have known by prolonged experience precisely what he was speaking of. But a misunderstanding could hardly have come about between him and his wife, for the very simple reason that he was so utterly subservient to her domination.

"They are like fungus growths," said the Parson, ready with an illustration. "They grow like parasites upon the very roots of life, sapping its happiness and embittering its love."

"Say, rather," corrected the Priest, beginning to chafe under the two somewhat metaphorical expressions just uttered, "they are the effect of a lack or loss of sympathy. Up to the point of the misunderstanding two minds are working together inductively. They rely on the same principles, think the same thoughts, and these produce, as an effect, similar feelings and sentiments. The two souls are as

analogous in knowledge as in affection. Then comes the misunderstanding, with its train of hurt and hard feelings. One mind has flown off at a tangent. Both have parted company. The more the one tries to make itself clear to the other, the more tangled grows the difficulty. The view-points have become so totally diverse. And it is only when the two minds which the misunderstanding has forced apart come back by curved or straight line paths to one point again, that it ceases."

"That is not quite what I meant," said the Doctor. "That sort of misunderstanding comes about in every conversation. Two people scarcely ever think exactly alike. Minds, as you express it, are continually running off at tangents. But why is it that, in some cases, these misunderstandings so interfere with our happiness and upset the whole course of our lives?"

"I think that is a very easy question to answer," smiled the Priest. "The greater the esteem and affection, the greater, too, the distress. And yet, once we have allowed our minds to take this new tangent path, how are we going to bring them back again? Either we must order them back abruptly, get rid of our new and personal ideas, force ourselves into line with the other mind, and give up the point for which we have contended altogether—and that is not quite natural and easy—or we must go on trusting that the paths will, somewhere, meet again,

and bear with whatever grief our new mutual positions bring to us."

"But why should misunderstandings be at all?" queried the Poet.

"Because," the Priest reiterated, "we think, each of us, beyond the knowledge that is common. It is a question of thought itself as against the affections engendered and swayed hither and thither by our thinking. Our minds work in that way; and, in every misunderstanding, these two factors are at work, tearing us in opposite directions."

"But would it not be far more simple to explain the whole matter by saying that thought and feeling and everything else that makes up our sentient life came from the particles of matter from which we are formed?" said the Doctor, harping back again to his original idea. "If the atomic theory is worth so much in one branch of science, why not so here as well? They function in one way, and you have thought. They work in another direction, and love is the result. They get out of gear, and you hate; and so on. That seems a feasible explanation, doesn't it?"

"It might be good," the Priest made reply, "if it were possible. I think we saw its fallacy the other night when we were talking of the soul. One of these days, perhaps, we shall see where it goes wrong. Mental states and processes can't be the outcome of matter. But, to go more to the heart of the question,

did it never strike you how absurd the atom-theory is, or the molecular or electron hypothesis, as a real explanation of the nature of beings?"

"I can't say it did," grumbled the Physician. "It seems to work correctly enough in chemistry."

"My contention again! Chemistry may be a highly specialised science. It is. But, for all that, it's the development of common knowledge in one bypath. It runs off at a tangent. If you really desire to get to the bedrock of truth, be sure you will not find it in any limited branch of the main road."

"Lady, sir, asking for you." The steward had come up, silent as a cat, and was addressing the Poet. The Doctor seized the opportunity. "Bring me a whisky and soda, steward. . . . Will you take anything? . . . No? . . . Going already, Father? . . . It's early yet. Well, if you insist, good-night." The Poet and the Priest were gone before the steward returned.

"A strange man, that," said the Parson.

"Who—the Poet?" asked his companion. "No. I was thinking of the Priest. He seems to have some strange opinions. I have not met very many Roman Catholic clergymen; but I never fancied them like him."

"I imagine not," said the Doctor dryly, biting his cigar. "He gives reasons for what he says—the why and the how, as well as the what. The majority

—I know them, if you don't—give you the same answers, but do not lead you through the maze of thought that leads you to them. Why? . . . What's the use, so long as you get the right answer? They are too busy to waste time in explaining, too certain to feel the need of going through their proofs. After all, it does not so much matter how you arrive at the truth, so long as you do manage to lay hold on it. The Catholic Church takes the most direct road, and the one best suited to humanity."

"Surely, my dear sir," the Parson remonstrated, "you are not going to allow that man to persuade you into the Romish Church, with all its errors and corruptions. You have too excellent an education and too keen a judgment . . ."

"You would sooner have me what I am than a Christian?" The Doctor's laugh was something like a sneer. "No. You need have no fear that I shall allow myself to be persuaded, unless by cogent arguments. The Priest has the best of those that I have ever yet heard from a Christian. He may do it. I have no objection to his trying, if he likes."

And, as the Parson rose to go, he added, pouring oil on the troubled waters of his reverend and disgusted soul in an echo of words uttered centuries before: "But I am not so sure that Christians are made by argument."

The Priest, in his cabin below, knew quite well the truth of St Ambrose's words, as he sat thumbing

his little book and reading aloud from its pages. And he had in his hands and on his lips the keenest weapons that a human being can wield: weapons that can give point and edge to the strongest argument or proof, and drive it home through the solid mail of disbelief; as he murmured, with his eyes fixed upon the red and black lettering of the page: *Judæi quoque, et Proselyti, Cretes, et Arabes: audivimus eos loquentes nostris linguis magnalia Dei.*

CHAPTER X

UBI SPIRITUS IBI LIBERTAS

THE Poet's Wife was sitting in her deck chair, a rug about her feet and a suspicious-looking and bulky pamphlet in her hand. Beside her, the Poet, gazing lazily out to sea and occasionally making a note of his poetic meditations upon the back of a letter. The shadows of fleecy white clouds chequered the surface of the water, and, in the distance, the sun glinted upon a tiny iceberg, gradually taking shape and form as the ship drew nearer to it. It was a lazy afternoon. The sea was lazily sliding past the ship; the shadows looked as though they were only darker tints in the uniform green, as neither they nor the clouds appeared to move at all. The very seagulls seemed indolently disposed as they floated through the almost still air on outstretched wings. The Poet's Wife had her eyes upon her book, but she was really thinking of something else as she lazily turned the pages; and her husband's gems of thought to all appearance did not scintillate, for he began to meditate with closed eyes. Don't imagine

that he was going to sleep, though. It was a lazy afternoon, I said, not a sleepy one.

The Doctor emerged from the smoking-room in company with the Priest. The latter was fumbling with one hand at his coat-tails—putting away his little book of *Day Hours*, I expect. They walked slowly down the deck.

"Well," said the Doctor, "how are you enjoying this fine afternoon?"

The Poet opened his half-closed lids and made a note of a combination of adjectives upon a scrap of paper. His wife dropped the hand holding her book, with a finger in it to mark the page, and looked up, quite pleasantly for her.

"I am reading and day-dreaming; and Arthur" —she bent her head sideways in his direction—"is composing verses."

"For the concert?" queried the Doctor.

"Yes—and no," hesitated the Poet. "I have been thinking of it for days. To-day nature—the sea and the sky, that vast dome full of light and colour, those exquisite clouds and their shadows, and the iceberg. . . Have you seen the iceberg yet? On the right, over there ahead. All nature is in a peaceful mood. What apt metaphors! A smiling sun, and laughing water, and all the rest—to-day. But nature is like a human being: at heart cruel and wanton, careless of pain, prodigal in the exercise of her power. That azure dome will hide itself

behind a leaden pall. The heavy clouds will sink to meet, not laughing ripples, but angry waves and thundering breakers. The wind will shriek and roar and lash the water with its stinging whips, and churn it into the full madness of the storm. And the chained-up lightnings will be loosed, and thunder across the blackness from the lowering sky and . . ."

"Now, Arthur, if you are going to be poetic, I shall go away. Why, in heaven's name, don't you write it down in verse, if you see anything interesting in what you are saying?" And poor Arthur, thus practically interrupted, collapsed like a punctured tyre. But the Doctor, being a man of science and kindly disposed, took up the cudgels in the stricken Poet's behalf.

"Of course," he said, "there is an immensity of power in nature's storage batteries, and when once it is let loose, there is not much that can stop it. Something opens a valve or smashes a pipe underneath, and you have a volcano that does not stop to worry about how much damage it's going to do."

"And that is the way with individuals," put in the Priest. "They let a valve go wrong morally, or allow the governor to get out of gear, and the consequences have to take care of themselves: consequences, too, mind you, that don't stop where they are."

"Everybody has a great responsibility," the Lady

remarked; "a very grave and serious responsibility. And people are only just beginning to realise it. While they lived their lives in the old humdrum way, set square by the rules of ready-made teaching, without investigating for themselves,——"

("They were very much happier,"—the Priest in an undertone to the Doctor.)

"—— no wonder things went wrong. But now that they are beginning to think, now that there is real liberty of conscience and freethought among the masses, there is light ahead."

The Doctor saw his chance to push this very theoretical lady into a corner. He knew how advanced she was; and ran the risk of venturing a guess as to her opinions on the particular point which he proceeded to thrust home.

"So you think everybody ought to possess perfect liberty of conscience? Yes? And that, of course, means that everyone may do exactly as he pleases. So, if you were a magistrate, you would exempt the children of 'conscientious objectors' from vaccination?"

"No; certainly not," said the Poet's Wife decidedly. "The good of the community comes before the fads of individuals."

"So you would have liberty of conscience, with limitations in its exercise?"

"Well, it comes to that, I suppose. But you must not forget that 'conscience' may be misinformed.

The 'conscientious objection' you are speaking of comes from a misinformed conscience."

"Exactly so," said the Doctor, somewhat dryly. "So, after all, liberty of conscience really depends on its information. You are free to act, if you understand correctly what your action means."

"And freethought comes in there," said the Poet's Wife triumphantly.

"Um . . . !" It was a long-drawn, meditative, and negative criticism, that sound, coming from the Priest's pursed-up lips. "There's a blessed word—freethought. How many intellectual suicides have been committed in its name! And how many fetters, heavier than lead and stronger than steel, has it welded on the mind!"

"What do you mean, sir? Freethought bad for man? Why"—with a ring of sarcasm—"I thought that it was only the old dogmatic teaching that dried up the springs of truth and freedom: 'You must believe, not because you know or even think it probable, but because I say so.'—And, to thrust it down the better: hell-fire and everlasting damnation."

"My dear madam," the Priest said calmly, ignoring the implied attack upon himself, "dogma and science, and the untrammelled vagaries of freethought itself, are all the same in fastening fetters on the reason of man. Only—some are the golden chains that bind to truth, and others are the steel handcuffs that link one to a lie. Just think a moment. Here is a

man, free from knowledge and theory and prejudice —let us grant all that in each case—setting out to find the truth. He starts off on a fair, level road lying in the full light of day. But the evening shadows begin to fall, and the darkness gathers about the pathway, and a cold wind of doubt rises behind the wayfarer before he has found the dwelling-place of Truth. And from out the fast-closing darkness, where at a sign-post three roads meet, comes a figure holding a bright torch in its hands and pointing onwards—'I will be your guide.' Before the night set in, the way ahead looked clear. Every sign pointed straight forward. There is no going back. What is our traveller to do? If he decides to go with the guide along the straight path until the light comes again, he is no longer free; for he has chosen guidance.

"But there are the other roads. Does he elect that on the right hand? That is the road of science. A little way forward, and then a sweeping curve, always to the right, and he finds himself back again on the main road with a scientific fact in his hands and his eyes fixed on the old sign-post pointing straight forward again, 'This way to Truth.' And so on he goes, in curves and angles, always amassing new facts, always coming back to the same point—for facts do not guide, and give no explanation of themselves."

"Or does he try the third road to the left? Up

hill and down dale, through quagmires and morasses, over sandy tracts and lonely mountains, with his eyes shut to the half-truths which lie strewn along the way even there, till he finds a place to rest. And resting, he fashions for himself a sign-post—'No thoroughfare; this road is blocked'—and sets it up in the middle of the pathway. And, turning back, on he goes again, over stony hills and marshes and through thickets of briers, always setting up his little home-made signs—'No road, no road.' For he cannot get behind his facts. He cannot see through the half-truths he finds. No; he mistakes each and several for the whole; and so he goes on and on, declaring as he goes that each path leads nowhere, and must be closed."

"Those are fine words, Father," said the Poet.

But his wife broke in with: "What a parody of the freethinker you have drawn. He does not spend his time in closing the avenues of thought with his failures. Rather, he accepts what he finds to be true, and goes on, encouraged to find further truths."

"Yes." The Priest took up the thread again. "And every truth he finds means a closed road to him. He can no longer think freely on a given question once he has decided as to its answer. If he accepts a truth such as, let us say, the law of gravity, he is not free to hold its contrary; unless, perhaps, you would have him free to hold both if he pleases. Bodies fall; bodies don't fall: both are

true! And even then, to be consistent, you must grant him that both truths are true and both false as well: and so on for ever."

"But no one ever would be so absurdly silly as to say or think such things," said the lady, a dull red flush showing her annoyance. "And that is not liberty of thought at all. Of course, we accept facts and recognise truths when they are proved. But in religious questions . . ."

"Religion again," the Doctor muttered to himself.

"In religious questions," the Priest supplied, "you will not believe the accepted teachings of Christianity. Precisely so. And why not?"

"Because they are not proved. They are gratuitous assumptions, contrary to science, and untrue."

"Oho! One moment please." The Priest was thoroughly interested; and by this time all signs of the "lazy afternoon" had disappeared from the faces and attitudes of the four. "So the truths of religion are gratuitous assumptions? Now, what makes you say that? There are certain questions clamouring for an instant answer in the ears of every thinking man. 'What am I? Why am I here?'—like two insistent bells for ever tolling. And the answer? The voice of religion is not a hesitating one. 'You are a reasonable creature of God. You are here to serve Him.' Is there anything gratuitous in that? No, my friends,"—he

included the Poet and the Doctor in his glance—"science brings you back ever to this sign-post, and the freethought that would ignore it is the voluntary slavery, not of the truth, but of avoidable error. The truth alone can emancipate the mind: falsehood never. And what matters it whence the truth comes—from the bottom of a test-tube or the lips of a master—so long as it is truth. What better answer can freethinking give? Let it give its best; it ceases, then and there, to be free. So far, it has made no coherent attempt at answering at all."

"'Contrary to science,' she said," suggested the Doctor in the momentary pause, carefully selecting a fresh cigar from his case.

"That," the Priest went on dryly, "we need hardly discuss. If the truths of religion were contrary to science, I take it there would be few Catholic men of science. As a matter of fact, there are a great many. And many more—nay, nearly all, who profess the reasonableness of religion and believe in revelation, although, illogically enough, they do not accept all its teachings. But their testimony is strong that religious truth is no bar to science, no impediment to thought. By it, as by scientific or philosophical or historical truth, the mind is set free from its only bondage—error."

"I said the teachings of Christianity were untrue," snapped the lady.

"My dear," the poor Poet protested; but, wonder

of wonders, the Doctor again—a very Saul among the prophets—took part in the fray.

"They may be true, or they may be false," he said. "I'm sure I don't know whether they are or not; but this much is certain, that no really thoughtful man would deny their claim too categorically. It is one thing to hesitate: another to reject. 'I see reasons and reasons'; but, in practice, it's the only thing that works—religion. If I put another question to the Priest's—and, upon my word, I begin to think his two answers are correct—religion is the only thing that even attempts to reply: 'How am I to serve God?' I have been reading that little book you gave me"—he turned to the Priest as he spoke—"and, though I don't agree with it, it's about the clearest and most common-sense thing I've seen for a long time."

The "little book" was a Penny Catechism, which, as the Priest said when he gave it to him, was "pretty hard reading, since it is a compendium of the whole of theology, but it will show you what Catholics do believe."

"Yes," the Priest said; "it depends where the answer comes from. If you are certain of your authority, it is no slavery, but rather a freedom from intellectual fetters, to accept it. And that is what we do—accept it on the testimony of the Church and the authority of God."

"But there are questions," the Doctor, true to his

nature, began, re-lighting his cigar. "For example, how about the apparent contradictions between science and your Church's teaching?"

"There aren't any," the Priest replied calmly. "There may be discrepancies between hypothesis and dogma; but hypothesis is not science. There are flat contradictions between some philosophies and Catholic teaching. One can't deny that. But then, just take the trouble to look into the principles of such crack-brained philosophers whose systems oppose. Who is there to vouch for them? As I said before, once settle the question of your authority, and you have settled the whole matter. The one system has it: the others have not. That's the point to think about when you are talking of real freedom in the pursuit of Truth."

"It is getting very cold," remarked the Poet's Wife, who perceived that the subject had narrowed to a discussion between the two. "Arthur, your arm, I must walk about a little or I shall be frozen."

"You settled her," grinned the Doctor, as he and the Priest moved in an opposite direction to that taken by the others. "Have a cigar? Take one of the little ones. I can recommend them. It is colder. I can smell the ice; can't you?"

The Priest was lighting his weed. "No," he said between puffs; "I haven't that faculty; but I can see it. There's a second berg quite near us," and he pointed to a blue-white mass about a quarter of a mile away.

"So it is," exclaimed the Doctor. And then: "There's one thing I can't understand about you people. What is it that decides you to believe? No; that's not quite what I mean. You were brought up as a Catholic. But what keeps you from giving it all up? You must have difficulties sometimes."

The Priest sucked at his cigar and looked out to sea. "What keeps that berg afloat?" he asked.

"Oh! that's simple enough. Ice is lighter than water."

"Yes? Well, the grace of God. It sounds pious. It isn't. It's a fact. Not like the floating ice: natural forces; but a supernatural grace. The same as that which creates faith in a convert."

"But is it all so certain? Don't you find those sign-posts up in religion, too—'This road blocked'? Don't you sometimes feel that you are asked to believe too much—candidly, now?"

"Candidly, I don't. I am as certain of the truth of every jot of Catholic teaching as I am of every fact of which I am in possession. Most of my facts I have got in the same way—by being told; only, my religious facts and truths have been told me by a teacher who can make no mistake."

"And freethought?"

"Is a myth, a shibboleth, an impossibility. Better agnosticism even."

Agnosticism?" The Doctor was surprised.

"Yes; it may be logical; and at least it is humble:

almost as humble as Christianity—'unless ye become as little children.' The true agnostic wraps himself about in the cloak of his ignorance; but he does not deny the possibility of knowing."

"How about Herbert Spencer, then?" suggested the Doctor.

"He was not an agnostic," replied the Priest. "He was one of the most dogmatic of freethinkers. I often wonder at the carelessness of popular nomenclature. It shows how little the masses really know of what they speak. Define your terms—free-thinking, agnosticism, faith—before you begin to reason about the subjects they signify. After all is said and done, their real meaning dwindles down to very little; and all their system shrinks to an aphorism or two, badly understood and impracticable. No, my friend; we need the answers to our questions for our daily life—you and I, and all of us. Revealed Truth alone gives those answers, and alone professes to give them. But"—with a ready smile—"I mustn't force my point of view. That would be to interfere with your freedom of thought and choice."

"No, indeed. I am only too glad to hear what you have to say. One is like a man in the dark, perplexed and lonely amid the surging questions that rise up before him. Truth must be somewhere. The light ought to break. Only, where—where is it to be found?"

"You are not alone, my dear Doctor," said the Priest, throwing away his cigar end. "There are many in the dark, groping amid what you called the other day their childish toys. And they only find the broken bits. Now, if those toys were whole. . . . But they are whole—not toys to be played with, but stern realities to be reckoned with —the entire collection of them; and, please God, those of you who seek may one day find them lit by the full sun of Truth, and know what they are."

By this time the *Carinthia* was almost abreast the second iceberg, and her passengers had all gathered together upon the deck to get a good view of it. The fortunate possessors of field-glasses handed them on to their friends; and all conversations were focussed upon the berg. The subject which the two men had been pursuing was naturally dropped, though doubtless it still occupied the thoughts of both; for, though their eyes were fixed upon the point of general interest, they stood a little apart from the rest, and did not join in the common conversation.

The Poet and his wife, who had been joined by Euphon, stood near them, looking in turns through a glass. Their remarks were characteristic and somewhat irrelevant.

As a matter of fact, the berg was a very ordinary one: a great mass of shapeless ice drifted from some far northern shore and worn and eaten and crumbled

by the water into contours that left the imagination free to suggest all kinds of fantastic shapes. It was clear and translucent for the most part, except where, in some of its slopes, the sun and wind had etched its surface into a semblance of frosted glass; and its cavities darkened to a rich, deep blue. It swayed slightly, very slightly, and with an almost imperceptible motion; and from time to time a little piece broke off and slid with a splash into the waves lapping about its base. The sea-birds were wheeling round it, uttering their querulous, half-human cries. The sunlight smote upon one side, and helped the lagging imagination. It was a castle with battlements; a fairy palace of crystal, and gold, and blue, glittering and shimmering upon the bosom of the ocean; a cathedral with many pinnacles—whatever one pleased to think it; and apparently one was pleased to think it many things. But the imagination had a limit as well as interest in icebergs; and soon the company melted away.

But the Priest and the Doctor stood on, watching the receding mass in silence. The Priest was the first to speak. "Well, Doctor, what do you think of it all?"

"Very pretty, certainly," he answered absent-mindedly.

"Oh! You've not thought it out yet," remarked the Priest, seeing his abstraction. "Follow it up in all its bearings—the good lady's subject of

freedom, intellectual and moral. I have some work to do before dinner, so I shall leave you now; but you will tell me your conclusion another time." And he went away, leaving the Doctor standing alone by the railings, his eyes still fixed upon the shining spire of ice, his mind upon a glimmering reflection of truth—or was it truth itself, far off and very distant, but still truth, the goal and crown of all human striving and hope?

CHAPTER XI

MYTHS

"I THINK," went on the Poet, "that the myth is one of the most beautiful forms of religious instruction."

This he said after a long pause in the conversation. The Doctor was in the act of lighting his third cigar since dinner—so you can see for yourself that they had been talking some time. The Priest was busy, apparently finding places in his little book; and the Parson, who had dined well, looked very comfortable and a little sleepy, sitting, as he was, in the corner.

"Myth" was the magic word that started the talk on a new track. The Priest looked up quickly and glanced at the speaker, and then resumed his occupation, marking the places, as he found them, with little picture cards. The Doctor frowned thoughtfully, and finished lighting his cigar.

"There is a theory," he said, "that all religion consists of myths, and that Christianity is the most beautiful form of the fable. It used to be a very favourite way of teaching. I am right, am I not, in supposing that the myth theory of religion is very

much to the fore nowadays?" He looked interrogatively, as he spoke, at the Parson, as to a man who read all the periodicals and reviews.

"Yes"—the clergyman hesitated. "Yes, it is much urged; but I am inclined to think that it is not a very solid theory—no, not very solid. Of course"—brightening up—"there are some difficult things that it explains very neatly; and"—with a side glance at the Priest, still busy with his book, but taking it all in—"in such cases, with limitations, it might be employed, when the subject matter is beyond comprehension."

"That would be to eliminate mystery," observed the Priest.

"But that is not what I meant at all," the poor Poet explained. "I never meant to say that religion was a collection of myths. That would be to take all the truth out of it. I only intended to say . . ." and he tailed off into a more or less incoherent rambling. He had started the trains of thought, and could not stop them.

"I believe I am right in stating," the Doctor resumed gravely, "that this myth theory has been applied to practically all the supposed facts and doctrines of Christianity—we might as well say Christianity, because it means that — one after another; and that, one after another, they have found their best explanation in being supposed—not to be true in themselves, but to convey certain

ideas to the mind? It is very comforting to the average man to know, for example, that the theological hell is no reality, but only a myth or fable intended to frighten men from trespassing on their neighbours' rights. And, it seems to me, that the heaven of the golden harps and never-ending hymns must be a dull, tiresome place, unless it too is only a myth after all."

The Priest had finished fumbling with his little book, and was sitting up straight, looking at the speaker. He was wondering at the Doctor's sudden change of front—a not unusual occurrence in a strong character groping in the dark for truth. The conversation will drift away to another point in a moment, he thought; so I must strike at this now. "Surely," he remarked, "common-sense would draw a distinction here between what is natural and what is revealed religion. The truths of natural religion cannot be myths or fables, unless all the other natural truths of the mind are myths and fables too—all the truths of history and mathematics and science alike. So there you have, at the beginning, a great platform of religious truth which cannot be explained away by calling it names and professing to explain its origin. Even if it could be proved—which it can't—that some of these truths arose like myths, reason gives the lie direct to any so-called fabulous nature, as soon as it begins to look at the arguments by which they are maintained.

Natural theology and science are in exactly the same case. Attack the one, and you risk bringing both tottering down about your ears. But when you get to revealed religion . . ."

"Yes, when you get to revealed religion . . ." echoed both the Parson and the Doctor, each with the particular intonation and inflection of voice that bespoke his mental attitude.

"Well, you see, revealed religion is quite a different thing. In the first place, it has no proofs to offer, in the ordinary sense of the word. Then, it claims to come with the irresistible weight of perfect authority. Who is it that reveals? God—perfect knowledge and perfect truth. And in consequence, if there is any such thing at all, it must be true simply and just as it is stated."

"But, granting all you say," argued the Doctor, "God may have chosen to teach by myths; and so religion may consist of fables after all."

"You do not rate the veracity of God very highly in making that supposition; nor do you pay a very great compliment to the majority of your fellow-creatures," commented the Parson.

"I see I have you all against me"—and the Doctor's lips curved downwards at the corners. "Of course, you have the best of the argument."

"Not at all, Doctor," said the Priest soothingly. "Numbers don't count for very much. They certainly can't persuade by themselves. No one

yet ever gave his assent to a truth unless he had some pretty good reason for doing so; and, myth or no myth, nothing short of good reasons can convince anybody. But we have got the cart before the horse. 'Revelation' is something very definite; and, granting once it comes properly certified, there is no danger of needing to explain it by the myth theory, or any other theory whatever. It is true and certain, because it comes from God. Now, the myth-theory people do not admit revelation. So, before you begin to argue, . . ."

"You must see whether revelation is true or not. I see,"—the Doctor finished his sentence for him.

"Exactly so," the Priest agreed.

"But that begs the whole question," said the Doctor, in a tone of voice that was final; "for it can't be proved."

"Can't it," queried the Priest. "I don't see why not. If there is a God, and if we are able to talk to one another, I confess I don't see why He cannot speak to us so that we can understand."

"But He has never done so." The Doctor began to argue in earnest.

"That, Doctor, is a very rash statement," began the Priest, before the Parson had time to ejaculate "My dear sir!" and while the Poet's eyes and mouth were forming themselves as nearly as possible into circles. "It is not an easy thing to prove a negative, to begin with; and you are making an assertion in

the teeth of the very strongest convictions of a large part of mankind in the second. Have you ever gone carefully into the long catalogue of the claims of revelation? No? Not made an especial study of it? I thought so. Of course, it takes time, and must be done in dead earnest."

"But is it so necessary to make such a careful study as you seem to indicate?"

"If you have doubts, certainly it is. Revelation is proportioned to everybody—the very simplest and the most acute. But if the acute tackle it, they must deal with it acutely, and go into its credentials profoundly. As a matter of fact, the truths of revelation and its claims and credentials are not the stumbling-blocks for the doubters at all. They have a much easier way of settling the whole question, and saving themselves the trouble of a serious examination. They are uncritical enough and unscientific enough to say at once, 'It is impossible,' and so at once unfit themselves for any reasonable view of the matter."

"But, surely," persisted the Physician, "that is the true way, as well as the simplest."

"I am surprised to find you range yourself in those ranks again," said the Priest quietly; "for there are to be found only the unphilosophical and thoughtless. You know that reason forces you to admit the existence, and, to some extent, teaches you the nature, of God. You practically admitted as

much the other day. Only this afternoon your thoughts seemed to run in different lines."

"Yes. But then there were reasons."

"Of course there were reasons—very strong reasons too—so strong that to refuse to listen to them would be to cramp and thwart your rational nature. But, let me go on."

A roar of laughter went up from one of the card-tables. Someone bluffing with a small pair had "been seen" by the holder of a "straight." The Parson looked over, and frowned. In the circumstances, it jarred on his nerves.

"If I can communicate my inmost thoughts to you," the Priest pursued calmly, "cannot our Creator? Indeed, He does so speak to us by signs not to be mistaken—to every one of us. The voice of Natural Science is His voice. The characters written in the age-old rock were penned by His hand. The moral law within you, the voice of conscience, the yearning and striving after better things—all these do not speak of Him only: they are the words of His voice speaking clearly and distinctly. And if He has been able to do all this, can He not do that little more which you and I can do in conversation?"

"Yes. But——"

"Forgive me for one minute; it's not yet time for 'but.' Are there not many things, unknown to us naturally, about Himself, for instance, which, if He

chose, He might tell us? Can't we realise that all our natural knowledge, grand as it is and wonderful, is only a fragment of what might be known? Can't we see that that strange silent crying of our nature is the same as that which St Augustine voiced in his Confessions? It is possible, beyond doubt possible. And is it not also necessary? Do we not need it? And, more than all this, it exists—the revelation of God to man, by which man ascends in spirit to his God."

"We who believe, Father, of course have a reason for believing," put in the Poet.

"And what is that?" asked the Doctor sharply.

"Because it is so strongly borne in on us that it is true," he replied.

"Humph!" grunted the Physician; but the Priest took up the thread of his explanation again. "After you have seen the possibility of revelation and—I shall say probability, if you don't like the other word—its necessity for man, you have in the world the stupendous fact: there is a body asserting that such a revelation has been made, and claiming to possess it."

"It is easy enough to claim," the Doctor remarked cynically.

"Ah!" said the Priest, with an upward inflexion on the interjection; "but not always so easy to substantiate. Here you have a long history stretching back to the mists that cover the cradle of the

human race. You have prophecy verified to the letter. You have the Divine seals of the innumerable wonderful events that we call miracles. You have the perfect teaching of the Founder of the Christian religion—far above, but never in contradiction to, the reason for which it was intended. There are the sublime precepts of a moral law; and the hosts of men, women, and children, who putting it into practice, trod, and still tread, the highest paths of holiness. You have the constant witness of Christians to the adaptability of their religion to their needs; and, finally, you have the perpetual approval in the graces and wonders by which God shows that their work is His work. The Catholic Church—the Church founded upon the rock—is its own perennial witness to all these things."

The Parson was the only one of his audience who did not appreciate the termination of the Priest's words. The Poet's emotions were stirred, and the Doctor was certainly impressed by the logical precision with which this defence of revelation had been built up. He saw the bare plan which the Priest had just filled in with a few dexterous touches. Possibility, probability, almost a necessity, adaptability, and, finally, the claim and its series of confirmations. It was undoubtedly a strong argument to use; still, he was in a mood for argument.

"How is it, then, if it is so clear, that everybody does not recognise such a claim?" he asked.

The Priest answered him: "Because it does not conclude demonstrably. The absolute possibility of a thing is not enough to induce us to say that it actually is. Even its probability and its power of satisfying the needs of mankind is not a proof positive, though they may be indications of its truth. The first, you understand, is *a priori;* and facts cannot be proved thus. But the confirmations of the claim of revelation are *a posteriori*, and we look to them to prove it."

"Prove? I thought you said it could not be proved," the Physician interrupted.

"Not prove with the force of a mathematical demonstration, of course," corrected the Priest. "One can't look for the methods of arithmetic or geometry in theology. But the weight of evidence in its favour is so strong that it would certainly be imprudent to ignore it."

"Prophecy may be accounted for by chance," said the Doctor. He was arguing for the mere sake of argument and to hear the Priest's replies.

"One case or two, perhaps; but not the whole mass that has been verified."

"And the miracles ostensibly performed in your Church"—thus the Parson—"can be explained on natural grounds."

"No more easily," retorted the Priest, "than the miracles recorded in the Bible. As a matter of fact, they cannot be accounted for on any natural grounds

that we know at all; and, as a consequence, those who are absurd enough to make up their minds, on *a priori* grounds, that miracles are impossible, are driven to the necessity of saying that they are explained by laws which no one knows and no one understands."

"It seems to me," remarked the Doctor, "that you are falling into the same error as that for which you blame your opponents. You practically say, on these *a priori* grounds, that the laws of nature cannot account for what you call miracles."

"We have drifted a long way from our original subject," said the Priest. "Still——. There are miracles which all the forces of nature cannot produce; and there are things which nature, indeed, could do, but not with the means employed or in the manner in which the miracle is worked. Nature may concur in the production of a living being; but it cannot revivify a dead body. Some people, infatuated by their own view of the progress of science, invoke unknown natural causes to explain such events. But common-sense, as well as reason, goes against them."

"Anyway," said the Doctor, who had by this time almost persuaded himself to argue in earnest, in the old-fashioned dogmatic way, "many of the doctrines of so-called revelation are self-contradictory. And that fact utterly destroys any claim it may have on our minds."

"For example—?" queried the Priest, with raised brows.

"Well, for example—." There was no hesitation in the Doctor's manner, if there was in his speech. "For example, if God is all-powerful and all-good, where does evil and suffering come from?"

"Those, at any rate, are not myths," the Priest replied. "For you have harped back again to the mythless region of natural religion, as everyone must who discusses revelation. God, if He be God, must be both all-powerful and all-good. That is as certain as the fact that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. When once a thing is proved, you don't reconsider it. And evil and suffering are obvious. The problem is to reconcile. It cannot be solved either by denying the existence of suffering or by saying that God is not good or powerful. To do that would be to make things worse; for one you have proved and the other you experience."

"Still, Father, if they are contradictory, both cannot be true," ventured the Poet.

"Who says they are contradictory?" asked the Priest. "It is a mystery, doubtless, as everything is, if you go far enough into it. Science is full of just such mysteries, and so, too, is mathematics. Life is woven of them. But no one denies the truths discovered by science, or taught by mathematics, or realised in life, or calls them contradictory, simply

because he is unable to understand them fully. No! my friend. God is omnipotent and good. That is as certain as that the ether transmits light. Evil and suffering exist, as clear as the planets hurtle through the same ether. Science there runs head-first into a mystery, an apparent contradiction, when she tries to explain a substance rigid enough to transmit light-rays, and yet sufficiently mobile to allow the passage of the planets. The difficulty of trying to reconcile omnipotent goodness with evil and pain is an apparent one. *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*—all things end in mystery."

"So you do not think that any of the truths of religion are myths?" persisted the Doctor.

"Certainly not," returned the Priest dryly. "If I did, I should not be a believer in revelation."

"The wonder is," the Parson mused, "that everyone is not a believer."

The Priest shrugged his shoulders slightly. What the Parson meant by belief—picking and choosing—was not the meaning he attached to an act of faith. Still, he answered the implied question courteously. "To believe is to accept everything revealed on the sole authority of Him who reveals. As far as I know, there is only one body existing that distinctly claims to be the guardian of such a revelation. And there is only one class of people that accepts its teaching and believes in that way."

"You mean?" The Doctor supplied the excuse for being exact.

"The Roman Catholic Church and her Catholic children," the Priest said tersely.

"And that, of course, is denied," protested the Parson, who did not relish the obvious conclusion natural to the subject.

"Yes, I admit it is; but we have not time to go into that question now." The Priest rose as he spoke. "I, for one, have not finished the day's work. Matins and Lauds for to-morrow to be said still."

"For to-morrow?" The Parson was surprised.

"Yes; we generally anticipate. In a good many other ways besides practice, the Catholic Church differs from other bodies. She alone condemns false or misleading doctrines authoritatively. She alone ever defines the truth. She alone exercises now what she has exercised since the beginning—the jurisdiction attaching to the mission, 'Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' Good-night, gentlemen." And with these parting shafts, meant kindly, and indeed only shot, as it were, in passing, the Priest left the smoking-room. He had summed up the true position, and left the other three men, as he thought, in possession of matter to discuss for themselves. But the Doctor followed him on deck.

The Parson and Poet continued the discussion without opposition, and ended up, after much quota-

tion of the classics and many charmingly beautiful illustrations of the subject in hand, with the conclusion that religion, and particularly the Christian religion, was not logical. "You see," said the Parson, just before he left for his state-room, "faith is an affair of the heart, not of the mind. If it were logical, it would probably be false"; and though the Poet did not catch the meaning of the impossible epigram, he echoed it. "Yes; we must distrust what is proved; for most likely it is untrue!"

On the deck the conversation was going otherwise. "Do you really believe, absolutely and unreservedly, all that the Catholic Church teaches, as you said?"

"Certainly, else I should be a hypocrite."

"And yet, you don't appear to be an over-credulous man."

"On the contrary, I fear I am unduly sceptical. But in the matter of faith, once I have established the infallible authority, what remains, if things seem difficult, but to distrust my own understanding of them. Come now, you will admit that once you are certain of a thing, nothing can shake you."

"But you said it could not be proved demonstrably."

"And I say so still. It is, on the face of it, impossible to expect a mathematical proof."

"But how, then——"

"The grace of God, my dear Doctor, assisting the

assent of the reason to this great and overwhelming mass of moral evidence. The grace of God, which is always ready to turn the strongest possible of probabilities into an unwavering certainty, than which nothing is more sure. The evidence is as good and better than that on which you believe most of the things of which you are—or say you are—certain; and the assent of faith once given, is the strongest of which man is capable."

"Then why—it's the same sort of question as the Parson's—do not we all have this grace given to us. It would make things so much easier, if it is all as you say. It would seem as though it is only given to some. Why not to the others!"

"Perhaps they do not deserve it; a greater grace is given after the good use of a less. Perhaps they do not ask. But, in the teaching of that Church of which we speak, we know that to all sufficient grace is given. If properly used, it will infallibly lead on to further graces."

"Then all who are outside the Church have abused earlier graces that would have led to that faith?"

"Of themselves or of their ancestors, I suppose they have. There must be a fault somewhere. But, you know, we reckon him who, not through his own fault, is outside the fold, to belong to the Church in spirit. He is in the soul of the Church, as we say."

"Then why trouble about those who are not Catholics?"

"There are few, my friend, who have not, like yourself, come nearer to the light than that they can withdraw again without fault. The moment a tiny doubt crosses your mind in this matter you are bound to do your utmost to set it at rest. Besides, aren't you looking at it from a wrong standpoint. It is not an unpleasant duty to be avoided, to embrace the truth. The Gospel was, and is, to be preached to every creature to free them from error of intellect and weakness of will: to raise, illuminate, and bless —not to be a burden."

"But surely the restrictions which your Church enforces——"

"Are little more than those which a sane, unaided nature would proscribe. Think it over. There is very little commanded or forbidden by God or by His Church that is not also commanded or forbidden by right reason alone. But I must be going. Think it over for yourself. Good-night, Doctor."

"Good-night, Father," said the man of science, as he gripped the Priest's hand.

CHAPTER XII

SPIRITUALISM

"WHAT an intolerably dull day," said the Doctor laying down the book he was reading, with a thoroughly bored gesture, and for the sixth time relighting his cigar.

The Priest had just entered the smoking-room. Without, the decks were wet with the drizzle of a thick fog, and the walls of the various deck-houses dropped moisture. A heavy pall hung, like a billowy curtain, over the *Carinthia*, shutting out the sky, and, for the most part, the sullen sea itself, except when occasionally it thinned to a sort of Scotch mist clinging around the funnels, the masts, and rigging, dripping from the ropes and stanchions, and settling in an almost imperceptible film upon everything that was exposed.

From time to time a breath of air blew it into shreds and rags, or else it was hung over the colourless and oily billows in a patchwork effect of greyness and comparative light; for occasionally it lifted to discover the monotonous and monochrome land—

monotonous and monochrome only by reason of the enveloping fog—which heralded the new continent.

Labrador and Anticosti—or what one sees of them upon a really fine day from the deck of a liner—are not to be despised. It is a question whether one hails with greater joy the browns and greens of that wonderful south coast of Ireland, between Fastnett and Cork Harbour, or the no less wonderful effects of the north coast, from Tory Island to Fair Head, or the crushing effect of the walls of Belleisle or the plateau of Anticosti. It is no doubt a matter of temperament and interest, as well as an awakening of the artistic sense. In fine weather, give me the south coast of Ireland as the most beautiful thing that Nature has to offer in the whole world—the heather-clad heights, the sombre masses of bare and honest rock that work in the necessary contrast; but in fog or mystery-laden suggestion, give me the rugged heights of Labrador.

"It is not altogether pleasant," the Priest agreed, shrugging his shoulders, as if anticipatory of rheumatism. "But we ought not to complain. This is a mist in the Gulf rather than a fog on the Banks; and, if we are defrauded of the first-fruits of the New World, we can console ourselves that there is little or no danger in the navigation. Had we been befogged on the Banks in this month, I would not have been able to say the same thing.

"That's so," assented the Physician. "But where

are all our friends to-day? I have been in here ever since lunch, waiting for someone to turn up. Surely there's no one on deck, eh?"

"That's hardly the place to find people in this sort of weather," said the priest, with a little involuntary shiver, as he thought of the clinging atmosphere outside, penetrating the thickest coat and drizzling through the most tightly-buttoned collar. "I heard the piano going in the saloon. Very probably we should find them amusing themselves there."

"Shall we go down," asked the Doctor, with a yawn.

"Well, now, that's a nice question." The Priest took a pipe out of his pocket, and proceeded to fill it slowly. It was a pipe, by the way, not unlike its owner—stubby, solid, a bowl well polished by use, the edge chipped where it had been carelessly knocked in emptying the ash, and the deep marks of determined teeth showing in the stem. It was not very beautiful; but, with the fire within it, it was eminently serviceable. "That's a nice question," he went on, shifting the emphasis from "that" to "nice." "Here am I, waiting for the last hour for my after-lunch smoke, and the moment I am free to indulge, you want to drag me off to the saloon. Wait a bit, Doctor. You are not in such a hurry as all that. And you have had your smoke."

He pointed to the little pearly heap in the ash-tray, out of which rose three tell-tale records, standing

on end just as the Doctor had crushed out their fire, to show that he spoke with knowledge.

"All right," said the Doctor. "We'll go down when you have had your pipe." He held a light to the stump he was holding, and handed the match-box to the Priest. "I saw you go off with our young friend the Epicurean after lunch. What have you been talking about all this time?"

"Ghosts," came the astonishing reply.

"Ghosts!" The Doctor's eyebrows went up. "You mean spirits in a bottle. I suppose you have been giving him good advice."

"No. . . . Well, yes, perhaps a little. But when I say ghosts, I mean real, *bona-fide* ghosts, sheeted in white, and with clanking chains, and emitting horrid sighs and sepulchral groans."

"What do you mean?" asked the Doctor, mystified by the Priests manner rather than his words.

"Just what I say." The Priest was laughing outright now. "Just what I say: apparitions and ghostly visitations, materialised spirits and trance mediums, table-rapping and planchette—the whole paraphernalia of spiritism. Our Epicurean includes a belief in this, amongst his other practical philosophies, and he has been worked up into a communicative enthusiasm by finding a kindred spirit in—who do you think?—the Poet's Wife."

The Doctor looked interested. "There is something in it," he said tentatively, for he did not quite

know how far an admission would stamp him, in the Priest's opinion, as over-credulous.

"Of course there is!" agreed the Priest. "There's a very great deal in it, without doubt; a great deal of truth, and a good mixture of quackery as well. I, for one, am rather frightened of it as a whole. At any rate, I do not care to experiment; and I have no experience of it at first hand to tell you. But it seems to me that it has no sound principles to justify its practice."

The Doctor made no direct reply to this remark, though it was on the tip of his tongue to do so. He had suddenly evolved a brilliant scheme: an idea of throwing down the subject of "Ghosts" as a bone of contention between the Priest and the lady, as soon as he got the chance; and he was pretty sure that his chance would come as soon as they adjourned to the saloon. It seemed a promising subject to him, and one calculated to while away the tedium of a foggy afternoon. So, instead of saying what he knew, or drawing the Priest out then and there, he shrugged his shoulders together. "Ugh!" he exclaimed. "It is cold. Is that pipe of yours nearly finished? We would be much better off in the saloon than here."

"Two minutes!" protested the Priest.

The Physician added the cigar stump he held to the others in the ash-tray, crushing it there in the same fashion. He put his book in his pocket, and turned

up his coat collar. He then began to make geometrical patterns on the table before him with match-boxes, ash-trays, glasses—whatever was there—until the Priest was ready to go.

"You need not have waited for me," said the latter. "Come along, though. But I don't know that we are not better off here, after all. There's no piano in the smoking-room; while down there everyone seems to be taking his turn and trying to show how little music he—or, more properly, she—has in her."

They left the shelter of the smoking-room for the raw air of the deck, *en route* for the saloon. But we will be before them there, and take our places beside the Parson on the lounge.

"My dear young lady,"—the Poet is speaking to Euphon and both are seated in the long line of revolving chairs on the other side of the table—"with a soul like yours, you ought to cultivate all that is beautiful in English, rather than waste your time learning things like that. Most people neglect the beauty that lies at their very doors—pass Shakespeare, and Tennyson, and Milton, and Browning by because they think they will find more beautiful things elsewhere. Now if you had learnt your Greek at school. . . . But, even then, of those of us who did, who has it so well that he can read without the taint of thumbed grammars and irregular verbs crowding on his memory. I really don't think——"

But the entrance of our two friends put an end to

his good advice; and, as if by natural magic, the topic general took the place of *tête-à-tête*, the piano rattling a constant succession of accompaniment. The fog? Was it lifting? Was there danger? No? But it was very unpleasant. And so disappointing! The Captain said, at lunch, that they were near enough to land to see it if . . ." and so on, for ten minutes at least.

The Doctor waited patiently, taking his turn in the conversation. But it presented no suitable opening; and so, in the spirit of mischief, he began to turn the subject, with machiavellian duplicity, into other channels. He engaged the Parson, discoursing on the dæmon of Socrates; he tried the Poet with "The Dream of Gerontius"; his wife with a reference to Mr Meyer; but all with the same lack of success. He would have thrust the subject to the fore without any preparation, but that he did not wish the Priest to think that he was bent upon pitting him against the Poet's Wife. At last the Parson and the Priest came out simultaneously with what was, in substance, the same remark. Natural enough, in any case; doubly so, when people are discussing a familiar question. But it was enough for the Doctor. While Euphon crooked her finger with a pretty gesture—you and I used to do it in our childhood—and smiled affectionately across at her father, the wily Physician saw his longed-for chance.

"A case of thought transference," he remarked,

quite simply and soberly, with the corner of his eye fixed on the elder lady.

"So it is," she said. She had fallen into the trap. The talk would go now as he wanted it to go, and the Priest would not suspect that he had so carefully awaited an opportunity of giving it a push.

"So it is. Now, that is extremely interesting. I don't suppose you two gentlemen think alike habitually; and therefore the case is the more interesting. I belong to a society for investigating, among other things, phenomena like this. So well known, yet so mysterious."

"What other things?" asked the Doctor innocently, and almost under his breath. He did not wish the Priest to hear. But he was going too fast.

"Eh? What?" queried the Poet's Wife. And while the guileless Priest looked at him reproachfully he repeated his question. "What are the subjects your society investigates?" He was self-confessed now, and so he resolved to brazen it out.

"Oh! All the psychic phenomena; appearances, communications from the spirit-world, materialisations. It is really most interesting; and I have all the facts on the most unimpeachable authority?"

"So," exclaimed the Physician, nodding his head; "you have seen all these things yourself?"

"No," the lady grudgingly admitted; "that is to say, not all of them. But I have had communications from the other world through a medium at

seances, and "—with the visible bridling of a challenge —"I have had the most wonderful answers from planchette."

"That is interesting," remarked the Parson meditatively. "I always looked upon planchette as a rather silly toy. We had one — you remember, Euphon? But it never would do anything for us; and after a time we tired of it."

"You were quite wrong, sir!" snapped the lady caustically. "Planchette is by no means a toy. By means of it the intelligences of the departed communicate their thoughts to us from the spirit-world."

"Auto-suggestion and nervous reaction," was the Doctor's comment; and the Priest formed with his lips the two words, "the Devil." But no one heard him speak; and the lady returned to the charge, taking up the Physician's words.

"Auto-suggestion! Nothing of the kind! Who can suggest to himself what he does not know? Planchette writes answers in languages of which the operator is totally ignorant; gives information that no one present has. And what do you say to that?"

"Nothing, dear lady," said the Doctor, with a smile. "I never believed in planchette; but I have had curious experiences in other ways. A friend of mine now, many years ago, had his fortune told by a gipsy. He's dead now, poor chap. But it all came true; even to the time and manner of his death."

The Poet's Wife was annoyed. She fancied that the Doctor was trying to throw discredit on her "spiritualism," and she said tartly: "That's quite a different thing. No serious person believes in common fortune-telling."

"Don't they?" said the Doctor humbly. "I think you are mistaken."

"That's the way with these things," remarked the Priest, speaking for the first time. "Each person has his own standard, and believes or denies just so much as he pleases. One man rejects table-turning as explicable on natural, if unknown, grounds. Another will have nothing to do with fortune-telling. But all those drifting minds that are under the fascinating spell of the mysterious, agree in admitting a certain amount, more or less, of spiritualism, and swearing by it. It is dangerous in the extreme."

"I suppose you say it is not true," snapped the lady.

"On the contrary, I believe it to be quite possible," replied the Priest. "And that it does occur, I have no doubt, for I have it from most trustworthy witnesses."

"Really?" asked the Parson, opening his eyes.

But the Doctor had not yet sufficiently drawn the lady. "And banjoes and tambourines flying through the air?" he went on. "And clammy spirit hands and bodies clothed in very substantial drapery?"

The Poet's Wife was irate. "You doctors are the

most sceptical of men. I don't imagine, if you had absolutely personal proof, you would believe."

"Oh, yes, I would; and as a matter of fact, I do," answered the Physician imperturbably. "A great deal may be due to trickery; Mr Maskelyne offered to prove that; more, perhaps, to nervous or unexplained causes; but a certain residuum of truth remains in these psychic phenomena. That I admit unhesitatingly."

Seeing that, to some extent at least, both Priest and Physician agreed with her, the Poet's Wife turned upon the Parson. "And you, sir; what do you think of spirit-manifestations?"

"Ah! Dear me!"—the Parson knitted his brows as he tried to fix his not very clear opinions on the subject and ransack his learning for classical examples; for he lived his scholar's life in the far distant past rather than in the living present—"Dear me! There was the sad-voiced spirit of Polydore, singing of his woes and the foreknowledge of his 'dear mother,' telling of that awful apparition above the tomb of Achilles that struck fear into the hearts of the returning Greeks, and bewailing his own sad fate—his body buffeted 'now on the shores and now in the salt wave'—and that of Polyxena."

The Parson would have gone on in the same strain, had not Euphon interrupted him. "But that is not true, father. It is in the play we were reading."

"It shows a belief that the thing could happen, my child: a mere play could not produce a belief."

"Did Shakespeare believe in ghosts when he introduced one into 'Hamlet'?" queried the Poet.

"I daresay he did," replied the Parson, thinking of another "apparition." "There was the Witch of Endor, and the vision of 'gods ascending out of the earth.'" He was on sure ground now. "There is the twenty-eighth chapter of the first book of Samuel. If such things are recorded in the Scriptures, I don't see—I should imagine . . . No; I can't see why they cannot happen now."

"So you agree, too," said the Poet's Wife triumphantly.

"I cannot see why not, in the main, since we find them in the Bible," replied the Parson.

"Very good, then. If then, why not now? There is no reason why anyone should call the modern instances impostures. It is consoling to the living to hear the voices and see the faces of their loved ones coming back from 'the other side.' And we know that the spirits long for the chance of making their communications to their living friends. They tell us of the life beyond; the progression; their nearness to ourselves; the guarding watch they keep over us; and, whereas in this world our would-be teachers tell us things without proof, here they are their own proofs of the statements they make."

Euphon's eyes were opened wide in astonishment,

as the usually matter-of-fact lady enlarged upon her theme. The Parson's face expressed mild wonder. The Priest looked serious, for he had had some experience of spiritualists, and knew in what apparently uncongenial soil such ideas and opinions take root. He did not wonder at the ease with which one cause, explaining the phenomena, was advanced without reference to any of the many possible ones. He knew the obsession of spiritism; and was mentally diagnosing the present case. The Poet was ill at ease, as he usually was when his wife was riding one of her favourite hobbies. The Doctor's ruse had succeeded. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

The Poet's Wife continued: "The spirits teach us of realms of love and continued evolution. They do away with eternal punishment, and tell us how their life resembles ours, save in the cloying of an earthly frame. They teach consideration and care for the dumb animals; for they, too, appear to us from the spirit-world, and manifest their feelings of joy or sorrow. From the far-off grey mists of antiquity, spirits have appeared to man. Here—in their revelations—if anywhere, there is truth in which we can rest contented."

She paused. The piano tinkled on at the end of the saloon. The Priest leant forward, his elbows upon the table, his chin resting upon his hands. It was about time for him to say something. He felt

it; so did the rest. But he began slowly—haltingly even. "A great deal you have said is true. That is to say, there is a mixture of truth and falsehood in spiritualism, taking it altogether. But, as a whole, it is a bad thing—playing with edged tools. No wonder the Scriptures and the Church condemn intercourse with 'witches' and 'pythons,' and forbid even what has the appearance of dealings with the Evil One."

The Parson looked half-amused, half-relieved. He had not a very rooted belief that the Devil was much concerned with what he would have termed "the quackery of spiritualists"; still, he felt that the Poet's Wife had stated her case very strongly, and was grateful to the Priest for taking her up.

"The practice of spiritism has led souls astray from the Truth, and has become a religion of itself, contradicting Christianity in many of its conflicting teachings. It has ruined and depraved minds, throwing them from their normal balance. It has brought in its train broken nerves and shattered constitutions, hysteria, and sometimes downright madness. You, Doctor, if you have had any experience of these cases, will bear me out. Health, moral force, self-respect, faith, reason, are threatened; and the end, if they go on to the end, is ruin of body, brain, and soul."

The Doctor looked at the speaker sharply. How did he know, this strange man, the physical and

mental ailments that properly belonged to him? But he nodded a confirmation, for he had had experience, and the Poet's Wife looked daggers at him.

"Do you mean to state," she said, "that the teachings of the spirits are not true?"

"We shall come to that point in a moment," replied the Priest. "I assert that the practice of spiritism is dangerous to the soul. That is in my province. Ask the Doctor if I am not right in asserting further that it is dangerous to body and mind as well."

Everyone looked towards the Physician, who took a notebook from his pocket. "As it happens," he said, "I am interested in this subject—very deeply interested. I look upon it all, naturally, from a medical point of view, and I have not had either the time or opportunity to go into it on its own merits. But I have some notes of an interesting case." He turned over the pages of his notebook rapidly. "Ah! Here it is! 'Case IV. Female; neurosis, symptoms of hysteria.' And that all means, in ordinary language, that my patient gradually became an absolute wreck; while I and my medicines were powerless in her case. I am convinced that her illness was caused by her connection, as a medium, with the spiritualists. She would not give it up, and she became worse and worse, until she was physically incapable of being present at a seance. Then she

got slightly better. The first seance at which she subsequently acted as a medium prostrated her, and she came to me again. After much trouble, I persuaded her to have nothing to do with spiritualism for a time. She recovered partially; but has never been quite well since."

"And was her illness caused by the seances, and nothing else?" questioned the Poet's Wife.

"As far as I could see, and speaking as a medical man, by that alone. It may be that this particular patient was a neurotic subject, but I have observed the same thing in other cases; and, in any case, neurotic or no, it was the spiritualism that was directly to blame. Of that, and of its evil effects, I am convinced."

The Doctor shut up his notebook with a snap, and put it back in his pocket, as the Poet's Wife insisted: "But there are medical men who are spiritualists."

"Yes, there are. There are medical men who are all sorts of things. It does not follow that they are infallible."

"But you speak as a physician."

"Undoubtedly; but not as an individual giving a private opinion. The profession would agree in my diagnosis."

It was not the Doctor's plan to involve himself in a controversy of detail and fact with the Poet's Wife, so he turned to the Priest with a request for the principles upon which he judged of spiritism. The

latter complied with his wish; and, as the instrument tinkled and jangled out a selection of Scotch airs, he summed up the subject comprehensively.

"It is not quite a simple thing," he said, "to take an impartial view of spiritism. Our prejudices of character stand in the way. We are scoffers or believers; we fly to natural causes for an explanation, or we invoke diabolical agencies; we embrace and practise it, or we anathematise. But if we begin by disabusing our minds of prejudice, and accept the facts as we find them, and then try to piece together an explanation in the light of the knowledge we have from any other sources, we shall not be far wrong. Discount the sham and the trickery. Make every allowance for forces of nature possibly coming into play—the nervous mechanism of the body, thought-transference, auto-suggestion, tricks of memory, and so on—as being in the vague borderland of the scientifically explainable. It is with what remains that we have to deal. From what we know, it is the work of intelligence. The question is, what are the intelligences concerned? They may be living human beings—ourselves, for instance. Some people explain all the phenomena thus. But all cannot be, and are not, as a matter of fact, explained so simply; and, consequently, such an explanation is of little worth. They may be the souls of those who are dead, or they may be angels. But such beings, supposing they were allowed to communicate with

us by rapping upon tables, or taking possession of 'mediums,' or making use of slate-pencils—most improbable on the face of it—would hardly tell us lies or do us harm. And yet we know, if we believe in the Christian revelation, that they lie; for they deny its truth, under the appearance of teaching the love of God or the brotherhood of man. More than that, they lie; for they contradict themselves continually. One would hardly expect that of an angel or a soul from Paradise. And we have already seen how they do us harm. The Doctor has only confirmed what I myself know by report. It remains then to say that if there are communications of this kind from another world, they come from beings of a malignant and evil nature. They are devils, not angels; and if human souls at all, the souls of the lost."

The Poet's Wife was furious. She could hardly control her voice as she interrupted the Priest. "So the spirits are devils," she sneered. "That's a nice way of getting out of a difficulty—at the end of the nineteenth century, too! To say that we spiritualists communicate with devils! As if there were any devils at all! To say that spiritualism contradicts those precious dogmas of Papists! As if there were anything true in your 'Christian revelation'! Arthur! I am surprised that you will allow me to be spoken of in that way. Your wife is a devil-worshipper!"

There was a general consternation in the little group. Fortunately, the piano was doing its utmost, and no one else in the saloon was near enough them to hear her words.

"Arthur" said and did nothing except look nervous and miserable; and the Priest, who had unintentionally been the cause of the outburst, attempted to soothe her. "You have quite mistaken me, madam," he said. "I in no way intended my remarks to apply to you. Indeed, on your own showing, you have never had very much to do with the 'spirits.' There are many who are caught by the glamour of spiritism, who do not ever examine it very carefully, and, in consequence, see no wrong in it. I would not, for an instant even, suppose that you really went in for the practice with your eyes open. I beg you to pardon me if I have in any way hurt you by what I have said. And—I am taking a great liberty, I know"—his voice became even more solemn than it had been—"I beg of you to have nothing more to do with spiritism. Stick to your other excellent philanthropic and charitable works. But this . . . : there is a real danger in it. You do not like the Church; but, believe me, she acts prudently and carefully, and, in uttering her warning here, she solemnly asserts the terrible risk run, the danger courted. I do not speak to you in her name, but—the Doctor will endorse me—in the name of reason and science I utter her warning."

The Doctor nodded approval, and the Parson fidgeted. The lady's anger had died away under the Priest's earnestness, and by the time the steward, who was bringing cups of tea to the occupants of the saloon, had reached the place where they sat, the unpleasant tension had slackened, and the conversation drifted back to the fog and the chances of its lifting to display the beauty of Canadian shores.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONCERT

"A LITTLE piece written for the occasion," said the Poet, with a low bow to the assembled company.

It was the last item on the programme of the concert in aid of the "Seamen's Homes," notices of which had for several days been posted up in the saloon, smoking-room, and companion way.

Talent had been found on board—quite a galaxy of talent; and the concert had gone off so far without a hitch. The usual songs, with an aria from an opera sung by a lady of whom rumour had it that she had been on the stage. The usual recitation by the nervous young man; and a fine old rollicking song —"Down Among the Dead Men"—"with a chorus, you know, in which you all join, 'down, down, down,'" emphasised with his plump old hand—by the jovial old gentleman who sits by the piano, flushed and perspiring, and happy with the success of his efforts.

"A little poem for the occasion," reiterated the Poet, pushing back his long black locks. "It is called

—ahem!—'The Ocean.'" And he proceeded to read out, in a pleasant and resonant voice, and with a certain amount of expression and dramatic effect, the poem at which he had been working for the last few days. It was really a quite good composition. His descriptions were good and his wording happy; and though the substructure of thought had a melancholy suggestion of metaphysics—the illimitable, the timeless, the strong and beautiful, played a large part in his personification of "The Ocean"—yet it was received by his audience with a hearty round of applause and many requests for copies. He was pleased; and, what was more, his wife shared in his pleasure; and it was some time after the strains of "God Save the King" had died away, that he managed to find his way to the little party already gathered together in the corner of the smoking-room. They had been speaking, naturally enough, of the various items on the programme; and, in particular, of the Poet's contribution. Perhaps you would like a verse or two, just to see what it was like? Very well! Imagine the exordium—lengthy and descriptive—and fill in the ending for yourself. Here are a few verses from the middle, after he has got the Ocean fairly personified:—

"I sit enthroned in majesty and might.
Amid the treasures of my ocean keep
The ages come and go in ceaseless flight.
Earth changes; but no change assails the deep.

"I am the Sea, the loving, patient, good;
I am the strong, relentless, pitiless.
To me the toilers turn for daily food;
And widows curse me—all their poor redress!

"For 'neath the azure sky I sleep, and surge
In sinuous beauty to the zephyrs' breath.
I wake in anger; and in fury urge
My strong white horses to their work of death.

"Great ships reel to and fro; and human hearts
Are wrung with anguished fear and frenzied pain.
Again I smile. The angered storm-cloud parts;
The lightnings quiver; and I smile again."

"What do you think his idea was when he wrote that?" asked the Doctor. "Is it only a picture he is drawing; or is it the idea of the awful, blind forces of nature . . .? Hallo! Here he is. Bravo, Poet! That was a fine thing you read us."

"Do you think so," said the gentleman addressed, taking a seat nonchalantly, and trying to appear as if he were not very proud of himself indeed. "I'm very glad. But it was nothing very much; only, there is a thread running through it . . ."

"I said so!" exclaimed the Doctor. "I wonder if I was right. You had in your mind the thought of irresistible power; the idea of blind, ungovernable force, when you wrote that; hadn't you, now?"

"Something like that," assented the Poet.

But the Parson could not forbear a criticism. "Don't you think," he said, "that is an altogether mistaken notion? There is a will-power behind all

that apparent brute force that we observe in nature. If only we could get out of ourselves; and, instead of unrelated parts, see the whole in action, we should no doubt perceive will and the reasons for willing in every one of those phenomena that seem to us now so unreasonable and inexplicable"—which, I think, you will grant, was very good—even if borrowed—philosophy on the Parson's part.

"With all due deference to the Poet, you are right, sir," said the Priest. "The same thing is apparent in human nature, even when the person under observation is carrying out the details of a well-arranged scheme. We only see one or two apparently meaningless actions. It is the same thing with a machine or a building. If we did not know the use of foundations or mortar, we should be set wondering and speculating and racking our brains as to why the workmen dig down into the earth instead of building up; and what their reasons could be for mixing what looks so like a huge mud pie."

"I wonder," thought the Doctor, "what he is leading up to now: for he seems to be leaving the "illimitable forces." However, I shan't interrupt him. Whatever he says will be worth hearing." By which glimpse of the Physician's mind you will observe that he had formed a very high opinion of the Priest. He had been much struck during the course of their few conversations by the points which the clergyman had raised; and for the most part he had gone on to

draw his own conclusions on the lines indicated—rather than laid down—by his friend. What struck him most, perhaps, were the ready sympathy, the broad views, and the childlike faith of a man belonging to a class that, with all its good points, he had allowed himself to think narrow, bigoted, and credulous—half fool, half knave. His agnosticism had received many a good-humoured home-thrust; and I fancy he would not now venture to make so outspoken a profession of unbelief in a deity as he had made on the evening of their first meeting in the smoking-room. Indeed, he was wavering on many questions in which his mind had come in contact with that of the Priest; and, almost without perceiving it, he had come to look upon many problems from quite a new point of view; an outlook that he felt was both logical and satisfying. But, like not a few others in a similar position, he felt it difficult to go to the Priest alone and thresh it all out. So he awaited the turn of events, now inclining to one view, now to another; at one time allowing the full force of the Priest's keen logic to come home to his mind, at another wrapping himself up in the threadbare garment of his ancient scepticism. It was the will to believe in conflict with the will to criticise, the struggle of new light with the darkness of his old habit.

"I don't quite see what bricks and mortar have to do with power, whether blind or voluntary,"

grumbled the Poet, with, perhaps, a pardonable vanity. He would not have minded a change in the conversation, had not his itching ears yearned for a discussion of his poem.

"Nothing much, I admit," smiled the Priest. "Only, since your admirable verses personified the will of the all-powerful Ocean, one naturally runs off to the real will behind it, and so on to the free-will of man."

"Ah! That's a question," commented the Doctor, "that needs some explanation. For the life of me, I cannot see how we can be free agents, when all that we do or think is conditioned and fixed by the law of the strongest motive."

"How do you know that?" asked the Priest.

"Why, Father, it's the method of science," retorted the Doctor. "Nowadays, we want reasons for everything; and we expect to find them. And why should we exclude the will? It must act on some motive; and, therefore, on the strongest."

"So it must act on the strongest motive?" queried the Priest.

"Naturally," was the Physician's reply.

"And what is the strongest motive?" pursued the questioner.

The Doctor saw the trap, but could not avoid it. "The strongest motive—well, it's the one that forces the will to act."

"That is neat," said the Priest. "In other words,

it is that one which the will adopts. You are arguing in a circle, Doctor; don't you see the fallacy? There's no way out of it—that vicious circle—but by saying that the will itself makes the strongest motive. You determinists tell me that I am bound, in given circumstances, to act in a certain way. Of course I don't say you are a determinist, Doctor, but you are using their argument. I say I am not. You can't prove to me that I am. I'm conscious and certain of my own freedom. And only by granting that, can I—or you, for the matter of that—explain our sense of responsibility or duty."

"You say I can't prove determinism. But you can't prove freedom," argued the man of science.

"I don't know that I can. Personally, I think it needs no proof. It appears to me to be a primitive fact of consciousness, rather than a truth requiring demonstration. Explanation ——? Yes, perhaps. But you can't persuade me, or any sane man, that the human will is not free, when every action and deliberation of our daily lives postulates and manifests its freedom. Merely to suppose a will not free, is to throw the whole of life into a meaningless chaos, and turns our world topsy-turvy."

"You do not think it necessary to attempt a demonstration?" asked the Parson, to show that he had been paying attention.

"I do not," was the Priest's reply.

"What about predestination, then?" The Poet

began to forget his wrongs and take an interest in the conversation.

"That is quite another question—a theological one into which we need not enter while we are talking philosophy. It comes from revelation; and it's best to let revelation explain it. Free-will—to confine ourselves to our subject—is a certainty beyond doubt or cavil, just as is our existence. If anyone denies it, I pity him. And God—philosophy vouches for that—has a foreknowledge of all things possible, including all events that will ever take place—not excepting the free actions of man."

"Then He knows whether you will be lost or saved," broke in the Parson.

The Priest rammed the square top of his middle finger into the bowl of his pipe, which had been out for some time. There was not enough left in it to light, and he laid it down upon the table before him. The Doctor offered his case; and, nodding his thanks, he extracted a cigarette and laid it beside his pipe. Then he answered the Parson's comment. "Undoubtedly," he said dryly. "But He knows also that I shall act freely in the process. Do you find any difficulty in allowing Him a greater degree of knowledge than His creatures? I think not. The two truths of which we speak stand out, luminous points in the hierarchy of our knowledge: one the principle on which all our actions are based; the other a firm conclusion which reason—if we listen

to reason at all—forces us to believe. Can I reconcile them? Yes; but by my human, and therefore more or less limited, notion of the relations of time to eternity. I act in time. All time—past, present, and future—is one eternal Now to God. What shall be in a hundred years He sees as though it had already been; or rather, since time and eternity are incommensurate, yesterday and to-morrow are to-day. It seems to me that the key lies here. But, whether it does or no, I am certain of my two truths none the less."

"So you confess to an antinomy," summed up the Parson, looking disappointed and puzzled. "I had hoped you might have had some explanation, some theory, to offer."

"I don't know that an explanation is really necessary. True wisdom, my friend, knows its limitations. Don't you remember the luminous and plastic ether; the parallel lines that, somewhere or other in space, are supposed to meet? We must get outside our subject to understand it: not burrow into it like moles. If the answer lies somewhere in eternity, we must leave off measuring the dark tunnels that we are making in time, and get out into the sunlight."

"And there is a contradiction here?" asked the Doctor.

"No; no contradiction. To understand how the All-knowing can foresee free actions is a very different

thing from knowing that He does. You know perfectly well that even science can never give an answer to the 'why?' of her questions, though it may reply to the 'what.'"

"And they can't be reconciled?"—The Poet was getting sleepy, or he would not have asked the question.

"I have just told the Doctor that there is no contradiction, and therefore, no reconciliation is necessary," said the Priest, patient with his questioners and looking at his watch. "There is perfect agreement between the two truths. That much we can say safely. But reason, with all its wealth of endowment, is only created and finite; and it finds it hard to strip off the limited qualities which it knows as its own, and substitute for them the absolute perfection which it realises must be God's. It is the transition from knowledge conditioned by time to eternal knowledge that is difficult."

"No one knows anything about that," said the Doctor gravely. "And I notice you always find a new problem behind each old one."

Taking his cigarette from the table, the Priest lit it thoughtfully. "If you could pursue all the lines far enough back, you would come to one truth that explains all others. They are converging. But I differ from you that we know nothing of timeless existence. The scientific method, true, cannot measure it by the ticking of a clock. But pure

thought can penetrate beyond mere motion in matter. And, if there is a God at all, He must be eternally unlimited. It follows from His perfection. And consequently, . . . "

"Consequently, He is omniscient," concluded the Physician.

"Precisely so. He is, to use the rough phrase again, outside His subject, as it were. He sees time from the outside, and is not conditioned by it."

"That certainly gives food for thought," the Doctor said meditatively.

The Priest lifted his eyes and glanced around the smoking-room. It was nearly empty by this time. One table only was being used for cards, and a couple of men were finishing their pipes and talking in low tones at another. The Parson was beginning to nod. He looked at his watch again, and then carefully pressed the lighted end of his cigarette against the ash-tray.

"Yes," he said; "it gives food for thought, and for action, too. Time, for us, at any rate, is a tyrannical reality; and it's bedtime now. If you don't want to miss some of the finest bits of the river, you must be up in the morning."

The Parson sat up with a start. "Dear me, how late it is! Well, have you settled all about free-will and foreknowledge?"

"Hardly that," laughed the Priest.

We've got a good way, though," said the Doctor.

"You missed that last bit, I'm afraid. It seems plain sailing, right enough; but it's not an easy thing to imagine."

"You mustn't try to imagine it," corrected the Priest. "You must think it; and that's a very different thing. However, we ought to be on the move now. A good night to you, gentlemen. You'll let me have a copy of your verses, won't you?"

"Certainly, I will," replied the Poet, brightening up. "Of course. I shall be only too happy."

They all left the smoking-room, and stood for a moment on deck before going to their state-rooms. It was dark, but a myriad of bright stars looked down upon the world, and the *Carinthia* ploughed a faint furrow of phosphorescence through the still water. A solitary figure was visible on the bridge. To the left a low band of dead black lay upon the water.

"That," said the Priest, pointing, "is the south shore. We are getting well into the St Lawrence now."

"Our voyage is nearly over, then," remarked the Doctor. "It has been a pleasant one. I, for one, have enjoyed it."

"We all have," said the Poet.

"Even our dry disquisitions upon philosophy?" asked the Priest. A smile curved on his clean-shaven face, but the darkness hid it.

"Dry? They haven't been dry," protested the

Doctor; while the Parson, courteous, even if sleepy, added: "You have given us a great deal of pleasure, sir, by the part you have taken in them."

"Well, I'm glad of that, if I really have," said the Priest earnestly. "But we must be going now, Do you know that it's past midnight? Good-night again, gentlemen." And they left the deck of the *Carinthia* to the stars.

What the silent guardian standing on the bridge thought, I know not. But it is possible that the vastness of the night conjured up the deep-rooted thoughts that lie, unsuspected sometimes, in the mind of man, and wrought upon the strings of feeling within his heart. Sailors are not exceptions, but rather accentuations of the rule. We are all very much the same, after all is said and done; and Nature, in whatever form or mood, generally brings the same messages to us. We hear them in the whispering air as it just stirs the languid leaves on a hot summer's afternoon, and in the thunder of the surf upon the shingle, and in the rain-drops that patter on the window-pane as we sit idly waiting for the sun to shine, and in the silence of the night.

They all set us a-musing, if we will only hearken to their voices as they tell us of the will behind all laws, and whisper the secret of the unity of our scattered rays of Truth in the one refulgent light of the Divine.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RIVER

THE Ocean had given place to the Gulf, and the Gulf to the River. There are few finer rivers in the world than the St Lawrence, taken altogether from, say, Anticosti to Lake Ontario. At first, long stretches of green sedge that look like floating islands moored to the bank ; behind them, the purple mountains showing through the distant haze, and little whitewashed villages—a mere group of low houses nestling under the golden-white tin spire and roof of the parish church, where the fishermen and the pilots and the habitants go to Mass on Sundays: where the Macfarlanes and the Macphersons and the Gordons, the descendants of a disbanded Scottish regiment who speak the purest "canoyen," and have forgotten that they did not come out with Laval himself, are baptised and make their first Communion: where a blushing Julie or Marie Paule Bédard, who can trace her ancestry back to the Breton peasantry of Louis XIII., goes to the Altar to return as Madame Stewart: where the east wind from the Gulf draws its patterns

in the lichens that are doing their best to efface the *ci gît* of old, but not altogether forgotten, stones. For all the life of these quiet villages centres around the village church, just as all the houses group themselves around its stone walls. Here from their homesteads come the farmers and their families in their calèches and buckboards to assist at the Mass and Vespers thoughtfully following each other without a break. Here are the auctions, Vespers done, and the weekly chats. Here the curé and his vicaire hob-nob with the pilots and fermiers and discuss the weather and the crops—for are they not all the same people, with the same interests and the same hopes? And behind it all, the forest of sweet-smelling sapin and the tamarack swamp and the trout stream and the placid lake. And before, standing out bravely on the point of rock, the low whitewashed lighthouse to remind the little community that Civilisation—with a capital C and many inconveniences and many unrealities and many, many sorrows—occasionally passes them by.

Higher up, as the ship passes where the river narrows between higher banks, the villages open out, as it were, and the cottages straggle—each with its long narrow strip of fenced land, fenced and narrow to keep the snows until the spring frosts have gone —straggle out along the road that leads through dozens of similar villages to Quebec. Below the steep ascent leading from the river to the road

smaller hamlets nestle—two or three houses, sometimes, and a wharf—back in some sheltered bay or at the mouth of a confluent stream. From Point au Père, where the last mails for Europe go on board, to Levis! from the Saguenay to the St Charles and on up to the Great Lakes, past the Lachine Rapids and the Thousand Islands—with dreams of the eternal Laurentians in the far distance, hoary-headed soaring peaks, worn and scored by the ice-ploughs of the past, clothed in the dark pine forests over which they tower—there are few finer rivers in the world than the St Lawrence. Thus, at any rate, as the vessel passed steadily along, sending its swells to stir the sedges at the bank, thought most of the *Carinthia's* passengers.

Standing near the bow and watching the undulations of the north shore, many-hued in green and grey, clear cut and gorgeous beneath the rays of a Canadian summer sun, were the Doctor, the Priest, the Parson, and Euphon.

The Parson's Daughter is speaking.

"How lovely it is, this great river, after the ocean. Look, Father, at that sweet little village. And what a pretty church. The roof looks just like burnished gold."

"It's tin," laughed the Priest; "but it is beautiful, is it not? now that it has begun to rust a little. And it really is a fine church, if you make allowances for its style."

"What style is it?" The Parson seemed interested.

"Early Canadian Perpendicular. At least, so I've heard it described," the Priest smiled back. "Just look how the sun catches that angle of the spire! Yes: it's a good building; dressed stone from the hills. It is built for solidity and use rather than for beauty."

"Umph!" grunted the Doctor, taking a long pull at his cigar. "It's too good for the village. How you priests must grind the people to build churches like that here. No wonder they are poor and their cottages like mere huts."

"Stone huts," corrected the Priest. "And what makes you think the people are poor? I know a good many of them: and they seem to be pretty comfortably off. At any rate, they are happy and contented, and that is the great thing."

"Why do you say they are ground, Doctor?" asked Euphon, her serious eyes turning from the receding village to the Doctor's face. "I think it's very beautiful of the people to build such churches for themselves and their children. It shows how generous they are."

"In the Province of Quebec, my dear, the clergy build their churches by levying a tax upon the people of the district. Am I not right, sir? it is a relic of the French law."

"Quite right," explained the Priest; "but that is

not the reason of the difference between homestead and church. The French Canadian, as a rule, has a large family. His land becomes divided. Each contributes, and willingly, his little quota; and the church is built. There is no grinding, Doctor. Your daughter, sir, is right when she attributes good-will to the people who build those churches. There is no country more genuinely religious than French Canada; and there is no finer man than the French Canadian to be found. He is happy and contented; generally prosperous, and easily satisfied; does his duty to his family, his town, and his church. They are a fine people, and come of a fine old stock. Where they are uninfluenced by what is foreign to their character and race, they are unsurpassed; for the backbone — the salvation — of a people is its nationality. And there is not much danger of their losing their individuality, and with it their sterling worth, as long as the *patois* of the north shore is spoken along the St Lawrence."

The Doctor was rather taken aback by the Priest's panegyric of the "canuck." He thought of other things; and his thoughts took shape in this fashion. "Do you think that strong nationalism is always a good thing?"

"Nationalism? Yes; pure and simple. Do you remember the saying, 'The race that shortens its weapons enlarges its boundaries'? Let me make an aphorism. The race that loses its national char-

acteristics ceases to be a race. No; that is badly put. The national character lives only in the national aim of the individual. That's better."

"But——" the Doctor began to object.

"But," laughed the Priest, "we are drifting into politics; and that will never do for one of my cloth. Do you see that point ahead? Just beyond it we pass the village of St Anne de Beaupré."

"Oh?" said the Parson in a query. He had never heard of the place before.

"Oh!" And the Doctor's eyebrows arched themselves from sheer habit, for he had.

"What is St Anne de Beaupré?" asked Euphon.

"First of all, it is a village near Quebec," smiled the Priest obligingly. "Next, it is a rather pretty village. Thirdly, it is the most celebrated shrine on the American continent—the shrine of La Bonne St Anne. Enormous pilgrimages go there, and many remarkable cures—miracles—take place at the——"

"Do you really mean to say," began the man of science, "that in this twentieth century you can stand here and assert that miracles are worked in that little village? I followed you the other day, after a fashion; but this localising of your theory in working order is quite another thing. It is preposterous, my dear sir, preposterous." And from the contortions of the Parson's scholarly face, we may perhaps infer that his sentiments were voiced by the Doctor's words.

Not so Euphon. "Oh! do tell me of the miracles, Father. I should so like to see one. And how pleased the poor people who are cured, and their friends, must be. But do they actually happen?"

The Priest was silent for a moment. The same problem had arisen in his mind when the subject last came up. He saw the almost insurmountable difficulties presented by lack of familiarity and ingrained prejudice; and as he thought of how he could best answer the three so differently disposed critics, his quick mind grasped the difficulty—nor for the first time—of explaining what to him was so clear and familiar and obvious to hearers whose mental atmosphere was so utterly devoid of understanding in the matter. But he began bravely. "You admit biblical miracles, I suppose?"

"Umph!" grunted the Doctor, taking refuge in his old scepticism.

"Of course. Miracles did not cease until post-apostolic times," assented the Parson.

Euphon said nothing. She had probably never thought very seriously of the subject, taking what shreds of truth she had heard more or less for granted.

"Well!" The Priest followed up the Parson's admission. "If miracles were possible then, they are possible now. There are two ways in which I might speak of miracles. I might show how they are as possible to the Almighty now as they were in

apostolic times, and go on to show how they were both natural, and even necessary, things to expect in a supernatural dispensation, and then bid you go search for miracles as a sign of the system or Church that really is supernatural. Or, I may point to facts—hard, stubborn facts—which ordinary prudence and medical science cannot explain on ordinary grounds, and ask you to account for them. If you believe in God—and you all do—Don't raise your eyebrows, Doctor, for I know you really do believe in a Creator now:—you must believe that He is superior to the laws which He Himself has made. If you believe in His providence—and all Christians believe that—you must admit that, in some cases at least, that providence takes extraordinary forms; and if you are a Catholic, you go one step further, and recognise that the Lord of all holds all power in His hands. You know that His dealings with mankind do not vary; that supernatural signs are to be expected in a permanent supernatural order; that the reign of power of the Christ is not temporary, but eternal; and that, among the prerogatives of that power, are miracles. 'In My name shall ye cast out devils. . . .' You draw your finger down the page of history from the time when Peter's shadow fell upon the sick and healed them; you pass the story of Queen Theodolinda and the relics sent from the apertures of the martyrs' tombs; saint after saint, miracle after miracle, all through the chequered page of the world's

history—a wheel within a wheel, the supernatural within the natural—and you end, if you please, to-day, with Lourdes or St Anne de Beaupré. There it is! Do you see the twin spires of the Basilica? Facts are stubborn things. Science marshals her facts in battalions, and works them up into laws. Faith marshals her facts, too, and they stand, golden letters or blemishes, as you please to look at it—sentiment and prejudice go for so much!—blazoned upon the red page of history. I have never seen a miracle—I am candid, you see. But, as facts, I believe them on as good a testimony as that upon which I take Science's latest dictum. Moreover, if I threw overboard the principle upon which these extraordinary events are based, I should not only cease to be a Catholic—no, I should cease to be a Christian."

"Now, surely," said the Doctor, "the very regularity observed in the working of Nature's laws gives you your chief argument for the existence of God Himself, and then, as soon as you have reached a belief in Him, you turn around and destroy the path by which you have come by asserting that the laws of Nature may be variable."

"Oh, no!" replied the Priest gravely. "I never said that. I don't mean to say anything of that kind. And your laws of Nature? What do you mean by them but laws imposed on Nature? What is a law? A generalised expression of fact—occur-

rence. What happens once, given the same conditions, will happen always: even if the happening and the law it points to remain impenetrable mysteries. The statement of the law of gravity is the statement of a fact. It gives, and professes to give, no explanation of what men of science have confessed to be inexplicable. But even that law can be interfered with by man using his free-will in determining how. If by man's will, why not by God's, whose will and power are infinite? Again, you cannot explain chemical affinity or the laws of reaction by gravitation. And just so, what we call miracles are events which can be explained by no known law."

"That's right; no known law," said the Doctor significantly.

St Anne was fading into the distance. Beyond it the long point of Petit Cap stretched itself lazily in the sun, and the many spires and massive masonry of Quebec began to show, or, rather, to suggest themselves, ahead, to the right of the Isle d'Orleans, with the silver thread of Montmorency falling sheer over the cliffs.

"My dear Doctor," said the Priest, his eyes taking in the whole varied scene, "do you think that we are idiots? There must be power and a will behind them. You may not, perhaps, altogether agree with a system that allows a definite place for miracles, though it seems to me that that would show a considerable hiatus in your philosophy. But if the

progress of science is worth anything, surely it has led us to surmise what Nature can not do. The negative results are even more regular and pronounced than the positive. And we have learned to look for a proportion between observed cause and effect. You may expect to bring a temperature down by a liberal use of quinine; but what would you say to a fever leaving your patient because, forsooth, you told it to do so?"

Parson and Doctor both looked incredulous, Euphon laughed, but the Priest went on: "Thus, we are told, the Saviour of the world worked miracles." And, in the sobering effect of his words: "There are such wonderful events even to-day. The blind see; the lame walk; and devils are cast out. Go, my friends"—and he warmed to his subject—"go to that little shrine yonder and see for yourselves. No ignorant credulity could pile up the heap of crutches that you will find there. No hysterical emotion can explain away the statements and votive tablets. Sit near the altar rail when a common-sense, matter-of-fact, band of pilgrims venerates the relic, and ask yourself if it is possible that such people should be such utter fools as to believe and model their lives and actions on such a belief without any real reason. Explain it as you will, you cannot explain it away. The fervour, the penetrating reality, the religion of it! And, if you do not see a miracle with your own eyes, look at the records of those who

have. Count the crutches, the iron engines that have tried their best to straighten some poor deformity; and ask yourself in sincerity and humility if it is possible that all this should be the monument of a huge sham. Go for yourself."

"It might be an interesting visit," said the Parson to his daughter hesitatingly.

"Go for yourself," repeated the Priest.

"I think I will," said the Doctor, under his breath. And he did.

But the little village of St Anne disappeared as the *Carinthia* turned the corner of the island of Orleans, and the Priest, who knew the country well, talked of other things: of the gorgeous colouring with which Nature paints the maples in the fall; how her chilly fingers touch the leaves and they turn to golden, and red, and brown; of the great ice dam that piles itself up against the western end of the island in winter, binding Quebec and Levis in its strong embrace; of the roadway smoothed across the frozen river, and the merry bells of sleighs and the cracking of whips and the cheery *marche donc* of the Canadian Jehus; of how the mighty force of the river, once let loose by the coming of spring, shakes itself free from its icy bonds; of the falls and natural steps of Montmorency; of the foundation of the city and the great Laval; of Montcalm and Wolfe, and of the battle fought on the Plains of Abraham; and of how the stronghold of New France became the contented

daughter of another kingdom; until the island lay behind the ship, and he pointed to the old-world city standing sentinel over the great water highway of the new.

"There it is!"

And there it was; the upper and the lower town; the wharves and docks; the spires of the University buildings and the Cathedral; the imposing Chateau Frontenac standing out upon the terrace to the right of and beneath the ponderous grey fortifications of the Citadel. There it was indeed, the old-world and famous City of Quebec. Outstripped by other towns, perhaps, in the race for wealth and population, it stands upon its tongue of rock in solitary grandeur, quiet and dignified, the monument of a bygone age, the earnest of a future.

The *Carinthia* drew silently to the dock, the Priest meanwhile being plied with questions as to the various buildings and points of interest. "That," he said, pointing to the finished and unfinished campaniles of the Cathedral, "is the Basilique. One might say it was symbolic of the Dominion. The spire on the left represents the early days. The square, stolid stump on the right is the future that the Canadians are carving out for themselves. Yes; it is an old see. The first Bishop was Monseigneur de Laval. If you have time to see the city, and I expect you will, notice the pilasters just within the door. Upon the white background are

gold letters—the names of the Bishops of Quebec—two lists, 'Domination Française' and 'Domination Anglaise.'"

"There is an English Bishopric too," suggested the Parson.

"Yes," said the Priest, "but it lacks the interest of the French."

"You parsons," remarked the Doctor spitefully, "are always crying up your own wares."

The Priest saw the opportunity. "Perhaps we are. Dominations matter little to the Church. How many have come and gone since Peter suffered, crucified in the circus at Rome! For me those lists of almost forgotten names in the Basilica have a wonderful significance. Empires come and go. Nations rise and fall. The conqueror's foot is on the neck of the conquered. But the Church of God goes on fearless and unshaken amid the crashing of fallen dynasties. It is not of the world. It belongs to no nation, or people, or age, but to all nations and peoples and ages. And, upon my word, sir"—and he looked the Doctor square in the eyes as he spoke—"the Church that fulfils that mission successfully, must be meant for human nature and humanity must be made for it. '*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*'"

"There is something in that," said the Doctor; but the Parson frowned, and Euphon relieved the tension by pointing out that they were made fast, and,

if Quebec was to be seen, they had all better make haste on shore. And so they were before many minutes lost in the crowd of porters and hotel omnibuses and calèches, on their way to see the sights of Quebec.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRIEST'S SOLILOQUY

ALL but the Priest. He did not go ashore; but stood upon the deck still watching the scene that he knew so well. There are few more beautiful. Evidently he was awaiting some one from the shore, for he turned his eyes often to the landing-stage and earnestly scanned the faces in the crowd beneath him. But no one came. The human ants tugged and pulled at the bales and boxes and crates, swarming to and fro, scurrying hither and thither, like the disturbed inhabitants of a nest that has been laid open by the plough. The Priest looked on for some time, leaning against the bulwarks, and then turned with a half sigh towards the heights of Levis. "If he were in Quebec," he murmured, "I am sure he would have come. He must have had my letter; and, if I leave the ship now to hunt him up, I am certain to miss him. Dear me! Dear me! Very possibly he is not in Quebec at all, and I shall have a wild-goose chase if I am to find him, before my business is settled."

He walked slowly up and down the deck, pausing for a moment at the end of each turn to look, now at the blue Isle of Orleans, now up beyond Cap Rouge along the mysterious waterway leading to the heart of the continent. Up through that canyon Jacques Cartier had on his first voyage gazed, dreaming of the wonders that lay beyond in the new world of promise. Up to Hochelaga he sailed, between those frowning cliffs, on the second. Along that road, Marquette had passed to his mission at the Three Rivers. Champlain, Laval, had gazed from yonder heights upon the smooth flood: and the birch canoes, driven by the strong arms of the primæval redskins, had cut the placid waters like knives as, panoplied for war, they dug their swinging paddles into its bosom. Here had the martyred Jogues passed onward; and here the tiny barques dropped anchor when the French first took possession of the land. A jumbled medley of recollections, suggested by the overwhelming genius of the place, out of chronological order, heaped together like the gathered-up beads of a broken rosary; the war-paint and the war-cry of the Indian; the polite astonishment of Champlain and the fleurs-de-lys semées of France; the clash of arms on the heights and the streaming banner of England. There it all was: and there it all is to-day. The stone column on the limestone heights where two brave men fell; the Indian village, with its Indian church and the

guttural resonance of the Indian hymns, almost within gunshot; the Basilica, with its golden lists of bishops and archbishops under the two dominations, with its tattered flags and its royal plate; the House of Parliament and the Chateau Frontenac: all is there. Your calèche driver may be the last descendant of a line of chiefs of his tribe now hunting in the happy hunting-ground of which they dreamed; you may rub elbows with some of the bluest blood of France in the narrow streets; and your hotel porter, if you make a stay in Quebec, may have, in company with those few thousands who lay claim to the distinction, "come over in the *Mayflower*."

London is old. There was a London when Julius Cæsar came to the isle of pearls. Paris was hoary with age when the sons of France set sail and braved the perils of the unknown to find and found a New France. Rome was old when the first Christian martyrs were laid to rest in the quiet *loculi* of the dark catacombs. But Quebec, in its short life, is older than them all. That silent rock, scored and graved by the great ice floes of immemorial ages, has seen the Indian come and go—who knows whence, and who knows when? It has echoed to the tread of men whose hands bore aloft the golden lilies. And it rears its proud crest beneath a citadel whose flag displays the crosses of the kingdom. If it could only speak! The old Indian settlement is gone; Charlesbourg is gone, and

Limolou stands upon its site. Jacques Cartier has fared further afield, his crew smitten with an unknown scourge. Marquette has passed on to the Mississippi. Jogues has poured out his life-blood at the Back River. And Quebec remains, the monument of it all, placid, conservative, old, aged beyond measure in the span of three hundred years, grey as the lime-stone crags upon which it stands, hoary with an antiquity undreamed of in the cities of an older civilisation.

But our Priest? He has taken a book from his pocket, and, as the sky turns to oranges and reds and purples, ushering in the clear Canadian sunset, he slowly turns the pages. It is not his Breviary; and for a time he reads. Then his eyes take on a far-away look, and his lips move, at first inaudibly, and then forming words. We may overhear him: it is our privilege. "So, St Thomas says"—he thinks rather than speaks his thoughts, to the accompaniment of the sounds that come from the wharf and the donkey engine—"St Thomas says that the angels understand, not as we do, but by the likenesses of things that are naturally theirs. Now, what can St Thomas mean? I understand the nature of things—we all understand things—by the spiritual likenesses we derive from them in passing our sensations, as it were, through the mill and purging them from whatever belongs, properly, to the senses alone. But of course it is so, the angel has no

senses: and he can't, consequently, purge his sensation—since he has not got any; but understands. . . . Now, I wonder why St Thomas has written so much about angels, or, for the matter of that, why did Aristotle and Plato talk about 'separate intelligences?' It would seem—— But, no. There must be other reasons. He did not ask how many angels could stand on the point of a needle. None of his questions are trivial—if that is a trivial question; I wonder now. . . .

"We get most of our ideas of angels from revelation. The rational arguments are not so very strong? I'm not so sure. There are two that are very persuasive. But—I have it! The great point of angelic psychology in St Thomas is to develop the doctrines of human psychology by comparison. Even if there were no such beings as angels, or separate intelligences, it would be of the greatest help to understanding our own souls and their spiritual nature to consider what a separate intelligence might be, and what it might do; how it would act.

"What a wonderful conception of the universe his was! The ninefold hierarchy of spirits spreading out in circles, as it were, from the heart and centre of reality; imitating in their created way the wholly pure spirits that called them into being from the void; the presidents of destiny and the message-bearers of the Almighty. And beyond them and

below them the corporeal creature. The spiritual intelligences that are united to matter; the material forms, shading off, like subtracted numbers, to the lower and uttermost circle. It is a philosophy—none finer. But it is something more; for as a completion of the whole there is one central figure, uniting in His person the two extremes, bringing the circumference of the uttermost circle to the centre: a Man in whom all the forces of nature have their play, in whose essence all the lower forms are gathered together in the virtue of a human soul and all material essentials in the organism of a human body; and a God, whose personality catches up and transfuses the whole. In this unique personality the Alpha and the Omega are at one. Here all nature is perfected in the perfection of humanity; and, in the strength of an assumed microcosm, the macrocosm is drawn close to the ineffable Being towards which all creation palpitates and surges."

There is a vein of the purest mysticism in all of us; a vein that is mostly hidden, like some of the richer quartz that runs slantwise downward into the very bowels of the earth. To reach the treasures hidden in the depths the laborious operations of mining are required, and when the glistening quartz in which the dull gold glows is brought to the surface, the crushing of the stamp-mill and the refining of the amalgam and the heat of the furnace

still stand between the dross and the precious metal. And then there is the assay and the valuation of the ingots, the rolling, and the stamp of the dies, before the coins issue into the currency of the busy world.

Deep down in that vein of royal metal, hidden in the inmost recesses of our being, lie the thoughts and aspirations for which we occasionally mine. Sometimes they rise to the light of our intelligence pure as the fined gold, sometimes they are imbedded in a foreign matrix—idea, feeling, sentiment, attraction: call it what you will. But they are always, or nearly always, incommunicable; and it is seldom that we can even present them clearly to our own minds.

They must go through the stamps and the amalgam of the thoughts of others than ourselves. They must pass the fire and the acid of criticism and correlation to reason. They must be stamped with the dies of truth; so that they cease to be personal and unrealised fully and become part of the currency of thought. And how little, despite the depth of the mine and the richness of the metal that lies hidden there, ever comes to light and passes minted into the literature and language of the thinking world!

The Priest had passed from the assayed and current thought of the foremost of the schoolmen into the vaguer region of his inmost soul. He did

not stop to fix or to precise the luminous suggestions that rose in his consciousness as he let the hierarchical idea of the universe develop in its mystic setting. His eyes were no longer on the Latin text he held open in his hand. Through half-closed lids he looked up at the pine trees that stood out over the town of Levis; but he did not see them. The eyes of his soul were fixed upon that vision towards which, as he had said, "all creation palpitates and surges." There was the key to the nature of the man. Through all his curious wanderings into other fields of knowledge, this ever was the goal towards which he tended.

And as it was so for him, so it is, whether we realise it or not, for us all. The main pivot of our lives, the central sun whose beams irradiate all our knowledge, the Alpha from whence we come, the Omega towards which we are borne on the swift and restless current of life, is that Eternal One, in whom indeed we live and move and have our being.

The night breeze touched the surface of the noble river, and the Priest, shivering slightly, came down to the earth again. He closed his book and crossed the deck, resuming his original occupation of watching the crowd upon the wharf. Just as six bells struck, the exploring party of passengers drove up, and, joining them, he went down to the saloon. Throughout the dinner the conversation was of

the city and its sights—animated, vivacious, but commonplace; and as soon as the meal was over, our friends, anxious to see all that was to be seen, found their way on deck again.

And as they stood the western sky still glowed in a glory of golden light, then died down till the silhouette of roofs and spires, citadel, chateau, church, and university stood out sharp cut against the pale background—that wonderful colouring just above the setting sun one frequently sees in Italy, sometimes in England. St Joseph de la Délivrance gleamed for a moment upon the heights of Levis, while the northern shore became mysterious in shadow beneath the historic Plains of Abraham, and the silhouette stood drawn in sable against a star-spangled vault of indescribable cobalt. To the northward a few ragged spears of the Aurora Borealis flung out against the twinkling stars. The insistent clanking of the donkey engine and the steady plash of water against the dock in the midst of the great silence of Nature's gathering night—. All entered into the mind, not inharmoniously, to create one impression; and the little group stood on, speaking occasionally in low monosyllables until, to enjoy to the fullest the short sail up to Montreal on the morrow, "Good-nights" were said, and our friends made their way to their cabins.

And the stars looked down upon the heights, and the heights towered above the flowing river,

as they have done for ages, before ships came to ruffle the calm flow of the St Lawrence, before the English found their way to New France, before the Frenchman's foot first stepped upon the shore and French lips formed the astonished ejaculation that named the site and city of Quebec—nay, before even the Indian left his far-off wigwam for the village at the meeting of the two great waters; and who can say for how many millenniums besides?

CHAPTER XVI

GOOD-BYE

"WELL, we are coming to the end of our voyage in earnest now," said the Doctor, with a shade of regret in his voice. "In a few hours we shall be in Montreal, and all drift off to our various destinations."

"What a lovely trip we have had," said Euphon, keeping her eyes fixed upon the steadily moving panorama as the banks silently slipped past the ship. "Lovely weather for the crossing, and such nice people on board. The last few days have been quite delicious, and I am sorry it is over."

"Are you?" asked her companion. "So am I. I shall remember this crossing. It has been interesting in many ways. Your father, and the Priest, and our friend the Poet, to say nothing of his wife, are all characters, and we have been very chummy all the way across. Do you know"—with a smile —"we have crammed as much discussion into these few days as is possible. We have each nearly converted all the others."

"Now, I'm sure that's not true," Euphon smiled back, as the Priest and the Poet made their way towards them.

"Here we are," said the Priest as he came up. "I've been trying to find out what the Poet was doing with himself all yesterday."

"Copying his verses, I expect," said the Doctor with a laugh. "He must have a good many to do, for he promised nearly everybody on board a copy. He's far too good-natured."

The Priest and the Poet had been together for some time—as had Euphon and the Doctor—and their talk had not been limited to the movements of the latter. Many times—one brief chat is already recorded in these pages—had the Poet been on the point of unburdening his soul to the Cleric, pouring out all the doubts and difficulties that he could not trust himself to speak when the four together were thrusting and parrying in the smoking-room or on deck. He had learned to respect his point of view, and had been strongly influenced by his arguments. What is more, he admired the man for himself. He had long had leanings, no doubt, towards that system which the Priest represented; but they were rather of the æsthetic and emotional type. The Priest's adjustment of natural reason and revelation, his sturdy refusal to compromise, and the solid basis of human truth to which he referred always the superstructure of faith, had

produced their effect in the Poet's mind; and he realised, what perhaps he had never fully realised before, that religion is something quite divine and wonderful that cannot be supplied or superseded by the patchwork makeshifts of human invention. He had been a curious mixture of faith and scepticism —without being aware of the fact, of course—as are hundreds of those in a similar position. He was not to blame, but the systems through which he had passed, from so-called Evangelical Protestantism to—equally so-called—Catholicism. Now he was on the verge of a discovery. The shreds and tatters of truth picked up *en route* were dropping away from his grasp as it dawned upon him that he had no very good reason for retaining them. He had been accustomed to say his rosary and to believe in the real presence; he had practised auricular confession; but why? The Priest had shown him that he had no answer to give. And as all this self-chosen spiritual clothing fell away, he felt a great craving for the reality. So, he had sought out the Priest on this the last day of the voyage, and, with all the impetuosity and fervour of his nature, had asked to be received, then and there, into the Church. The Priest, of course, had refused; but with all possible kindness and tact. He pointed out that so serious a step was not to be taken lightly or without due preparation, put the whole matter before him in the clearest possible

light, and ended up by advising him to wait patiently for a little and pray for guidance.

The Poet had been disconsolate. "But, Father, I may never see you again."

"And what of that?" the Priest said gently. "There are other priests to be found in the world."

"Still, it will be so difficult to go to another. He might not be sympathetic, or helpful. Perhaps he could not even understand my position—certainly not as well as you do."

"You are not seeking for sympathy but for truth," urged the Priest. "And you will find any priest, the world over, ready to hear whatever you have to say. He will give you every help in his power, and he will—this is the great point—be absolutely at one with me in whatever is of faith. The Church, my friend, is the same wherever it is found. You need never fear divergency of doctrine in her ministers."

And so, consoled with what is perhaps the most striking mark of the Church's personality, they had joined the Doctor and Euphon.

"You have a copy of your poem for me, I hope," said the latter. "Papa liked it so much and so did I. But it is unkind to ask you; you must have had so many to do."

"But I haven't done them all," said the Poet, a smile dispelling the seriousness of his eyes as he

thought of his cleverness. "I made four copies and distributed them. Everyone made his own from those, and they are coming back to me now. Permit me to present you with one."

"In your own handwriting," cried Euphon, taking the folded paper. "How lovely of you! This will do for Papa and me. Thank you so much."

"If you would care for a copy too——" and the Poet's hand went again to his pocket.

"Thanks," said the Priest; "I shall keep it as a memento of a pleasant week."

"And where do I come in?" The Doctor assumed an aggrieved tone. "Haven't you a copy for me, too?"

"Sorry, Doctor; but those were the only two I had. I'll let you have one before we go ashore, though."

They were standing forward on the promenade deck. On either side of the *Carinthia* stretched the green banks, dotted with comfortable-looking homesteads. The villages, too, were more frequent and larger—towns rather than villages—than many of those they passed on the previous day. Altogether the country looked more suitable for agriculture; less hilly and interspersed with outcropping ridges of rock than below Quebec. But everywhere the same character in the low solid dwelling-houses. At piers, vessels were unlading or taking up their loads; and river boats, great two-decked side-

wheelers, were plying in company with the schooners and yachts. Below them the emigrants that the *Carinthia* carried were getting together their belongings from the steerage; a motley crowd of men, women, and children looking forward to the new land of promise to which they were going to trust their future. Their little stores, boxes, and bundles, and parcels, were piled up on the lower deck, and they sat contentedly around them and upon them waiting for Montreal. Many of the men touched their rough caps, many of the women dropped a curtsey, most of the children smiled, as the Priest looked down upon them. He had been no stranger to that little company. Every morning he had come and gone among them, and, with that exquisite adaptation of human nature that is often given to Priests, had won his way through the rough exterior to their hearts.

With an apology he turned to descend to the lower deck. "I must have a word with some of those people," he said.

But the Doctor stretched out his hand. "Wait a minute. The Parson and our friend's wife are just coming up. You will want to say good-bye to them, too; won't you? And we're nearly there. That must be Montreal I see just ahead. Isn't it?"

The Priest looked, and saw the swelling curve of the mountain that gives its name to the city. It stood out faintly blue in the still afternoon.

Below it lay the streets and houses; and from the great chimneys of Point St Charles the filmy smoke drifted over it. Low and squat it looked lying at the water's edge, with its piers and docks and grain elevators. The golden image of Our Lady of Bonsecours stood out on high, clear from the smoke and grime, keeping silent watch and ward over the harbour. The engines puffed and snorted in the yards below; and above, tier upon tier, the city crept towards the green woods that clothe Mount Royal.

"Yes. That's Montreal. But we shan't be there for half an hour yet. I won't be gone five minutes." He descended as he spoke, and was soon in the midst of the emigrants, going from one little group to the other, speaking to all a word of encouragement, answering with his smile the smiles of this casual little flock, and especially of the children, brighter than all the rest.

"It's a wonderful system that produces men like that," thought the Doctor as the others came up. "He seems to be as much at home down there as he is up here: more in his element, if anything."

But his thoughts were interrupted. The Poet's Wife was in the midst of explanations, to which the Parson listened courteously, contributing to the conversation an occasional mild criticism or an apt quotation. With her increased audience the lady continued to develop, and defend, and propagate a

theory that she had got hold of—one of the many socialistic theories that are offered as a panacea for all the ills of modern society. There was nothing very novel in her words, no very definite or practicable scheme of amelioration. But she, not unlike many whose talents are given to the same or similar causes, mistaking assertion for argument and insistence for proof, made up for the weakness of her subject by the vigour of her speech. And so she pounded on, through all the moods and tenses of social theories, bewildering Euphon with the high-sounding words and phrases, and bringing an amused smile to the lips of the Doctor by her careless, and occasionally ignorant, use of them. The Parson punctuated with quotation, keeping his eyes upon the city shaping itself more definitely out of the faint smoke wreaths. But the Doctor was tiring of the sharp voice, persistently affirming what everyone knew—that the actual state of society, labour, housing, trusts, physical, moral, and all the other problems, left much to be desired; and dispensing the out-of-date learning that had filtered into her brain from the popularisers of science, who had taken it without question, from the undiluted works of the framers of theories. He turned to her.

"Has it ever struck you, madam," he said in a business-like, matter-of-fact voice, "that no theory or scheme on paper is of the slightest use in these matters? It is the old road over again. These are

some of the problems that lie bound up with the destiny of man. The poets are the first to touch them, then the philosophers. You have the 'Song of the Shirt' and Karl Marx; and, upon my word, the poets do more practically than the theorisers. But neither of them really solve the problem. Now religion is another thing. Look at that man down among those poor people!" and he pointed to the Priest, surrounded by the emigrants. "He has got the solution. His Church gave it to him: and he makes it work. If the religious system that man represents had a free hand, then you would come somewhere near to a true, actual, social paradise. The Catholic Church is a grand thing. The Priest has been telling me——"

"The Priest!" snapped the lady. "He seems to have persuaded you pretty well. Don't you know that it is his business to make converts, and any lie——"

"Softly, now, madam, I am not going to hear anything against him"; and the Doctor looked from the irritated lady to the amazed face of Euphon, and the pleased, amused, yet half-annoyed countenance of her father.

"But there is very much against him." The lady would not be silenced. "Here is Arthur on the point of seeking admission to his superstitious fold. He has done his best to gather you all into his net. I don't know how far he has tricked you. He has

probably received Arthur into his Church by now. It's simply disgusting! He won't get over me, at any rate; and if you choose to act like children, it's your own affair."

Through the Parson's mind flashed the memory of a certain text of Scripture; but as he said nothing, and as the Priest was seen to be making his way towards them, the Doctor concluded the topic hastily, saying somewhat bitterly: "Your dislike of the Catholic Church seems to have blinded you to fact. Your husband has probably not been captured. Indeed, were he to go down on his bended knees, I doubt whether the Priest would baptize him. He was telling me only yesterday that, in England at any-rate, no priest can receive a convert without the permission of his Bishop; and that looks like putting obstacles in the way of what you would doubtless call proselytism. No, madam, the Priest has not tried to 'catch us.' He has given us good, sound, common-sense reasons for some of the things he has said. He has not tried to persuade by mere rhetoric; and I, for one, am profoundly glad to have had the opportunity of making his acquaintance. I do not see eye to eye with him; but I have learned to respect him, and the religion he professes, as sound, sterling, and intimately human. But—— There is the wharf." He changed the subject abruptly as the Priest rejoined them. "Have you made all your adieux, Father?"

"Down there?" replied the Priest. "Yes. But

I still have to say good-bye to you. How we drift, we human atoms, across each other's horizons!"

"True," agreed the Doctor for them all. But he had not, any more than they, caught the full meaning of the Priest. The latter did not explain—perhaps he could not; for there are some thoughts that halt in the wording, those thoughts that take shape and colour from the intelligence in which they have their birth. Either from his philosophy or from some unsuspected and unacknowledged vein of mysticism in his character, he had long looked upon the universe as containing but two real realities. Not that he was not human, or incapable of affection. The true conception of the one real relationship does not destroy, but intensifies, those others that we human beings form, atom to atom, among ourselves. He was on the point of imitating the Parson by quoting a favourite verse:

> "Fool, all that is at all,
> Lasts ever past recall."

But, instead of doing this, he added with an exquisite pathos: "And yet those poor atoms obey the universal law. There is never one lost good in the gravitation of human beings. The shadow of one life falls athwart another. The bright light of one soul, and even the invisible heat rays at the end of the spiritual spectrum, brighten and warm other lives. Most of us live inductive to the lives of others;

and the vast multiplicity of puzzling detail in our character can be interpreted in the light of one fact."

"That's mysticism," said the Doctor.

"Poetry, rather," corrected the Poet. "And true and beautiful poetry as well. The pattern of each life is woven with other colours than our own."

The conversation threatened to lengthen. The Poet's Wife was gathering herself together to take part in it. But the donkey engines, which had been snorting and clanking for some time past, had hoisted all the passengers' luggage out of the hold and were quiet. The vessel had drawn near the wharf, and the men were standing ready with the coils of rope to throw for the hawsers. There was no more time to talk. On the landing-stage the usual little crowd had gathered. Handkerchiefs were fluttering from ship and shore. A thin cord shot out from the vessel—the first link. Slowly the great cables sagged to its strain, and at last the ship was moored fast in Montreal. With much unnecessary shouting the gangways, on wheels and painted white, were dragged across the wharf and reared up against the *Carinthia*. The agent of the company came on board. The passengers seized upon their various belongings—rugs, bags, coats—brought up from their state-rooms, and deposited by obsequious stewards along the length of the promenade deck. The great engines ceased their throbbing; and the *Carinthia*

lay still. The Poet and his wife had already taken their leave. The voyage was over.

"Good-bye," said Euphon, holding out her hand to the Doctor.

He pressed it in his, and together, Priest, Euphon, Parson and Doctor, they moved towards the head of the gangway.

"Good-bye, sir," said the Priest. "I wish you the best of sport in your Quebec fishing; and I hope that we shall meet again some day."

"A wish which I reciprocate," said the Parson, laying down the rugs he was carrying and holding out his hand. "I trust we shall meet; yes, when you come back to England you must not forget the Parsonage—nor you, Doctor. You must find your way there, too. But for Euphon, bachelors' quarters now, but I daresay we could make you comfortable; couldn't we, my dear?"

"Yes, father, of course we could," Euphon replied brightly.

And then the hand-clasps and the farewells; the crowded gangway, and the search upon the wharf for the luggage; the Customs, and the cabs whirling off to railway station or hotel.

The Priest stood beside a huge pile of trunks, looking for his own modest belongings. The Doctor, who had escorted the Parson and his daughter to their cab, came back to him.

"Can I give you any help?" he asked.

"No, thank you," said the Priest, his slow smile lighting up the rugged features. "I am only looking for my bag. It probably has not come on shore yet. Don't bother to wait for me."

"I am going to the Windsor. We are all going to be there for a few days, I think. And you?"

"I stay at St Patrick's for a day or so, and then I must get to work. I have a lot to do before I go back."

"Might one call?" asked the Physician.

"I should be delighted," said the Priest.

"Well, I will. Good-bye, then, Father, good-bye! The passage has been all too short." He lifted his hat as he went towards the line of cabs.

The Priest stood waiting beside the steamer trunks. Porters rushed hither and thither. Stewards were hurrying up and down the gangways. But the Priest stood still, waiting and thinking, with that smile—slow to go as to come—upon the golden statue of Our Lady of Good Succour keeping watch and ward over the harbour of Montreal.

THE END

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