The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, Vol. 1

E. Lynn Linton

Table of Contents

The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, Vol. 1

E. Lynn Linton

(dedication)
To EDWARD BARRINGTON DE FONBLANQUE. DEAR MR. DE FONBLANQUE In asking you to accept the dedication of this book, I do not wish to make it appear that you either share its opinions or sympathize with its aim. I merely wish to claim you as one who, like Christopher himself, loves honesty and practises sincerity, and who will therefore forgive even his defence of vivisection, to which you are so notoriously opposed. Neither do I seek to entangle your assent to that profound respect for man as the highest thing we know that belief in his glorious future and infinite progress,

---

Page v

by the law of moral evolution working from within which is my hero's support and consolation. This optimistic belief is a matter of faith; and faith, the result of temperament, is out of the control of the individual. The Pessimists, who see only the hopelessness of man's misery and the limitation of his powers, count as many strong brains among them as the Optimists, who judge of the future by the past, and recognize no barriers which may not be overcome. Each school is as sincere as the other in its creed; and as neither can prove its doctrines, neither has the right to scorn the other for its special gospel. Wherefore I trust that, differing in certain essentials though we do, you will none the less accept this dedication as an expression of my friendship and esteem.

E. LYNN LINTON.

PREFACE.

IT is impossible to write an absolutely candid autobiography. Our relations with others, and the artistic proportions of events, forbid that completeness which, to be perfect, should include every circumstance of the life. For just as plants and organisms are built up and developed by microscopic cells, so are our characters and minds formed by all the circumstances which surround us, how minute soever each may be in itself. At the best then, no more can be given than those salient points of thought and action which furnish an intelligible outline but do not include fractional details which

---

Page vi

show the completed fabric but not the whole process of construction.

Within these limits every autobiography which is clear and symmetrical so far as it goes, has its value. As no human being is absolutely unparalleled, but each embodies in his degree the moral and intellectual characteristics of certain orderly types already established, it necessarily follows that no personal history can be without the interest which comes from sympathy and likeness. The ways by which some have arrived at certain landing−stages must needs be those by which others have gone or are going; and the experience of one serves another as warning or guidance, according to the secret bent of his nature and his dread or desire to be led to the right or turned to the left.

For this reason, I, a pilgrim rapidly nearing the great Mecca of the grave, write here as faithful an autobiography as I may

---

Page vii

or can. It will not be useless to show where a man who has ardently desired to know the Truth, and who has been neither afraid of his own conclusions nor ashamed to confess his convictions, finds himself at last. The Isis at whose feet he stands will hold in her hand, or a torch to light forward or a flaming sword to stay, the advancing steps of those who read, as they may sympathize with the process or be repelled by the result.

CHRISTOPHER KIRKLAND.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHRISTOPHER KIRKLAND.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born before the age of railroads, steamboats, electric telegraphs, or the penny post; and when society in the remote country districts of England was very little changed from what it had been a hundred years before. In those days living was simple, locomotion both difficult and restricted, and absence from home a rare event, save for the grandees who were bound to be in London for their place in Parliament or for their attendance at Court. Women of the upper middle class kept their houses and looked after their children with more vigilance of personal superintendence than now; and if there was less taste there was less finery, nor was extravagance made into an æsthetic virtue as it is in these present times. The religious revival had not begun for the nation at large; for all that Wesley and Whitfield had done good work among the rough men of the West, and had transformed a large proportion of the Cornish miners and fishermen from brutalized savages and wreckers, among whom the King's writ did not run, into God−fearing and law−abiding citizens. Education was at its lowest possible ebb though local grammar−schools in the North were plentiful, kept up by old−time grants and bequests from former founders and benefactresses; though Robert Raikes had established Sunday−schools here and there, where

minds had begun to awaken to the need of saving souls; though Joseph Lancaster had got a fair trial for his system of teaching; and though even infant−schools, which we generally believe to be emphatically of modern establishment, languished feebly in certain populous places. Still, none of these waves of progress, as yet slow and sluggish, though gathering, as they went, the volume and power we know of, had stirred the stagnant shallows of remote country places at the time of which I write; and society, as found on the moors, in the dales, and in the villages among the mountains, was satisfied with the most elementary knowledge for the so−called educated classes and absolute ignorance for all the rest.

The Reform Bill, Catholic emancipation and the emanacipation of slaves, the political rights of the Jews, free trade and a free press, were all as yet the golden apples of liberty and justice held in the closed hand of Time. The press−gang was a recognised institution; felony was punishable by death and stealing sheep, as well as any article the value of thirteen−pence halfpenny from the dwelling−house, was felony. Though Howard's remonstrances had had some effect, and Coldbath Fields prison had been built in accordance with his views, our gaols were in general a disgrace to civilization, and our laws were still justly stigmatized as 'written in blood.' Monday morning hangings were part of the week's ordinary work; and my father just remembered to have seen thirteen men hanging in a row at Tyburn, with never a murderer among them. Besides slaves in Jamaica, we had climbing−boys, who were substantially slaves, for our chimneys at home; and apprentices were still greatly needing the protection they did not get till comparatively the other day. Gipsies and vagrants were laid by the heels at the will of the authorities; and to be homeless was of itself a qualification for the stocks. Belief in the divine right of Kings; in the saintly martyrdom of Charles I.; in the criminality of Cromwell and the hypocrisy of Puritanism; in the good cause of Charles Edward; in the diabolical origin of the French Revolution, of which the echoes still reverberated through the awakening world; in the infinite iniquity of Bonaparte; in the capacity of any one Englishman to lick three 'mounseers' single−handed; as well as belief in the damnable instincts of the 'many−headed monster,' as the people proper were generally called formed part of every true gentleman's creed. He who thought differently was either a traitor to his order or no true gentleman at all. Party spirit in the country ran as high as it ever ran in Florence or Verona, when Guelfs and Ghibellines slew peace and humanity between them; and no man with a soul to be saved would have consorted in friendship with a wearer of the hostile colour. As well ask Juliet for Romeo, as ask of a Tory father his daughter in marriage for the son of a Whig, when the one sported blue and the other purple and orange, while brickbats were flying and bribery stalked about the contested town with never a mask to hide its face nor a cloak to conceal its hands.

Our family house was for many years in one of the most primitive of those untouched country districts of which I first spoke; and the recollections of the elders of my own generation carry us back to a wonderful state of things.

My father was a clergyman and the holder of two livings. The second, of which I shall speak farther on, was one of the most beautiful places in England, where the ordering of life was simple and homely, but not more than this. The other was a large, rambling, sparsely−populated parish, where the people were half−savages, and where the very elements of all that makes our modern civifization were wanting. Not a school of any kind was in the place, though there was one at the quaint old market−town some few miles away; but in return, for a village of about three hundred inhabitants, there were seventeen public−houses and jerry−shops; and the man who did not get drunk would have been the black swan which the white ones would soon have pecked to death. No one, however, tried the experiment of sobriety. There was no sense of public decency, no idea of civic order and as little private morality. The parish−constable would have thought twice before taking up a crony for any offence short of murder; and then he would have left the door of the lock−up ajar. Not a man would have held himself justified in marrying before the woman had proved her capacity for becoming a mother; and when the lovers were united according to the law of the land just in time to legitimize the child the customs and ceremonies of the day were almost as brutal as, and certainly more drunken than, those of the North American Indians or Tierra del Fuegians. Indeed, they were evident survivals of those primitive times when the bride was taken from her tribe by force and compelled to submit to violence, before dawning civilization made the whole matrimonial transaction a matter of sale and barter. But for the most part the young people slipped by night across the border to Gretna Green, preferring, as they said, the blacksmith's forge to the joiner's shop, and liking the mock romance of a

pseudo−elopement which saved the parson's fees and the wedding−dinner, and thus 'gave folk less cause for clack.'

If the people were thus uncivilized, their appointed pastors and masters in the off−districts were very little better. About eight miles from Braeghyll, my father's parish, was a God−forsaken moorland incumbency, the 'priest' of which was in no wise beyond his flock either in refinement or morality. As Braeghyll was the mother−parish, our village was naturally the local metropolis where the inhabitants of the surrounding hamlets found their pleasures and excitements. These were for the most part 'murry−neets' dances in barns and public−houses, where the men got drunk, the women fuddled, and the marriage ceremony was discounted all round and the Saturday−night fights, which came as regularly as the Sunday−morning shave. To these fights the priest of Moss Moor, of whom I have spoken, came more punctually than he went to his own little chapel the next day. He was a fine, stalwart fellow, who kept up his muscle by week−day working in the fields, like any hired herd or ploughman; and, 'stripped to buff,' as the phrase was, he took his turn like a man, did his fighting gallantly, then got drunk with the best; and so was trundled home to his stone cabin in the wilds, to sleep off his intoxication in time for his ragged duty to−morrow morning. My father's curate himself brought his unwedded wife to the parish and married her about three weeks before the child was born. No one thought the worse of them for their impatience; and, 'Nae, what!' they said with the broad charity of moral kinship, 'young folk will be young; and men and women are kittle cattle to shoe ahint!'

Accustomed to such ministers as these men who were intellectually in advance of their flock only in so far as they could read and write, but whose example was a direct encouragement to both lawlessness and vice the people of these wild districts would not brook interference nor admonition from such gentlemen as might be appointed to the mother−parishes. My father tried to bring about a better state of things when he first undertook the care of these shaggy souls at Braeghyll; but the men swore at him, and threatened to do him a mischief if he did not hold his noise, when he rebuked them for their intemperance or tried to stop their brutal excesses; and the women jeered him, for a Molly who put his nose where he had no concern, when he would have taught them a little modesty as maidens and decency as wives. Thus the heart was taken out of him; and, being naturally indolent, he soon dropped the reins which at first he had attempted to hold, and the parish went on as it would without let or hindrance from him. They were more respectful to my mother, who was sweet and gentle and very beautiful; and who was, moreover, assimilated to the every− day experience of her sex by the rapid 'bairn−bearing' which never left her without a child in the cradle and another at her breast. But she had too much to do at home to carry her energies abroad; and district−visiting, mothers'−meetings, Bible−classes, and all the other modern circumstances of parochial organization, were then things unknown. Besides, there were no educated women to have 'worked the parish,' even if there had been the thought or the endeavour. There was only one gentleman's family besides our own; and as the squire's lady bore child for child with the parson's, she was naturally as much tied at home.

Things were no more satisfactory in the church than they were in the parish. Not more than twenty people came to the service, for the fullest attendance. The average was about fourteen. On afternoons, when folks were late, the old clerk would ring the bell for a short three minutes, then shut the church door in a hurry even if he saw some one coming in at the lych gate glad to be quit of his irksome duty for that day.

'Nay, what, i' fegs, we bain't agoing to maunder through t' service for yon,' he said one day contemptuously to my father, when remonstrated with for shutting the church door right in the face of Nanny Porter.

According to old Josh, souls counted by the gross; and the parson's own household did not count at all; and it was a wicked waste of force to spend the means of grace on a unit. So Nanny Porter had to go home again and leave her prayers unsaid; and old Josh took the responsibility on his own soul, and swore a big oath that hers would be none the worse for the lapse.

This morally unsatisfactory living was pecuniarily valuable. The rector was Lord of the Manor as well as rector; and heriots and fines on the death or displacement of tenants, together with tithes in kind, rent−charges and compensations, raised the income to a good round sum when all was told. There was always bad blood at tithing time, when the parson's tenth 'steuk' was sure to be the largest of the row; the parson's tithe−pig the fattest of the litter; while the geese, ducks, fowls, etc., driven into the rectory back−yard for the service of the church and in payment of these despised and neglected functions, were beyond compare the finest of their respective broods.

When I grew old enough to understand how things were, I confess I felt both ashamed and revolted when my father, as he sometimes did, went about the fields himself, and chose his own tenth 'steuks' in the face of the world of reapers and before the eyes of the farmer. They thought nothing of it; and as my father did his doubtful work naturally, cheerily and genially, he lost no honour, but on the contrary gained in personal favour as a 'good 'un of his kind,' though his kind was bad enough. It was only my own callow sense of personal dignity and democratic justice that suffered.

Our place used to overflow with produce at tithing−times. At Easter, eggs came in by the hundred, and at 'shearing−time' wool was by the cartload. Everything else was in like quantity. The tithers' supper made a supreme holiday for us young ones. They always had hodgepodge, plum−pudding, and a glass of punch to follow; and sometimes a cracked fiddle was put into requisition, when our maids used to dance with the men, threesome reels or foursome, and jigs where the women held their aprons ('brats' we called them) by the two corners, and flourished them, thumbs up− ward, with clumsy coquetry as they jigged. There was a grand quarrel between my father and his parishioners when the Tithe Commutation Act came in force; and the seven years' average, which had to be struck as the basis for the consolidated income, differed considerably in the estimate of the one who was to be the recipient and the others who were to be the paymasters. Things quieted down at last; and when Mr. Blamire's labours came to an end, the new system was felt all round to be better than the old, as giving less occasion for subterfuge here, suspicion there, and heartburnings on both sides alike.

CHAPTER II.

EDEN, the second living to which my father had been presented, just before I was born, was by no means so rough and riotous a place as Braeghyll. It was as drunken and immoral, but it was less ferocious and uncouth. There were more resident gentry to keep civic order and restrain the lawless impulses natural to strong−bodied and uneducated men. There was too, a tolerably fair High School under the management of twelve 'statesmen,' which knocked the rudiments of knowledge and some small sense of discipline into the un− kempt heads of the boys and girls who attended or played truant at their parents' pleasure and their own will. There was a great deal of honest moral courage and sturdy personal independence among the people, mainly owing to the large number of these same 'statesmen,' or peasant proprietors, who owned no master and were no man's hire. Some of them had title−deeds dating from the time of Edward VI. and were both nominally and substantially the 'kings' of their respective dales: I say were, for now they have almost disappeared as a class; not all to the gain of the country. But, as I said, the drunkenness of the men and the lax virtue of the women kept about even step in each parish alike; and though manners were less barbarous, morals were no purer at Eden than at Braeghyll.

In those days a South−going coach ran twice a week through Eden; and the journey to London took three days and two nights. A letter from London cost thirteen−pence halfpenny; and as once happened to ourselves, when we were told the contents of a brother's letter as it was handed to us through the little window of the house in the square where the post office stood if of likely interest to the public, it was quickly read by our sharp−tongued Mailsetter before delivery to those whom it concerned. As envelopes had not then been invented, and the folded sides of the sheet were always closely written over to get the whole worth of the postage, a little practice in peeping made the process of deciphering easy enough; and the main threads of all the correspondence afloat were in the hands of our Mailsetter aforesaid. The franking system mitigated the severity of these postal expenses to the rich. It was only the poor who suffered without any mitigation. They had either to pay a formidable proportion of

their week's slender earnings, or to go without hearing from the absent ones at all. For it was a legal offence, carrying large penalties, to make the carrier do duty as a postman and take, for twopence, what the Post−Office charged sixpence or eightpence to deliver at the next town, some ten or twelve miles away. People evaded the penalty by making the letter into a parcel and tying it round with string well sealed; but, if discovered, the evasion did not hold good, and the penalties were enforced as a warning to others.

All the carrying trade was done by these carriers, who were often men of shrewd wit and keen observation, and who brought a breath of larger life into the small places, as they passed through and told what they had seen and heard elsewhere. A great part of the commerce too, of the time, was in the hands of pedlers, who came at stated seasons to tempt the weak, profit by the savings of the thrifty, and supplement the poverty of the mouldy little shops where the shopkeeper was the tyrant and the customer was his slave. I remember to this day the kind of Arabian Nights' splendour of gems and jewellery, silks and shawls and 'farlies' of every description, which little Pedroni, the Swiss−Italian who wore huge rings in his swarthy ears, used to bring out of his cases with a certain mysterious reverence, as if each article was worth a king's ransom. What a good fight my eldest sister made for that green shawl with the kincob pattern! and how I inwardly resolved to save up my money when I should be a man, and become the proud possessor of that monstrous silver watch, as big as a small warming−pan!

Beside our punctual pedlers with their packs, we had also our recognised gaberlunzies our established tramps of either sex. These also came in their appointed seasons, and were hospitably entertained with a bed in the outhouse, a supper at the kitchen door, and sixpence or a shilling at parting in the morning. My father always added to his generosity a little homily, for the honour of the cloth and the tradition of good things. Also we had our village idiots, who could do nothing but sit in the sun and make mouths at those who passed; and our half−witted men and women, who could scramble through a rough day's work of a purely mechanical kind, were as happy as kings and queens with sixpence for their 'darrack,' and who married, had children, and stuck peacocks' feathers in their ragged hats and bonnets. We had our poachers and suspected smugglers generally the handsomest, strongest and swarthiest men of the district who were looked on with profound respect by us boys, and a deadly animosity by the gentry which to us seemed infinitely unjust. Why idealize and honour Will Watch if Black Jack Musgrave was a scamp? And we had our scares, when the maids were hysterical and moony scares which now meant burglars and now 'bogles,' and now again Burke and Hare, a report of whose sudden appearance in the Lime−pots ran like wild−fire among us, and made the women afraid to venture over the threshold, even so far as the stick−house, after dark.

Our church was a fine old Norman structure, choked with barbarisms. The frescoes had been whitewashed over by successive generations of churchwardens; so had the magnificent freestone pillars. The stained−glass windows had been taken away and plain squares, among which were interspersed a few bulls' eyes, had been put in their stead; the pews were the familiar old cattle−pens of every size and shape, wherein the congregation sat in all directions and went to sleep in the corners comfortably. The choir was composed of a few young men and women who practised among themselves as they liked and when they liked, and sometimes essayed elaborate anthems which resulted in vocal caricatures. The orchestra was a flageolet, on which the clerk, as the official leader and bandmaster, gave the key−note; and at the feet of the choir, in the dark at the west end, the High School boys and girls sat on benches which every now and then they tipped up or overturned, played marbles, had free fights, laughed aloud, and were dragged out by the hair, kicking and yelling, when their conduct was too obstreperous for even the lax reverence of the rest to bear. With all this we had a peal of bells which was the pride of the parish and acknowledged to be the best in the county; and our bell−ringers were renowned as past masters of their craft.

In my early youth, two families only among us kept a carriage or a footman; and no one thought of hiring a car, as our tubs on wheels were called, for anything short of a day's excursion to the neighbouring lakes and waterfalls. When evening parties were on hand we never or rarely gave dinners at Eden the ladies tucked up their skirts and the men turned up their trousers, and walked gaily through the snow in winter and the dust in summer, lighted by lanthorns when there was no moon, and wearing wooden−soled clogs shod with iron when the roads were 'clarty.' Picnics on the lake, where each family contributed its quota, were the grand summer amusements of Eden; and

walking expeditions up the more practicable mountains, all returning to the proposer's house for tea and supper and a dance or a round game in the evening, took the place of modern tennis−parties. Without question, things were merrier for us than our children have known how to make them for themselves. There was less luxury and more simplicity; people were easily amused because not worn out by premature experience; and there was a greater sense of homeliness and friendliness than can be found anywhere now.

Perhaps some among us went a little too far in the way of simplicity and homeliness, as when the Roberts' girls the daughters of the great literary light who shone at Eden took down the soiled house−linen to mend in the drawing−room at Rydal Mount, where they were on a visit, to give Mrs. Hemans, who was also there on a visit, a practical lesson on the value of good house−wifery and no nonsense. Mrs. Hemans was somewhat superfine and lackadaisical; and these girls, the youngest of whom was famous for a certain quiet hardness which amounted to calm brutality, thought that to darn dirty linen before her eyes would be a useful counterpoise to her Rosa Matilda proclivities. The result was that the poetess fled from the room in dismay, and ever after cherished the most profound horror for the uncompromising Marthas who had so wounded her delicacy.

My father and that great literary light did not get on quite well together. I have never understood why. There had been no quarrel that I know of; the respective children were playfellows; and Dr. Roberts was as orthodox as my father himself, and notoriously a dutiful son of the Church. But they were not the friends one might have expected two cultured men would have been; and though Dr. Roberts came regularly to church, as any other decent body might, when the prayers were over he ostentatiously folded his arms, shut his eyes, and sat during the sermon in a state of frigid indifferentism, like one no more interested in the proceedings. He had done his duty to God and the Establishment by saying his prayers and following the ser− vice; to the sermon, which was purely personal, he openly refused to give his attention.

At the other side of the vale, and not in our parish, was a very notable family incomparably the most liberal and enlightened of all we had. Thoughtful and large−minded, they were remarkable, among other things, for the quiet dignity of their lives; their inflexible sense of public duty; their orderly management as proprietors and masters; their close friendships with the best thinkers and foremost men of the time; and the determination with which they discountenanced all local gossip and petty scandal. The father, and his son after him, were men who make the unwritten but vital history of England, and furnish the solid material of English greatness. The other son, however, belongs to the written history of our time, and has left a name and done such work in literature as will never die out.

This family belonged, unfortunately for me, to the elder section of my generation; so that I was not able to profit by them in the forming period of my life, as I might have done had I been fifteen years or so older. It was only when I was a grown man that I came to know and recognise the moral greatness which was their inheritance. And then I was made. But to this day I have a curious feeling of loyalty and clanship towards the survivors of the house especially towards one, the last of the elder generation, whose wonderful charm can be as little described as the perfume of a flower or the melody of a song. Indeed, she is very like a human flower or incorporate melody and of all emblems the Daisy and the Pearl suit her best.

Then there was a county magnate, whose house by the Bay where the water−lilies grew, was a kind of sentimental Paradise to my elder brothers. Three beautiful girls made the charm of those woods and gardens; and three of my elder brothers fell in love, as was but natural; and the tears shed in vain by these poor young erotic Tantaluses were matters of family history for many years after. Besides these, were retired officers of both services, who had come to Eden because the country was lovely and living was cheap with here a gentleman living on his estate, and there an outsider who only rented and did not possess, and who never took quite the same place as the autochthones by inheritance, or even the naturalized by purchase. We were also in those days tremendously exclusive; and when the rich Leeds manufacturer bought the estates of our historical attainted Lord, he was considered decidedly below the salt, and there were anxious consultations among the impecunious well−born as to the propriety of visiting him and his. I have lived to see all this nonsense knocked out of the place; which

maybe has been converted to the compensating worship of wealth somewhat over zealously.

Beyond these again, were the local oddities the old maids with sharp tongues renowned for queer sayings; the well−endowed widows with large hearts 'mothers in Israel,' as they were called when the days of cant came upon us; the Will Wimbles who played the flute were 'characters' and flighty, not to say more; the hunting parsons who rode to hounds whenever they could, and when they could not, did the best they could for themselves by riding into Eden, jack−booted and spurred, to meet the coach and talk horseflesh with Tom and Arnold; the scientific recluses who got a name of terror because of their anatomical studies, whereby they were supposed to be too friendly with the Evil One; the retired sea−captains, choleric and litigious; the Scotch doctors, drunken and clever, who performed wonderful operations when half−seas over; the men−servants and maid−servants who were part of the family and called by the master's name, as Birkett Tim and Crosthwaite Molly; the maiden shopkeepers, who were the humbler members of the society, greatly respected and esteemed, with whom the aristoi would sometimes take a cup of tea and not hold themselves as condescending unduly: these were as individualized, and some were as queer, as anything to be found in Sterne or Smollett. But the queerest of all were the incumbents of the small chapelries−of−ease made off the mother−parish all of whom were St. Bees men, while many were as drunken as our old priest at Moss Moor, and none were men of education and refinement. I remember how, at a visitation dinner at the vicarage, one of these outlying pastors stood up in his place, and, asking the Bishop familiarly if he would be served, carved the cabbages before him with his own knife and fork. He had already eaten generously with his knife. They all did in those days.

Our own way of living was simple in the extreme. Our servants wore short woollen petticoats; cotton bedgowns and blue−checked aprons; huge caps with flapping borders and flying strings; and thick−soled shoes, with which they wore out the carpets and made a hideous clatter on the bare boards. We had a gardener who had been a soldier, and who, in memory of his past glory, always wore a scarlet waistcoat on Sundays; and we had a hay−field, a farmyard, and two cows 'Cushie' and 'Hornie' which in the summer evenings we used to go with the cook to bring home from the field to the milking−byre. I think I could replace every dock and ragwort and plot of nettles and mayweed in that ragged bit of pasture−land, sloping down to the little brook where the minnows were. Our food was oatmeal−porridge, night and morning. For dinner we were allowed meat only twice a week. On the 'banyan days' we had large tureens full of milky messes of exquisite savour, or enormous paste puddings 'roly−polys' of fruit, jam, or undecorated suet. It was simple fare, but it made a stalwart, vigorous set of boys and girls; and out of the whole dozen, only two were relatively undersized and only one was delicate. The rest averaged six feet for the men and the full medium height for the women.

My mother, who was of higher social standing than my father for he was a simple vicar and she was then the Dean's daughter had married him against the consent of her own people. She died when my eldest brother was fifteen years old and when I, the youngest of the brood, was five months. Ten rapidly recurring steps between these two limits filled the quiver to overflowing.

My grandfather, at first violently angry, at last when he had been made a Bishop proved his forgiveness of his daughter's disobedience and my father's presumption by giving him, in succession, the best two livings in his gift; as well as certain sinecures which the lax ecclesiastical conscience of those days made it possible for an otherwise honest man to hold. But this liberality, added to the original sin of the marriage, only served to alienate the rest of the family more completely from us. For, as all my uncles were in orders, and all my aunts had married clergymen, and plurality was then in force, and nepotism the first duty of a patron−parent, it was but natural that they should resent this apportionment of the big plums to the least desirable of the sons−in−law, rather than to the more commendable who had the better claim, or to the sons who had the most right.

This professional jealousy, backed by social disdain for the family, as a family, was one of the proudest, most exclusive, and most worldly in England and my father's total want of kindred on his own side, explain the isolation in which we lived, and why, after my grandfather's death, we knew none of that kindly superintendence which the children of a dead sister so often receive from those still living. While my grandfather lived we were

taken care of at the Castle; but after his death we were abandoned; and my father was left to bring us up as he would, unhelped and unchecked by the influence of his wife's kinsfolk. He chose the rough and ready way of corporal punishment for all offences. He believed in Solomon and the rod, and put religious conviction as well as muscular energy into his stripes. It was a brutal system. But the times were brutal all through; and my father was neither worse nor more enlightened than his generation. He sincerely believed that he was doing his imperative duty when he thrashed us in accordance with the inspired command; and that were the rod spared the child would be indeed spoilt. And when a passionate temper takes with it divine sanction, the punishment it inflicts is softened by no misgiving as to its wisdom or its humanity.

My stately grandfather himself set an example of almost incredible severity in his family. His sons never called him anything but 'Sir' or 'My Lord;' and he was never known to kiss one of his daughters, save by rare grace, or on supreme occasions of marriage or departure, coldly on the forehead. Sometimes however, he allowed them to kiss his hand. He gave his wife half−a−crown at a time for pocket−money; and like Mrs. Primrose, with the guinea she 'generously' let each of her daughters have 'to keep in their pockets' she was exhorted not to break into it nor spend it. It always went in 'goodies' for the grandchildren. When the sons were beneficed clergymen and married men with children, they dared not have asked for a glass of wine at their father's table; and he would have been a bold man who should have addressed my Lord without first being spoken to.

A dark and terrible family tradition was whispered from each to each, under the bond of absolute secrecy, how that once, when one of my aunts had reached the ripe age of eighteen, my Lord Bishop had whipped her bodily with his own august prelatic hands. He was a tall and dignified−looking man; famed for botany and scholarship, and held to be the handsomest Bishop on the bench; but he was a queer successor of the Fishermen; and I doubt if the Master would have recognised him as a wholly satisfactory representative. Yet it was told of him that once, in a rare fit of humility confessing some trivial weakness of character, he said to my father with admirable condescension to the frailty of a common humanity: 'After all, Mr. Kirkland, a Bishop is only a man!'

Naturally indolent and self−indulgent in his habits, but a man of the strictest temperance never once in his whole life, in that drinking age, having exceeded the bounds of absolute sobriety; fond of shining in society, where he knew how to make his mark, but almost impossible to drag out of his study for any form of social intercourse; flattered by the notice of the great when it came to him, but neglecting all his opportunities and too proud to accept patronage even when offered; a Tory in politics and a Democrat in action; defying his diocesan and believing in his divine ordination; contemptuous of the people as a political factor, but kind and familiar in personal intercourse with the poor; clever, well read and somewhat vain of his knowledge, but void of ambition and indifferent to the name in literature which he might undoubtedly have won with a little industry; not liberal as a home−provider, but largely and unostentatiously generous in the parish; fond like a woman of his children when infants, but unable to reconcile himself to the needs of their adolescence and refusing to recognise the rights of their maturity; thinking it derogatory to his parental dignity to discuss any matter whatsoever rationally with his sons, and believing in the awful power of a father's curse, yet caressing in manner and playful in speech even when he was an old man and we were no longer young; with a heart of gold and a temper of fire my father was a man of strangely complex character, not to be dismissed in a couple of phrases.

With a nature tossed and traversed by passion, and a conscience that tortured him when his besetting sin had conquered his better resolve once more, as so often before, he was in some things like David; for whose character he had the most intimate kind of personal sympathy. 'For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me,' was the broken chord of his lament. But to us children, the echo of his loud midnight prayers, waking us from our sleep and breaking the solemn stillness of the night the sound of his passionate weeping mingled in sobbing unison with the moaning of the wind in the trees, or striking up in sharp accord with the stinging of the hail against the windows gave only an awful kind of mystery to his character, making the deeper shadows we knew too well all the more terrible by these lurid lights of tragic piety.

My poor dear father! The loss of my beautiful mother, and, a year after her death, that of the eldest girl, who seems to have been one of those sweet mother−sisters sometimes found as the eldest of the family, had tried him almost beyond his strength. His life henceforth was a mingled web of passion and tears now irritated and now despairing with ever that pathetic prostration at the foot of the Cross, where he sought to lay down his burden of sorrow and to take up instead resignation to the will of God where he sought the peace he never found! He had lost the best out of his life, and he could not fill up the gap with what remained.

There was one thing I have never understood: why my father, so well read and even learned in his own person, did not care to give his children the education proper to their birth and his own standing. The elders among us came off best, for the mother had had her hand on them, and the Bishop too, had had his say; but the younger ones were lamentably neglected. I do not know why. We were not poor. Certainly, we were a large tribe to provide for and my father often made a 'poor mouth;' but his income was good, the cost of living was relatively small, and things might have been better than they were. At the worst, my father might have taught us himself. He was a good classic and a sound historian; and though his mathematics did not go very deep, they were better than our ignorance. But he was both too impatient and too indolent to be able to teach, and I doubt if the experiment would have answered had he tried it.

So time went on, and he allowed neither a responsible tutor for us boys nor a capable governess for the girls, nor would he send us to school. He engaged, as a very perfunctory kind of crammer for two of my brothers, the son of a small hamlet hand−weaver, a young St. Bees man whose parents denied themselves almost necessaries that they might give their son a good education and see him in the ministry. This young man, who was both plain in person and ungainly in manners, fell in love with my eldest sister, and inspired her thereby with a physical horror that became almost a constitutional antipathy, such as certain people have for cats. When she was quite an old woman she used to say she should feel if Mr. Donald came into a room at her back, where she could not see him. She would feel him in a shudder down her spine and goose−flesh over her skin.

When my father had engaged this young man, he thought he had done all for his boys that was demanded of him by duty or need. If ever the subject was broached to him, he used to lose his temper, and always ended by saying that self−educated people got on the best. He forgot the pithy saying that a self−taught man has had a dunce for his master.

One of our family traditions, rounded off of course by repetition and the natural desire to make a good story, tells how that, after our mother's death, my grandfather sent for my father and urged him to do such and such things, whereby he might increase his income and provide for the fitting conduct of his family. To each proposal my father found insuperable objections. At last the Bishop, losing patience, said angrily:

'In the name of heaven, Mr. Kirkland, what do you mean to do for your children?'

'Sit in the study, my Lord, smoke my pipe, and commit them to the care of Providence,' was my father's calm reply.

And he acted on his decision. He did emphatically commit us to the care of Providence; and he was satisfied with his trustee.

Practically, this meant the control of the younger by the elder. The eldest brother was the master of the boys, the eldest sister the mistress of the girls; with intermediate gradations of relative supremacy according to seniority. Hence there reigned among us the most disastrous system of tyranny, exercised by these unfledged viceroys of Providence over their subordinates a tyranny for which there was no redress, however great the wrong. It was of no use to appeal to my father. Had he sided with the complainant, things would have been worse in the end, and there would then have been revenge and retaliation to add to the original count. It was better to take things as they came, or to fight it out for one's self. And there was always some one still younger to whom it could be passed on;

which was so far a comfort! Our house, in those days, was like nothing so much as a farm−yard full of cockerels and pullets for ever spurring and pecking at one another. It was the trial of strength that always goes on among growing creatures especially among young males; but it was bad to bear while it lasted. Add to this a still more disastrous system of favouritism, and the knowledge that no justice was to be expected, from my father downwards, if such a one were the plaintiff and such another the defendant and the breaking up among ourselves into pairs of sworn friends and devoted allies and this slight sketch of the moral rule that obtained during the early days of my childhood is complete.

CHAPTER III.

WE all suffered much from the want of intelligent supervision, but I, by the inherent defects of my character, as well as by my place as youngest, suffered most. Quick to resent and sensitive to kindness, rebellious and affectionate, wilful and soft−hearted, I was ever in tumult and turmoil, followed by disgrace, punishment and repentance. But I must say in self−exculpation, that, tiresome as I must have been, I was as much sinned against as sinning.

Easily provoked and daring in reprisals, but as the youngest the least formidable and the most defenceless, I was too good fun to be let alone. I was like the drunken helot told off to self−degradation for the moral benefit of the young Spartans; for I was teased and bullied till I became as furious as a small wild beast, and when by my violence I had put myself in the wrong, I was held up as an example to Edwin and Ellen to avoid, and flogged as the practical corollary. I do not suppose a week passed without one of these miserable outbreaks, with the rod and that dark closet under the stairs to follow.

These repeated floggings did me no good. Physically, they certainly hardened me to pain, but morally they roused in me that false and fatal courage which breeds the dare−devils of society and makes its criminals die game. But I was subdued at once when anyone, by rare chance and gleam of common−sense, remonstrated with me lovingly or talked to me rationally. I well remember my ambition to prove myself worthy of his trust, which was like sunlight in my tempestuous young life, when my father, instead of accusing and threatening me, relied on my promise to do what was right and to my word when I said I had not done what was wrong. Nor he, nor anyone who trusted to me, ever found me even then a defaulter. Like a faithful dog, I would have stood to have been hacked to pieces before I would have broken faith or forfeited my childish honour.

These halcyon days of moral dignity were painfully exceptional; and my father's confidence in me was that gift of God for which I longed more ardently than for anything in my life before or since and how seldom granted! I only remember two occasions once when I was believed about that broken drawing−room window, of which I had not been the ball−playing cause; and once when I was allowed to pick red currants for preserves, and my father trusted to my promise not to eat nor filch. As things were, I was always being guilty of some act of mischief, some flagrant disobedience to rules, or some outburst of temper which gave those in authority reason when they thrashed me, if they were in the wrong when they misunderstood me. So much I must say for my past turbulent self: I never remember being flogged for an act of meanness nor for a lie; and I do remember twice taking his punishment for Edwin and not betraying him. I never told tales of the others, and I was always ready to brave danger and its consequences if asked to do a service. Thus, though I was undeniably the black sheep of the flock, I was the one trusted to when a steadfast agent was wanted.

At this moment there comes before me a little scene which must have taken place when I was a very small boy.

I was sent to steal some sacred apples for some of them I forget who they were now. As I shook the tree by means of a light garden−rake hitched up on the branches, it fell and cut open my head, covering my neck−frill with blood. But I gathered up the apples in my pinafore, and took them to my brothers or sisters hiding behind the wall on the little bank which to this day is golden with the 'shoes and stockings' I remember so well; and then I

marched sturdily into the house, where Mary the nurse cut my hair, strapped up the wound, and put me to bed. The next day I was taken to my father and flogged. But I would not tell for whom I had stolen the apples, nor would I plead in mitigation of my punishment that I had had none myself.

Our then 'viceroy,' the second brother the eldest being away at college was a young fellow of eighteen, with a violent temper and a heavy hand. He was generous and affectionate at bottom, but he was irritable, jealous and tyrannical to an overwhelming degree. One day, a Punch−and−Judy show came on the lawn before the dining−room windows. We were all there, watching the raree−show. I suppose I was excited and in one of my impudent moods, for I persisted in calling my brother 'Dicksy,' a name he disliked and specially forbade the smaller fry to use.

'If you say that again I will thrash you,' he said to me angrily.

I looked up into his face. How clear the whole thing is before me! The squeaking and unintelligible Punch; the sunshine on the grass; the close throng, clustered like flies against the window; and my sense of my brother's towering bigness and formidible ferocity. But I was a daring young rascal, and always ready to brave the unknown.

'Dicksy!' I said defiantly.

Whereupon Richard was as good as his word, and then and there beat me severely.

The brother who stood next to Richard, with one sister between, was three years his junior. He was as tall, but naturally not then so strong; as passionate in temper, but of a deeper nature and finer mental and moral quality altogether. These two were natural foes and rivals, and were always fighting the one tyrannizing, the other rebelling. Before this day I do not remember this brother Godfrey. He is lost in the crowd of the elders, from whom we little chaps were separated as entirely as if they had been lions or we had been mice. After this day he became one of the enduring loves of my life. I distinctly remember how he turned upon Richard and fought him for his cruelty to such a little fellow as I was not quite five years old, and still in frocks like a baby; for I can yet see the weals on my shoulder made by Richard's vigorous fingers. After the scuffle Godfrey took me on his knee, and kissed me to comfort me. From that moment there woke up in me a kind of worship for this brother, just ten years my senior a worship, which, old man as I am still older as he is I retain to this hour. We have lived apart all our lives. In over forty years I have seen him for two at a stretch. But when I realize the ideal of knightly honour and manly nobleness of that kind of proud incorruptibility which knows no weakness for fear nor favour I think of my brother Godfrey far beyond the seas; he who as a boy braved his elder brother for the sake of a little fellow who could not defend himself as a man calmly faced an excited mob yelling for their blood, to place under the shadow of the British flag two trembling wretches who had only his courage between them and death.

The early life and adventures of this brother are a romance in themselves. Had he lived in mythic times he would have been another Amadis, a second Wallace. He is like some offshoot of heroic days, rather than a man of a commercial generation; and in him the grand old Roman spirit survives and is re−embodied.

Godfrey was my lord, but Edwin was my natural chum. Some eighteen months younger, I was the stronger and bigger of the two. He had always been a delicate boy; and the nursery tradition about him was that when he was born he was the exact length of a pound of butter, was put into a quart−pot, and dressed in my eldest sister's doll's clothes: the ordinary baby−clothes were too large, and her doll was a big one for those days. I was his slave and protector in one. He had none of the emotional intensity, none of the fierceness of temper, the foolhardy courage, the inborn defiance, neither had he the darkness of mood nor the volcanic kind of love which characterized me. He was sweeter in temper; more sprightly as well as more peaceful in disposition; more amenable to authority; of a lighter, gentler, more manageable and more amiable nature altogether. He was the family favourite and the

family plaything. Long after my sisters had left off taking me into their laps they would let Edwin sit on their knees for hours; and when my brothers would have kissed a hedgehog as soon as me, they kissed him as they kissed Julia and Rosamond and Ellen. He was never in mischief and never in the way. He cared only to play quiet games in the garden when it was fair, or to sit in the embrasure of the window when it was wet and we were forced to keep the house. In consideration of his delicacy he had been taught wool−work and netting; and his supreme pleasure was to sit on his 'copy' (a kind of stool), in a 'cupboardy house' that is, in the midst of a ring of chairs forming a defence−work against intruders while I told him stories 'out of my own head' or Ellen good−naturedly read to him.

Besides this constitutional delicacy to make those in authority tender in their dealing with him, he was the most beautiful of us all. Godfrey was incomparably the handsomest of the grown boys did not his beauty once save his life? but Edwin was the loveliest of the children. He was like one of Sir Joshua's cherubs. His head was covered with bright golden curls, his skin was like a pale monthly rose, and he had big soft blue eyes which no one could resist. Everyone loved and petted him, as I have said. Our father, who saw in him the reproduction of our dead mother, had even a more tender feeling for him than for any of his other favourites; my own hero, Godfrey, loved him ten thousand times more than he loved me; and Richard, our tyrannical 'kingling,' who spared no one else, spared Edwin. But no one sacrificed to him as I did, and no one loved him with such fanatical devotion. It was but natural, then, that he should lord it over me with that tremendous force which weakness ever has over loving strength; and that I, the born rebel but the passionate lover, should give to that weakness the submission which no authority could wring from me. Also it came into the appointed order of things that I should bore him by my devotion, and that he should pain me by his indifference. It was a preface to the life that had to come the first of the many times when I should make shipwreck of my peace through love.

Yet had it not been for this devotion to Edwin, and the feeling that I was of use to him for all his coldness to me, my life would have been even more painful than it was. I was so isolated in the family, so out of harmony with them all, and by my own faults of temperament such a little Ishmaelite and outcast, that as much despair as can exist with childhood overwhelmed and possessed me. Three years after his defence of me, when he was eighteen and I eight, Godfrey left home; and I lost the Great−Heart of my loyal love the one I always felt was somehow my own special suzerain, if I were but a despised kind of Dugald creature to him. But even at the best, the difference between our ages prevented anything like friendship or companionship. He was my lord, but he was never my familiar.

I remember how, after he had left, and though I knew that he was out of England and countless miles away, I used to expect him to return suddenly and by miracle; and how sometimes I used to look for him about the place in the cupboards and unused lofts. And I remember, too, a strange horror that used to seize me, of expecting to find a pool of blood in the place where I looked for him.

Perhaps this odd kind of horror was due to a terrible scene which had had a great effect on me. Our two brothers, Richard and Godfrey, were shooting in a field not far from the vicarage, and we were watching them from the windows. Suddenly there was a tremendous report, a large volume of smoke, a cry and the hurrying of men together; and then we saw a body carried on their shoulders, and brought up to the vicarage. It was Richard, the barrel of whose gun had burst. The stock had wounded him severely in the stomach, and covered him with blood. Godfrey was safe, but singed. Perhaps it was some obscure association of ideas which added this ghastly horror of expected blood to my grief for Godfrey's mysterious flight and my insane belief in his miraculous return unable as I was, like all devotees, to accept the unalterable law when dealing with love.

In these outcast days I used to dream a strange dream strange, considering my age how that I was not one of them not my father's child at all but a foundling, some day to be reclaimed and taken home by his own who would love and understand him. I had a favourite hiding−place in the lime−trees at the foot of the garden, where I used to lose my time, my strength and mental health in this fantastic idea. Granting all the difficulties my family had to contend with in me, I do not think the desolation of a young child could go beyond the secret hope of one

day finding himself an alien to his own of some day being claimed by the unknown strangers coming out of space sure to be more gentle and sympathetic than those others! But I always added, as a codicil to this testament of despair, that if ever I did find these unknown dear ones, Godfrey should still be my king and Edwin my beloved, and that no new tie should break these two golden links of the old sad heavy chain. As another proof of my childish desolation, if also of my intemperate nature, I remember how once, in a fit of mad passion for some slight put on me by my eldest sister, whereat the others had laughed and jeered me, I first fought them all round, then rushed off to a large draw−well we had in the coach−yard we were not then at Eden, but at my father's private house in Kent intending to throw myself down and end for ever a life which was at the moment intolerable and emphatically not worth living. The heavy cover was over the mouth, and I could not move it. While I was trying the gardener came along; and, seeing that I had been crying, he good−naturedly took me to the apple−loft, where he filled my pockets with golden russets which consoled me grandly, and lifted me over that little stile of sorrow into a flowery field of content. I was then ten years old.

If Edwin had died when he was a child, the spiritualists would have had a case. He woke one night sobbing piteously, and woke me, sleeping with him, by his crying. When I asked him what was the matter, he said that he had just seen 'poor mamma.' He was on one side of a broad black river, and on the other, in a garden full of flowers, stood our mother draped in white with wings like an angel. She held out her arms and called: 'Little Edwin, come to me! Little Edwin, come!' Then he woke, and cried because he had again lost the mother whom he, of all the children, most desired to have had and known. For not even those who remembered her regretted her loss so much as did Edwin, who was not quite two years old when she died, and who did not remember her at all. He had no illness after this, nor did he die. Thanks to the pure blood we have all inherited, notwithstanding his early delicacy he is alive and well to this day. But had he died then, this dream would have been accounted a supernatural vision, and he would have been held to have been called to death and paradise by his mother's spirit.

If all the failures in presentiments and warning dreams were recorded, I fancy they would considerably outweigh the co−incidences.

I had not Edwin's pathetic yearning for our mother. I found her substitute in Nurse Mary, whom I loved with overwhelming force, and got into trouble as the result. As, once when she had been away for a week's holiday and had returned at night, I was wakened up out of my sleep and taken to her bed. I was so glad to see her that I cried; and finally cried myself into what was, I suppose, a fit of hysterics; when they whipped me as a useful nervous counteraction.

This nurse was an undisciplined kind of woman, who now hugged us till she nearly squeezed us to death, and now beat us black and blue. But I suppose my own volcanic nature understood her violent one, for I could not live out of her sight, and she was good enough to me. I am afraid she drank, poor Mary! Things dark then are clear now; and those mysterious and sudden illnesses which she used to have pretty often were, I fancy, due to brandy rather than to disease. She left us when I was nine years old.

I was about eleven years of age when the first distinct stirrings of my mental life began to make themselves felt. Godfrey's adventures for he had returned after two years' imprisonment in Russia had something to do with the new light that began to dawn in my young brain. I had always had a passion for books and pictures, and I knew almost by heart those few that we possessed. In contrast to the wealth of modern days, it will not be uninteresting to give the full catalogue of our special library. Mrs. Sherwood's 'Little Henry and his Bearer'; 'William and the Woodman'; 'Sandford and Merton'; 'Paul and Virginia'; 'Evenings at Home'; 'The Arabian Nights' Tales'; 'Tales of the Castle'; 'Tales of the Genii'; 'Robinson Crusoe'; 'Pilgrim's Progress' where the occasion was generally improved for my benefit, as I was identified with Passion, while Edwin was Patience; Miss Edgeworth's 'Moral Tales'; and 'Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia,' formed our whole stock of profane literature. For Sunday−reading we had 'Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns'; the 'Dairyman's Daughter'; 'Fox's Book of Martyrs'; 'The History of all Religions'; 'The Life of Christ' of which I remember only the pathetic pictures of the Agony in the Garden and the Crucifixion, where two little angels held up cups to catch the blood; and sometimes we were allowed to look

at the coloured plates of the 'safe' volumes of the 'Encyclopædia Londinensis' the battle−horse of the study library. When we grew older we had to read one of Sherlock's sermons Sherlock was my father's favourite divine; or he read to us in the evening, before prayers, a chapter out of Doddridge's 'Family Expositor,' when all of us youngsters invariably fell asleep and were scolded for our irreligious drowsiness.

But, as I say, when I was about eleven years of age, almost suddenly I seemed to leap out of this narrow circle and to demand a larger mental area altogether. There woke up in me the most burning desire to Know. With all the intense physical enjoyment of life given me by my keen senses and strong animal nature with all the delight I felt in putting out my strength and learning how to increase and sharpen my growing bodily powers I had a dim consciousness that life meant more than mere pleasure; and that it was as important to know history and geography, and what the problems of Euclid proved, and what those unintelligible books in strange tongues said to those who could read them, as it was to know how to swarm up a smooth−boled tree, jump standing and leap running, and clamber like a goat over the crags and rocky places. All these things were necessary and delightful; but higher and beyond them all stood Knowledge.

By this time our family at home had decreased by death, marriage and absence, to five less than half the original number; and things educational were worse for us, the youngest two boys, than they had been for the elders. Edwin's health was too frail for school−life; and as he could not go, neither could I. I was wanted at home to be his companion. It was in vain that I begged my father to send me to school. He would not; and I vexed him by my entreaties. Nor would he give us masters nor a tutor at home. He promised, but he never fulfilled his promise. All the instruction I ever received was of the pot−hook−and−hanger degree the mere elements; the rest I did for myself. And so years passed on, and still Edwin and I were kept at home to do what we liked, provided we did not get into mischief and did not bother.

Part of that liking with me went into learning for myself what there was no one to teach me. I took up languages; beginning with French. Year after year I attacked one after the other, till I had got hold of a good many. But, as I learnt only to read and was not phenomenally laborious, I scamped the grammar and devoted myself to translation that is, I neglected rules and learnt only words. This is the reason why, when I could read with ease and translate aloud rapidly while I read, French, Italian, German, Spanish, with a little Latin and less Greek, I could neither parse any of these languages correctly nor speak one fluently. I learnt without method, and I have never been able to disentangle my mind from the false order of the start.

This want of early training explains all my persistent intellectual deficiencies my want of dialectical skill, my want of scientific accuracy, and how it is that I know nothing analytically, from the foundations upward, but only synthetically, concretely, as it stands. This must needs be, seeing that I have never built up any study brick by brick, nor chamber by chamber, but have only entered on the results of other men's work inhabiting where they have created. Essentially self−educated as I am, that self−education began at an age when the elemental drudgery, which always seems useless to ignorance, is naturally shirked for the more interesting results. Learning, with me, was only a means to an end. For instance, I learnt French out of curiosity to read an old illustrated 'Telemachus' that we had, and thus to understand what the pictures meant; Italian to know about Petrarch and Dante, whose conventional portraits in our encyclopædia had fascinated me; German, for 'Faust'; Latin, to understand those brown−leather folios in the study library; Spanish for 'Don Quixote'; and Greek in the vain hope of following Homer in the original the awakening touch here having been given by Godfrey telling me about the 'far−darting Apollo' and the 'silver−ankled Thetis.' And being by the nature of my intellect quick to understand, and by temperament impatient to possess 'a temperament founded on ultimates,' as my friend Garth Wilkinson said of me in later times I had not mastered the rudiments when I plunged into the middle term, and bounded on to the end. Thus, never subjected to that severe mental discipline which is but another form of moral control, I grew up in absolute mental unrestraint; and I have never been able to put myself into harness since.

This independence of thought is not presumption nor vanity, nor any of the hard things believers in authority say of the self−reliant. It is the result of antecedent conditions, for which a man is no more responsible than he is for

the size of his skeleton. And he can change the one as little as the other. Those who are to be disciplined must be taught their drill and made to obey; and no one can be at once self−reliant and submissive.

This then, was how things stood in my early boyhood, after the stage of childhood proper was passed say from between eleven to seventeen. In my mental life, undirected and unhelped, save by opposition which has always been a powerful stimulus to me I strove to learn, to know, to possess. So far I was justified by my conscience and at peace with myself; and if I lost my time, took things by the wrong end, and amassed a world of rubbish which did me no good then nor since, I did not know my mistakes, and my ignorance was my bliss.

In my family I was still under the old cloud. I was snubbed by my father, whom I constantly worried and often angered; roughly handled by my brothers, whose authority I defied when they came home for their vacations from college; sent to Coventry by my sisters whom I revolted by my violence and affronted by my impertinence; made his slave by Edwin, who did not really love me in those days; but with all this I knew that I tried to do right, however poorly I succeeded, and that I would have died rather than I would have done what seemed to me mean or false, or cowardly or selfish. And ever and ever I longed with a hungry passion that ran into pain, for the love which my own turbulence of nature made it impossible for others to give me.

If our dear mother had lived, things would have been different. She would have understood each and would have done justly by all. Under her wise management there would have been none of that neglect in direction and harshness of punishment when things went wrong which had been the rule of our upbringing. And her gentle influence would have tamed the tempers and regulated the actions of all alike. All our troubles were due to her death; and my poor father was as much to be pitied as were we.

I have dwelt so long on the early life of my childhood because it gives the clue to all the rest. The boy is father to the man, and the first chord contains the key−note of the whole succeeding harmony.

CHAPTER IV.

AT seventeen my future profession was undetermined and my real education had never been begun. My father's constitutional indolence had greatly increased of late years, and nothing was so difficult to him as to take a resolution, excepting to act on it when taken. Hence, Edwin and I were still hanging about at home, doing nothing that should in any way equip us for the life in which we had to take our place and pull our pound with the rest.

Though we two were incomparably the worst off for tuition, our elder brothers themselves had been but slenderly furnished, all things considered. Therefore they had failed to make for themselves such positions as might have helped us youngsters against the dead weight of my father's inertia. It was as much as they could do to fend for themselves and struggle into comparatively good places. And some of them, in revolt against their difficulties, had flung up the attempt here at home, and had cast their lines in the dark but brisker waters of emigration and exile.

There never was a family with so much power left to run so cruelly to waste for want of timely cultivation as was ours! It is no vanity to say that we were an exceptionally fine set all through, and that, had we been properly trained, each one of us would have made his mark. There was not a dunce among us, nor a physical failure. All my sisters were pretty; all my brothers were well−grown and handsome; and Edwin, who was the least robust in person, was the most beautiful in face and the most lovely in character. I have often lamented the waste of good material in our family, and the loss to the world that it has been. When I see the elaborate education given to boys and girls with brain−power of the most ordinary calibre, and note what careful training has made of them, and then remember the large amount of mental and physical vitality among ourselves, and what ordinary care might have made of us, I confess I feel heartsick foolish as it is to look back, like Lot's wife, over the irrecoverable past. All the same, it was a misfortune; and it has been a real loss.

It might have been so different! My father's office and position made him an influential person in society; my mother's family kept us abreast with the county magnates, at least in theory, if, owing to my father's disinclination to society, scarcely in practice; and we had friends who might have helped us if they would. There was, for one, the great Tory member whose historic name was like a battle−cry he had power enough, if he would have used it for gratitude without being entreated. For my father would have cut off his right hand before he would have asked a favour of living man. When an election was on hand, and every vote was of consequence, Sir James used to come to our house, make much of his dear friend Mr. Kirkland, praise his Latinity and his poetry, admire the girls, kiss the children, and hint at substantial services for the boys. When he was returned he forgot all about his dear friend as cleanly as if he had never existed, and did not lift a finger to serve the sons of his faithful partisan, who were also the grandsons of his old master, the Bishop. His want of gratitude never touched my father's political fidelity; for no man was ever less a self−seeker than he. He did his duty at a personal loss quite as stoutly as if it brought him grist and grain; though he suffered from ingratitude, as any man of sensibility would. But he never complained, even in the privacy of home. I have never known anyone more entirely free from all spite and bitterness than he.

By this time I had formed my theory of the universe. What thoughtful boy of seventeen has not? I was firmly convinced that I held the fee−simple of all great truths in my hands, and that no views other than those which seemed to me right were worth consideration. All were the outcome of either ignorance or falsehood of either blind superstition which could not see the light, or wilful tyranny, conscious of its iniquity but determined to hold on for the oppression of truth. No question could have two sides; no opponent could be an honest man; no ultimate development of my own theories could eventuate in evil. Does not every individual, like concrete society, go through this phase of bigotry tyrannous and unjust by its very intensity of conviction?

I was comically proud of being an Englishman. I had no doubt that we were God's modern chosen His eldest sons and peculiar favourites; that the English Protestant Church was the very Delos of Truth the ark of the Christian covenant; that even Christian prayers said in a foreign tongue were not heard with so much pleasure, nor answered with so much precision, as ours while prayers said to a Being who did not exist to Allah or Brahma, Vishnu or Buddha, not to speak of the Madonna and the saints were neither heard nor answered at all; that we were the best gentlemen, the bravest men, the most enlightened and most virtuous people on the face of the earth; and that every departure from our special ways of living and thinking was a wandering into the desert with destruction at the far end. That is, I was bounded by my own circumstances, and could not travel beyond my experience.

Also, I was an ardent Republican and a devout Christian. Indeed, I was the one because the other; and, in spite of that injunction to pay tribute to Cæsar, on which my father so much insisted, I could not see a 'via media.' Nor could I understand the compromise between faith and practice, consistency and expediency, made by the believing world; nor yet how men, who would have roasted alive an infidel had the law permitted, could deliberately break all the commands given by the Saviour. That fine satirical problem of how to hold together, on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, an empire founded on the breach of all the Ten Commandments, had not then been formulated. But the spirit of it was in my own young head, and the difficulty involved was one that puzzled me as it has many more than myself, and will continue to puzzle others for some time yet to come.

For my own part, full of youthful zeal and the logic of consistency, I determined to live the Christian life so far as it was possible; helped thereto by the influence and example of the strong old heathen times. I, at least, in my own person would be faithful to the Lord and a man among men.

I began by renouncing all the pleasant softnesses and flattering vanities of my youth, and made myself a moral hybrid, half ascetic, half stoic. I accustomed myself to privations and held luxuries as deadly sins. Sensual by nature, I cut myself off from all sweets of which I was inordinately fond; and because I was a heavy sleeper and fond of that warm ener− vating morning doze which made me always late for breakfast, for a whole year I lay on the floor and despised bed as an unrighteous effeminacy. Never cowardly to pain, I taught myself to bear mild

torture without wincing as, when I one day dug out a tooth with my knife as a good exercise of fortitude. Because I once saw myself in the glass with a strange and sudden consciousness of the beauty of my youth and personality, I turned that offending bit of blistered quicksilver to the wall, and for six months never saw my face again. During that time I had to undergo many things from my sisters because of the untidiness of my general appearance; for though I had become scrupulously clean by now, as part of the physical enjoyment of life clean even to my long brown freckled hands, surely the test−piece of a boy! I was but a sloven in the decorative part, and never knew the right side from the wrong, and scarcely the back of things from the front. I gave away all the 'treasures' I had accumulated since my childhood, in imitation of the Apostles and according to Christ's injunctions to the rich young man; and no one but myself knew of that little altar which I had built up in the waste−place behind the shrubbery, where I used to carry the first of such fruit as I specially liked, to lay it thereon as my offering to God to wither in the sun or be devoured by insects and birds. I set myself secret penance for secret sins. I prayed often and fervently, and sometimes seemed to be borne away from the things of time and space and carried into the very presence of God, as it were in a trance a still living Gerontius. I realized my faith as positively as if it had been a thing I could see and touch. My confirmation was a consecration; and when first I received the communion, I felt as if I had tabernacled the Lord in my own body, and that I was henceforth His, so that I could never sin again.

In these days of boyish fervour, had I fallen into the hands of a Roman Catholic I should have become a monk of some severe disciplinary order. My whole inner life was one of intense religious realization. God was far off, the paternal King and inexorable Judge of all, and His 'unlidded eye' ever watched me with awful attention. This thought was sometimes so oppressive that I used to shrink and cower under the consciousness of being always looked at; when I would cover my face in my hands and say aloud:

'Oh! if I could but be sometimes alone if I could but hide myself and be able to think as I liked and not be watched nor heard!'

And then I felt that I had spoken blasphemy and committed the unpardonable sin.

My consciousness of Christ was softer. He was my gracious Prince, to obey whom brought the joy of loyal serving. To disobey pained rather than angered Him, and caused Him that 'crucifixion afresh' in which I believed as firmly as I believed in Gethsemane and Golgotha. The angels were my invisible companions, of whom I was not afraid; and I felt the grim presence of the devil at my back and in the corners of the room, as one feels the presence of a murderer in the dark. In a word, I lived in the Christian's sanctified egotism believing that all the forces of heaven and hell were mainly occupied with the salvation or destruction of my one poor miserable little soul; and that the most important thing between earth and sky was, whether a hot−blooded lad with more sincerity than judgment flew into a rage when he should have curbed his temper, or heroically checked his impulses of sensuality in the matter of jam−pudding and the fruit garden.

But during all this time of my faithful endeavours after a higher life I was just as intolerable to my family as before, and my passions were still my masters. My anger blazed out in the old fierce way at the smallest provocation; and when the blood mounted to my head, then I was again the helot self−degraded I had always been. Heaven was shut against me, and I was spiritually in the Hell I was predestined to eternally inhabit.

I was vehemently penitent when the fit was over, and resolved in my wild way of repentance to bear with Christian patience the next affront put on my sensitive pride. Alas! nature was too strong for me, and my progress in self−control was like nothing so much as the twirling of a squirrel in his cage. For all my efforts to deliver myself, I was up to my neck in the Slough; and my prayers brought me no more spiritual grace, no more godly fruitage, than so much water poured out on sand. The boiling blood I called on God to calm boiled ever as madly as before; and with all my faith in the Divine presence and power, I was conscious that I was not answered.

What agony I went through! What an infinite sense of being fated to sin, foredoomed to perdition, possessed me, as I felt that I was left to fight with my wild beasts unhelped to struggle to get free, that I might take refuge in God, and to be hopelessly in the clutch of the devil! It was as if some monster held me bodily, while I was striving to deliver myself that I might rush into the outstretched, loving arms of the Saviour opposite. But that Saviour waited for me to go to Him. He did not and would not help me. Only those who have gone through a like period of spiritual endeavour and frustration can realize my sufferings at this time, which, I remember, threw an awful kind of light on the myths setting forth the endless labour of Sisyphus and the fruitless work of the Danaïdes in hell.

Clergyman though he was, all this ebullient zeal and youthful extravagance of aspiration annoyed my father as if the translation of faith into practice had been an impiety, and not an effort after godliness. We will grant the clumsiness of the method still, the effort was always there. Logical Christianity seemed to him a dream as fanatical as it was inconvenient. All that was necessary for our salvation was to believe the Bible, obey our parents, say our prayers night and morning, go to church regularly, and keep ourselves free from forbidden sins. More than this was to fall on the other side and go over into presumption.

He venerated the saints and martyrs of past times; but he maintained that the past was not the present, and that the age of enthusiasm, like that of miracles, had died out. Had persecution been revived, he would have stood firm for his own part, and he would have exhorted others to a like fidelity. But as no more fires in Smithfield would be lighted, at least in our generation, and no one would now call out: 'Christianos ad leones!' he held spiritual assent more valuable than practical imitation, and quiet walking in the cleanly parts of the broad highway better than scaling eccentric heights and shouting 'Excelsior!' from the clouds.

It was useless for me to turn to him for guidance. He repulsed me with coldness, or testily chid me with arrogance, when I carried my difficulties between faith and practice to him. He accused me of presumption in thus questioning the lives of men older, better, wiser than myself such a mere unformed lad as I was! And ever, with perfect justice and uncompromising logic, he pointed out the inconsistency of my aspirations after superior piety with my acted life of passion and misconduct. My conscience told me he was right when he thus flung me back with the argument 'ad rem.' What had I to do with good or godliness I, the child of sin, whose very love was a tempest, whose quarrels were volcanic eruptions, whose repentance was a tropical storm, and whose virtues themselves were as unsettling and disturbing as were his faults? If I could just scrape in by conformity, that was all I need hope for. To attempt more was as irrational as if a lame man who could not walk should try to leap.

The wave of religious revivalism, just beginning to break on the arid shores of ecclesiastical indifference, was to my father a sign of storm and shipwreck, not of healthy movement. He stood apart from both Evangelical enthusiasm and Tractarian authority with equal dislike for each. Through the former, moreover, he had received personal annoyance of a grave kind. During his five years' absence in Kent, his curate, one Mr. Black, had 'awakened' and 'converted' the parish of Eden to a high pitch of evangelical fervour. A schism in the place was the natural consequence. The Evangelicals said that my father had not been a faithful minister of the Word, and that the Gospel had never been preached to them before the advent of Mr. Black; and the sleepy old souls, who disliked innovations, stood by their kind−hearted vicar who did so much quiet good in the place, though he did not 'pan out' on free will and prevenient grace, baptismal regeneration and faith before works. They scouted the new order as fantastic and extreme; and thought evening parties, where prayers took the place of the former round games, and expounding recondite doctrines that of the old forfeits, not only monstrously dull but also unseemly.

Their sheet−anchor was Conservatism and keeping things as they were. What had done for their fathers was good enough for them, and ought to be good enough for their children. No improvements, however much they were needed, met with their support. They saw no good in the Sunday−schools, which had been built and were kept up by a rich adherent of the energetic curate; and the 'restoration' of the old church by the same generous hand was an offence to them. Munificence had a hard fight with chronic obstructiveness before it got leave to bestow; and every stone that was laid and every ornament that was added was subjected to hostile criticism and opposition.

Naturally my father was not so backward as this. He recognised the good and beauty of all these changes. The restored church was really magnificent; and the fine organ, with its organist and well−trained choir, was a decided advance on old Adam and his pitch−pipe. The Sunday−school teachers too, kept those unruly children in order; while the low pews, all looking one way, held the congregation together and prevented the sleepy−heads from snoring. But the finer surroundings demanded a more stately method; and in his heart my dear, indolent father, when he came back into residence, regretted the old familiar ways, and felt strange in all this new niceness, where he had to be for ever on parade and always alert and in order. If the glory of God could have been fitly set forth without so much ado, it would have been more pleasing to him. He thought it just a little in excess as he thought my poor, purblind efforts very greatly in excess.

My father and I, not in harmony on reli− gious matters, were at issue in politics High Tory, according to his age and training, as he was; Republican of the crudest academic type as was I. We had many a stormy scene; for I was such an impulsive fool I could never hold my peace, and when my mind teemed with thoughts that knocked at the door of my lips, they had to come forth, for good or ill.

'I would rather see the devil himself let loose on the earth than the Radicals get the upper hand in the country!' my father said to me one day in a paroxysm of rage, when I had rashly introduced the subject of the first Chartist petition, just then presented to Parliament.

'And I hold all kings and tyrants as direct emissaries of the devil, and that "Vox populi, vox Dei,"' was my defiant reply.

For which piece of impertinence my father called me a puppy and incontinently knocked me down.

In those days O'Connell was my political idol; and I seriously thought of running away from home to offer myself to him as the servant and soldier of liberty, good for any work he might give me to do. Had not Godfrey, that best and noblest of us all, gone to join the Poles in their rise against Russia? and was not the freedom of a country beyond one's own small nationality? Wherefore, for all my patriotism, I rather inconsistently longed for the Irish to take up arms, that I might imitate my brother's splendid example and fight their tyrants ourselves for their liberties. I thought Byron's 'Irish Avatar' the finest bit of poetry the world had ever seen run hard, however, by Campbell's 'Song of the Greeks;' and I used to declaim these two poems with a ferocious energy which made my sister Ellen call me, in her quiet way, 'a perfect monster' while Edwin added: 'You are just a maniac, Chris, and ought to be put into a madhouse.'

If I found in O'Connell my Leonidas, my Brutus, my Tell any one you like who shall best express the anax andrn of history and liberty Sheil was my Demosthenes; and I used to devour his speeches as if they had been the text of a new Gospel. In the smaller men, of whom our own Liberal county member was the natural chief, I saw the modern representatives of the immortal Three Hundred. The French Revolution was the divine birthday of European liberty I am not far from the same belief now! Lafayette, thin and respectable mediocrity that he was, took, in my ardent imagination, heroic proportions and colossal merits; and I undutifully rejoiced over the discomfiture of my country in the American War of Independence. I believed in Greece and abjured Turkey. I adored Poland and I hated Russia. Joan of Arc, the Maid of Saragossa and Charlotte Corday, were my feminine ideals; but the old Judaic heroines, such as Judith and Jael, were even then abhorrent, and I marvelled much how God could have found them worthy.

I envied the dead of all times and in all places who had known how to die for Liberty; and I held the apotheosis of humanity to have been reached in Old Greece and Republican Rome. I burned as with fever when I read of old−time tyrannies, and shouted to the skies when they were avenged; for the past was as the present to me, and my vivid imagination bridged the gap with the living lines of sympathy. I raged dumbly, or broke out into stormy deprecation when my father, as he often did, read aloud the most pungent bits of the 'Anti−Jacobin' and I held Canning as no better than Judas Iscariot. All of which means that I was as intolerant as the men whose intolerance

I reviled as arbitrary as the tyrants who had oppressed free thought and slaughtered independent action.

And I tried to indoctrinate Edwin with all this burning hatred of oppression, all this admiration for the assassins of tyrants, all this sympathy with revolt which filled me as with a divine afflatus. But when my proselytism was more noisy and aggressive than usual, he simply shook his fair curly head with his favourite little action of disdain, and told me that I was an ass for my pains for we were a plain−spoken lot, and did not mince our terms among ourselves. And when I bothered him too much he lost his patience and got annoyed, telling me that I was the most unendurable nuisance and the biggest idiot going, and that if I did not hold my tongue he would leave the room. Then I stormed at his civic and political indifferentism, which to me was a real crime; and probably tore out of doors to work off my anger and cherish may sense of isolation by long lonely rambles among the mountains, where I felt like some exile banished for the sake of liberty friendless among men, but supported by the immortal justice of his cause.

It was towards the beginning of this political phase in the 'Sturm und Drang' period of my life that the Chartist riots were on hand. With what vague dread and sympathy combined they filled me! I was quite sure that their cause was holy and that their demands were just; but the thought of danger, when brought home to my own people, froze the blood in my veins with horror. I might shout 'The Song of the Greeks' to wind and sky for as long as I liked, but I had no fancy for seeing the beaks of our home ravens crimsoned with the precious blood of friends and family! Still, if there were to be a general revolution, I used to assure Edwin, I would protect them all. Of course I should join the insurgents; but, if the worst came to the worst, my Brothers the Chartists for my sake would hold harmless all I loved. And they would place an armed guard at our gate, who would require the password from all who came near, and allow no one to enter with evil intent. And we would receive into the rectory all our best friends, and I would be their saviour. For myself, if the royalists won, I would not take my life at their hands at a gift.

I do not think my assurance had a very tranquillizing effect on my brother or my sisters, who somehow, with the illogicality of youth, made me responsible for their terror. How young it all was!

I shall never forget my strange emotion when, one day, we heard the guns over by Carlisle we were then at Braeghyll, which was at the back of the mountains. We were walking on the high moor which runs into the plain where Carlisle stands. My father said it was the Chartists firing at and being fired on by the soldiers; and he looked grave and anxious, and did not abuse the poor fellows. His kind heart carried it over his political passions, and he was sorry for the men who would have to suffer. And how vividly I too realized the fact of war being within this measurable distance of our home; but oh! how my blood leapt for hope that the cause of Liberty would prevail! But I dared not speak. When my father was in such a mood as to−day, I was awed by loving reverence into silence.

About this time a party of about thirty men one day surged in at the rectory gates, and came up to the house, demanding bread and money. My father chanced to be from home this day; which was as well; for the men were at first inclined to be blustering and rude, and my father's quick temper 'flew' at insolence as quickly as the seed−vessel of the balsam flies at the touch. He would have been kind enough to them had they been respectful; but he would have braved all consequences had they been brutal. The sight of my pretty sisters, however, and of us two young boys, soon soothed them into a pleasant frame of mind; and when I went out boldly among them, and fraternized with them, joining with them in their general abuse of all aristocrats and mill−owners, and talking seditious nonsense with the best, they grew quite friendly and confidential. One of them justified my former boasts by assuring me, with an oath, that when their day came we should have no cause to be 'afeard.' The rectory should be marked with white chalk, and not a hair of our heads should be harmed.

'For thy sake, my brave lad!' said the speaker, laying his hand on my shoulder kindly.

So the adventure passed off without more damage than that which came from a temporary domestic famine. For the men generously refused to take any money from such a young, irresponsible set as we were: 'Nay, we isn't rogues!' they said; and after their bread and cheese and beer, they left us with a ringing shout, and 'God bless the parson's childer!' flung back as their parting words, when they passed through the gate.

Another time we got into an excited crowd as we were driving back from Carlisle. There had been a mass−meeting of the mill−hands there, and they took my brother Godfrey for Feargus O'Connor. They swarmed over the carriage in noisy and rather inconvenient enthusiasm, insisting on shaking hands with us all; till Godfrey grew angry with their familiarity to our sisters, and, knocking one drunken fellow down, drove off at a smart pace. His ideas of fraternity did not include grimy paws thrust into Ellen's pretty hands; and half−drunken oper− atives claiming us all as their 'mates' was bringing the ideal down to the vulgar real with a run making of Bellerophon carrying Theseus a cart−horse driven by a satyr.

CHAPTER V.

HOW bitter−sweet life was to me in this forming−time of my character! and how violent the contrast between my mental troubles and the keenness of my physical enjoyments! No one who drew in the sweet breath of flowers or stood against the storm−winds, glad in his youth and rejoicing in his strength, enjoyed the great gift of Life more than I. And no one suffered more. My recollection of all my young life is that of a tempest. I never knew rest, never compassed the outermost circle of serenity. I was always either violently elated or as vio− lently miserable always one with the gods or down among the demons who people hell. But, full of unrest and turmoil as was the present, how resolved I was that the brilliancy of the future should repay me with more than compound interest! Once give me my liberty, my majority, and my share of the small fortune left us by our grandfather, and let me go into the world for myself, and I **would** be happy. I always said to myself: 'I will not be like other men, miserable and discontented, because failures and weak−kneed. When I am my own master I will be happy, because I will conquer fate and compel fortune; and I will then make friends who will love and understand me.'

For I would be famous and do great things. I would cover my name with glory, and all those who had not believed in me with confusion; and my own should be proud of me. I used to dream of the senior wranglership at Cambridge and of the leadership of the House of Commons. I would go to the bar and be Lord Chancellor, or remain a free lance and be Prime Minister. I would make a name; I would be great. Whatever I did I would succeed. And I felt as if I could not fail.

I also felt as if I could not die as if there were no forces in nature which could destroy that strong vitality, that passionate outstretch and possession by which I knew how the gods of old were framed and fashioned. Belief in immortality is the correlative of strength and youth. It is only when we are old and tired that eternal rest seems possible and unbroken sleep desirable.

At one time I had been undecided whether I would be an artist or an author. I was intensely fond of painting, and 'Anch'io son pittore' was a phrase that had rung in my ears like the sound of a golden bell. It struck a chord which has vibrated ever since in the pride and joy I take in my profession, and I well remember, the first time I walked to the office with my first commanded leader in my pocket, I said to myself aloud: 'Anch'io son pittore! I also am one of the leaders of public opinion and the makers of modern thought.' But I was very short−sighted; and when I thoroughly realized the disadvantages of this defect, I gave up the idea of being a second Raffaele and stuck to that of over−topping Gibbon or Scott instead.

Many things helped on this final decision. I had always had the power of 'telling stories out of my own head,' and I could imagine things so vividly, I was not always sure whether I had seen or only fancied that I had seen them. Fired by the thrilling adventures of my beloved Godfrey, who had returned from Russia and imprisonment when I was about ten years old, I had already begun a novel to be called 'Edith of Poland' the idea of which had come

into my mind during a dull sermon at our parish church of Shorne, when we were in Kent. And was not that a sign by which to steer? A book published by the Christian Knowledge Society, and I think called 'Difficulties of Genius,' had greatly influenced my mind. It had given stability to my hopes, and, as it were, a practicable backbone to my ambition, by the example of others who, as untaught as I, had yet by their own industry and resolve risen to be the shining lights of their generation. Thus directed and encouraged, after long wandering round the outer circle of possibilities, I finally gravitated to the centre, and chose the profession of literature as more within the range of my powers than any form of plastic or pictorial art. And as the most useful preparatory tools were languages, I had devoted myself to the study of tongues, with this graver end more or less consciously underlying the pure delight I felt in the mere acquirement of words and the ability to read what else would have been so many sealed books.

It was about this time that a curious bit of hallucination came to me. It was All Halloween, and we of the North still believed in spells and charms. My sisters, Edwin and I were melting lead, roasting nuts and wasting eggs whereby the white drawn up by the heat of the hand through water might determine our future when I was dared to that supreme trial: to go upstairs into my bedroom, lock the door, and, with the candle set on the dressing−table, deliberately pare and eat an apple, looking at myself in the glass all the while. I would in those days have accepted any challenge offered me to go into a lion's den, if need be: this bit of fantastical bravery was easy enough! Jauntily and defiantly I bounded up the stairs, locked the door, pared and began to eat my apple, with my eyes fixed on the glass. And there, suddenly out of the semi−darkness the eyes looking into mine peered a face from over my shoulder; a dark, mocking, sinister face which I could draw now as I saw it then how many years ago! Broad in the low, flat brow, with dark hair waved above the arched eyebrows the eyes deep−set, dark, and piercing the nose long and pointed the thin mouth curled into a sneer the chin narrow, but the jaw wide it was all so vivid that I turned sharply round, saying: 'Who is there?'

No one was there, of course; and I spoke into a void more gruesome than that grim Presence would have been.

The vision did not return, and I ate my apple to the last pip steadily; but when I went downstairs they all laughed and said I was as white as if I had seen a ghost; and they were sure I had; and what was it like?

'The devil,' I said gruffly; on which Ellen said mildly:

'Upon my word, Chris, you are more like a bear than a boy.'

Long after this I had in my ears the sound of rushing wings. They were so loud that I used to wake from my sleep with the noise as of large wings about my bed. And with these were mingled whisperings and voices; but no intelligible words ever came to me; though I made no doubt they were the same voices as those which haunted Christian when passing through the Valley of the Shadow. I was studying very hard at this time, and in the full swing of all my private penances and eccentric self−discipline; and my nervous system was for the moment strained, despite my powerful constitution.

Our lives at Eden, whither we had finally returned, were not remarkable for variety. There was little incidental amusement for us, and we had to make our own pleasures in the best way we could. On the whole we managed pretty well, and never knew the want of artificial aids. Boating in summer; skating in winter; riding; long mountain rambles and more distant excursions; picnics in the daytime and 'tea−parties' in the evening, helped to make our young existence glad and to redeem the monotony of the hours. And as time went on, and the new influx of life and motion through railroads and the penny post stirred even our stagnant little stretch of backwater, we became more like the rest of the world. But we lost in individuality what we gained in catholicity. No longer great ladies, like the Duchess of St. Albans, travelling post with multiplied precautions, sent up a message, which was a command, requesting my father to go down and spend the evening with them at the hotel. This was to do honour to the cloth, while avoid− ing the tedium of a lonely three hours after dinner.

No longer distinguished strangers from afar, unendorsed, came among us as superior beings to whom the whole community was cap−in−hand. On the contrary, we were taken up by men of authentic name and acknowledged light and leading, and we became vastly more critical and less credulous than we had been. Knit up into closer communion with the larger world outside for we had now daily coaches and a railway−station not more than twenty miles away we were less the countrified 'hoodie−crows' we had been; and Eden became one of the favourite show−places of the kingdom, and as luxurious and polished as the rest.

The most important to us of the 'strangers,' as the summer visitors were generally called, were the reading−parties the collegians who came down for the Long, sometimes to vagabondize and get into mischief, and set the place in a flame by reason of their rowdyism *e.g.*, by those hot 'coppers' flung to the rabble of small boys in the street on Sunday, when the decent folk were coming home from morning church and sometimes to read hard and walk mightily, according to their traditional intention. We used to get acquainted with them through the tutors, who generally managed to know my father; and we found them delightful variations to the main theme of our existence. My sisters had their love−affairs which began with roses and ended with thorns; and we boys had a glimpse of other lines of thought which did us infinite good. But the circumstances which most influenced my own life at this time were the creation of a new ecclesiastical district taken off the old parish and the strange influence which certain books and stories had over my thoughts.

The incumbent of this new district of St. Mark's, Henry Grahame, was a man of wide cultivation of mind and great sweetness of manner. He was essentially a Coleridgean, able to reconcile Faith with Reason by the higher way of the Understanding, just as now certain of the Broad Church reconcile Genesis and Darwin by the elastic theory of Development. He was a 'made,' as opposed to an instinctive and natural man; one who held art to be superior to nature, and the intellect a greater thing than emotion. Of the ancients, Plato of the moderns, Goethe and Coleridge were his 'dii majores;' and the schools of Sappho and Pindar, Schiller and Byron, he abhorred. My first introduction to Coleridge was through him, and he made me also read Wordsworth and Carlyle. For himself, he was eminently eclectic. What he could not receive as, for instance, following his friend and teacher, Maurice, the doctrine of eternal punishment and the personality of the devil he rejected as mistranslations of meaning and the misdirection of mediæval ignorance. Other doctrinal difficulties he accepted, as I said, by that Understanding which Coleridge makes our spiritual Universal Expositor.

Satisfied as he was with his own interpretation, it was perhaps natural that he should be intolerant to the mistakes of others. He was serenely confident that he knew. Those who differed from him were therefore ignorant. And ignorance is not a state that demands respect pity, if you will, and enlightenment, but not respect. Thus, those whom he undertook to teach were bound to be humble and obedient, as their first step towards true knowledge. They must accept without cavil such dogmas as he offered them. He who knew, and they who were dark and dense what else could be demanded but hu− mility and obedience when he gave them the living truth?

Liberal as he was, in reference to the ecclesiastical section to which he belonged, Henry Grahame was like all other unscientific men who believe in spiritual enlightenment, void of proof. Personal conviction stood with him for so much tangible and ponderable reality; and that mental state to which he had attained was therefore the absolute norm for others. He could not tolerate divergence; for all divergence meant to him error, and error was Apollyon. Humane, gentle, loving by temperament, this consciousness of culture superior to the mass, and of the secure possession of Truth, made him intellectually both exclusive and scornful. He was a moral Brahmin who drew away his skirts from the Pariah. He despised the common run of men and minds, and looked on the majority as his inferiors, thinking humanity but a poor job at the best. To be sure, Christ had died for men of all degrees the Gurths and Wambas as well as the Platos and Aristotles of the Christian world; but Henry Grahame put aside the inferential respect which it would seem but consistent for Christians to have for the creatures who once produced their God; and, standing on the heights of his own intellectual Pisgah, judged calmly, but condemned inexorably, all who were inferior to or different from himself. He reverenced only culture, and despised ignorance as much as he shrank from vice and ugliness.

His wife was a woman of like mind to himself; but also, sweet and good as she was, with a little more artificial stillness of manner, and a little more conscious effort after grace. She had been born and bred a Unitarian, but had now come into the Church; and the effects of her early training, in its chilly æstheticism and self−subdued purity, still clung to her. Both showed that they felt themselves here, among us unawakened and unæsthetic creatures, like Crishnas among the cowherds. They were of another order of intelligence, another school of thought altogether; and their sense of mental isolation was manifest.

They did not like my father, nor did he like them. They found him arid, unenlightened, fossilized a leafless stick in a stagnant pool. He found them unsound, fanciful, unreal painted sparrows passing for birds of price. There was very little intercourse between them and him; and soon the new incumbency became as completely differentiated from the old parish, as is the frog from the tadpole. Thoughts, doctrines, modes and hours of conducting the service, all were different; and though St. Mark's created no schism among us, it made a complete division between the old and the new. Meanwhile both Mr. and Mrs. Grahame were very kind to us young people; and especially so to me, whose turbulent nature and now troubled thoughts they set themselves to calm and guide.

They also introduced us to some notable people. I remember once meeting Mr. Carus at their house, and how frankly shocked I was by the joyous, buoyant tone and manner with which he announced that he had just left the death−bed of his dearest friend.

'I was so glad to know that he was with Jesus! It was one of the happiest days of my life to feel that he was safe in the arms of the Saviour!' he said, a smile of supreme satisfaction beaming over his face.

I was too instinctive to understand this queer pleasure, which seemed to me both false and strained; and I felt a disgust for the man I never got over.

Another notability met at the parsonage was Whewell. This was when my faith had begun to fall away at the base; and I see still the satirical smile with which he accompanied this coda of a long speech setting forth the necessity of faith in the unprovable:

'"Sceptic and septic" there is only the difference of one letter between them.'

Also I saw Carlyle, at the house of our dear local chieftain, spoken of before. I had then begun a classical romance my most important book; for I am antedating in these fragmentary recollections; and Carlyle thundered in his deep bass against the foolishness of going back on the past and writing about trouserless heathens, when so much work was lying to be done in the present for honest Christians and how young fellows who maundered about bull−god Apis, or Pericles and his Impropriety−Aspasia, had better be set to break stones by the road−side which at least was useful for the mending of the highway we all had to travel on.

Another of my almost friends at this time was poor Hartley Coleridge. I say mine for all that I was but a unit, a fraction, in the family sum because he distinguished me from among the others with special attention, and talked to me more than to the rest. He had the habit of gathering piles of books under his arms, walking about the room while he declaimed on all things under heaven, or read aloud as he went. His reading was charming. He had the Coleridgean sweetness and rotundity of voice, and read with perfect grace not too theatrically, and without affectation; in both of which snares his brother Derwent ran his feet and tripped but with just enough artificiality to make it art, and lift it from commonplace into beauty.

Because of his besetting sin he could never be kept long on a visit anywhere; and his comings and goings were therefore always cometic and unsatisfactory. But I like to remember him and to picture him at his best, and as he always was whenever I saw him; for I loved him with a strange pride in his special notice of me and his evident affection for me, unformed, uncouth hobbledehoy as I was then. He and the Grahames were the first persons who distinguished me by their special attention, and who thus brought a certain sense of light and companionship into

the dim and lonely chamber in which my soul had hitherto lived.

Now I must go back to the main thread of my story, and to the troubled perplexity of my thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

I WILL give, so far as I can, the genesis of my first change in speculative thought.

Undirected in my studies and unhelped in my thoughts, I read where I listed and came to such conclusions as seemed good to me. In the superstitious and pre−scientific period of life, when marvels are accepted as of the established order of things, I was inclined to the mysterious and the weird at all four corners of my being. Thus, I believed in magic of a stately and learned kind; in alchemy and astrology; in the Rosicrucians and second−sight; in fortune− telling, magic crystals, and the Egyptian boy's power of seeing the past and future in a few drops of ink held in the hollow of the hand; in mesmerism, ghosts and spiritual visitations generally; but by some good luck of latent common−sense I did not believe in vulgar witchcraft, though I did in the Witch of Endor. But then, she was not vulgar; and she was in the Bible. The supernatural powers of such men as Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus I took to be undeniable. The charmed circle surrounded by smoke wherein the demons appeared to (I think) Benvenuto Cellini, was a fact; and I had no doubt but that Surrey did see Geraldine in the magic mirror. The Indian jugglers, of whom my eldest sister sent home such thrilling accounts, were evidently mighty magicians; and he who had the courage could, if he would, conjure up the devil even to this day. I remember how greedily I devoured, and half−ashamedly, half−defiantly, believed in the notes to Sir Walter Scott's works, telling of the wonders that had been. Gilpin Horner the goblin, crying: 'Tint, tint!' and Thomas of Ercildoune, who lived with the fairy queen and was sent for by her again when his time had come; the 'Book of Might' and its strange glamour; the magic potency of that shadowy Virgilius whom I could never reconcile with the more solid humanity of the Virgil who wrote the 'Eclogues;' the egg on which Naples is built; the naked child running three times round the barrel; the Mauthe Doog; Sir Kenelm Digby's sympathetic ointment; the Irish banshee and the Scottish seer all were cherished faiths with me; while the historical mysteries of the Vehmgericht and the secret worship of Bafomet seemed to put a backbone into the more purely imaginary qualities of the rest.

Other things of an unprovable nature also troubled my imagination. I was intensely fond of mythology, in which I saw neither the sun nor the dawn, nor yet the ark, but simply the divine and the human.

How dear that little idyl of Philemon and Baucis was to me! Its simplicity and realism made it almost Scriptural; and though I did not dare to bracket it with the visit of those three divine beings to Abraham and Sara, still, I thought the one account as true as the other. No poem ever written equalled in my eyes the loveliness of that sweet picture where Endymion lies asleep on the heights of Mount Ida, and the virgin goddess leans over him lovingly; and the majesty of Minerva was equalled only by the beauty of Apollo. Aurora and her dappled steeds surrounded by the Hours casting flowers as they fly; rash Icarus and rasher Phaethon; the deluge of Deucalion and the dragon's teeth which Cadmus sowed they were all products of the border−land lying between romance and reality, and I was never quite sure of the line of division.

The stories also of the Greek maidens who met the Gods among the reeds, in the court of the temple, in the woods, gave me cause for much crude speculation. Like our own sacred mystery of how the Sons of God came down and loved the daughters of men, they woke up in me incessant wonder at the difference between those old times and the present day, and made me ask myself: 'Where are the Sons of God now?' and with more faith than critical faculty: 'Why should not be again that which his already been?' I remember when I first read Byron's 'Heaven and Earth,' how the characters of Anah and Aholibamah, and the superhuman yet manlike beauty of Samiasa and Azaziel struck me with living force, and coloured my dreams for many nights. But the story which impressed me most was that wild and weird account of Gilli−Doir−Magrevollich, the Black Child, Son to the Bones, found in the notes to the 'Lady of the Lake.'

I cannot say why this strange unwholesome legend took such hold of me. Perhaps because it was unwholesome. I could not shake myself clear from it; and I had a haunting kind of prevision that more hung on it than its own superstitious fancy. I had just heard, too, of Joanna Southcote; and altogether my mind was, as it were, fascinated by this subject of virgin births their possibility now as their certainty in times past and by the whole range, indeed, of divine interposition in the works and ways of man whether it were in the assumption of the human form or in the gift of prophetic insight, or inversely in the darker mysteries of magic and the power of conjuring up the devil. This was a different thing from belief in spiritual communion. It was what one may call the materialistic form of supernaturalism belief in which belongs to all unscientific and uncultured minds, and the abandonment of which is the first step outward towards enlightenment.

One early summer's day, I was sitting where I had no business to be, under the hedge of the as yet unmown hayfield at the foot of the garden. I had taken with me to read in quietness, Ovid's 'Metamorphoses.' If my father had seen it in my hands he would have forbidden it to me; which was why I went where I was not likely to be found even if looked for. I was digging away at the myth of Nisus and Scylla, and the purple lock wherein the old king's strength lay, when, for the first time, I was struck by the likeness of this story to that of Samson and Delilah. Hitherto all the Bible stories had been on a raised platform apart, and there was no analogy with them to be found elsewhere. I knew my Ovid pretty well by now; and immediately, on the discovery of this point of resemblance, there flashed across me also the likeness between the story of Myrrha and that of Lot's daughters of Iphigenia and Isaac for the one part, in the substitution of a doe for the one, of a ram for the other; and of Iphigenia and Jephthah's daughter for the other, where the human element is alone retained. With this my mind went off on the now familiar track of the virgin births, when suddenly in that strangely rapid and vivid manner in which such things come to me, as if it were really the quick opening of a closed door and the headlong rush into a newly−furnished and brilliantly−lighted chamber there shot through my brain these words which seemed to run along the page in a line of light: 'What difference is there between any of these stories and those like to them in the Bible? between the loves of the Sons of God for the daughters of men, and those of the gods of Greece for the girls of Athens and Sparta? between the women made mothers by mysterious influences, and those made mothers by divine favour? between the legends of old times and the stories of Sara, Hannah, Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mary?'

When this last name came, a terrible faintness took hold of me. The perspiration streamed over my face like rain, and I trembled like a frightened horse. My heart, which for a few seconds had beaten like a hammer, now seemed to cease altogether. The light grew dim; the earth was vapoury and unstable; and, overpowered by an awful dread, I fell back among the long grass where I was sitting as if I had been struck down by at unseen hand. But this physical faintness soon passed, and my mind went on following the line of thought I had begun, as if I were talking aloud to some one at hand.

'No one at the time knew anything about the miraculous conception of Mary's child. Joseph himself was only warned in a dream not to doubt her, for that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, as announced to her by the Angel Gabriel. Does any one know more now than was known then? If this Christian marvel is true, why not all the rest? Why should we say that Mary alone spoke the truth and that every one else has lied? But spirits do not come to women; there were no such beings as those old gods who were said to have come down from Olympus to mingle in the affairs of mortals; that passage in Genesis about the Sons of God is a mystery we cannot fathom. And we know that there is such a being as the Angel Gabriel such a Divine person as the Holy Ghost. Do we know this? Have we more certainty than had the old Greeks when they believed in the power of Jupiter and the divine manhood of Apollo, and in the celestial origin of those fatherless sons brought into the world by maiden mothers, who swore to their womanly innocence for the one part and their human exaltation by divine favour for the other? Surely yes! The Miraculous Incarnation has been affirmed by all the churches; and the proofs are the star which guided the Magi, and the song of the angels in the sky to the shepherds watching their flocks. But who can certify to these proofs? Why did not others see that star as well as the Magi? and who knows whether the shepherds heard the song, or only imagined it?'

These thoughts clung to and left me no peace night nor day. Ever and ever the Mystery of the Incarnation became more and more a subject of perplexity and doubt, and of dread lest that doubt should broaden into denial. Brought into line with these legends of former times contrasted with the old classic myths and the stories in the very Bible itself it suddenly seemed to lose its special character and to be merely one like others. It was no longer exceptional and divine it had become historic and human. Therefore, it fell within the range of criticism and might be judged of according to its merits and the weight of evidence at its back. What was that weight? Outside its own assertion absolutely nil. No contemporaneous testimony vouched for the story of the Virgin Birth for the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel for the Star or the Song; and Mary herself alone knew the truth of things. All therefore rested on her word only. Sweet, beautiful and pure as was her personality Godlike as was that Christ she bore was that word of more intrinsic value than that of the Greek girl who told how she had met the god in the reeds by the river side? or than that of the nameless mother of the Black Child, Son to the Bones, denying human knowledge and accusing the unseen? Was it? Had there been more miraculous births than one? or no miraculous birth at all, and the laws of nature interrupted for no one for one no more than for another?

While my mind was torn and tossed by these terrible questions, I was one night looking at the stars from my bedroom−window, wondering at the mystery and glory of creation and speculating on our relations with the universe when again in that same sudden way these words came to me as distinctly as if I were reading them in a printed page:

'Has God in very truth ever become man? We, the inhabitants of only one out of such countless millions of worlds our world of a lower order of cosmic splendour than so many, and ourselves of conscious mental deficiency why were we singled out for such a transcendent act of mercy? Why should God have cared so much for us, vile and troublesome as we have always been? Was it true? Has the great Incommunicable First Cause ever clothed Himself with flesh born, living, suffering, dying as a mortal man, and all the time very God?'

Then, as vividly as if I had seen Him in the body and spoken with Him face to face, I saw Christ as a peasant translated to our own time. I realized the minutest circumstances of His humanity; when a loud voice, like the rushing wind, seemed to echo from earth to sky to fill all space and to command all time, till I was conscious of nothing but these words: 'Man not God; man not God!'

The voice was so loud, the words were so clear, I wondered the whole house did not wake to listen. And how bright the stars were! Each star grew to be like a sun which changed the darkness of the night to almost overpowering glory; and I seemed to hear the weaving of the great web and to understand the complexity, but the unity, the universality, the rush and pressure and stream of life everywhere life, even as here!

Why did they not all hear and see as I did? But no one moved. I turned to look at Edwin. He was tranquilly asleep in bed at the other end of the room a beautiful child rather than a youth of nineteen innocent, troubled by spiritual doubts no more than his favourite cat which was curled up on the pillow beside him, and desiring to learn no more of the great mysteries than he had been taught in his childhood. No! he saw and heard nothing. The voice and the glory and the great weaving of the web of life did not exist for him. It was only I who heard and saw and knew.

But now, coming up from the study, over which our bedroom immediately was, my father's voice broke out in prayer; of which I heard these words: 'O Thou, who came into the world to save sinners, have mercy on me!'

Then all my exaltation passed, and I was once more alone in the dimness of the starry night alone, in the dark, and ignorant.

I flung myself on my knees and asked pardon of Him whom I had crucified afresh by my doubts longing only to die and to have done with all this ignorance longing to die, that I might then Know and sin no more.

The light under the door betrayed me. My father, passing along the passage, saw it and came in to find me in this state of spiritual anguish and contrition.

When he asked why I was not in bed? and what ailed me? I could not confess to him. I knew of old how unsympathetic he was with this part of my life; and my wound was too sacred to lay bare to eyes which could not understand and would probably rasp it afresh.

My silence, which looked like sullenness, angered him.

'Why was I ever cursed with such a son!' he said vehemently. 'Look at your brother there why cannot you be like him a reasonable creature who gives no trouble to anyone? Why are you so foolish, so irritating? Not Job himself could have patience with you, Christopher!'

He went up to Edwin's bed, leaned over him and kissed him fondly; and my brother, roused by the light and the action, opened his eyes and smiled, putting up his hand to our father's face with the caressing gesture of a child.

I was too much moved to resent or defy, as I should have done in my ordinary mood. I only longed to receive the same love as that which was given to others to be included to be taken out of the solitude and banishment in which I lived.

'Kiss me, too!' I said, holding out my hands. 'Father, dear! kiss me too!'

'No,' he said coldly; 'I cannot kiss you, for I neither believe in you nor respect you.'

So there it was again! the old bitter contrast Esau and Jacob; Ishmael and Isaac; Cain and Abel; and the poor goat, laden with sins, sent into the wilderness, while the sheep fed about the Master's feet and the lambs were carried in His bosom!

For all this I could not stop my thoughts. They came as of their own will, and I was forced to listen to them.

Bracketed with the more human difficulty of the Divine Incarnation came one yet more mysterious. Christ, to whom we pray under the name and form of; and as actuated to pity by His experience as, a man was He always Jesus Christ the Divine Man from all eternity? Was then the Godhead always tripartite? The Jews were taught the unity of the Divine Essence in the one supreme Jehovah, and knew nothing of this division. When did it come about? when Mary conceived? Did that which had been from the beginning take a new form at a moment of time? and was heaven, in point of fact, acted on by earth, and God determined by humanity? If not, why then was Christ hidden so long behind the overwhelming personality of the Father? His very name and being concealed until He had taken the form of man? Was He powerless till then? and did God, the great Spirit, need to become flesh before He could save flesh? Was the Athanasian Creed wrong, and were the Persons unequal?

Again, was the grace which lies in Christ Jesus, the crucified Saviour, dormant for all these countless generations? But why? Why should not the world have been redeemed before? There was no manifest historic reason why that special moment should have been chosen; and for the worth of the men saved surely Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Aristides, Buddha, Confucius, Marcus Aurelius and how many more! were as worthy of redemption from the eternal doom meted out to ignorance as those nameless lepers and minor disciples who had neither commanding intellect nor enduring influence!

I carried my troubles to Mr. Grahame, and he set himself to resolve them. He took the last first, but refused to admit that this was a subject which fell within the range of discussion.

'The reason for that moment When is hidden with Christ in God. Why, Wherefore, How, and the need which God in Christ has of the love of man, are of the mysteries whereof no man knoweth,' he said reverently 'It is a waste of time, and the encouragement of spiritual presumption, to speculate on them.'

'Would you have said that to a Greek wanting to know why Chronos devoured his own children?' I asked.

'The cases are not parallel,' he answered.

'Parallel in so far that we are the children of God, and He let us be lost for all eternity because He delayed His salvation,' I answered. 'The only difference is that which lies between the active and the passive.'

'Things which are beyond reason are beyond dialectics,' he returned. 'We have to deal with completed facts, not with energizing causes nor yet with reasons why. The fact of the Miraculous Conception is all that concerns us.'

'How do we know that it is a fact?' I asked; and again went over my roll−call of analogies.

'To compare the Divine Child and His Mother to the absurd legends of a rude people in a rude age, when the most monstrous myths were accepted without examination, and the laws neither of nature nor of evidence were understood, or to the patent falsehoods of a few unfortunate girls!' said Mr. Grahame with gentle contempt. 'Have you so little sense of proportion beauty verisimilitude? But we need not go farther on this line. It pains and revolts me. So far then, I take it that the ground is clear. The Mystery of the Trinity is beyond our comprehension; the virgin mothers of men are myths; but the Incarnation of the Divine in Jesus of Nazareth stands four−square to all the winds of doctrine. It is the one Great Fact on which humanity can rely and by which it is saved.'

'Why this more than those others?' I asked. 'To assert is not to prove is it?' I added hurriedly, a little frightened by my own audacity in standing up against one so infinitely my superior.

He was sweet and gentle and mild.

'By its own internal evidence,' he said. 'I disregard the external, about which you trouble yourself so much, and take my stand on the character and life of Christ alone; and on the results of Christianity in history. We want nothing more to prove the divine origin of our faith. Such a being as Jesus of Nazareth must have been divine, seeing how far He was beyond humanity, both in His life and teaching. And the work which Christianity has done in the world could only have come through a God−given revelation. I ask you to look at nothing else but the life of our Lord, and the influence of Christianity on society.'

'Yet Buddha's life was pure and holy, and Mohammed redeemed the Arabs from gross idolatry to the spiritual worship of the One God,' I said.

'And Buddha and Mohammed were both divinely inspired and divinely led,' was his reply. 'Rivers are fed by many streams, and the river of righteousness with the rest. Buddha, Mohammed, Luther, Cromwell, Savonarola, Galileo, Newton all the great men who have taught great truths of any kind, have had their portion of inspiration, the perfect fulness of which is found only in our Lord. The instruments of God are many the melody from each is the same and the Hand which masters all is the Only One. Study the character of Christ. Trace the influence of His teaching on the morality, the history, of mankind, and then you will realize for yourself the Divinity which needs no circumstantial evidence to substantiate it.'

This argument did not satisfy me for long. At first I thought I had found in its deeper insight and wider outlines the resolution of all my difficulties and a sure harbour of glad refuge. But after a time I slipped back into my painful groove of doubt, and, with doubt, of despair.

There were certain things in the character and doings of Christ beautiful as was the one, benign and loving as were the others which seemed to me simply and purely human: as, His wholesale denunciations of the Pharisees and Sadducees; His cursing the fig−tree for its natural and normal barrenness; His sending the devils into a herd of swine, so that the innocent brutes were all drowned, while the devils were presumably not damaged, being of the nature of immortal spirits; and a few more of those elementary difficulties over which all inquirers stumble. And as for the effects of Christianity on society divorced from civilization, surely these have been more disastrous than beneficent! Religious zeal has only added another and still more pungent ingredient to the fierce compound of the natural man, by adding fanaticism to cruelty. It has made of a peaceful paradise a reeking hell in South America; devastated the Low Countries; set Catholics to shoot down Huguenots, Episcopalians to massacre Covenanters, and all dominant sects to destroy all nascent ones; it has deluged the earth with blood wherever the Cross has been raised and the Beatitudes have been preached in the name of the Prince of Peace and the God of Love.

And then the popes and bishops, the cardinals and abbots, the Roderick Borgias and Balfours of Burley men who have wallowed in sensuality or waded through blood where was the Sign of the Lamb on them? Were popes like Hildebrand and Innocent III. true Vicars of Christ? Was Thomas à Becket or was Wolsey a fit successor to the sweet St. John or the humble−minded St. Andrew? And was our own prelatic Church, with its worldly wealth, political influence and social dignity, the same Church as that which the Twelve Apostles planted when they went forth without scrip or purse to preach the poverty they practised? 'Le grand sansculotte!' Was my grandfather, the Bishop, a Christian after the Archetype? Indeed, were any of us who lived daintily and fared sumptuously, while our brothers wept and starved, Christians such as Christ would own?

I said all this in my headlong way, vehement in manner, crude in method. And to Mr. Grahame I must have seemed as unphilosophic as the chalk scrawl on a barn−door would have been inartistic to Etty or Maclise. I had no logical method; no reserve force; no critical discrimination of values. I flung my bricks on the ground without order or constructive endeavour, unskilfully, rudely, where he pieced his mosaic bit by bit and line by line, till the pavement was smooth, compact and without a flaw.

Still, he was very kind to me, and let me talk myself out; sitting with his eyes half−closed, his white hands touching each other by the finger−tips, and a serene smile just lighting the curved corner of his bland mouth; while I, heated, excited, my rough hair tossed and tumbled, my lank face crimson with emotion, stood before him pouring out my fiery thoughts like lava that scorches as it flows.

Yes, he was very kind. For a fastidious scholar as he was, to whom method was as valuable as matter; for a philosopher who had overcome all dialectic difficulties and supplemented the darkness of Reason by the light of Understanding; for a theoso− phist, sure that he knew the mind of God, and could map out, as it were a chart, the whole plan and order of divine dealing with man through Christ and the Church; for an intellectual master where I was but a hodman, he was marvellously patient. It fills me with wonder now, when I remember how long−suffering he was, as I can measure the provocation I must have given him both by my want of scholarly finish and by my intractability. For neither his eclecticism, urging me to put aside as non−essential all those points which troubled me, nor Maurice's books which he lent me, removed the doubts by which I was harassed. And the internal evidence on which he dwelt so much was no more convincing than the external.

And now another thought came to me. Like the running loops of a chain, whereof the first has broken, my doubts were multiplying and these unanswerable questions were increasing. This was my new difficulty: If Christ were God that is, Omniscient as well as Omnipotent why did He not teach things that could be tested by man and proved by experiment, rather than those which are assertions only? Why, for instance, instead of telling us about Lazarus in heaven, leaning on Abraham's bosom and separated by a great gulf from Dives in hell, did He not give us a form of political government whereby men might have been made happy, with equal justice to all? Why did He not tell us that the earth is not the centre of our system, and that our system itself is not the all−important part of creation we have imagined it to be? Galileo would not then have been subjected to the Inquisition, and

Giordano Bruno would not have been burned. Why did He not tell us about electricity and steam; and reveal the law of gravitation and that of optics and of dynamics; and show us at least the way to the great chemical discoveries that have since been made? How many crimes would have been prevented, and how many falsehoods would never have been believed, if He had!

To say that man has to find these things out for himself, and that to reveal would be to destroy endeavour, seemed to me but a weak argument. For, at the best, only one man finds out, while all the world after they have persecuted him and perhaps put him to death as a blasphemer quietly accept his discovery without any endeavour at all. And was it worth while to leave the whole human race in ignorance, that Copernicus should centralize the sun or Newton formulate the law of gravitation, when Christ could have done both? Surely, in view of a Divine Teacher who might have told us in one moment of time what it has taken so many generations to learn, the argument for the necessity of search which only means isolated teachers and delayed discoveries is an excuse rather than an argument! And, on the plea of help to the race to be saved is not intellectual truth as necessary for the right−mindedness of a man as the spiritual is for the salvation of his soul?

I said all this to Mr. Grahame each question a doubt but his answer was:

'All this is immaterial. Christ came to teach us only spiritual truth; His kingdom is not of this world.'

And I was to him as dense−witted as a buffalo, when I answered as before:

'But the spiritual life is not divorced from the intellectual. The crimes committed by superstition and ignorance witness the crime of witchcraft might have been prevented by a little timely enlightenment. Would not that have been more to our good than telling us about the turning of the moon into blood, and the falling of the stars from the sky? Yet the very Apostles themselves believed in witchcraft, and their words gave an impetus to the terrible persecution which disgraced our humanity and only proved our hideous ignorance.'

I did not say this with irreverence. It was simply because the present and material good of man seemed to me more important than something to happen in the far−off, undated future. And also because I was beginning to think that the Teacher was not divinely omniscient, and knew no more than His epoch.

One day the fragmentary benevolence of the miracle of healing wrought on the blind man suddenly struck me with a sense of incompleteness and partiality and therefore not as divine, but purely human. By my reading I knew that ophthalmia is, and always has been, one of the physical curses of the East; and: 'Surely,' I thought, 'it would have been more like the act of an impartially benevolent Deity, had Christ taught how this evil might have been removed for all time, rather than simply opening the eyes of this one man. Why did He cure only that one? To set forth His power by a miracle, and thus compel the halting faith of those who would not receive Him? Would not a universal remedy have done that as well as this one event only, besides benefiting the whole human race?'

Reminded that I, a young creature with a finite intellect and even what I had of intelligence neither well−trained nor well−developed had no right to question the modus operandi of Divinity, I could only answer by my one cuckoo−note of evidence:

'This modus operandi has been manifested to us by human media. We therefore have the right to examine into the credentials of these media and part of these credentials lies in the moral harmony of the account. If things are said of God which shock our own conceptions of justice and generosity, we are not blasphemous in refusing to believe that they are true.'

Reminded again that some of the greatest minds and acutest intellects have believed implicitly both the Old Testament and the New, I answered, as others have answered before me:

'What men have believed is no measure of external truth, however great the individual intellect. Plato and Socrates believed in the Gods of Olympus would you support yourself on their authority?'

'In the confession of the Divine Life within man? Yes,' he said.

'No; in the special manifestation,' I answered; 'in the then mystery of the armed Minerva springing from the head of her father, Jove in the unborn Bacchus carried about in the great God's thigh.'

'Your parallels, my dear boy, never run on all fours,' said Mr. Grahame mildly.

'Why not these manifestations of divine power as well as our own?' I asked.

'The world has settled that long ago,' he answered.

'So perhaps, the world of the future will settle our questions,' I said. 'In their day the doubters of Jupiter and Bacchus and the whole hierarchy of Mount Olympus were held as infidels and treated as criminals.'

'And justly; if they had no better faith to put in the place of the old!' he flashed out quickly.

'We must destroy before we can rebuild,' I said.

'Meanwhile the unhoused souls starve,' was his reply. 'Man must have a faith that is incontestable; and no man has a right to destroy before providing a substitute. Your substitute for the Chris− tianity you would uproot? the living affirmation in place of your death of negation?'

'Monotheism,' I answered.

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said:

'But Unitarianism which is our modern Monotheism confesses the divine life in man.'

'Inspiration not incorporate Godhead,' I replied.

'We must judge by the Understanding,' he said. 'The Hidden Wisdom is felt, not demonstrated. You have it, or you have it not. You cannot argue about it as you might argue about a philosophic theorem or a painted picture. It is a thing which the Best have agreed to accept as final and fixed.'

'No question can be called final, Mr. Grahame, while there are dissidents and doubters. We do not deny that two and two make four, nor do we question the laws of gravitation. While two opinions exist on a subject it cannot be called proved granting these two opinions to be held by men of the same calibre of intellect and the same degree of education.'

When I said this, Mr. Grahame, smiling softly, first shut his eyes, and then opening them full in my face, asked mildly, as if seriously demanding information:

'My dear boy, are you one of those men of intellect and education qualified to judge for yourself on these abstruse points, and to argue with me?'

'No,' I said, 'not if I stood alone. But others think as I do. It is a question of schools, not individuals.'

'There have always been schools,' he answered, still smiling. 'One of these schools once believed in Simon Magus; one gave glory to Cagliostro; and one denied the Copernican theory.'

'That was the Church,' I said, yielding to the temptation.

'Of Rome? Yes. That was the Church of Rome,' was his calm reply.

'But Rome is Christian,' I said.

'And Sir Matthew Hale was a Christian, too. Christianity has never assumed to include scientific illumination.'

'No; and that is just my point,' I said. 'If it had! If it had given us a test by which we could judge of the unknown by the proved!'

'In which case there would have been no room for faith. And without faith there is no religion.'

'Is there no religion in heaven, where we are to know even as we are known?' I returned. 'The ultimate of religious enlightenment precludes the necessity of faith according to the conditions of our state.'

'Precisely. Then we shall have know− ledge, which is the fruition of faith,' he answered, with a certain kind of compassionate disdain for my ignorance. 'It is the seed and the flower the root and the tree; the one cannot exist without the other. Here we have faith and the higher series of religious research there we shall have love and knowledge. The two are different notes on the same string a simple question of vibration.'

'And for those who have not faith?' I asked.

'The loss of time consequent on straying on wrong roads the condemnation due to wilful ignorance.'

'Is any ignorance wilful, Mr. Grahame?' I asked. 'Do we not all do the best we can?'

'No; some do the worst, and some ignorance **is** wilful,' he answered. 'As with you now. You have the truth offered you and the light is all around you. You will not accept the one nor open your eyes to the other.'

'Will not or cannot?'

'The one is only a mask to hide the other. "Velle est agere." You say that you cannot, and I, that you will not. You might if you chose. It is because you will not choose that you do not, You are not the first half−educated youth who has fallen into the sin of unbelief through presumption who has lost his better reason through the pride which accompanies ignorance so dense as to mistake itself for knowledge. And I suppose you will not be the last. It is a spiritual disease which has to be gone through, like measles or small−pox. Pity that sometimes the eyesight goes for ever and the scars remain ineffaceable to the day of death! Absit omen! Be wise in time and heal yourself while you can. I fear, however, you will not. I know your kind; and your training has been too disastrous.'

This was the first time that Mr. Grahame had spoken to me with harshness. In general he had dealt with me tenderly, as one in error truly but, though erring, one sincerely desirous of knowing the truth, and therefore to be in a certain sense respected. And this sudden dogmatic condemnation wounded me to the quick. For I could not feel that I was wilfully wicked. I was merely conscious of a desire to know the truth and the corresponding dread of believing a lie. If I were in the wrong, might God forgive me and lead me aright! I had not intentionally gone astray. And if it is part of the function of Divine Grace to keep souls straight, why had mine been abandoned?

There was no more impiety in asking this question than there was in acknowledging the fact. If faith comes by grace, and divine illumination is necessary for salvation is it the wilful fault of the individual when this grace is withheld, this illumina− tion denied? Is not God more powerful than the thoughts of man?

I was far as yet from the materialism which makes certain thoughts the necessary results of certain conditions of the brain. I believed in mind as a thing apart from and uninfluenced by matter the soul as something that both controlled and was determined by thought. And the shape of my head, the depth of the convolutions, the arrangement of the molecules and the quality of the grey matter, together with the state of my blood and nerves, had no part in that which I held to be essentially spiritual and super−sensual inspired by heaven or dating from hell.

Hell? Was there such a place as hell? such a being as the devil? I began to doubt even these two points, cardinal as they had hitherto been. The Incarnation, the Atonement, Eternal Punishment and Satan these four corner−stones of the Christian Church had loosened so much that the slightest movement more would shake them down altogether. And then what would be my state?

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT this time, however, came a lull in my speculative troubles, for trouble of another kind began to possess me. There had lately settled among us a certain Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple, who had already won the goodwill of the neighbourhood by their charm of manner and general delightfulness. They had established themselves on a scale of what was to us rather unusual luxury; and, as Mr. Dalrymple was known to one of our magnates, there was no cause to doubt the solidity of their condition. We had had before now our jackdaws pranked in peacocks' feathers, and we had been punished pretty severely for our want of discrimination; but here we stood on safe ground, and no one hung back because no one was afraid.

It may be that the idealizing power of youth created more than existed, and that the golden mists of time have added their magic to that idealization; but even now, with my imagination sobered by age and chastened by experience, Mrs. Dalrymple stands in my memory as something unapproachable and supreme. Her image is that of the most exquisite creature under heaven of a woman more like an impersonate poem, or embodied music, or a spirit half−transparently incarnate, than a living, solid flesh−and−blood reality. She was about twenty−seven tall, slender, with a cream−white skin, and dark eyes full of inconceivable pathos and a kind of far−away spiritualized listening look, as if she saw what we did not. Her eyelashes were the longest I have ever seen, and she had a fabulous abundance of jet−black hair. She dressed, too, as no one dressed in Eden; with more elegance and refinement than that to which we were accustomed from even our grandest ladies. She had lived much abroad; and from her Polish mother she had inherited the subtle charm which is given by the foreign element, as well as having that which comes from home good−birth and perfect breeding.

She was in delicate health; languid in her movements; indolent in her habits; but she had an almost feverish activity of mind, an almost dangerous energy of thought. She could do everything. She was an admirable linguist, and spoke the principal four Continental languages as well as she spoke English itself which, by the way, was coloured with the daintiest little dash of foreign accent a certain Italianized lingering on the letters that was like a caress. She was a musician of rare force and an artist far beyond the average. She could talk of men, books, places, things, ideas. She knew all that others knew and worlds beyond. She was the most graciously−educated and the most gracefully−minded woman I have ever seen I use the terms advisedly and from my father to myself we all yielded to her charm and adored her.

From the first the Dalrymples were very friendly with us. We saw a good deal of them; and the more we saw them, the more we loved them and the more they seemed to like us. For myself, it soon came to be that the day when I was not with them seemed to be blank and colourless a day of deadly dulness, to be lived through only for

the sake of the morrow, when I should go up to Windy Brow, where they lived, as a half−frozen creature creeps to the fire to be warmed back into life. Gradually these new arrivals became the world to me. When I was not with them, I was thinking of them longing, pining, restless, dissatisfied; oppressed with untranslatable sorrow; burning with hidden fever; finding no pleasure save in the books which Mrs. Dalrymple had lent me, whereof I learnt all the marked passages, and repeated them to myself with somewhat the same reverence as that with which I said my prayers. Or I made Edwin or Ellen play again and again the music she played and had given them certain pieces of Mendelssohn and Beethoven which were to me like poems or pictures as full of thought and dramatic fervour as the one, and of visible beauty as the other. Or I begged for that long−drawn sigh of Pestel's prison−hymn, which I cannot hear even now without a swelling at my heart and something that feels like tears behind my eyes.

When they played these things to me I used often to find, to my own surprise, my eyes wet with real tears as I sat, my elbows on my knees, my face buried in my hands, lost in a dream of nameless yearning a kind of nebulous haze of formless sadness, where nothing was distinct save sorrow which yet was also beauty.

Then I used to dash out of the room, generally leaping through the window into the garden, to hide from my brother and sisters the strange effeminacy that had overtaken me. My abrupt departure naturally enough offended them, and was counted to me for ingratitude, after they had done something to please me; so that when I returned I received a lesson on my sin of rudeness and bearishness in general, which, with my fiery temper, was sure to involve me in a quarrel.

I was both too intense and too inexperienced in those days to realize how things must necessarily look from the outside. I was only conscious of what I felt. And when looks and feelings were at variance, I took my stand on the latter, and held myself unjustly treated when condemned for the former. Were more allowance made for this inability to realize the world outside one's self this inability to understand that we are not so transparent as we imagine ourselves to be, and that what we do and not what we feel is the rule by which we are measured life would be far better for us all, and especially for such young creatures as I was; young creatures of impulse and sincerity, as yet incapable of that ethical diagnosis which can criticize self.

Our new friends did us all good. Mrs. Dalrymple helped Edwin and my sisters with their music and lifted their taste into a higher sphere; and Mr. Dalrymple led them to practise drawing on a better method than they had done before. He taught them to sketch from nature and to draw from the round, and he gave them hints about their colours and perspective; so that their efforts grew to be of better quality all through than when they had been content to reproduce in pencil, with smooth and servile fidelity, this stag's head from a wood−cut by Bewick, or that child and dog from a steel engraving after Corbauld.

To me, neither a musician nor an artist, they lent books chiefly the poets in various tongues which widened my horizon and added to my knowledge. I had always been passionately fond of poetry, so that I had felt as if our common possessions had belonged by right of appreciation to me alone; but it seemed to me that I had never understood the true meaning of even those I had loved best until now. Shakespeare and Schiller and Goethe, Shelley and Byron, Dante and Tasso all took a different meaning and gained an added value after Mrs. Dalrymple had repeated such and such pas sages, or given a new interpretation to such and such thoughts. And whatever I read now, it was with her voice, her inflection sounding in my ears, and her divine eyes following mine on the page. Her mental influence was about me like the sunlight, and there was no hour of the day when I forgot her no occupation which made me unconscious of her. She was the soul of all things to me; and I felt like that picture of the half−uprising man in whose nostrils she was gently breathing the breath of life like the dumb Memnon when the first rays of the sun touched the soulless stone.

All the thoughts which had hitherto held me, and which I had elaborated for myself, seemed to me crude, unformed, unbeautiful; without life or artistry all but my love of Liberty, and that I think must come from the formation of my brain from birth. I had been such a rude clod up to now; and now I was fining down, like

Dryden's Cymon was I becoming the inversion of Pygmalion's statue?

Again another help onward. Mrs. Dalrymple taught the rest new steps and new dances. I say the rest, for though she tried to teach me as one of them, I could not learn. Yet she took as much trouble with me as with them, and I did my best to do as she told me. But something held me. 'A spirit in my feet' kept me stupid and clumsy.

I could have walked safely over a foot−wide ledge with a precipice on each side of me, but my head swam when Adeline Dalrymple laid her long white hand on my shoulder and I put my arm round her supple stayless waist; and I was faint and giddy before I had made a couple of turns round the room. What anguish it was to stop, and yet how impossible to go on! Why was I so weak? I, the strong one, par excellence, of the family the young lion of the brood the Esau, the Nimrod, the savage to be unable to waltz twice round a room not more than twenty−four feet square! It was inconceivable and humiliating; but also it was unalterable; and I never conquered the strange physical weakness which touched me only when waltzing with Mrs. Dalrymple, but which overpowered me then.

She too was sorry. True to her Polish blood, for all her delicacy of health and general indolence of habit she was enthusiastically fond of dancing; and she would have liked me for a partner, she said with her faint sweet tremulous smile, and that look in her eyes which was like the very glory of the heavens opening.

If, however, I could not waltz, I could talk and listen. And in our little evenings together, when I was finally pronounced hopeless, not to let me feel neglected and shut out, Mrs. Dalrymple generously forbore to dance with the others, so that she might sit and talk to me on the window−seat. And on the whole I felt that I had the best of it.

Up to now I had never known the sentiment of jealousy against Edwin. He was the family favourite, caressed by all where I had ever been cold−shouldered and repulsed. At an age when education was the one essential of my life, and idleness the ruin of my whole future, I had been sacrificed in my best interests and denied my natural rights simply to be kept as his companion at home. Yet I had neither grudged him myself nor been jealous of what the others had given him. I had sometimes broken my young heart over the difference made between us that was only natural; but I had never carried the blame to him, nor made him suffer because I was wronged and he was favoured.

Now there were times when I almost hated him for what he was; though I hated myself much more in that I was not like him. I was furious against myself because I was tall and lean and strong, large−boned, and with a shock of thick brown hair disturbed by that unmanageable wave which broke it in heavy flocks that never would lie straight; while he was slenderly framed and almost as round−limbed as a girl his head a nest of close−growing golden curls his skin like a child's and his blue eyes like limpid lakes beneath the long fine arch of his narrow brows. He was of the Cherubino type, and women treated him pretty much as they would have treated one of themselves. And when I saw Mrs. Dalrymple let him put his arms round her waist while she kissed him as if he had been a child, I confess I was sometimes more really mad than sane. If I could have changed my physique for his, I would at this time. I, who had always gloried in my strength, would have made myself now a weakling, if Adeline Dalrymple would have treated me as she treated my brother. And there were times when, as I say, I hated him; and felt that I could have struck him like a second Cain.

I did my best to conceal this jealous rage against the one whom hitherto I had loved best of all in the world. But people who live together, especially young people, are quick to note differences of feeling; and Edwin saw the change in me and taxed me with it. Of course I denied that there was any change at all; and, because his charge was true, I grew irritable and sullen under the accusation. But once, when the tears sprang to his eyes, and his small mouth quivered as he said: 'I never thought, Chris, that you would have behaved like this to me: and what have I done to deserve it?' I was conquered. After all, he was my first care, and I would give him even Mrs. Dalrymple's preference. I would give him, if need be, my life!

For all answer to his reproaches, which meant affection, I threw my arms round his neck, and bursting into one of those violent floods of tears which used to characterize me as a child, I kissed him, as also I used to kiss him when we were children together, and dashed out of the house in a tumult of emotion which made me feel as if I had been caught in a typhoon.

I was in that stage of feeling which makes fetishes of inanimate objects and carries into things the divinity centred in persons; which energizes symbols and vivifies relics, which then it adores. I remember pushing this fetishism so far as to envy the very clothes that Mrs. Dalrymple wore which clothes also had a special character of their own to help on my folly. That old wish of being the glove on her hand was no mere literary conceit to me; it was what I myself realized. I endued with a kind of consciousness all that belonged to this divinest woman; and consciousness included love. She had a certain ermine cloak, lined with pale pink satin through which ran gold and silver threads. If I had made a new religion, with her for the Paraclete, I would have taken that cloak for my standard, as Mohammed took the blacksmith's apron I would have venerated it as Catholics venerate the handkerchief of St. Veronica.

When I look back on the passionate idealism, the unreasoning sentiment of this time, and test it by scientific principles, I can understand how myths crystallize and religions are made. I dreamt of Mrs. Dalrymple night after night; but never as an ordinary woman always with a halo of divinity about her which took her out of the ranks of common humanity and lifted her heaven−high above the rest. She was to me what the Madonna is to the Neapolitan what his guardian angel is to the young seminarist. She was the divine part of humanity; the incarnation of all its beauty; the last expression of all its poetry and purity and inner wisdom. She was the seraph of the hierarchy; and to worship her as a goddess was the necessary corollary of knowing her as a woman. For her sake I loved the meanest creature that belonged to her; and to meet and speak to one of the servants of the house, to caress one of the dogs in her absence, made me comparatively content. That 'rose and pot' how true all real poetry is!

Her husband, Mr. Dalrymple, was in his way a clever as well as an eccentric man, at once charming and less than charming. He had a passion for little dogs, which he called his children and made his idols. He had exactly twenty; all of rare kinds and of perfect breeds. It was one of the sights of the place to see this elegant, aristo−cratic−looking man, dressed in the latest fashion light trousers buttoned round his ankles, light kid gloves, coloured under−waistcoat showing a narrow band of rose or blue, gorgeous stock, white hat, hair and whiskers artificially curled and highly perfumed, scented handkerchief and superb jewellery, as if he were in Bond Street, not among the Cumberland mountains daintily picking his way on the rough roads, with his twenty little dogs, all in pairs, streaming behind him like a herd of miniature wild beasts. He had the most extraordinary names for them all; of which I only remember Zamiel and Lilith for the barking Pomeros; Puck and Ariel for the graceful Italian greyhounds; Sambo and Sally for the pugs; the little female truffle−hunter was Queen Mab, but I forget the name of her husband; and the toy−terriers were Oberon and Titania.

Mr. Dalrymple was his wife's husband, and therefore I held him sacred; he was also a man of cultivated intellect, perfect manners, refined tastes, wide experience, and therefore I respected him. But naturally for himself, in view of the man he was and the boy I was, I should not have liked him. He was too effeminate for my taste and he did not admire his wife as she deserved to be admired. He was essentially a dilettante just touching the borders of excellence and never attaining it. He drew well, played the guitar well, wrote pretty music and pretty poetry; but he failed in the full grasp and completion of any of these things. Strange stories of his personal habits, and his devotion to certain occult studies, which terrified the weaker minds among us, crept about the vale; but we were a scandalmongering set at Eden, and we had those in our midst who would have criticized and plucked out the feathers of the angel Gabriel's wings, had he alighted at the Town−hall. All the same, Mr. Dalrymple openly confessed to a belief in magic, ghosts, and all the higher phenomena of mesmerism. According to him, both the witches of old and the Indian jugglers of the present time, had and have mysterious powers extra to those of the common run of men; and he lost his time and strength in experiments where he was now the deceiver and now the dupe.

He was never with his wife, save on state occasions of formal visits and dinners; and they lived two entirely different lives under the same roof. He was a vegetarian and a Rechabite; but he drank a great deal of strong coffee and smoked incessantly; and though by no means a confirmed opium−eater, like De Quincey, he was not innocent of that strange man's vice, nor of that other, corresponding, of smoking hachshish.

If his wife did not complain of his neglect, who else had the right? Though I some− times felt I should like to kill him when I saw her sweet, pale face grow paler than before, her pathetic eyes more mournful, as she had to confess that she had not seen her husband for perhaps three days though we might have seen him, and he had certainly been out and about in the interval I calmed myself by remembering that I had no right to thrust myself into her affairs, even by my sympathy; and that what she kept secret, I and all ought to hold sacred.

My worship for her was too exalted to be intrusive, too humble to take the initiative. It was she who set the rule and measure of our intercourse; and I should as little have dreamed of going beyond her allowance of asking a question on things which she had not already explained as I should have spoken with levity of my dead mother. But I was unhappy all the same, in more ways than one; and, what with my jealous fear of her liking Edwin too much, my in− dignation because Mr. Dalrymple did not like her enough, and my dread lest she did not like me at all, I was for the most part in a state of torment which nothing soothed but her voice and presence, and nothing effectually charmed away but some signal act of gracious kindness and special distinction.

In the midst of all this feverish unrest I had some divinely happy hours. As time went on, and our intimacy increased, not a day passed when we were not with the Dalrymples with her more often than with him, and seldom with both together. We used to row across the lake and land at some favourite spot where there was a fine view, or a waterfall, or perhaps a rare fern or orchid to look for and never find; and where there was sure to be one of those wide wet tracts which require some amount of courage and activity to pass dryshod. At such places Mr. Dalrymple, if he came at all, had enough to do to take care of himself, having the most extraordinary horror of dirt and damp. My sisters were mountaineers born and bred, and needed as little help as a triad of goats; but Adeline Dalrymple was different. She was like a hot−house flower where they were field daisies; and what was child's play to them was an insurmountable difficulty to her. Such a feat as springing from one loose stone to another over a mountain ghyll, or picking her way from tussock to tussock through a bog, was simply impossible. And I was glad that it was so. For then I used to take her in my strong young arms and carry her safely across and far on to the dry ground. I could not dance with her, but I could bear her through difficulties such as these, and feel as if I had the very universe in my arms. It was the epitome of all divinity the possession of all humanity. It did not make me faint nor giddy, but strong, invul− nerable, unconquerable like an old Israelite to whom had been given the sacred ark to defend the very essence of God made helpless to guard.

I used to want to kneel to her, to kiss the hem of her garment, to make myself her footstool, her slave, so that I could be of use to her. I would have liked to have spent my life in ministering to her, as if she had been a living goddess in a temple and I her sole servitor. Sometimes I had the criminally selfish half−wish that some great loss should befall her, when the world would desert her all but I and I would carry to her the same homage, the same reverent worship as before. Discrowned by evil hands, she should ever be sole queen to me! And sometimes I had a morbid kind of wonder, if she would be sorry were I to die, and if she would ever come to look at my grave and lay flowers on the turf. If she did, I knew that down there beneath dead and dumb as I might be, I should know the touch of her hand, hear the tread of her feet, and feel on my face the quick−drawn breath of her parted lips. I could never die so that I should not be conscious of her; and I could only die in her service. To know her, to love her, was of itself the warranty of immortality. She was already, herself, immortal; for the body which held her spirit was emphatically only a veil, a shell, a medium of communication. The true reality was the angel within her form.

The strange deifying reverence that I felt for Mrs. Dalrymple was due partly to my age and temperament, and partly to her own philosophy. She belonged to a school of thought quite unlike any I had ever met with. And, as she interested herself in my religious difficulties, she naturally gave me her own views to help my cruder

thoughts. She was emphatically a transcendentalist, and in a certain sense a pantheist. To her the things of the spirit the unseen world of the souls that had once been men, and of the angels who had neither been born nor had died spiritual experiences and realizations, and the all−pervading presence of God, were more real than those things we call time and space. She believed in the interfusion of souls soul with soul in spiritual blending more lasting than any earthly tie, more potent than any physical circumstance of disruption or removal. She believed in the oneness of God with life, of God with matter, with thought, with emotion, with the cosmic forces of the universe. Like the atmosphere which surrounds us, like the ether which interpenetrates all space, God is the universal medium, the spiritual ether in which we float, the energizing sense by which we recognise and love each other. Soul interfused with soul, and both lying cradled in the Heart of God minds touching each other in the dark, and seeking each other through long ages and across interminable distances, welded together for all time and through all eternity welded together by and with and in the very substance of God!

She was also in a sense a metempsychosist, and believed that we had all known each other in another life all of us who loved in this. For she maintained the absolute indestructibility of love, and the impossibility of sundering those whose spirits had once met each other and been united by love. Her beautiful face took the rapt look of a sibyl when she spoke to me, as she often did, of the glorious joy and sense of freedom and invulnerability contained in this conviction; and how it dwarfed all the pains of life, and life itself to a mere short day's dream not worth lamenting while it was passing. Eternity was behind and before us. Why fix our minds only on the one troubled hour?

'Those who believe as I do,' she said one evening to me, when we were sitting in the twilight, watching the last of the day fading from the sky and the first of the stars coming out; 'no not who believe, but who know are never really separated from the beings they love. Time and space may divide us from each other, and circumstances may be stronger than our will; but thought overrides matter, our souls are ever one and inseparable, and the bond of the spirit once made is indissoluble. Love is in itself immortality. It cannot die; it cannot change; and no force in nature can kill it.'

She laid her white and scented hand on mine, so brown and large and bony and bent her head till she looked full and straight in my eyes. I was sitting on a low stool by her side; she was on the window−seat made in the embrasure.

'You, dear boy, will go into the world far away from all of us here,' she said; and was it my fancy? or did that sweet voice which always reminded me of pearls tremble, and something as tender as tears come into her glorious eyes? 'but, wherever you go, my spirit will go with you, surrounding you, guarding you, one with your very breath, your very life. Never forget that, my child. I am with you always like God and with God in the future always, as I have ever been in the past.'

Her hand closed on mine with an almost convulsive grasp. It burnt like fire, and the diamonds on her fingers and at her throat flashed as if by their own internal light. Her voice had sunk almost to a whisper, and something seemed to pass from her to me which thrilled me like electricity. I could not speak. My heart suddenly swelled so that it strangled my voice and cut short my breath. I only felt a dumb kind of desire to carry my life to her hands and worship her as I would have worshipped the Eternal Mother of men and things. She was beyond womanhood to me she was the casket that embodied and enclosed the Divine.

As I looked at her, she still bending down her head and looking into my eyes, I felt a strange rapture and loss of myself in her personality. Her eyes were as mysterious as those stars overhead worlds where I was, as it were, engulfed, but wherein was contained all the beauty, the love, the secrets of the universe. It was the unveiling of Isis to her priest the goddess revealing herself to man. I scarcely lived; I did not breathe; I was as if spiritually carried away into another sphere; and for the moment I was not human but immortal. It was a sensation beyond mere physical excitement; and it would have been appalling from its intensity, had I had enough consciousness left to examine or reflect.

What was in my face I do not know, but there must have been something which did not displease Mrs. Dalrymple. One hand still clasped mine, the other she laid on my forehead, pushing back my hair and bending my head a little backward.

'Dearest child,' she said, 'God has given you to me. You are mine in spirit now and for ever. Never forget this moment, Christopher, when our souls have met and recognised each other once again across the long ages which have separated them.'

She stooped her gracious face to mine, and lightly kissed me on the eyes and forehead.

It was the first kiss any woman, other than my sisters, had given me since I was a child; and it was the birth−hour of a new life to me. Henceforth all things were transformed for me, and life meant a new existence as it had a new message. The sunrises and the sunsets, the song of the birds, the flowers in the fields, the shadows of the clouds on the mountains, the reflections in the lake and the ripple of the blue waves, the voice of the waters making music in cascades, the budding and the fall of the leaves of the trees all were the circumstances of a more beautiful world than that in which I had hitherto lived. Nature had a secret language which was revealed to me, and I understood the hidden meaning of things which hitherto had had no meaning at all. I, like Adeline Dalrymple, felt and saw God everywhere but when I thought of God, she stood ever foremost at His hand.

How I lived then, I do not know. I remember nothing very distinctly outside my being with Mrs. Dalrymple our sunlit noonday walks in her garden our speculations beneath the stars her eyes, which looked more eloquently than words her words, of which I sometimes lost the meaning because her voice filled my ears with too much music. When I was not with her, I was away in the lonely mountains, where I could think of her without interruption and associate her with the beauty of all about me. I carried my secret joy like a bird in my bosom, hidden from the eyes of all; and not even to Edwin did I reveal what was in my heart.

Of him I was no longer jealous. I had no cause. For I noticed that of late Mrs. Dalrymple had ceased to treat him so familiarly as she used to do in the early days; and on this side I was at peace. I lived in my enchanted island, so far as I knew alone and undiscovered. And if any one suspected my state, no one spoke to me about it. But indeed I have forgotten all the details of my family life at this time. I suppose I ate and drank and slept and lived among them as usual; but I do not remember the fact nor feeling of a day, save once, when I looked at Edwin and thought: 'How much I know that you do not and how different the world is to you and me!'

The strain at this moment must have been severe. I had not done growing, though I was six feet as it was but I am six feet two now; and my big bony frame took a great deal of rest and nourishment to keep it in serviceable condition then and to make a strong man of me in the future. Under the excitement of my present rapturous life I lost both my sleep and my appetite, and became as thin as a grasshopper. It was impossible not to see that I was changing; and my sisters were always commenting on my eyes, which they said looked as if they had been picked out by hawks and put in again by a chimney−sweep; while my face was whiter and leaner than ever, and I was altogether uglier and even more like Don Quixote than I used to be. But as I was certainly less violent and less irascible, they were too glad of a change which was a respite to fall foul of the cause, whatever it might have been.

By degrees the rapture of my first content faded and the old unrest took possession of me and ruined all. To be with Mrs. Dalrymple was ecstasy, but to be away from her was torture and despair. And how could I be always with her? Still, absence from her was like passing into the darkness of the grave; and my old impatience of sorrow made me furious and wild against the obstructions which kept us apart. I used to get out of our house at night by a side door that no one ever looked after, and wander about her garden on the chance of seeing her at the bedroom window, or perhaps of seeing only her light, burning far into the dawning day. There was no danger of being discovered. Mr. Dalrymple slept at the other side of the house altogether, and the big watch−dog knew me. I used to stand among the laurestinus bushes, looking up at her window; and I was grandly rewarded when, as she

sometimes did, she came all in white and drew back the blinds, opening the window, and sometimes stepping out on the balcony and looking at the sky. I never let her know that I was there. That too was my secret which I kept sacred; till one night, as if attracted by some magnetic influence, she came down the outside steps which led from her bedroom to the garden, and walked straight to where I was standing in the shadow of the bushes.

'I knew you were here,' she said, as she came up to me. 'I was conscious of you, and could not sleep. Child! what have you done to me to draw me to you? What strange power have you over me?'

I trembled as if in fever.

'Have I any power over you?' I said.

'You see it,' she answered simply.

I cannot describe the curious sense of in− version which these words created. I, who had been the slave, the worshipper, the subordinate, to be suddenly invested with power to be even so prepotent as to compel obedience from the one who had hitherto been supreme it was a change of parts which for the moment overwhelmed me with a sense of universal instability; and to the end of my life I shall never forget the strange confusion of pride and pleasure, of pain in loss yet joy in the sensation of a newborn power which possessed me, as the goddess thus became a woman, and made of me, who had been her slave, her master and a man.

I did not speak, nor did she. It was like an enchanted spell which words would have broken; and we walked in the dark alleys of the shrubbery in a silence that was at once divine in its blessedness and painful in its vagueness, and more like a dream than a fact. I did not know what it meant, and yet I dared not break it; and she did not. We went into a small summer−house at the end of the garden, and sat there hand in hand, till the morning broke. Then the faint flush on the mountain−top and the first stirring of the birds told us it was time to part.

'See how I have trusted you!' she said as she stood up to go. She laid both her hands on my shoulders, then drew my face forward and kissed me as she had done once before, on the forehead and the eyes. 'Your consecration,' she said; 'the seal of our eternal oneness.'

Overpowered by an emotion so powerful as to be physical pain, I knelt on the ground at her feet; and I think that for a moment I died.

This was the first and only time we met thus by night in the garden. But after this I passed the best half of every night in the shadow of the laurestinus bushes, praying for her to come down to me as she had done on that night of ecstasy and silence. And as the hours passed and she gave no sign, I used to feel as if I must inevitably die as I stood there as if this agony of vain longing and ruthless disappointment took from me my very heart's blood.

At last the strain grew too intense, and nature gave way. I had a sharp attack of brain−fever, when I was for many days in danger. Through the dark tempestuous trouble of the time, I vaguely remember a sudden influx of peace and rest when there came to my bedside some one who spoke to me softly, in what seemed to me a language I had once learned and now vainly tried to remember; bending over me and breathing on me. I remember how my face was cooled and refreshed by what I thought was water from a Greek fountain, and how, with a subtle scent of roses, it was softly dried. I thought it was my mother who had come out of heaven, or poor Nurse Mary who had returned; then that it was the Divine Virgin who had made me her second Christ; then that it was the goddess Isis, she whose awful beauty no man had unveiled; and then I had a confused dream of Diana and Endymion, which changed into that of Juno and Ixion, as the vision faded and the form melted away into mist.

It was none of all these. It was Adeline Dalrymlple; and the tears on my face, which seemed to have fallen from some divine source, were those shed because of the sorrow which had no healing because of the love which had

had no past and could have no future.

When I recovered I found that the Dalrymples had left Windy Brow, and no one at Eden knew where they had gone. Years after I heard of them as living at Venice, where Mrs. Dalrymple was a confirmed invalid and never seen, and Mr. Dalrymple was wholly given up to mesmerism, opium and poetry.

Thus then, began and ended the first love of my life; and in this manner the Great Book was opened and the page turned down half−read but ineffaceable. And ever and ever a fragrance steals from that closed page which neither length of time nor deeper knowledge of life can destroy. Adeline Dalrymple remains in my memory as the impersonation of all beauty and all delight a woman more heavenly than human ever the saint in her shrine, the goddess in her temple, her white robes unstained and her divine glory undiminished through all time and for all eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN I had fully recovered, it seemed to me impossible to go on living at home. I had lost all that made life sweet on the outside, and the monotony of existence within was intolerable. If I had had the hope of a settled future and the occupation of preparing for it, things might have been better; but even such lame endeavours after self−education as I had made now failed me, and I seemed to have lost the key to all the holy places of the past, and to have let the fire on the sacred altar burn out.

I was listless, inert, uninterested. All hope, all joy, all secret ambition of future success, all passionate thrill of living, all delight in books, all intellectual vitality, had gone from me. I wanted but to be left alone, not spoken to and not noticed. Even the companionship of Edwin was distasteful to me; and their cheerfulness under what I felt to be our irreparable loss made my sisters seem the very incarnations of ingratitude.

Everything had gone from me. I could have shrieked for the torture given me by music. I dared not read a poem which was associated with Mrs. Dalrymple and all were associated with her and the zeal with which I had dug down into the arid wells of the 'Encyclopædia Londinensis' for that fantastic learning with which I had crammed my brain, had gone with the rest.

What a wretched time this was to me! I had recovered my life and lost that which had made it beautiful. It was the husk without the kernel, the shell without the pearl; and I was like the Garden when the Lady who had been its Soul had died. I have gone through the fire more than once since then, but I have never had a more painful period than this of that drear dead winter, down among the mountains, after Adeline Dalrymple had left.

The Grahames did what they could to help me. I think they saw what was amiss and were sorry for me. But I had lost all interest in those subjects which had been common to us, and cared nothing for the theological difficulties which, a year ago, had so much disturbed me. Things might be, or might not. What mattered it to me? I went back to that languid acquiescence in doctrines as they are taught, which is neither faith nor voluntary acceptance. It is simply letting things slip and taking no trouble. I had lost, too, my political ardour; and from passion and enthusiasm and turbulence all round had passed into the silence of indifference, the quietude of death.

Thus I droned through the days, dreaming rather than doing; sheltering myself behind the false plea of study, because I wanted to be left alone, but, destitute of either purpose or vigour, in reality doing nothing. My books lay open before me, but I, with my face in my hands, was thinking of all that Adeline Dalrymple had ever said to me recalling all that she had ever done remembering her eyes, her voice, her hair, her hands till I broke down into such tempests of despair as frightened even myself. The consciousness of her was my universe, my inseparable second self like another soul possessing me. I carried her always with me; and my heart was like a perfumed vase filled with the ashes of the dead.

She was the spirit that animated Nature Nature, who had always been my Divine Mother, my Eternal Friend. I saw her in the stars and found her in the skies; I heard her in the voice of the waters and traced her outline in the misty foldings of the silent hills. She was as beautiful as the snow−crystals on the window−pane, as pure as the frost that fringed the dead leaves of the trees. She was everywhere everywhere; the one unchangeable circumstance traceable behind all different forms. In the night and in the morning and through out the day, she was my ever−present thought sometimes strong and vivid as a solid fact, sometimes pale and vaporous as a distant cloud, but always there always! always! She held me and possessed me as she had said she ever would. She stole between me and heaven, and when I prayed to God I thought of her. She was fire in my veins and ice in my heart; but I should have been poorer through life had I not known her. I can see now the good of the pain she brought me.

'When winter went and spring came back' how I love that beautiful copy of Shelley which she gave me! I have it yet, and can still repeat almost all the minor poems I learnt as a lad, blistering the pages where I learnt! my blood once more began to stir in my veins and my natural energy to re−assert itself. I gradually got back my old feeling of power and invulnerability my old sense of certainty in the future and my ability to conquer circumstances and compel happiness, no matter what the obstacles to be overcome. Heart−broken though I might be, I was still master of fate; and I had always the fee−simple of the future.

Yet, as this sense of power returned, so grew ever more masterful that which was its reflex repugnance to my home−life, and desire to go out into the world on my own account, to work for myself and be independent.

But how? What could I do? I had learnt nothing thoroughly and nothing useful. Even my languages, which were my battle−horses, were merely so much literary furniture, and were useless for the more practical purposes of either writing or speaking. I had amassed cart−loads of useless knowledge including heraldry and prescientific mythology but I knew nothing that represented money−power nothing which touched the fringe of any professional robe, or included the price of a plate of meat at a chop−house.

It had been intended that I, like my brothers, should go to Cambridge when I should come of age. My father would have given me a reading−tutor for the year previous to matriculation; and after that he would have held me responsible for my future, and himself acquitted of all obliga− tion. But I was too impatient to wait even the short two years that stood between me and my majority. I was now past nineteen; and those two years seemed to me an eternity of ennui. Besides, what could I do after I had taken my degree? I could not take Orders; and the Bar was beyond my means. Where was the good, then, of widening foundations over which I could never build? and why delay the more restricted building which should be begun now at once?

Then it was that I returned to my old love, Literature that waste−pipe of unspecialized powers, which no one thinks demands an apprenticeship, and wherein all believe that fame and success are to be caught like wild goats, at a bound! Besides it would be my means of communication with Mrs. Dalrymple. If I could but write things which she would repeat, as she repeated that poem of Shelley's, that sweet music of Heine's if I could make those beautiful eyes moist and stir that lofty soul with generous emotion, she remembering the boy who through her had become great! if I could! Yes: I would be a literary man, pure and simple; and I would leave home.

Of late I had blossomed into poetry. It is the natural expression of love and sorrow, and minds, like all other things, obey fixed laws and exhibit the same phenomena under the same conditions. And being only a Philistine, without real insight into the true meaning of the gift of Song, I thought that, because I had been able to set down a few passionate couplets with tolerable flow of rhythm and harmony of rhyme, my path was clear before me, my tools were sharpened to my hand, and my chaplet of bays was already sprouting on the tree. I wrote a short poem, which I resolved should determine my future. If accepted, I would at once take up my parable and begin my career; if rejected, I would accept the verdict as final, and go to the colonies as a sheep−farmer, or I would go to sea as a sailor before the mast, or enlist as a private in the army trusting to myself to be recognised as a gentleman, raised from the ranks in less than a year, and made an admiral or a general while still young. I was

such a mere child in some things, even yet! and in nothing more than in my ignorance of the ways of the world, and the impotence of the individual when brought into contact with systems. Meanwhile, I would try my fate with literature; poetry and literature being to me, in those days of darkness, interchangeable terms meaning the same thing.

At that time the two magazines in greatest favour among us youngsters at the vicarage were 'Ainsworth's Miscellany' and 'Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine.' My father patronized Blackwood, of which some articles were delightful to me and others made me rageful. With the superstition of youthful hope and fear, I determined to do a little bit of private vaticination for my better guidance; and to make the best of a certain number of catches on the point of cup−and−ball determine the magazine to which I should send my poem. I caught forty−nine out of the fifty for Ainsworth, and only forty−seven for Jerrold. To the former then I posted my rhymes, with a boyish letter of entreaty which must have amused him by its fervour.

To my joy he accepted my poem, and sent me an honorarium of two guineas; together with a kind and encouraging letter, assuring me of success if I would persevere, and promising to accept all such work as would suit the 'Miscellany.' So now things were plainly ordered, and my future was fair before me.

Literature, as a profession, was a thing which went dead against our family traditions our inherited ideas of respectability and what was due to our gentle birth. To write in the quiet dignity of home a learned book like Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' or a profound one like Locke 'On the Understanding,' was one thing; to depend for bread on one's pen was another. The one shed increased lustre on the noblest name; the other was no better than fiddling in an orchestra, acting in a barn, or selling yards of silk across the counter, all of which were allied disreputabilities. It was a low−class *métier*, let who would follow it; but for a gentleman and the grandson of a Bishop, it was degradation.

So at least my father said when I opened fire on him one day, and propounded to him my notable scheme for leaving home, going to London, and supporting myself by literature. He was opposed to the scheme from first to last, and tried to deter me from it by sarcasm.

'I thought, with your fine ideas, you had more ambition than to make yourself a mere newspaper hack, a mere Grub Street poet,' he said, throwing into his words that galling emphasis which impetuous youth finds so hard to bear. 'Do you think you can do nothing better for yourself than write poems for Warren's blacking, or scratch up Bow Street details for a dinner?'

'I do not intend to write poems for Warren's blacking, nor to scratch up Bow Street details for a dinner,' I answered I honestly confess it insolently; for my father had the fatal power, as some others have also had, of rousing the worst passions in my nature. 'And if to be a literary hack now is the way to literary fame hereafter,' I continued, 'I will serve my apprenticeship as others have done. Sir Walter Scott was not a literary hack!'

'There is no good in talking to such an obstinate young puppy as you,' said my father angrily. 'I am sick to death of your whims and affectations! The best thing for you would be a good thrashing to knock some of the conceit and wilfulness out of you. If you go to London, as you propose, you go without my consent do you hear? and the curse of God rests on disobedient children to the end of their lives. Now leave the room, Christopher, and never let me hear of this ridiculous rubbish again.'

Here then I was at the junction of those two roads of which either determines the whole after−life. Opposition of my father's unreasoning kind was naturally, to a boy of my violent temper, so much oil on flame and so much strengthening of resolve. All the same, obedience to parents is a duty; so also is the perfecting of one's own powers and leading the life for which one is best fitted for we all have duties to ourselves as well as to others. At this moment the two clashed and made my choice very difficult. For underneath the fierce temper which I could not deny, was always conscience and the desire to know the right; and to do it when known.

Finally, my personal ambition conquered. I reasoned the thing out in my own way, and came to the conclusion that, although self−sacrifice for the good of others is absolute and imperative, the sacrifice of a real vocation for no one's good and simply because of the arbitrary opposition of a parent, is not; and that in my case self−assertion was not selfishness. The permission then, which my father would not give me, I prepared myself to take; and I was on the point of running away from home, as my grandfather, uncle, and brother had done keeping quiet for the moment only because Edwin was not well when, fortunately for us, Mr. King, our family solicitor, came down from London to pay us a visit, and proved the 'deux ex machinâ' by whom all difficulties were arranged.

Mr. King took a fancy to me. A sharp practitioner in his office, outside his profession he was a kind−hearted man enough, fond of young people, and always ready to assist undeveloped talent and help on the schemes of honourable ambition. He thought that I was fit for something better than a parson's petticoat, he said with his cynical contempt for all forms of faith; and, as it was not possible to send me to the Bar, the next best thing was to give me the run of the British Museum, and leave to prove of what stuff I was made. He would help me with his advice; and he promised my father that he would look after my health and morals.

But, first of all, he said to me: 'Could he see what I had already done, beside that prancing poem in "Ainsworth's Miscel− lany," which was well which was pretty fair, but vastly young?'

Full of the pride of ignorance and the confidence of youth, I gave him some of the things I thought my best; and never doubted of his verdict. Poor Mr. King! Such a turgid, upheaped, colossally clumsy style as mine was in those early days! 'like a wood where you could not see the trees for the leaves' like a confused mass of ornamentation, where not a figure was detached nor a volute truly drawn. But to me they were all monumental chaos, encumbrances, bad drawing and all.

Mr. King told me quite candidly what he thought of my productions. In consequence, he went near to drive me mad by what I took to be his prosaic aridity and deadness of touch. He cut out all my finest passages; ridiculed all my best descriptions; gravely demanded what I meant by my sublimest ideas; put my most high−flown phrases into flat prose, and then asked me if that was not much better? certainly it was more intellegible! and reduced the whole thing to pulp.

But it was protoplastic pulp, after all his hacking and pounding pulp with the germ of life and the potentiality of development in it pulp out of which, with care, might be evolved some kind of vertebrate organism for, though he edited me severely, he ended by saying he thought I had 'stuff' in me; at all events, enough to justify me in my choice of literature as a profession and him in his advocacy with my father. And after he had thus waded through my literary Niagaras, he addressed himself again to my father and discussed the matter with him philosophically.

It was evident I was doing no good at home, he said. I was too big for the house; too vigorous for such a life as we led down here. It was power wasted vitality run− ning to seed and it would be far better to send me up to London, as I wished. Let me have a year's grace to see what I could do. The question of permanent settlement might come after. When I should come of age my small fortune would simplify matters until then, could I not have an allowance?

Mr. King was one of the few people who had a decided influence over my father. His sharp, brisk energy; the trenchant audacity of his theories; his worldly knowledge and business capacity; his respect for society, appearances, success; his absolute self−confidence all naturally impressed a man whose indolence was his bane, and who had to be stirred up if he were to be made to move. And as Mr. King swore by all his gods that his sisters he was not married should look after me and keep me out of the destruction into which my father made sure I should run, the thing was at last arranged. My father gave his formal consent to my going up to London for a year for the purpose of studying at the British Museum, and writing the book on which I had set my heart. And he agreed to furnish me with the funds necessary for that year's experience.

'After that,' he said kindly, and yet severely; 'you sink or swim on your own account. If you fail, as I fear you will, you have your home to come back to. It will never be shut against you, unless you disgrace yourself so that you are unfit to enter it. If you succeed my blessing be with you! It will be a pleasant surprise if you do but all things are possible to God; and to His care I commend you.'

My leaving home in this sudden and erratic manner created a tremendous stir among us. Poor dear Edwin cried like a girl, and said that he did not know what he should do without me, and that it was hard, after I had accustomed him to lean on me all his life, for me now to leave him alone.

And when he said this, for a brief instant I felt the joints of my resolve give way, and I thought I would throw it all up and be content with him and home. But, like another Pharaoh, I hardened myself afresh, and, instead of yielding to him, did what I could to comfort him especially promising to return before long, and to write to him every day, faithfully.

As for my sisters, they were half−relieved and half−sorry, as now the prospect of greater peace by the withdrawal of my turbulent personality, and now the loss of a useful kind of servant, was uppermost. As pretty Ellen drawled out in that quiet naïve way of hers, by which she was able to say the most wounding things with the greatest serenity, and not get into a quarrel as the price to be paid for her frankness:

'We shall have no one now to do things for us; and I think, Chris, you are very selfish indeed to go away. Who is to go down for the letters on the wet days? and how dull it will be for Julia and me to walk out by ourselves when Edwin has a cough and cannot come! How can we go up the mountains alone? Who is to drive away the bulls? and how can we sail without you to manage the boat? And what is Edwin to do without you? you, who have always pretended to be so fond of him too! I must say I think you are very wicked and selfish for leaving us all like this, just to go and amuse yourself in London. But you always were a selfish and ungrateful boy; and it is not to be wondered at.'

'Am I really selfish, Nell?' I asked.

'Of course you are,' she answered, lifting her soft eyes to mine with her candid look. 'You were never anything else.'

Well, perhaps. Still, I thought that to give up such a chance as I had now, that I might go to the post on the wet days, take care of my sisters in their mountain walks and amuse my brother when he was not well, would be a disproportionate expenditure of my own life in view of the gain to theirs.

And more. With the return of the old strength and hope had come back the old theological troubles: and my 'unsoundness' had by now become so patent as to make things less than ever harmonious between my father and myself. His method of reconversion was not of a kind to bring us into closer union. Leland's 'Short Method with the Deists,' which he insisted on my reading, only made me angry; and his unstinted abuse of all Unitarianism, Deism, and even Dissent, made me angrier still.

When the 'Vestiges of Creation' came out, our fight was serious. Giving, as it did the first idea of cosmic continuity, and the consequent destruction of the bit by bit creation of Genesis, it was a priceless treasure to me, to him a deadly and diabolical sin. And in the controversy between Whewell and Sir David Brewster, we of course took opposite sides and mine was not that which adduced as the convincing proof of the centralization of intelligent life on the earth alone, the astounding argument that Christ had died for man only, and that no other world could, therefore, be peopled with creatures of intelligence, soul, or spirit like ours.

For all these reasons then, I felt that it was best to go. I had outgrown the dimen− sions of the old home; and fission is the law of families as well as of animalculæ. I was the one inharmonious circumstance within the

vicarage walls, and all would be better without me. The die was cast. My choice was made. Selfish, or only self−respecting, I took my place with Mr. King in the coach which was to carry us to the railway station; and thus and for ever broke down my dependence on the old home and set my face towards the Promised Land the land where I was to find work, fame, liberty and happiness.

CHAPTER IX.

MY first year in London was one of strange alternation of feeling. Sometimes I longed for the old place the lake, the mountains, the rivers, the woods, the faces I knew when passing up the street, and my own people with that sickness of desire which grows into a real malady, culminating in death if continued long enough. And then again I was in a world of enchantment as my mind opened to new impressions and my heart warmed to new affections.

This total change of scene, and the influx of fresh interests included, did for me what nothing else would have done. My certainty of endless heart−break for the loss of my first love began to be as a grave−mound which gently covers itself with moss and flowers as it sinks down almost on a level with the plain, while sweet birds come to sing, above the dead.

I read daily at the British Museum, gathering material for my magnum opus, and making raids into all manner of strange regions according to my old habit of amassing unusable cartloads of perfectly worthless learning. Among other things, I remember how nearly I made shipwreck of myself in the fascinating whirlpool of Analogy. I improved my knowledge of classical times and circumstances, and blessed Becker and Winckelmann; and I lost myself in the mazes of comparative mythology and Higgins's 'Anacalypsis.' Turned loose in this rich pasturage, with only the limitation of subject which came from the main lines of my book, I ran great risk of losing my time by the very fact of over−filling it.

The consciousness of living in the midst of such boundless stores, and of being the potential possessor of all this wealth, acted on my brain as a stimulant sometimes as an intoxicant. I was never weary of that badly−lighted, ill−ventilated and queerly tenanted old room, with its legendary flea and uncleansed corners. The first to come, the last to leave, and always surrounded by a pile of books, of which the number brought down on my young head many a good−natured sarcasm from the attendants, I soon became known to the officials and habitués, whom my youth interested and my enthusiasm amused. All were kind to me; but one attendant was especially my friend. The habitual readers of the Museum from some forty to a few years ago will recognise my man.

With his heart in the country, and his hope of leaving his hated service in the reading−room to once more establish himself as a gentleman−farmer in Norfolk ever flitting, like a Will−o'−the−wisp, before him, he had to live on those narrow lines for the remainder of his life. The post which had been accepted as a temporary stop−gap when he was ruined by that unlucky speculation of his had to be his permanent office; and the discomfort of a few months crystallized into the discontent of a life. Honest as the day, true as steel, tender−hearted as a woman, he was gruff in manner and of superficial surliness of temper to men; to women he was always both courteous and considerate, so that he grew to be the recognised ladies' attendant of the room. His delicate little wife, for whom he had the most chivalrous devotion, knew his real worth; and I too learnt the intrinsic value of his nature. He and his wife were my good friends, and I used often to go and see them on the Sun− day afternoons, when they lived out by Stoke Newington.

From the first partly owing to the habit of mixing with all classes, proper to a clergyman's family, and to the familiarity natural in a small country place towards the children whom the elders had seen grow up in their midst; partly to my own nature I have been as democratic in my ways as in my principles. I have ever chosen my friends for their worth and not for their station; and, taking society vertically as I have done, I have counted friends in all the strata, from those born in the purple down to fishermen and servants. And I began as I have gone on starting off with this real friendship made with the family of a simple attendant in a public library.

In those days Mr. Panizzi not yet Sir Antonio was our Deus Maximus; and on more than one occasion he showed how far ahead Italian astuteness looks, and how wise it is to have your traps in order when you suspect that vermin may be about. He caught and caged one of these vermin in the most masterly way in the world. The thing was done as neatly as a conjuror's trick, and has left on me the impression of a nightmare. It was my first introduction to the Italian character, whereof I have had wide experience since.

Mr. Panizzi took great notice of me. He had a watchful eye over his small world both of readers and officials, and not so much as a mouse squeaked behind the skirting−board but he heard it and tracked the run from end to end. Who did his work of espionage no one ever knew; but some one must have been his 'mouse−trap' for this accurate knowledge of all things within the domain of the Printed Book Department could not have been had by direct personal observation, even granting those 'eye−holes' of which there was a dark tradition and unpleasant consciousness.

One day he gave me a little wise advice about my friendliness with this good attendant, of whom I have spoken. He had seen me shake hands with him on coming into the reading−room, and he knew that I visited him and his wife at their own home. And as he knew from Mr. King something of my inherited social position, and saw for himself how young and unformed and impulsive I was, he thought himself justified in warning and reproving me. As a reader, I was so far under his jurisdiction; and his position gave him seigneurial rights.

'You are a gentleman,' he said; 'he is only a servant. Make him keep his place, and do you maintain your position. These familiarities with low people always end badly.' Then he bent his head and levelled his eyes at me from under his broad bushy brows. 'You are very young,' he said with a peculiar smile; 'and you think that you can revolutionize society. You will find that you cannot; and that if you knock your head against stone walls, you will only make it ache and alter nothing.'

But he talked to the winds. What can heady youth do, when temperament and principles combine to push it in one direction, but stick to its own sense of right and earn its own experience? with bitter weeping, if need be, but always earned through constancy and conscientiousness. The young fellow whose course of action or mode of thought can be changed or modified by the first dissident he comes across will never be a man, morally, but will remain a bit of jelly to the end. For weakness of will and plasticity of conviction, however pleasant they may be to live with, make but a poor job of life on the whole; and while one is young, moral steadiness is more honourable than intellectual amiability. Wherefore, acting more or less consciously on these ideas, I gave no heed to Mr. Panizzi's counsel, and continued my friendship with these good people as I maintained it to the end.

My chief friends however, at this time, were naturally Mr. King and his family, and their house was like my home. I have often wondered since, how they could have been bothered with me as they were; but they were wonderfully kind to me at least, some among them. There were two sisters who did not like me; so we will let them pass. It is not in human nature to speak very enthusiastically of those who dislike one and make no secret of their feelings; and I wish to remember only things pleasant and of good repute in connection with my old friends and quasi−guardians.

They were a strangely united family; not so much in personal affection as by the feeling of family solidarity. When I first knew them they were five in all; and all were unmarried. The eldest brother was the master; the eldest sister was the mistress. The youngest two sisters were respectively the beauty and the invalid; and the younger brother was the family pet and subordinate. He was one of the best fellows that ever lived kind, unselfish, devoted, faithful; but he hated his profession, and he was emphatically a round man in a square hole. He was a great athlete and fond of all country exercises. He had wanted to go to sea, but had been prevented for reasons of family ambition never fulfilled; so he had to sit at his desk instead of climbing up shrouds and handling stays; and his brother found, when too late, that to coerce a life out of its natural direction does not always ensure a successful settling in another form.

This brother, George, and I were great friends; and for years we spent every Sunday together. We used to take long walks into the country, about London, and through the parks and public gardens; and, utterly unlike in every thought, feeling and instinct, we were nevertheless chums as close as if we had been brothers together.

The eldest sister was the great feature of the family. She was a tall, large, strikingly handsome woman, almost stone deaf, and of a singular mixture of qualities. With certain virile characteristics witness her personal courage and her constancy; her strong sense of family duty, which led her to self−sacrifice for the sake of her own; her self−respect, which ran into queenliness of pride and dignity; her power to command and her ability to obey she had the most ultra−feminine notions of propriety, and for certain transgressions felt a loathing amounting to horror. She, as well as my special chum, were curiously conservative; and it was impossible to make them believe that anything which had not been in their forming−time of youth was valuable or respectable. I was devotedly attached to this noble creature 'Queen Betty' we used to call her; and she made a kind of pet of me, and protected me against the animosity of her sisters.

For Mr. King himself I have only kindly tender recollections; and I will not dwell on the clouds which came over the future.

In these days I lived at a small private boarding−house kept by a dear, good woman with a magnificent contralto voice, formidable eyebrows, a decided beard and moustache, and hands as large and strong as a man's. In spite of these masculine accompaniments, Miss Smith had a heart as soft as swansdown and as large as an elephant's. She was totally unfit for any undertaking in which she had to resist encroachments and defend her own rights. Anyone could talk her over. She was influenced by her affections more than by her interests; and where she took a liking she would sacrifice her gains to please the favoured him or her by extra liberalities. She had generous instincts, refined tastes, indolent habits; and she kept a loose hand on the domestic reins. Hence she made the most comfortable home possible for those who lived under her hospitable roof. But our comfort was her loss; and, when Christmas brought its bills, the two ends gaped ever wider and wider and were less and less able to be strained together.

I knew all this only afterwards. At the time everything seemed to stand on velvet.

This house was a queer experience to me. The tremendous love−affairs which budded and blossomed, but never set into the permanent fruit of matrimony; the friendships which began, continued, and then suddenly one day went pouf! in the smoke of a blazing quarrel; the fights of the old ladies for the footstools, the favourite easy−chair, the best place by the fire, and the stratagems and wiles put in force for victory and prior possession how odd it all was! And what extraordinary people came and went like shadows, or stayed as if they were coeval with the foundations of the house, and as little to be moved as these!

There was the bull−necked, bullet−headed bon vivant who kept the bill−of−fare up to the mark, was inexorable on the subject of breakfast−bacon and soft−roed herrings, and allowed of no stint in quantity nor scamping of quality.

There was the dissipated young clerk who did nothing but count returned notes at the Bank of England, and had no intellect for higher work had he been put to it. He had a private income in excess of his salary; was given over to music−halls and late hours; spent his money as if it were water running through his fingers; dressed gorgeously and wore a small counter−full of jewellery; and, among other things, bought a fine carved mahogany bookcase, which he stocked with novels, all in showy bindings, uncut and never read.

There was the well−conducted young solicitor, silent, reserved, methodical the best of them all; and the loose−lipped young fellow, who spluttered when he spoke, and asked counsel of unmarried girls whether he should put on his thick trousers or his thinner.

There was the uxorious couple who made embarrassing love in public, and the quarrelsome couple who were just as embarrassing in their fierce disputes; the maiden lady of good family, whose feature was eyebrows, and who would have sniffed at Venus herself as plebeian, had she not had the exact arch held by her as a sign of birth and breeding; and there was the mincing prude who objected to Cromwell 'because he was not a gentleman,' kept a sharp look−out on the young men and was a very Cerberus to the girls.

There were the girls themselves the pretty, touzled, mop−headed ones, who turned the heads of all the men, and had their own loves out of doors; the earnest ones who had something in them, and the frivolous ones who had nothing in them; and one that girl who was my special friend and studied with me at the British Museum. She was one of the vanguard of the independent women; but she did her life's work without blare or bluster, or help from the outside; and without that weakness of her sex which makes them cry out when they are hustled in the crowd they have voluntarily joined which makes them think themselves aggrieved because they are not aided by the men to whom they have placed themselves in opposition and rivalry.

Then there were the women of sixty and upwards, who chirped like birds and dressed like brides; the mother and daughter, who came no one knew whence, did no one knew what, were pleasant companions and charming entertainers but kept at a distance; the buxom widows of forty, smiling, debonnaire and ready for their second bridal; and the sad−eyed ones of the same age, whose weepers were as big as sails, and their crape of phenomenal depth and blackness. There were the half−crazed members of well−known families planted out to insure that peace at home which their odd ways disturbed; and sometimes there were people whose antecedents would not bear scrutiny, and whose dismissal had to be summarily given. Like the shadows of a magic lantern these memories pass before me, and I ask myself: Was it really I, the man I am now, who lived there as one of this strange menagerie myself, perhaps one of the strangest of them all?

Impulsive, shy, eager, enthusiastic, sensitive at all points, revelling in my sense of liberty but scarcely knowing how to use it, I was like some big bird as yet unfledged some huge puppy as yet untrained. My kind landlady, however, liked me, and did her best to warn and direct me as to my conduct in the house and the intimacies to be formed or avoided among her people.

'It is a pity you should be spoilt too soon,' she said to me one day with a sigh. 'Boys are so nice, and men are such wretches! I wish you could be a boy for ever, then you might be worth something.'

'I shall be worth more when I am a man,' I laughed. 'You shall be proud of me then, Smithy. Wait till my book is published, and then you will see.'

'I would rather keep you as you are,' she answered. 'When you are a man I shall have lost you. Now you are like my own boy.'

'You shall never lose me, Smithy,' I said. 'I am not of the kind to change.'

Dear, good, generous Miss Smith! She was only a boarding−house keeper; but she was the most of a mother to me of any woman I have known save poor Nurse Mary. I got to like her and confide in her so intimately that it seemed strange I had not known her all my life; and to the end we remained the perfectly good friends we were now, when she 'mothered' me and looked after me, and kept me, so far as she could, from making mistakes and falling into mischief. If I have seemed to give too much weight to this comparatively unimportant tract in my life's journey, it is because it was my first field of personal freedom; and like all first things it has left an indelible impression on my mind.

CHAPTER X.

BY the end of the covenanted term I had accomplished my purpose and written my novel. It was an ambitious undertaking for a 'prentice hand, but it met with that kind of reception which means promise and opens the door to better things. It gave me no money. On the contrary, the publication cost me fifty pounds, which sum, advanced by Mr. King on the faith of my majority, was Mr. N 's standing price for first books by young authors.

I shall never forget the day when I read the first favourable notice of my book, which, strangely enough, was in the *Times*. I seemed to tread on air, to walk in a cloud of light, to bear on me a sign of strange and glorious significance. I felt as if I must have stopped the passers−by to shake hands with them and tell them it was I who had written the novel which the *Times* had reviewed so well that morning. I thought all the world must be talking of it, and wondering who was the unknown Christopher Kirkland who, yesterday obscure, to−day famous, had so suddenly flashed into the world of letters; and I longed to say that this veiled prophet, this successful aspirant, was I! I remember the sunset as I went up Oxford Street, to what was not yet the Marble Arch. For I could not rest in the house. I could not even go home to dinner. I felt compelled to walk as if for ever not like that poor wretch, for penance, over a dreary and interminable plain, but through an enchanted garden of infinite beauty to damp down the glad fever in my veins. I could only breathe out in the open. I should have been stifled within the four walls of that house in Montague Place.

Since then I have watched with breathless emotion the opalescent skies of Venice; the westering light which streams like visible prayer through the windows of St. Peter's as you stand on the Pincio; the gorgeous sunsets of Naples, with that burning bar drawn all across the horizon, stretching from Vesuvius to infinitude; but I have never seen one to match the splendour of that sunset in London, on the evening of the day when I first achieved success. For the moment I was as a god among gods. My veins were filled with celestial ichor, not human blood; and my mind saw what it brought the infinity of glory because of that intensity of joy.

I turned into the Park and sat down on a bench, looking at this resplendence which was to me like a message a symbol of my own strength and future lustre. Suddenly, as distinctly as if she had been there in the body, I felt the presence of Adeline Dalrymple. It seemed to me as if she stood before me, enveloping me in her personality as in the old days. I seemed to feel her arms about me as if she drew me gently to her bosom; and I felt again her lips on my forehead and my eyes. Then she seemed to sit down on the seat beside me, and I heard the murmur of that marvellous voice, saying softly: 'By the power of Love you have come to the possession of Fame!'

The full chord of divinest harmony was now complete. All my life and being were swept away as by one great rush and flood of rapture, unfathomable, irresistible. It was as if I heard the primal harmony whence all other music flows as if I saw the archetype of all beauty, and felt the essence of all love and joy. For that brief moment I was in what we mean by heaven; when a heavy hand was laid a little roughly on my shoulder, and a harsh voice said rudely:

'Come, none of this now! You mustn't sleep here, you know. Or is it drunk you are?'

The angel with the flaming sword who turned me so unceremoniously out of Paradise was a park−keeper; and poor Icarus, my spirit, had a headlong tumble from the empyrean to the dust!

When the agreement between us came to an end, my father again wanted me to give up my present life, go to Cambridge, put away my foolish doubts and take Orders like a rational being. He ought to have known this last was impossible, granting me the very elements of honesty. But he was so convinced, for his own part, of the truth of Christianity and the perfectness of Anglican Protestantism, that he felt sure if I read in the orthodox direction I should be also convinced. Thus he hoped that, by studying for the ministry, I should by force of better reasoning abandon my errors, and at one and the same time redeem my worldly position and save my soul.

Naturally I resisted this plan; for I was more than ever in love with liberty and literature. And as there was really nothing in my choice injurious to my family nor derogatory to myself, I at last bore down my father's opposition and won his consent: I am bound by truth to add, never his cordial approval. Still, he consented; and I was thus saved from the pain, as well as the disgrace and wrong−doing, of flat disobedience to his will; and my home−ties remained intact. And after my people had got rid of the daily irritation of my presence, and I myself had learned more self−control by contact with the world, and had also become less sore, because not so often wounded, we were better friends than we had ever been before. My bi−annual visits to the dear old place were purely harmonious; which my life there had not been; and our mutual affection was strengthened, not weakened, by the loosening of the links and the lengthening of the chain.

My life, then, was finally arranged on the lines I had so long marked out for myself. Now I had only to show of what stuff I was made. For the rest, my future was in my own keeping.

The first necessity was to get steady employment outside my novel−writing, which was to be the sweet after the meat; and my ambition was that of most young writers not specialists to get work on the press. This gradation of aim was the natural result of experience. From poetry to novel−writing, and thence to newspaper work what an epitome of young ambition is here! I could not begin by reporting, as Dickens and Beard and Kent and Hunt and, if my memory serves me, George Henry Lewes, had begun. I did not know shorthand which yet was easily learned. But I was too ambitious to like the idea of work so unindividualized and a position so subordinate as are the work and position of a reporter. I wanted to be a full−fledged leader−writer at once. Wherefore I tried my hand at what was really a social essay rather than a leader, on the wrongs of all savage aborigines. This I sent down to the office of the , with a letter stating the full presumption of my desires; and waited for the result.

Poor dear 'Smithy' had a bad time of it for the next few days. For that fatal quality of concentration which has intensified every feeling and action of my life was then more potent than it is even now; and there was nothing in heaven nor earth, the past, the present, nor the future, save the acceptance or rejection of that essay. The four days which intervened between my letter and the answer were four days of restlessness amounting to agony of alternate hope and fear rising into insanity. There was no treading on air nor walking in a cloud of light now! It was going through the Valley of the Shadow; with perhaps that fatal abyss at the end!

On the fifth day I had wrestled through my torment and come out into the upper air once more. My proof lay on my plate at breakfast; and with it was a letter from the editor, bidding me go down to the office to−day, at four o'clock precisely.

I was punctual to the moment; and with a beating heart but very high head, went swinging up the narrow, dingy court into which the 'editor's entrance' gave; and then up the still narrower and still dingier stairs to a room whence I could not see the street for the dirt which made the windows as opaque as ground−glass. Here I was told to wait till Mr. Dundas could see me. In about half an hour the messenger returned, and ushered me into the awful presence.

For in truth it was an awful presence, in more ways than one. It was not only my hope and present fortune, but of itself, personally, it was formidable.

A tall, cleanly−shaved, powerfully−built man with a smooth head of scanty red hair; a mobile face instinct with passion; fiery, reddish−hazel eyes; a look of supreme command; an air of ever−vibrating impatience and irascibility, and an abrupt but not unkindly manner, standing with his back to the fire−place made half a step forward and held out his hand to me as I went into the room.

'So! you are the little boy who has written that queer book and want to be one of the press−gang, are you?' he said half−smiling, and speaking in a jerky and un− prepared manner, both singular and reassuring.

The little boy, by the way, was as tall as he and that was two inches over six feet.

I took him in his humour and smiled too.

'Yes, I am the man,' I said.

'Man, you call yourself? I call you a whipper−snapper,' he answered, always good−humouredly. 'But you seem to have something in you. We'll soon find it out if you have. I say though, youngster, you never wrote all that rubbish yourself! Some of your elder brothers helped you. You never scratched all these queer classics and mythology into your own numskull without help. At your age it is impossible.'

'It may be impossible,' I laughed; 'at the same time it is true. I give you my word, no one helped me. No one even saw the manuscript or the proofs,' I added eagerly.

On which my new friend and potential master startled me as much as if he had fired off a pistol in my ear, first by his laughter, and then by the volley of oaths which he rolled out oaths of the strangest compounds and oddest meanings to be heard anywhere oaths which he himself made at the moment, having a speciality that way unsurpassed, unsurpassable and inimitable. But as he laughed while he blasphemed, and called me 'good boy' in the midst of his wonderful expletives, he evidently did not mean mischief. And I had fortunately enough sense to understand his want of malice, and to accept his manner as of the ordinary course of things.

This pleased him; and after he had exhausted his momentary stock of oaths, he clapped me on the back with the force of a friendly sledge−hammer, and said:

'You are a nice kind of little beggar, and I think you'll do.'

Then he told me to go into the next room to write a leader on a Blue Book which he would send in to me. It was the report of the Parliamentary Commission on the condition of the miners relative to the 'truck' system.

'I give you three hours and a half,' he said, taking out his watch. 'Not a minute longer, by . By that time your work must be done, or you'll have no supper to−night! You must take the side of the men; but d'ye hear? you are not to assassinate the masters. Leave them a leg to stand on, and don't make Adam Smith turn in his grave by any cursed theories smacking of socialism and the devil knows what. Do you understand, youngster? I have had the passages marked which you are to notice, and so you need not bother that silly cocoanut of yours with any others. Keep to the text; write with strength; don't talk nonsense, and do your work like a man. And now be off.'

To my great joy and supreme good luck, I seized the spirit of my instructions, and wrote a rattling, vigorous kind of paper, which pleased Mr. Dundas so much that he called me a good boy twenty times with as many different oaths, and took me home to dine with him. And from that day he put me on the staff of the paper, and my bread−and−butter was secure.

The next two years followed without any change in outward circumstances. I worked hard for very moderate pay; but I was young, strong, energetic, and temperate in my habits. To live was of itself good enough for me. I did not want the adventitious excitement of dissipation nor luxury. My work was my pleasure, and to do well was its own reward. I had that appetite for work which is the essential of success on a newspaper; and I was to be relied on at a pinch as well as for the day's steady routine. I filled the office of handy− man about the paper was now sent down to describe a fête; now given a pile of books to review; sometimes set to do the work of the theatrical critic when this gentleman was away; and given certain social leaders to write but never the political.

For a young fellow as I was then, unfit for responsibility because wanting in experience, this was all that I could expect. And occasionally it was more than I was fit for. Twice I got the paper into trouble because of my unsound

political economy, and the trail of the socialistic serpent, which made itself too visible for even the ; for all that this was one of our then most advanced Liberal journals. But, as I was a favourite with the irascible editor to whom also I was sincerely attached, though I stood in wholesome awe of him into the bargain my sins were forgiven. A sounder man than I was told off to reply to the attacks I had drawn down on our heads; to explain away what could not be retracted; and to carry the out of the fire. And I had nothing worse to bear than an outburst of imprecations which let off the steam and broke no one's bones.

All the employés of the journal did not come off so well when hot water was about; and some ran rough risks: as, for instance, that poor fellow who brought in either a wrong or an unpleasant message I forget which at whose head Mr. Dundas hurled his heavy metal office−inkstand. The man ducked in time; but the door was cut and indented where the sharp edge had struck, and blackened by a stream of ink from the centre panel to the floor. Mr. Dundas showed me the place with a peal of laughter and a volley of oaths, in no wise disconcerted by this narrow escape from committing murder. He made it up to the man with a couple of sovereigns; and when the door had been scraped and re−varnished, no more was heard of the matter. The men in the office were used to his ways, and dodged him when he let fly waiting till the dangerous fit was over. All forgave his violence some because they really loved him, and some because he paid them handsomely for their bruises.

Mr. Dundas was a bad writer and a poor classic, and not especially well−informed on any subject; but after Delane he was the best constructive as well as administrative editor of his time, and knew how to choose his staff and apportion his material with a discrimination that was almost like another sense. He was indefatigable in his office, and finally broke down his iron constitution by sheer hard work. What made the pity of it was, that this hard work was often more superfluous than necessary. But this minute attention to details was his point of honour, and he would not be beaten off it. He used to wait at the office till the first sheet was printed off till five in the morning and often he was so exhausted that he had to be almost carried down the stairs.

For all his violent temper and frightful language, he was able to dominate himself with certain of his staff two of whom are especially in my mind. They were men of very different calibre and standing. One was the publisher of the paper an extremely timid man, who looked as if he would have died outright had he been brutalized in any way; but he remained in absolute peace with Mr. Dundas all the time the lasted, and moved with him to those other offices where the great weekly paper was established; and the other was his co−editor a sensitive, refined, cultured scholar, whose pride of gentlehood would not have brooked affront nor submitted to insolence. To neither of these, so different as they were but each so valuable, did Mr. Dundas ever go beyond the nicest line of moderation; and the last, like the first, held with him to the end, and finally took the sole charge of that sharp−tongued Weekly, when the fiery spirit which had first ruled it was laid to rest under that melancholy monument on the Cornish coast he loved so well.

To me, younger and in some sort defenceless, I confess he was at times exceedingly brutal, though he was substantially kind and did what he could to give me work. But his oaths used to curdle my blood; his violence was at times appalling; and once he forgot himself so far as to shake his fist in my face. That was when trouble had come between us; and it may be easily understood that this day saw my last visit to the office. It was the rift which was never mended.

But this furiousness was his habit. He forgot himself in the same way even with ladies witness that well−known scene, when he ran along the platform as the train was moving out of the station, cursing and swearing with all his might at the women he then loved best in the world, because they would not do something he wished.

All the same, he had his grand good points. He was generous and affectionate; utterly devoid of all treacherous instincts; and he bore no malice. He was brutal, if you will; but the core of him was sound; and his fidelity to his friends was very beautiful. With so much that can be said less than laudatory of this fierce Boanerges of the press, it is pleasant to record that which makes for his renown and claims our more tender memories.

I remember two notable crowds in which I found myself in these early days. One was when my old friends the Chartists marched through London twenty thousand strong, and I followed not as a special constable. And the other was when Baron Rothschild addressed the people from the balcony on the day of his futile election. He began his speech by these words:

'I stand here by the will of the people.'

From the dead silence of the dense throng rose a voice clear and strong:

'So stood Barabbas!'

But, Barabbas notwithstanding, after a fight of years the Jews won the day; as the Roman Catholics had won theirs before them; and as Agnosticism will also win in the near future.

At this time I went much into society. My social place was that which naturally belongs to a youngster of good birth, who, if he has not quite won his spurs, may yet some day do great things who knows? and who has good names at his back. The tower of strength my grandfather the Bishop and my uncle the Dean were to me! What humiliating snobs we are! I became ac− quainted with a few of the leaders of thought already established, and some who were still preparing for the time when they too should lead and no longer follow. Among others, I fell in with that notorious group of Free−lovers, whose ultimate transaction was the most notable example of matrimony void of contract of our day. But though those who floated on the crest of the wave, and whose informal union came to be regarded as a moral merit even by the strait−laced, had the more genius and the better luck, he who made personal shipwreck, and from whose permitted trespass the whole thing started, had the nobler nature, the more faithful heart, the more constant mind, and was in every way the braver and the truer man. The one whom society set itself to honour, partly because of the transcendent genius of his companion, partly because of his own brilliancy and facility, was less solid than specious. The other whom all men, not knowing him, reviled, was a moral hero. The former betrayed his own principles when he made capital out of his 'desecrated hearth' and bewildered society by setting afloat ingenious stories of impossible ceremonies which had made his informal union in a certain sense sacramental, so that he might fill his rooms with 'names' and make his Sundays days of illustrious reception. The latter accepted his position without explanation or complaint, and was faithful to his flag, indifferent to selfish gain or social loss. And whether that flag embodied a right principle or a wrong, his steadfastness was equally admirable, and the constancy which could not be warped for loss or gain was equally heroic.

It must never be forgotten too that he who afterwards posed as the fond husband betrayed by the trusted friend, was, in the days when I first knew them all, the most pronounced Free−lover of the group, and openly took for himself the liberty he expressly sanctioned in his wife. As little as he could go into the Divorce Court for his personal relief, because of that condonation and his own unclean hands, so little did he deserve the sympathy of society for the transfer which afterwards he put forward as his own justification and that friend's condemnation.

This I say with absolute knowledge of the whole series of facts, from the beginning. And I say it for sake of the truth and in the interests of justice though it be but justice to the dead.

At the time when I first knew these people they were living in a kind of family communion that was very remarkable. Sisters and cousins and brothers some of the women married and with yearly increasing families, to which they devoted themselves; others single, and of general domestic utility all round clubbed together their individually thin resources, and made a kind of family Agapemone which had its charm and its romance. Among them were some who practised no divergence in their own lives, and allowed of none in theory: such as Samuel Lawrence, who was then vainly giving his strength to discover the Venetian method of colouring; and that handsome Egyptologist, George Gliddon, who might have thrown his handkerchief where he would, but who was true to his first love, and married her when her youth and beauty had long since gone, and only her truth and her

lovely nature remained. These and some others went with the broad current of ordinary morality. But also there were, as I have said, certain Free−lovers mingled with the orthodox rest; and of these the most remarkable was that faithful and lovable man, that generous and patient, loyal and devoted friend, of whom I have just spoken, and whose individuality many still living will recognise.

I also became as intimate as a son with a father with the most famous poet−scholar of our generation; the 'old man eloquent,' whose mind was more Greek than English, and whose hatred of political tyranny on the one side, was balanced by his aristocratic exclusiveness and personal pride on the other. He was of some use to me in helping me to polish my style; and he indoctrinated me with an enduring horror of slang. But the crowning misfortune of my character, intractibility, which has marred so much of my life, prevented my gaining as much as I might by his lessons. I could accept only such things as commended themselves to my own judgment. I could not accept them simply on authority even his. I therefore profited intellectually by this friendship less than I should have done had my mind been more plastic and more apt to subordination. But I gained all the same.

I always look back to the times when I visited Mr. Landor as the most valuable for lessons in self−control. I reverenced him so deeply and loved him so tenderly, and the difference between our ages was so great, that I should as little have thought of contradicting him as I should have thought of irritating a lion. If I did not accept all he said, I never presumed to oppose him; and his fiery temper subdued mine by the very force of my own love and respect. Had he declared that the stars shone at mid−day, I would have answered: 'Yes, dear father, they do;' and he would have returned, with his sweet smile: 'My good Christopher! my good son!' Thus his temper, notoriously short in tether and leonine in its wrath as it was, was never once ruffled during the whole of our thirteen years of close and constant friendship; and the self−control I was obliged to exercise was of incalculable service to me.

The affection between Mr. Landor and myself was very true and deep, and it began at first sight and through my own enthusiasm. His 'Imaginary Conversations' was one of my most cherished books. Edwin gave it to me when he came of age, and I loved it better than all else I had save Adeline Dalrymple's 'Shelley.' When I was introduced to an ill−dressed and yet striking−looking old man with unbrushed apple−pie boots; a plain shirt−front, like a night−gown, not a shirt; a wisp of faded blue for all kerchief round his neck; his snuff−coloured clothes rumpled and dusty but an old man with a face full of the majesty of thought, with a compressed mouth capable of the sweetest tenderness, and an air of mental grandeur all through, and was told that he was Mr. Landor **WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR** I broke out into an ardent exclamation of joy, and showed such boyish delight as pleased him, and, in a sense, took his heart by storm.

'And who is this young fellow, who cares so much for an old man?' he said, holding my hand, and perhaps not understanding what joy it was to me to see in the flesh one of the great gods of my intellectual world.

From that hour the thing was done. I became to him like his own son, and he was my father. And as he loved me in that I was his child as well as his scholar and loved my love for him as much as he took interest in my professional career and as we agreed in our abstract politics, and harmonized in our hatred of tyrants we got on together, as I say, with perfect accord to the surprise of everyone who knew my dear father−friend's peculiarities of impatience and my own natural indocility.

If some marvelled, others envied. Among these latter was John Forster that literary Ghebir who worshipped all the suns that shone, and grudged that any but himself should bask in their rays. He never forgave me my intimacy with the Samson who had already generously endowed him with the copyright of his books, and whose kindness, he was afraid, would be diverted to me. Probably he thought I was as self−seeking as himself. In the days to come he made me feel his enmity; and of all the queer things in my strange life, one of the queerest is the determination with which he, first, and then subsequent biographers of Mr. Landor, have agreed to ignore my friendship with him. This grudgingness has gone on to the end; and I was deprived of his bequest to me on a plea which was either a false pretence, or an act of selfishness.

In this fair city of palaces, where my dear 'father−friend' had made his home, lived a clever old lady who had once been a schoolmistress and had written a very pretty little story. She was cleverer than her works; seeming to need the friction of conversation to bring out her own latent fire. She was a picturesque old lady, and always dressed in very light, soft grey with a profusion of white lace. After seventy, she said, all women should dress in light grey and wear much white lace; so, giving the sense of freshness and cleanliness. After fifty and before seventy they ought to wear black. She was a great friend of Mr. Landor's; but she one day offended his susceptibilities, and he broke with her, never to renew his acquaintance. Courteous as he was to women taking them downstairs and standing bareheaded by the door of their carriages, according to the manners of the old school, and of Italy he could be as vehement to them as to men when he was offended; and to affront him once was to lose him for ever.

My first friend in the city was that learned and fastidious Dr. Devise, who had read too much for any good work of his own to be possible. He had, as it were, smothered his originality by the enormous mass of other men's thoughts with which he had loaded his brain. He was intent on writing a book which should demolish all religious superstition; and he had already been many years about it. The first chapter only was finished. This he had had printed as a 'brick,' for private circulation. I cannot say that I was impressed by it. Seeking to be comprehensive, it was wire−drawn and diluted. It read like a list of synonyms, or a catalogue of intellectual processes and in the matter of literary style it was singularly poor.

Dr. Devise was a man who had extreme fascination for some people. One of our greatest celebrities, when in the Ugly Duck stage of her existence and before she had joined her kindred Swans, had wanted to dedicate her life to him. But too many other feminine interests were already established to allow of the introduction of an outsider; and the friendship came to a stormy end, after a more than ordinarily ardent beginning. His house was my first sojourning place in Bath; but I annoyed him too, by my confessed preference for the 'Father'; and I fear he thought me both ungrateful and a fool.

Anyhow, he gave me one of those moral shocks which are the birth−hours of new experience to youth, when, one day, he gently chid me for loving Mr. Landor better than I loved him. Still gentle, but cynical as well as half−compassionate, he went on to remind me that Mr. Landor had no money to leave; that he had even given the copyright of his works to John Forster as I already knew and that his very pictures, of which he was so proud, were for the most part rubbish.

I never forgave this insinuation. And it did not mend matters when he spoke of his own ampler means, and how he was able both to leave his family well provided for and to remember congenial outsiders into the bargain. I never cared for him after this. At no time of my life have I been self−seeking in friendship; and legacies have come into my calculations as little as the chance of a peerage or an offer of the Garter. And if this be so now, when I have learned the value of money, what was it then, when I was still too young and impulsive to calculate or foresee anything whatever? For all his learning and hospitality and undoubted qualities, there was ever in my mind after this a repugnance to Dr. Devise which lasted to the end.

But I liked his cheerful, patient, blind wife, with her graceful little courtesies, pretty flatteries, and craving for sympathy. And her energetic sister−in−law, with her strong brain and heart of purest gold, was 'Aunt Susan' to me, as she was to some others. She was a passionate propagandist of freethought, and was never so happy as when giving away the small tracts and bigger books which were her artillery against the strongholds of superstition. Mr. Scott, of Ramsgate, found her a valuable auxiliary; and she welcomed every new light with almost youthful enthusiasm. She was one of the bravest of the morally brave; for she suffered keenly from that kind of local ostracism, consequent on her unorthodox opinions, which in a manner isolated her and reduced her society to a few fit, if you will, but few all the same. Yet she never relaxed her propagandism, which was as much part of her philanthropy as was her more direct benevolence in the matters of food and flannel; and she dug her own social grave unflinchingly, if with some sighs and not a few heart−aches.

Dr. Devise's soft−voiced, fair−skinned daughter was also one of my chosen friends at this time. Her charm lay in her marvellous power of sympathy and almost godlike strength of consolation. She was like a younger daughter of Demeter, in whose soft white arms the troubled might lie and be at rest. In my own dark hour, which came upon me a little later, she was of divine and infinite consolation. And others found in her the exquisite charm that was so patent and potent to me.

A kind of outlying member of this remarkable group was a certain refined and thoughtful man who was in those days the ideal poet and student as he is now the ideal scholar and philosopher. He was of all the men known to me one of the most graceful in mind, most cultivated in intellect, most modest in bearing, most accurate in learning, and of the purest kind of morale incarnate in human form. He was then in Orders. Subsequently he broke his chains and came out into freedom and the light.

There were also two learned sisters who lived near my doctor friend, and carried to him a chilly worship like incense smouldering in a censer of ice. They awed me by their fearful superiority. They were women who had the most extraordinary power of dwarfing all other pretensions and degrading you both in your own esteem and in the eyes of others. And they used this power unsparingly. They had not lived down the softer follies and tender frailties of youth, for they had never had any to live down, being of the tribe of the 'unco' guid' the 'prigs in petticoats' from the beginning. Self−centred, bloodless, intellectual, sarcastic, unemotional, they had no sympathy with the sorrows which sprung from passion and no compassion for failure. They were like a couple of old Egyptian goddesses shot through with Voltaire Pasht for the one, the Sphinx for the other while behind the mask of each peered the keen satirical and mocking face of the author of 'Candide.' They thought me abominable, and I thought them dreadful; and there was always war between us, such as Tieck or Hoffmann would have made between a couple of Ice−maidens and the Fire−king.

Here, I made the acquaintance of Mr. Empson, that pre−historic æsthete who did his best to create a taste for minor ornamentation by skilfully combined and original adaptations, and whose bric−à−brac shop was a favourite lounge with the best people in Bath. My dear old 'father' was frequently there, and I with him. Mr. Empson was eager for lengths of old brocades with which to line the covers of his more valuable books, or to drape as curtains about his statuettes. He was wonderfully sleek and silky in his manners; but I saw the reverse of the polished medal when, one day, he turned on me with a sudden outburst of astounding ferocity, because I compassionated him for some rheumatic ailment of which he complained.

'How can you, a strong young fellow in the beautiful morning of life, care for what an old man like me suffers? I hate humbug!' he said savagely.

On which I fired up and told him that he was both impolite and inhuman, and that he had no right to question my sincerity unless he had found me already less than honest. But these sleek, silky, smooth−mannered people are so often savage when touched beneath the skin!

Then I knew the charming family of that delightful Irish actor who went down in the ill−fated *President*. The mother had a mania for birds and small dogs, and the girls were among the prettiest in Bath. They were of three distinct types 'petillante,' statuesque, elfin Rosina, Galatea, Fenella; and each was perfect in her kind.

There was also one man of whom I will only say that I thought him then, and I think him now, one of the Best I have ever known one of those who make the honour of their generation, and who help to keep society sweet and pure, because entirely governed by principle. With him it was religious principle, which he translated into practical and vital morals. He and my brother Godfrey stand side by side under the measuring standard of human worth. The one has touched the heights by faith, the other by honour. The one has learned self−command by obedience, the other by self−respect. Neither could commit a dishonourable action, were the noose knotted and life to be the forfeit; but the one would gather his strength from religion, the other from heroism the one would die with the fervour of a martyr, the other with the fortitude of a Stoic.

All the same, differences of method notwithstanding, they stand shoulder to shoulder on the green plot of human nobleness; and no one can say that the one is higher than the other the one better or braver or stronger than the other. They have come to the same point by different roads; and the modes of faith for which graceless zealots fight are emphatically of no account with such as these, whose lives are so eminently in the right.

END OF VOL. I.