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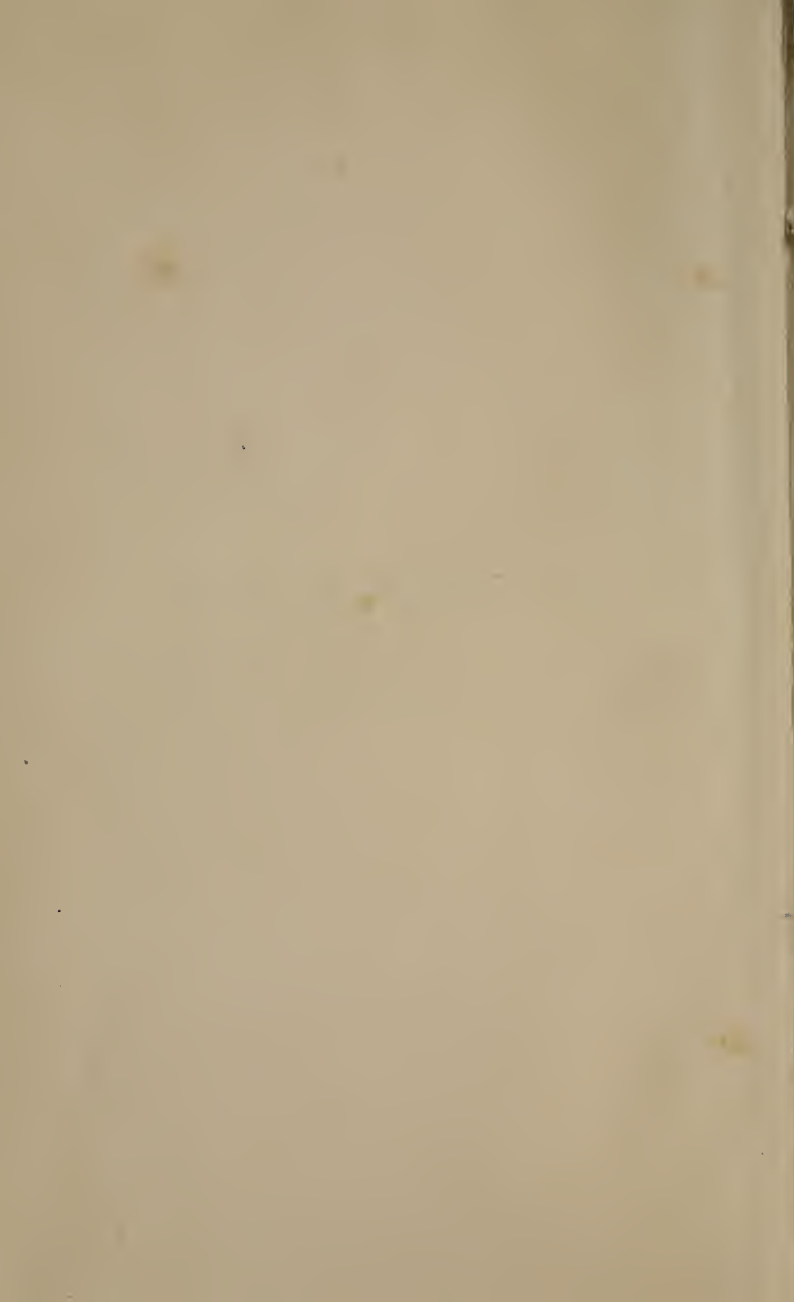
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ROBERT FALCONER.

VOL. III.



# ROBERT FALCONER

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

“ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN,”

“DAVID ELGINBROD,”

&c., &c.

Countrymen.

My heart doth joy that yet, in all my life,  
I found no man but he was true to me.

BRUTUS in *Julius Cæsar*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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OF  
THE THIRD VOLUME.

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# ROBERT FALCONER.

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## PART III.—HIS MANHOOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### IN THE DESERT.

A LIFE lay behind Robert Falconer, and a life lay before him. He stood on a shoal between.

The life behind him was in its grave. He had covered it over and turned away. But he knew it would rise at night.

The life before him was not yet born; and what should issue from that dull ghastly unrevealing fog on the horizon, he did not care. Thither the tide setting eastward would carry him, and his future must be born. All he cared about was to leave the empty garments of his dead behind him—the sky and the fields, the houses and the gardens which those dead had made alive with

their presence. Travel, motion, ever on, ever away, was the sole impulse in his heart. Nor had the thought of finding his father any share in his restlessness.

He told his grandmother that he was going back to Aberdeen. She looked in his face with surprise, but seeing trouble there, asked no questions. As if walking in a dream, he found himself at Dr. Anderson's door.

"Why, Robert," said the good man, "what has brought you back? Ah! I see. Poor Ericson! I am very sorry, my boy. What can I do for you?"

"I can't go on with my studies now, sir," answered Robert. "I have taken a great longing for travel. Will you give me a little money and let me go?"

"To be sure I will. Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know. Perhaps as I go I shall find myself wanting to go somewhere. You're not afraid to trust me, are you, sir?"

"Not in the least, Robert. I trust you perfectly. You shall do just as you please.—Have you any idea how much money you will want?"

"No. Give me what you are willing I should spend: I will go by that."

"Come along to the bank then. I will give you enough to start with. Write at once when you want more. Don't be too saving. Enjoy



yourself as well as you can. I shall not grudge it."

Robert smiled a wan smile at the idea of enjoying himself. His friend saw it, but let it pass. There was no good in persuading a man whose grief was all he had left, that he must ere long part with that too. That would have been in lowest deeps of sorrow to open a yet lower deep of horror. But Robert would have refused, and would have been right in refusing to believe with regard to himself what might be true in regard to most men. He might rise above his grief; he might learn to contain his grief; but lose it, forget it?—never.

He went to bid Shargar farewell. As soon as he had a glimpse of what his friend meant, he burst out in an agony of supplication.

"Tak me wi' ye, Robert," he cried. "Ye're a gentleman noo. I'll be yer man. I'll put on a livery coat, an' gang wi' ye. I'll awa' to Dr. Anderson. He's sure to lat me gang."

"No, Shargar," said Robert, "I can't have you with me. I've come into trouble, Shargar, and I must fight it out alone."

"Ay, ay; I ken. Puir Mr. Ericson!"

"There's nothing the matter with Mr. Ericson. Don't ask me any questions. I've said more to you now than I've said to anybody besides."

"That *is* guid o' you, Robert. But am I never to see ye again?"

“I don’t know. Perhaps we may meet some day.”

“*Perhaps* is nae muckle to say, Robert,” protested Shargar.

“It’s more than can be said about everything, Shargar,” returned Robert, sadly.

“Weel, I maun jist tak it as ’t comes,” said Shargar, with a despairing philosophy derived from the days when his mother thrashed him. “But, eh! Robert, gin it had only pleased the Almichty to sen’ me into the warl’ in a some respectable kin’ o’ a fashion!”

“Wi’ a chance a’ gaein’ about the country like that curst villain yer brither, I suppose?” retorted Robert, rousing himself for a moment.

“Na, na,” responded Shargar. “I’ll stick to my ain mither. *She* never learned *me* sic tricks.”

“Do ye that. Ye canna compleen o’ God. It’s a’ richt as far ’s ye’re concerned. Gin he dinna mak something o’ ye yet, it’ll be *your* wyte, no his, I’m thinkin’.”

They walked to Dr. Anderson’s together, and spent the night there. In the morning Robert got on the coach for Edinburgh.

I cannot, if I would, follow him on his travels. Only at times, when the conversation rose in the dead of night, by some Jacob’s ladder of blessed ascent, into regions where the heart of such a man could open as in its own natural clime, would a few words cause the clouds that envel-

oped this period of his history to dispart, and grant me a peep into the phantasm of his past. I suspect, however, that much of it left upon his mind no recallable impressions. I suspect that much of it looked to himself in the retrospect like a painful dream, with only certain objects and occurrences standing prominent enough to clear the moonlight mist enwrapping the rest.

What the precise nature of his misery was I shall not even attempt to conjecture. That would be to intrude within the holy place of a human heart. One thing alone I will venture to affirm—that bitterness against either of his friends, whose spirits rushed together and left his outside, had no place in that noble nature. His fate lay behind him, like the birth of Shargar, like the death of Ericson, a decree.

I do not even know in what direction he first went. That he had seen many cities and many countries was apparent from glimpses of ancient streets, of mountain-marvels, of strange constellations, of things in heaven and earth which no one could have seen but himself, called up by the magic of his words. A silent man in company, he talked much when his hour of speech arrived. Seldom, however, did he narrate any incident save in connection with some truth of human nature, or fact of the universe.

I do know that the first thing he always

did on reaching any new place was to visit the church with the loftiest spire; but he never looked into the church itself until he had left the earth behind him as far as that church would afford him the possibility of ascent. Breathing the air of its highest region, he found himself vaguely strengthened, yes comforted. One peculiar feeling he had, into which I could enter only upon happy occasion, of the presence of God in the wind. He said the wind up there on the heights of human aspiration always made him long and pray. Asking him one day something about his going to church so seldom, he answered thus :

“My dear boy, it does me ten times more good to get outside the spire than to go inside the church. The spire is the most essential, and consequently the most neglected part of the building. It symbolizes the aspiration without which no man’s faith can hold its own. But the effort of too many of her priests goes to conceal from the worshippers the fact that there is such a stair, with a door to it out of the church. It looks as if they feared their people would desert them for heaven. But I presume it arises generally from the fact that they know of such an ascent themselves, only by hearsay. The knowledge of God is good, but the church is better!”

“Could it be,” I ventured to suggest, “that,

in order to ascend, they must put off the priests' garments?"

"Good, my boy!" he answered. "All are priests up there, and must be clothed in fine linen, clean and white—the righteousness of saints—not the imputed righteousness of another,—that is a lying doctrine—but their own righteousness which God has wrought in them by Christ."

I never knew a man in whom the inward was so constantly clothed upon by the outward, whose ordinary habits were so symbolic of his spiritual tastes, or whose enjoyment of the sight of his eyes and the hearing of his ears was so much informed by his highest feelings. He regarded all human affairs from the heights of religion, as from their church-spires he looked down on the red roofs of Antwerp, on the black roofs of Cologne, on the gray roofs of Strasburg, or on the brown roofs of Basel—uplifted for the time above them, not in dissociation from them.

On the base of the missing twin-spire at Strasburg, high over the roof of the church, stands a little cottage—how strange its white muslin window-curtains look up there! To the day of his death he cherished the fancy of writing a book in that cottage, with the grand city to which London looks a modern mushroom, its thousand roofs with row upon row of win-

dows in them—often five garret stories, one above the other, and its thickets of multiform chimneys, the thrones and procreant cradles of the storks, marvellous in history, habit, and dignity—all below him.

He was taken ill at Valence, and lay there for a fortnight, oppressed with some kind of low fever. One night he awoke from a refreshing sleep, but could not sleep again. It seemed to him afterwards as if he had lain waiting for something. Anyhow something came. As it were a faint musical rain had invaded his hearing; but the night was clear, for the moon was shining on his window-blind. The sound came nearer, and revealed itself a delicate tinkling of bells. It drew nearer still and nearer, growing in sweet fulness as it came, till at length a slow torrent of tinklings went past his window in the street below. It was the flow of a thousand little currents of sound, a gliding of silvery threads, like the talking of water-ripples against the side of a barge in a slow canal—all as soft as the moonlight, as exquisite as an odour, each sound tenderly truncated and dull. A great multitude of sheep was shifting its quarters in the night, whence and whither and why he never knew. To his heart they were the messengers of the Most High. For into that heart, soothed and attuned by their thin harmony, not on the wind that floated without breaking their



lovely message, but on the ripples of the wind that bloweth where it listeth, came the words, unlooked for, their coming unheralded by any mental premonition, "My peace I give unto you." The sounds died slowly away in the distance, fainting out of the air, even as they had grown upon it, but the words remained.

In a few moments he was fast asleep, comforted by pleasure into repose; his dreams were of gentle self-consoling griefs; and when he awoke in the morning—"My peace I give unto you," was the first thought of which he was conscious. It may be that the sound of the sheep-bells made him think of the shepherds that watched their flocks by night, and they of the multitude of the heavenly host, and they of the song—"On earth peace": I do not know. The important point is not how the words came, but that the words remained—remained until he understood them, and they became to him spirit and life.

He soon recovered strength sufficiently to set out again upon his travels, great part of which he performed on foot. In this way he reached Avignon. Passing from one of its narrow streets into an open place in the midst, all at once he beheld, towering above him, on a height that overlooked the whole city and surrounding country, a great crucifix. The form of the Lord of Life still hung in the face of heaven and

earth. He bowed his head involuntarily. No matter that when he drew nearer the power of it vanished. The memory of it remained with its first impression, and it had a share in what followed.

He made his way eastward towards the Alps. As he walked one day about noon over a desolate heath-covered height, reminding him not a little of the country of his childhood, the silence seized upon him. In the midst of the silence arose the crucifix, and once more the words which had often returned upon him sounded in the ears of the inner hearing, "My peace I give unto you." They were words he had known from the earliest memorial time. He had heard them in infancy, in childhood, in boyhood, in youth: now first in manhood it flashed upon him that the Lord did really mean that the peace of his soul should be the peace of their souls; that the peace wherewith his own soul was quiet, the peace at the very heart of the universe, was henceforth theirs—open to them, to all the world, to enter and be still. He fell upon his knees, bowed down in the birth of a great hope, held up his hands towards heaven, and cried, "Lord Christ, give me thy peace."

He said no more, but rose, caught up his stick, and strode forward, thinking.

He had learned what the sentence meant; what that was of which it spoke he had not yet



learned. The peace he had once sought, the peace that lay in the smiles and tenderness of a woman, had "overcome him like a summer cloud," and had passed away. There was surely a deeper, a wider, a grander peace for him than that, if indeed it was the same peace wherewith the king of men regarded his approaching end, that he had left as a heritage to his brothers. Suddenly he was aware that the earth had begun to live again. The hum of insects arose from the heath around him; the odour of its flowers entered his dulled sense; the wind kissed him on the forehead; the sky domed up over his head; and the clouds veiled the distant mountain tops like the smoke of incense ascending from the altars of the worshipping earth. All nature began to minister to one who had begun to lift his head from the baptism of fire. He had thought that Nature could never more be anything to him; and she was waiting on him like a mother. The next moment he was offended with himself for receiving ministrations the reaction of whose loveliness might no longer gather around the form of Mary St. John. Every wavelet of scent, every toss of a flower's head in the breeze, came with a sting in its pleasure—for there was no woman to whom they belonged. Yet he could not shut them out, for God and not woman is the heart of the universe. Would the day ever come when the

loveliness of Mary St. John, felt and acknowledged as never before, would be even to him a joy and a thanksgiving? If ever, then because God is the heart of all.

I do not think this mood, wherein all forms of beauty sped to his soul as to their own needful centre, could have lasted over many miles of his journey. But such delicate inward revelations are none the less precious that they are evanescent. Many feelings are simply too good to last—using the phrase not in the unbelieving sense in which it is generally used, expressing the conviction that God is a hard father, fond of disappointing his children, but to express the fact that intensity and endurance cannot yet coexist in the human economy. But the virtue of a mood depends by no means on its immediate presence. Like any other experience, it may be believed in, and, in the absence which leaves the mind free to contemplate it, work even more good than in its presence.

At length he came in sight of the Alpine regions. Far off, the heads of the great mountains rose into the upper countries of cloud, where the snows settled on their stony heads, and the torrents ran out from beneath the frozen mass to gladden the earth below with the faith of the lonely hills. The mighty creatures lay like grotesque animals of a far-off titanic time, whose dead bodies had been first withered into

stone, then worn away by the storms, and covered with shrouds and palls of snow, till the outlines of their forms were gone, and only rough shapes remained like those just blocked out in the sculptor's marble, vaguely suggesting what the creatures had been, as the corpse under the sheet of death is like a man. He came amongst the valleys at their feet, with their blue-green waters hurrying seawards—from stony heights of air into the mass of “the restless wavy plain;” with their sides of rock rising in gigantic terrace after terrace up to the heavens; with their scaling pines, erect and slight, cone-head aspiring above cone-head, ambitious to clothe the bare mass with green, till failing at length in their upward efforts, the savage rock shot away and beyond and above them, the white and blue glaciers clinging cold and cruel to their ragged sides, and the dead blank of whiteness covering their final despair. He drew near to the lower glaciers, to find their awful abysses tremulous with liquid blue, a blue tender and profound as if fed from the reservoir of some hidden sky intenser than ours; he rejoiced over the velvety fields dotted with the toy-like houses of the mountaineers; he sat for hours listening by the side of their streams; he grew weary, felt oppressed, longed for a wider outlook, and began to climb towards a mountain village of which he had heard from a

traveller, to find solitude and freedom in an air as lofty as if he climbed twelve of his beloved cathedral spires piled up in continuous ascent.

After ascending for hours in zigzags through pine woods, where the only sound was of the little streams trotting down to the valley below, or the distant hush of some thin waterfall, he reached a level, and came out of the woods. The path now led along the edge of a precipice descending sheer to the uppermost terrace of the valley he had left. The valley was but a cleft in the mass of the mountain: a little way over sank its other wall, steep as a plumb-line could have made it, of solid rock. On his right lay green fields of clover and strange grasses. Ever and anon from the cleft steamed up great blinding clouds of mist, which now wandered about over the nations of rocks on the mountain side beyond the gulf, now wrapt himself in their bewildering folds. In one moment the whole creation had vanished, and there seemed scarce existence enough left for more than the following footstep; the next, a mighty mountain stood in front, crowned with blinding snow, an awful fact; the lovely heavens were over his head, and the green sod under his feet; the grasshoppers chirped about him, and the gorgeous butterflies flew. From regions far beyond came the bells of the kine and the goats. He reached a little inn, and there took up his quarters.

I am able to be a little minute in my description, because I have since visited the place myself. Great heights rise around it on all sides. It stands as between heaven and hell, suspended between peaks and gulfs. The wind must roar awfully there in the winter; but the mountains stand away with their avalanches, and all the summer long keep the cold off the grassy fields.

The same evening, he was already weary. The next morning it rained. It rained fiercely all day. He would leave the place on the morrow. In the evening it began to clear up. He walked out. The sun was setting. The snow-peaks were faintly tinged with rose, and the ragged masses of vapour that hung lazy and leaden-coloured about the sides of the abyss, were partially dyed a sulky orange red. Then all faded into gray. But as the sunlight vanished, a veil sank from the face of the moon, already halfway to the zenith, and she gathered courage and shone, till the mountain looked lovely as a ghost in the gleam of its snow and the glimmer of its glaciers. "Ah!" thought Falconer, "such a peace at last is all a man can look for—the repose of a spectral Elysium, a world where passion has died away, and only the dim ghost of its memory returns to disturb with a shadowy sorrow the helpless content of its undreaming years. The religion that can do but this much is not a very great or very divine thing. The

human heart cannot invent a better it may be, but it can imagine grander results.

He did not yet know what the religion was of which he spoke. As well might a man born stone-deaf estimate the power of sweet sounds, or he who knows not a square from a circle pronounce upon the study of mathematics.

The next morning rose brilliant—an ideal summer day. He would not go yet: he would spend one day more in the place. He opened his valise to get some lighter garments. His eye fell on a New Testament. Dr. Anderson had put it there. He had never opened it yet, and now he let it lie. Its time had not yet come. He went out.

Walking up the edge of the valley, he came upon a little stream whose talk he had heard for some hundred yards. It flowed through a grassy hollow, with steeply sloping sides. Water is the same all the world over; but there was more than water here to bring his childhood back to Falconer. For at the spot where the path led him down to the *burn*, a little crag stood out from the bank,—a gray stone like many he knew on the stream that watered the valley of Rothieden: on the top of the stone grew a little heather; and beside it, bending towards the water, was a silver birch. He sat down on the foot of the rock, shut in by the high grassy banks from the gaze of the awful



mountains. The sole unrest was the run of the water beside him, and it sounded so homely, that he began to jabber Scotch to it. He forgot that this stream was born in the clouds, far up where that peak rose into the air behind him; he did not know that a couple of hundred yards from where he sat, it tumbled headlong into the valley below: with his country's birch-tree beside him, and the rock crowned with its tuft of heather over his head, the quiet as of a Sabbath afternoon fell upon him—that quiet which is the one altogether lovely thing in the Scotch Sabbath—and once more the words arose in his mind, "My peace I give unto you."

Now he fell a thinking what this peace could be. And it came into his mind as he thought, that Jesus had spoken in another place about giving rest to those that came to him, while here he spoke about "*my* peace." Could this *my* mean a certain *kind* of peace that the Lord himself possessed? Perhaps it was in virtue of that peace, whatever it was, that he was the Prince of Peace. Whatever peace he had must be the highest and best peace—therefore the one peace for a man to seek, if indeed, as the words of the Lord seemed to imply, a man was capable of possessing it. He remembered the New Testament in his box, and, resolving to try whether he could not make something more out of it, went back to the inn quieter in heart than

since he left his home. In the evening he returned to the brook, and fell to searching the story, seeking after the peace of Jesus.

He found that the whole passage stood thus:—

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

He did not leave the place for six weeks. Every day he went to the burn, as he called it, with his New Testament; every day tried yet again to make out something more of what the Saviour meant. By the end of the month it had dawned upon him, he hardly knew how, that the peace of Jesus (although, of course, he could not know what it was like till he had it) must have been a peace that came from the doing of the will of his Father. From the account he gave of the discoveries he then made, I venture to represent them in the driest and most exact form that I can find they will admit of. When I use the word *discoveries*, I need hardly say that I use it with reference to Falconer and his previous knowledge. They were these:—that Jesus taught—

First,—That a man’s business is to do the will of God:

Second,—That God takes upon himself the care of the man:



Third,—Therefore, that a man must never be afraid of anything; and so,

Fourth,—be left free to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself.

But one day, his thoughts having cleared themselves a little upon these points, a new set of questions arose with sudden inundation—comprised in these two :—

“How can I tell for certain that there ever was such a man? How am I to be sure that such as he says is the mind of the maker of these glaciers and butterflies?”

All this time he was in the wilderness as much as Moses at the back of Horeb, or St. Paul when he vanishes in Arabia; and he did nothing but read the four gospels and ponder over them. Therefore it is not surprising that he should have already become so familiar with the gospel story, that the moment these questions appeared, the following words should dart to the forefront of his consciousness to meet them :—

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Here was a word of Jesus himself, announcing the one means of arriving at a conviction of the truth or falsehood of all that he said, namely, the doing of the will of God by the man who would arrive at such conviction.

The next question naturally was: What is

this will of God of which Jesus speaks? Here he found himself in difficulty. The theology of his grandmother rushed in upon him, threatening to overwhelm him with demands as to feeling and inward action from which his soul turned with sickness and fainting. That they were repulsive to him, that they appeared unreal, and contradictory to the nature around him, was no *proof* that they were not of God. But on the other hand, that they demanded what *seemed* to him unjust,—that these demands were founded on what *seemed* to him untruth attributed to God, on ways of thinking and feeling which are certainly degrading in a man,—these were reasons of the very highest nature for refusing to act upon them so long as, from whatever defects it might be in himself, they bore to him this aspect. He saw that while they appeared to be such, even though it might turn out that he mistook them, to acknowledge them would be to wrong God. But this conclusion left him in no better position for practice than before.

When at length he did see what the will of God was, he wondered, so simple did it appear, that he had failed to discover it at once. Yet not less than a fortnight had he been brooding and pondering over the question, as he wandered up and down that burnside, or sat at the foot of the heather-crowned stone and the silver-

barked birch, when the light began to dawn upon him. It was thus.

In trying to understand the words of Jesus by searching back, as it were, for such thoughts and feelings in him as would account for the words he spoke, the perception awoke that at least he could not have meant by the will of God any such theological utterances as those which troubled him. Next it grew plain that what he came to do, was just to lead his life. That he should do the work, such as recorded, and much besides, that the Father gave him to do—this was the will of God concerning him. With this perception arose the conviction that unto every man whom God had sent into the world, he had given a work to do in that world. He had to lead the life God meant him to lead. The will of God was to be found and done in the world. In seeking a true relation to the world, would he find his relation to God?

The time for action was come.

He rose up from the stone of his meditation, took his staff in his hand, and went down the mountain, not knowing whither he went. And these were some of his thoughts as he went:

“If it was the will of God who made me and her, my will shall not be set against his. I cannot be happy, but I will bow my head and let his waves and his billows go over me. If there is such a God, he knows what a pain I bear.

His will be done. Jesus thought it well that his will should be done to the death. Even if there be no God, it will be grand to be a disciple of such a man, to do as he says, think as he thought—perhaps come to feel as he felt.”

My reader may wonder that one so young should have been able to think so practically—to the one point of action. But he was in earnest, and what lay at the root of his character, at the root of all that he did, felt, and became, was childlike simplicity and purity of nature. If the sins of his father were mercifully visited upon him, so likewise were the grace and loveliness of his mother. And between the two, Falconer had fared well.

As he descended the mountain, the one question was—his calling. With the faintest track to follow, with the clue of a spider’s thread to guide him, he would have known that his business was to set out at once to find, and save his father. But never since the day when the hand of that father smote him, and Mary St. John found him bleeding on the floor, had he heard word or conjecture concerning him. If he were to set out to find him now, it would be to search the earth for one who might have vanished from it years ago. He might as well search the streets of a great city for a lost jewel. When the time came for him to find his father, if such an hour was written in the de-

crees of—I dare not say Fate, for Falconer hated the word—if such was the will of God, some sign would be given him—that is, some hint which he could follow with action. As he thought and thought it became gradually plainer that he must begin his obedience by getting ready for anything that God might require of him. Therefore he must go on learning till the call came.

But he shivered at the thought of returning to Aberdeen. Might he not continue his studies in Germany? Would that not be as good—possibly, from the variety of the experience, better? But how was it to be decided? By submitting the matter to the friend who made either possible. Dr. Anderson had been to him as a father: he would be guided by his pleasure.

He wrote, therefore, to Dr. Anderson, saying that he would return at once if he wished it, but that he would greatly prefer going to a German university for two years. The doctor replied that of course he would rather have him at home, but that he was confident Robert knew best what was best for himself; therefore he had only to settle where he thought proper, and the next summer he would come and see him, for he was not tied to Aberdeen any more than Robert.

## CHAPTER II.

## HOME AGAIN.

FOUR years passed before Falconer returned to his native country, during which period Dr. Anderson had visited him twice, and shown himself well satisfied with his condition and pursuits. The doctor had likewise visited Rothieden, and had comforted the heart of the grandmother with regard to her Robert. From what he learned upon this visit, he had arrived at a true conjecture, I believe, as to the cause of the great change which had suddenly taken place in the youth. But he never asked Robert a question leading in the direction of the grief which he saw the healthy and earnest nature of the youth gradually assimilating into his life. He had too much respect for sorrow to approach it with curiosity. He had learned to put off his shoes when he drew nigh the burning bush of human pain.

Robert had not settled at any of the univer-



sities, but had moved from one to the other as he saw fit, report guiding him to the men who spoke with authority. The time of doubt and anxious questioning was far from over, but the time was long gone by—if in his case it had ever been—when he could be like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed. He had ever one anchor of the soul, and he found that it held—the faith of Jesus (I say the faith of Jesus, not his own faith in Jesus), the truth of Jesus, the life of Jesus. However his intellect might be tossed on the waves of speculation and criticism, he found that the word the Lord had spoken remained steadfast; for in doing righteously, in loving mercy, in walking humbly, the conviction increased that Jesus knew the very secret of human life. Now and then some great vision gleamed across his soul of the working of all things towards a far-off goal of simple obedience to a law of life, which God knew, and which his son had justified through sorrow and pain. Again and again the words of the Master gave him a peep into a region where all was explicable, where all that was crooked might be made straight, where every mountain of wrong might be made low, and every valley of suffering exalted. Ever and again some one of the dark perplexities of humanity began to glimmer with light in its inmost depth. Nor was he without those moments of communion when the

creature is lifted into the secret place of the Creator.

Looking back to the time when it seemed that he cried and was not heard, he saw that God had been hearing, had been answering, all the time; had been making him capable of receiving the gift for which he prayed. He saw that intellectual difficulty encompassing the highest operations of harmonizing truth, can no more affect their reality than the dulness of chaos disprove the motions of the wind of God over the face of its waters. He saw that any true revelation must come out of the unknown in God through the unknown in man. He saw that its truths must rise in the man as powers of life, and that only as that life grows and unfolds can the ever-lagging intellect gain glimpses of partial outlines fading away into the infinite—that, indeed, only in material things and the laws that belong to them, are outlines possible—even there, only in the picture of them which the mind that analyses them makes for itself, not in the things themselves.

At the close of these four years, with his spirit calm and hopeful, truth his passion, and music, which again he had resumed and diligently cultivated, his pleasure, Falconer returned to Aberdeen. He was received by Dr. Anderson as if he had in truth been his own son. In the room stood a tall figure, with its back



towards them, pocketing its handkerchief. The next moment the figure turned, and—could it be?—yes, it was Shargar. Doubt lingered only until he opened his mouth, and said “Eh, Robert!” with which exclamation he threw himself upon him, and after a very undignified fashion began crying heartily. Tall as he was, Robert’s great black head towered above him, and his shoulders were like a rock against which Shargar’s slight figure leaned. He looked down like a compassionate mastiff upon a distressed Italian greyhound. His eyes shimmered with feeling, but Robert’s tears, if he ever shed any, were kept for very solemn occasions. He was more likely to weep for awful joy than for any sufferings either in himself or others. “Shargar!” pronounced in a tone full of a thousand memories, was all the greeting he returned; but his great manly hand pressed Shargar’s delicate long-fingered one with a grasp which must have satisfied his friend that everything was as it had been between them, and that their friendship from henceforth would take a new start. For with all that Robert had seen, thought, and learned, now that the bitterness of loss had gone by, the old times and the old friends were dearer. If there was any truth in the religion of God’s will, in which he was a disciple, every moment of life’s history which had brought soul in contact with soul, must be

sacred as a voice from behind the veil. Therefore he could not now rest until he had gone to see his grandmother.

“Will you come to Rothieden with me, Shargar? I beg your pardon—I oughtn’t to keep up an old nickname,” said Robert, as they sat that evening with the doctor, over a tumbler of toddy.

“If you call me anything else, I’ll cut my throat, Robert, as I told you before. If anyone else does,” he added, laughing, “I’ll cut his throat.”

“Can he go with me, doctor?” asked Robert, turning to their host.

“Certainly. He has not been to Rothieden since he took his degree. He’s an A.M. now, and has distinguished himself besides. You’ll see him in his uniform soon, I hope. Let’s drink his health, Robert. Fill your glass.”

The doctor filled his glass slowly and solemnly. He seldom drank even wine, but this was a rare occasion. He then rose, and with equal slowness, and a tremor in his voice which rendered it impossible to imagine the presence of anything but seriousness, said,

“Robert, my son, let’s drink the health of George Moray, Gentleman. Stand up.”

Robert rose, and in his confusion Shargar rose too, and sat down again, blushing till his red hair looked yellow beside his cheeks. The

men repeated the words, "George Moray, Gentleman," emptied their glasses, and resumed their seats. Shargar rose trembling, and tried in vain to speak. The reason in part was, that he sought to utter himself in English.

"Hoots! Damn English!" he broke out at last. "Gin I be a gentleman, Dr. Anderson and Robert Falconer, it's you twa 'at's made me ane, an' God bless ye, an' I'm yer hoomble servant to a' etairnity."

So saying, Shargar resumed his seat, filled his glass with trembling hand, emptied it to hide his feelings, but without success, rose once more, and retreated to the hall for a space.

The next morning Robert and Shargar got on the coach and went to Rothieden. Robert turned his head aside as they came near the bridge and the old house of Bogbonnie. But, ashamed of his weakness, he turned again and looked at the house. There it stood, all the same,—a thing for the night winds to howl in, and follow each other in mad gambols through its long passages and rooms, so empty from the first that not even a ghost had any reason for going there—a place almost without a history—dreary emblem of so many empty souls that have hidden their talent in a napkin, and have nothing to return for it when the Master calls them. Having looked this one in the face, he felt stronger to meet those other places before

which his heart quailed yet more. He knew that Miss St. John had left soon after Ericson's death: whether he was sorry or glad that he should not see her he could not tell. He thought Rothieden would look like Pompeii, a city buried and disinterred; but when the coach drove into the long straggling street, he found the old love revive, and although the blood rushed back to his heart when Captain Forsyth's house came in view, he did not turn away, but made his eyes, and through them his heart, familiar with its desolation. He got down at the corner, and leaving Shargar to go on to The Boar's Head and look after the luggage, walked into his grandmother's house and straight into her little parlour. She rose with her old stateliness when she saw a stranger enter the room, and stood waiting his address.

"Weel, grannie," said Robert, and took her in his arms.

"The Lord's name be praised!" faltered she. "He's ower guid to the likes o' me."

And she lifted up her voice and wept.

She had been informed of his coming, but she had not expected him till the evening; he was much altered, and old age is slow.

He had hardly placed her in her chair, when Betty came in. If she had shown him respect before, it was reverence now.

"Eh, sir!" she said, "I didna ken it was you,

or I wadna hae come into the room ohn chappit at the door. I'll awa' back to my kitchie."

So saying, she turned to leave the room.

"Hoots! Betty," cried Robert, "dinna be a gowk. Gie's a grip o' yer han'."

Betty stood staring and irresolute, overcome at sight of the manly bulk before her.

"Gin ye dinna behave yersel', Betty, I'll jist awa' ower to Muckledrum, an' hae a caw (*drive*) throu the sessions-buik."

Betty laughed for the first time at the awful threat, and the ice once broken, things returned to somewhat of their old footing.

I must not linger on these days. The next morning Robert paid a visit to Bodyfauld, and found that time had there flowed so gently that it had left but few wrinkles and fewer grey hairs. The fields, too, had little change to show; and the hill was all the same, save that its pines had grown. His chief mission was to John Hewson and his wife. When he left for the continent, he was not so utterly absorbed in his own griefs as to forget Jessie. He told her story to Dr. Anderson, and the good man had gone to see her the same day.

In the evening, when he knew he should find them both at home, he walked into the cottage. They were seated by the fire, with the same pot hanging on the same crook for their supper. They rose, and asked him to sit down, but did

not know him. When he told them who he was, they greeted him warmly, and John Hewson smiled something of the old smile, but only like it, for it had no "rays proportionately delivered" from his mouth over his face.

After a little indifferent chat, Robert said :

"I came through Aberdeen yesterday, John."

At the very mention of Aberdeen, John's head sunk. He gave no answer, but sat looking in the fire. His wife rose and went to the other end of the room, busying herself quietly about the supper. Robert thought it best to plunge into the matter at once.

"I saw Jessie last nicht," he said.

Still there was no reply. John's face had grown hard as a stone face, but Robert thought rather from the determination to govern his feelings than from resentment.

"She's been doin' weel ever sin' syne," he added.

Still no word from either ; and Robert fearing some outburst of indignation ere he had said his say, now made haste.

"She's been a servant wi' Dr. Anderson for four year noo, an' he's sair pleased wi' her. She's a fine woman. But her bairnie's deid, an' that was a sair blow till her."

He heard a sob from the mother, but still John made no sign.

"It was a bonnie bairnie as ever ye saw. It



luikit in her face, she says, as gin it kent a' aboot it, and had only come to help her throu the warst o' 't; for it gaed hame 'maist as sune's ever she was richt able to thank God for sen'in' her sic an angel to lead her to repentance."

"John," said his wife, coming behind his chair, and laying her hand on his shoulder, "what for dinna ye speyk? Ye hear what Maister Faulkner says.—Ye dinna think a thing's clean useless 'cause there may be a spot upo' 't?" she added, wiping her eyes with her apron.

"A spot upo' 't?" cried John, starting to his feet. "What ca' ye a spot?—Wuman, dinna drive me mad to hear ye lichtlie the glory o' virginity."

"That's a' verra weel, John," interposed Robert quietly; "but there was ane thocht as muckle o' 't as ye do, an' wad hae been ashamed to hear ye speak that gait aboot yer ain dauchter."

"I dinna unnerstan' ye," returned Hewson, looking *raised-like* at him.

"Dinna ye ken, man, that amo' them 'at kent the Lord best whan he cam frae haiven to luik efter his ain—to seek and to save, ye ken—amo' them 'at cam roon aboot him to hearken till 'im, was lasses 'at had gane the wrang gait a'thegither,—no like your bonnie Jessie 'at fell but ance. Man, ye're jist like Simon the Pharisee, 'at was sae scunnert at oor Lord 'cause he

loot the wuman 'at was a sinner tak her wull o' 's feet—the feet 'at they war gaein' to tak their wull o' efter anither fashion afore lang. He wad hae shawn her the door—Simon wad—like you, John; but the Lord tuik her pairt. An' lat me tell *you*, John—an' I winna beg yer pardon for sayin' 't, for it's God's trowth—lat me tell *you*, 'at gin ye gang on that gait ye'll be sidin' wi' the Pharisee, an' no wi' oor Lord. Ye may lippen to yer wife, ay, an' to Jessie hersel', that kens better nor eyther o' ye, no to mak little o' virginity. Faith! they think mair o' 't than ye do, I'm thinkin', efter a'; only it's no a thing to say muckle aboot. An' it's no to stan' for a' thing, efter a'."

Silence followed. John sat down again, and buried his face in his hands. At length he murmured from between them :

"The lassie's weel?"

"Ay," answered Robert; and silence followed again.

"What wad ye hae me do?" asked John, lifting his head a little.

"I wad hae ye sen' a kin' word till her. The lassie's hert's jist longin' efter ye. That's a'. And that's no ower muckle."

"'Deed no," assented the mother.

John said nothing. But when his visitor rose he bade him a warm good-night.

When Robert returned to Aberdeen he was



the bearer of such a message as made poor Jessie glad at heart. This was his first experience of the sort.

When he left the cottage, he did not return to the house, but threaded the little forest of pines, climbing the hill till he came out on its bare crown, where nothing grew but heather and blaeberris. There he threw himself down, and gazed into the heavens. The sun was below the horizon; all the dazzle was gone out of the gold, and the roses were fast fading; the downy blue of the sky was trembling into stars over his head; the brown dusk was gathering in the air; and a wind full of gentleness and peace came to him from the west. He let his thoughts go where they would, and they went up into the abyss over his head.

“Lord, come to me,” he cried in his heart, “for I cannot go to thee. If I were to go up and up through that awful space for ages and ages, I should never find thee. Yet there thou art. The tenderness of thy infinitude looks upon me from those heavens. Thou art in them and in me. Because thou thinkest, I think. I am thine—all thine. I abandon myself to thee. Fill me with thyself. When I am full of thee, my griefs themselves will grow golden in thy sunlight. Thou holdest them and their cause, and wilt find some nobler atonement between them than vile forgetfulness

and the death of love. Lord, let me help those that are wretched because they do not know thee. Let me tell them that thou, the Life, must needs suffer for and with them, that they may be partakers of thy ineffable peace. My life is hid in thine: take me in thy hand as Gideon bore the pitcher to the battle. Let me be broken if need be, that thy light may shine upon the lies which men tell them in thy name, and which eat away their hearts."

Having persuaded Shargar to remain with Mrs. Falconer for a few days, and thus remove the feeling of offence she still cherished because of his "munelicht flittin'," he returned to Dr. Anderson, who now unfolded his plans for him. These were, that he should attend the medical classes common to the two universities, and at the same time accompany him in his visits to the poor. He did not at all mean, he said, to determine Robert's life as that of a medical man, but from what he had learned of his feelings, he was confident that a knowledge of medicine would be invaluable to him. I think the good doctor must have foreseen the kind of life which Falconer would at length choose to lead, and with true and admirable wisdom, sought to prepare him for it. However this may be, Robert entertained the proposal gladly, went into the scheme with his whole heart, and began to widen that knowledge of and sympathy with

the poor which were the foundation of all his influence over them.

For a time, therefore, he gave a diligent and careful attendance upon lectures, read sufficiently, took his rounds with Dr. Anderson, and performed such duties as he delegated to his greater strength. Had the healing art been far less of an enjoyment to him than it was, he could yet hardly have failed of great progress therein; but seeing that it accorded with his best feelings, profoundest theories, and loftiest hopes, and that he received it as a work given him to do, it is not surprising that a certain faculty of cure, almost partaking of the instinctive, should have been rapidly developed in him, to the wonder and delight of his friend and master.

In this labour he again spent about four years, during which time he gathered much knowledge of human nature, learning especially to judge it from no stand-point of his own, but in every individual case to take a new position whence the nature and history of the man should appear in true relation to the yet uncompleted result. He who cannot feel the humanity of his neighbour because he is different from himself in education, habits, opinions, morals, circumstances, objects, is unfit, if not unworthy, to aid him.

Within this period Shargar had gone out to

India, where he had distinguished himself particularly on a certain harassing march. Towards the close of the four years he had leave of absence, and was on his way home. About the same time Robert, in consequence of a fever brought on by over-fatigue, was in much need of a holiday; and Dr. Anderson proposed that he should meet Moray at Southampton.

Shargar had no expectation of seeing him, and his delight, not greater on that account, broke out more wildly. No thinnest film had grown over his heart, though in all else he was considerably changed. The army had done everything that was wanted for his outward show of man. The drawling walk had vanished, and a firm step and soldierly stride had taken its place; his bearing was free, yet dignified; his high descent came out in the ease of his carriage and manners: there could be no doubt that at last Shargar was a gentleman. His hair had changed to a kind of red chestnut. His complexion was much darkened with the Indian sun. His eyes, too, were darker, and no longer rolled slowly from one object to another, but indicated by their quick glances a mind ready to observe and as ready to resolve. His whole appearance was more than prepossessing—it was even striking.

Robert was greatly delighted with the improvement in him, and far more when he found

that his mind's growth had at least kept pace with his body's change. It would be more correct to say that it had preceded and occasioned it; for however much the army may be able to do in that way, it had certainly, in Moray's case, only seconded the law of inward growth working outward show.

The young men went up to London together, and great was the pleasure they had in each other's society, after so long a separation in which their hearts had remained unchanged while their natures had grown both worthy and capable of more honour and affection. They had both much to tell; for Robert was naturally open save in regard to his grief; and Shargar was proud of being able to communicate with Robert from a nearer level, in virtue of now knowing many things that Robert could not know. They went together to a hotel in St. Paul's Churchyard.

## CHAPTER III.

## A MERE GLIMPSE.

AT the close of a fortnight, Falconer thought it time to return to his duties in Aberdeen. The day before the steamer sailed, they found themselves, about six o'clock, in Gracechurch Street. It was a fine summer evening. The street was less crowded than earlier in the afternoon, although there was a continuous stream of waggons, omnibuses, and cabs both ways. As they stood on the curbstone, a little way north of Lombard Street, waiting to cross—

“You see, Shargar,” said Robert, “Nature will have her way. Not all the hurry and confusion and roar can keep the shadows out. Look: wherever a space is for a moment vacant, there falls a shadow, as grotesque, as strange, as full of unutterable things as any shadow on a field of grass and daisies.”

“I remember feeling the same kind of thing in India,” returned Shargar, “where nothing looked as if it belonged to the world I was born

in, but my own shadow. In such a street as this, however, all the shadows look as if they belonged to another world, and had no business here."

"I quite feel that," returned Falconer. "They come like angels from the lovely west and the pure air, to show that London cannot hurt them, for it too is within the Kingdom of God—to teach the lovers of nature, like the old orthodox Jew, St. Peter, that they must not call anything common or unclean."

Shargar made no reply, and Robert glanced round at him. He was staring with wide eyes into, not at the crowd of vehicles that filled the street. His face was pale, and strangely like the Shargar of old days.

"What's the matter with you?" Robert asked in some bewilderment.

Receiving no answer, he followed Shargar's gaze, and saw a strange sight for London city.

In the middle of the crowd of vehicles, with an omnibus before them, and a brewer's dray behind them, came a line of three donkey-carts, heaped high with bundles and articles of gipsy-gear. The foremost was conducted by a middle-aged woman of tall, commanding aspect, and expression both cunning and fierce. She walked by the donkey's head carrying a short stick, with which she struck him now and then, but which she oftener waved over his head like



the truncheon of an excited marshal on the battle-field, accompanying its movements now with loud cries to the animal, now with loud response to the chaff of the omnibus conductor, the dray driver, and the tradesmen in carts about her. She was followed by a very handsome, olive-complexioned, wild-looking young woman, with her black hair done up in a red handkerchief, who conducted her donkey more quietly. Both seemed as much at home in the roar of Gracechurch Street as if they had been crossing a wild common. A loutish-looking young man brought up the rear with the third donkey. From the bundles on the foremost cart peeped a lovely, fair-haired, English-looking child.

Robert took all this in a moment. The same moment Shargar's spell was broken.

"Lord, it *is* my mither!" he cried, and darted under a horse's neck into the middle of the *ruck*.

He needled his way through till he reached the woman. She was swearing at a cabman whose wheel had caught the point of her donkey's shaft, and was hauling him round. Heedless of everything, Shargar threw his arms about her, crying,

"Mither! mither!"

"Nane o' yer blastit humbug!" she exclaimed, as with a vigorous throw and a wriggle, she freed



herself from his embrace and pushed him away.

The moment she had him at arm's length, however, her hand closed upon his arm, and her other hand went up to her brow. From underneath it her eyes shot up and down him from head to foot, and he could feel her hand closing and relaxing and closing again, as if she were trying to force her long nails into his flesh. He stood motionless, waiting the result of her scrutiny, utterly unconscious that he caused a congestion in the veins of London, for every vehicle within sight of the pair had stopped. Falconer said a strange silence fell upon the street, as if all the things in it had been turned into shadows.

A rough voice, which sounded as if all London must have heard it, broke the silence. It was the voice of the cabman who had been in altercation with the woman. Bursting into an insulting laugh, he used words with regard to her which it is better to leave unrecorded. The same instant Shargar freed himself from her grasp, and stood by the fore wheel of the cab.

"Get down!" he said, in a voice that was not the less impressive that it was low and hoarse.

The fellow saw what he meant, and whipped his horse. Shargar sprung on the box, and dragged him down all but headlong.

"Now," he said, "beg my mother's pardon."

“Be damned if I do, &c., &c.,” said the cabman.

“Then defend yourself,” said Shargar. “Robert.”

Falconer was watching it all, and was by his side in a moment.

“Come on, you, &c., &c.,” cried the cabman, plucking up heart and putting himself in fighting shape. He looked one of those insolent fellows whom none see discomfited more gladly than the honest men of his own class. The same moment he lay between his horse’s feet.

Shargar turned to Robert, and saying only, “There, Robert!” turned again towards the woman. The cabman rose bleeding, and, desiring no more of the same, climbed on his box, and went off, belabouring his horse, and pursued by a roar from the street, for the spectators were delighted at his punishment.

“Now, mother,” said Shargar, panting with excitement.

“What ca’ they ye?” she asked, still doubtful, but as proud of being defended as if the coarse words of her assailant had had no truth in them.

“Ye canna be my lang-leggit Geordie.”

“What for no?”

“Ye’re a gentleman, faith.”

“An’ what for no, again?” returned Shargar, beginning to smile.

“Weel, it’s weel speired. Yer father was ane

ony gait—gin sae be 'at ye are as ye say."

Moray put his head close to hers, and whispered some words that nobody heard but herself.

"It's ower lang syne to min' upo' that," she said in reply, with a look of cunning consciousness ill settled upon her fine features. "But ye can be naebody but my Geordie. Haith, man!" she went on, regarding him once more from head to foot, "but ye're a credit to me, I maun alloo. Weel, gie me a sovereign, an' I s' never come near ye.

Poor Shargar in his despair turned half mechanically towards Robert. He felt that it was time to interfere.

"You forget, mother," said Shargar, turning again to her, and speaking English now, "it was I that claimed you, and not you that claimed me."

She seemed to have no idea of what he meant.

"Come up the road here, to oor public, an' tak a glaiss, wuman," said Falconer. "Dinna haud the fowk luikin' at ye."

The temptation of a glass of something strong, and the hope of getting money out of them, caused an instant acquiescence. She said a few words to the young woman, who proceeded at once to tie her donkey's head to the tail of the other cart.

"Shaw the gait than," said the elder, turning again to Falconer.

Shargar and he led the way to St. Paul's Churchyard, and the woman followed faithfully. The waiter stared when they entered.

"Bring a glass of whisky," said Falconer, as he passed on to their private room. When the whisky arrived, she tossed it off, and looked as if she would like another glass.

"Yer father 'ill hae ta'en ye up, I'm thinkin', laddie?" she said, turning to her son.

"No," answered Shargar, gloomily. "There's the man that took me up."

"An' wha may ye be?" she asked, turning to Falconer.

"Mr. Falconer," said Shargar.

"No a son o' Anerew Faukner?" she asked again, with evident interest.

"The same," answered Robert.

"Weel, Geordie," she said, turning once more to her son, "it's like mither, like father to the twa o' ye."

"Did you know my father?" asked Robert, eagerly.

Instead of answering him she made another remark to her son.

"He needna be ashamed o' *your* company, ony gait—queer kin' o' a mither 'at I am."

"He never was ashamed of my company," said Shargar, still gloomily.

"Ay, I kent yer father weel eneuch," she said, now answering Robert—"mair by token 'at I

saw him last nicht. He was luikin' nae that ill."

Robert sprung from his seat, and caught her by the arm.

"Ow! ye needna gang into sic a flurry. *He'll no come near ye, I s' warran'.*"

"Tell me where he is," said Robert. "Where did you see him? I'll gie ye a' 'at I hae gin ye'll tak me till him."

"Hooly! hooly! Wha's to gang luikin' for a thrum in a hay-sow?" returned she, coolly. "I only said 'at I saw him."

"But are ye sure it was him?" asked Falconer.

"Ay, sure eneuch," she answered.

"What maks ye sae sure?"

"'Cause I never was vrang yet. Set a man ance atween my twa een, an' that'll be twa 'at kens him whan 's ain mither 's forgotten 'im."

"Did you speak to him?"

"Maybe ay, an' maybe no. I didna come here to be hecklet afore a jury."

"Tell me what he's like," said Robert, agitated with eager hope.

"Gin ye dinna ken what he's like, what for suld ye tak the trouble to speir? But 'deed ye'll ken what he's like whan ye fa' in wi' him," she added, with a vindictive laugh—vindictive because he had given her only one glass of strong drink.

With the laugh she rose, and made for the door. They rose at the same moment to de-

tain her. Like one who knew at once to fight and flee, she turned and stunned them as with a blow.

“She’s a fine yoong thing, yon sister o’ yours, Geordie. She’ll be worth siller by the time she’s had a while at the schuil.”

The men looked at each other aghast. When they turned their eyes she had vanished. They rushed to the door, and, parting, searched in both directions. But they were soon satisfied that it was of no use. Probably she had found a back way into Paternoster Row, whence the outlets are numerous.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DOCTOR'S DEATH.

BUT now that Falconer had a ground, even thus shadowy, for hoping—I cannot say believing—that his father might be in London, he could not return to Aberdeen. Moray, who had no heart to hunt for his mother, left the next day by the steamer. Falconer took to wandering about the labyrinthine city, and in a couple of months knew more about the metropolis—the west end excepted—than most people who had lived their lives in it. The west end is no doubt a considerable exception to make, but Falconer sought only his father, and the west end was the place where he was least likely to find him. Day and night he wandered into all sorts of places: the worse they looked the more attractive he found them. It became almost a craze with him. He could not pass a dirty court or low-browed archway. He *might* be there. Or he might have been there. Or it was such a place as he would choose for shelter.



He knew to what such a life as his must have tended.

At first he was attracted only by tall elderly men. Such a man he would sometimes follow till his following made him turn and demand his object. If there was no suspicion of Scotch in his tone, Falconer easily apologized. If there was, he made such replies as might lead to some betrayal. He could not defend the course he was adopting : it had not the shadow of probability upon its side. Still the greatest successes the world has ever beheld had been at one time the greatest improbabilities. He could not choose but go on, for as yet he could think of no other way.

Neither could a man like Falconer long confine his interest to this immediate object, especially after he had, in following it, found opportunity of being useful. While he still made it his main object to find his father, that object became a centre from which radiated a thousand influences upon those who were as sheep that had no shepherd. He fell back into his old ways at Aberdeen, only with a boundless sphere to work in, and with the hope of finding his father to hearten him. He haunted the streets at night, went into all places of entertainment, often to the disgust of senses and soul, and made his way into the lowest forms of life without introduction or protection.



There was a certain stately air of the hills about him which was often mistaken for country inexperience, and men thought in consequence to make gain or game of him. But such found their mistake, and if not soon, then the more completely. Far from provoking or even meeting hostility, he soon satisfied those that persisted, that it was dangerous. In two years he became well known to the poor of a large district, especially on both sides of Shoreditch, for whose sake he made the exercise of his profession though not an object yet a ready accident.

He lived in lodgings in John Street—the same in which I found him when I came to know him. He made few acquaintances, and they were chiefly the house-surgeons of hospitals—to which he paid frequent visits.

He always carried a book in his pocket, but did not read much. On Sundays he generally went to some one of the many lonely heaths or commons of Surrey with his New Testament. When weary in London, he would go to the reading-room of the British Museum for an hour or two. He kept up a regular correspondence with Dr. Anderson.

At length he received a letter from him, which occasioned his immediate departure for Aberdeen. Until now, his friend, who was entirely satisfied with his mode of life, and supplied him freely with money, had not even expressed a

wish to recall him, though he had often spoken of visiting him in London. It now appeared that, unwilling to cause him any needless anxiety, he had abstained from mentioning the fact that his health had been declining. He had got suddenly worse, and Falconer hastened to obey the summons he had sent him in consequence.

With a heavy heart he walked up to the hospitable door, recalling as he ascended the steps how he had stood there a helpless youth, in want of a few pounds to save his hopes, when this friend received him and bid him God-speed on the path he desired to follow. In a moment more he was shown into the study, and was passing through it to go to the cottage-room, when Johnston laid his hand on his arm.

“The maister’s no up yet, sir,” he said, with a very solemn look. “He’s been desperate efter seein’ ye, and I maun gang an’ lat him ken ’at ye’re here at last, for fear it suld be ower muckle for him, seein’ ye a’ at ance. But eh, sir!” he added, the tears gathering in his eyes, “ye’ll hardly ken ’im. He’s that changed!”

Johnston left the study by the door to the cottage—Falconer had never known the doctor sleep there—and returning a moment after, invited him to enter. In the bed in the recess—the room unchanged, with its deal table, and its sanded floor—lay the form of his friend. Falconer hastened to the bedside, kneeled down,

and took his hand speechless. The doctor was silent too, but a smile overspread his countenance, and revealed his inward satisfaction. Robert's heart was full, and he could only gaze on the worn face. At length he was able to speak.

"What for didna ye sen' for me," he said. "Ye never tellt me ye was ailin'."

"Because you were doing good, Robert, my boy; and I who had done so little had no right to interrupt what you were doing. I wonder if God will give me another chance. I would fain do better. I don't think I *could* sit singing psalms to all eternity," he added with a smile.

"Whatever good I may do afore my turn comes, I hae you to thank for 't. Eh, doctor, gin it hadna been for you!"

Robert's feelings overcame him. He resumed, brokenly :

"Ye gae me a man to believe in, whan my ain father had forsaken me, and my frien' was awa to God. Ye hae made me, doctor. Wi' meat an' drink an' learnin' an' siller, an' a'thing at ance, ye hae made me."

"Eh, Robert!" said the dying man, half rising on his elbow, "to think what God maks us a' to ane anither! My father did ten times for me what I hae dune for you. As I lie here thinkin' I may see him afore a week's ower, I'm jist a bairn again."

As he spoke, the polish of his speech was gone,

and the social refinement of his countenance with it. The face of his ancestors, the noble, sensitive, heart-full, but rugged, bucolic, and weather-beaten through centuries of windy ploughing, hail-stormed sheep-keeping, long-paced seed-sowing, and multiform labour, surely not less honourable in the sight of the working God than the fighting of the noble, came back in the face of the dying physician. From that hour to his death he spoke the rugged dialect of his fathers.

A day or two after this, Robert again sitting by his bedside,

“I dinna ken,” he said, “whether it’s richt—but I hae nae fear o’ deith, an’ yet I canna say I’m sure aboot onything. I hae seen mony a ane dee that cud hae no faith i’ the Saviour; but I never saw that fear that some gude fowk wud hae ye believe maun come at the last. I wadna like to tak to ony papistry; but I never cud mak oot frae the Bible—and I read mair at it i’ the jungle than maybe ye wad think—that it’s a’ ower wi’ a body at their deith. I never heard them bring foret ony text but ane—the maist ridiculous hash ’at ever ye heard—to justifee ’t.”

“I ken the text ye mean—‘As the tree falleth so it shall lie,’ or something like that—’at they say King Solomon wrote, though better scholars say his tree had fa’en mony a lang year afore that text saw the licht. I dinna believe sic a

thocht was i' the man's heid when he wrote it. It is as ye say—ower contemptible to ca' an argument. I'll read it to ye ance mair."

Robert got his Bible, and read the following portion from that wonderful book, so little understood, because it is so full of wisdom—the Book of Ecclesiastes:—

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

“Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

“If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

“As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

“Ay, ay; that's it,” said Dr. Anderson. “Weel, I maun say again that they're ill aff for an argument that taks that for ane upo' sic a mo-

mentous subjec'. I prefer to say, wi' the same auld man, that I know not the works of God who maketh all. But I wish I could say I believed onything for certain sure. But whan I think about it—wad ye believe 't? the faith o' my father's mair to me nor ony faith o' my ain. That soonds strange. But it's this: I'm positeeve that that godly great auld man kent mair about a' thae things—I cud see 't i' the face o' 'm—nor ony ither man 'at ever I kent. An' it's no by comparison only. I'm sure he *did* ken. There was something atween God and him. An' I think he wasna likly to be wrang; an' sae I tak courage to believe as muckle as I can, though may be no sae muckle as I fain wad."

Robert, who from experience of himself, and the observations he had made by the bedsides of not a few dying men and women, knew well that nothing but the truth itself can carry its own conviction; that the words of our Lord are a body as it were in which the spirit of our Lord dwells, or rather the key to open the heart for the entrance of that spirit, turned now from all argumentation to the words of Jesus. He himself had said of them, "They are spirit and they are life;" and what folly to buttress life and spirit with other powers than their own! From that day to the last, as often and as long as the dying man was able to listen to him, he read from the glad news just the words of the Lord. As he



read thus, one fading afternoon, the doctor broke out with :

“Eh, Robert, the patience o’ him! *He* didna quench the smokin’ flax. There’s little fire about me, but surely I ken in my ain hert some o’ the risin’ smoke o’ the sacrifice. Eh! sic words as they are! An’ he was gaein’ doon to the grave himsel’, no half my age, as peacefu’, though the road was sae rouch, as gin he had been gaein’ hame till ’s father.”

“Sae he was,” returned Robert.

“Ay; but here am I lyin’ upo’ my bed, slippin’ easy awa. An’ there was he——”

The old man ceased. The sacred story was too sacred for speech. Robert sat with the New Testament open before him on the bed.

“The mair the words o’ Jesus come into me,” the doctor began again, “the surer I am o’ seein’ my auld Brahmin frien’, Robert. It’s true I thought his religion not only began but ended inside him. It was a’ a booin’ doon afore and an aspirin’ up into the bosom o’ the infinite God. I dinna mean to say ’at he wasna honourable to them about him. And I never saw in him muckle o’ that pride to the lave (*rest*) that belongs to the Brahmin. It was raither a stately kin’ness than that condescension which is the vice o’ Christians. But he had naething to do wi’ them. The first commanment was a’ he kent. He loved God—nae a God

like Jesus Christ, but the God he kent—and that was a' he could. The second comman'ment—that glorious recognition o' the divine in humanity makin' 't fit and needfu' to be loved, that claim o' God upon and for his ain bairns, that love o' the neebour as yer'sel—he didna ken. Still there was religion in him; and he who died for the sins o' the whole world has surely been revealed to him lang er' noo, and throu the knowledge o' him, he noo dwalls in that God efter whom he aspired."

Here was the outcome of many talks which Robert and the doctor had had together, as they laboured amongst the poor.

"Did ye never try," Robert asked, "to lat him ken about the comin' o' God to his world in Jesus Christ?"

"I couldna do muckle that way honestly, my ain faith was sae poor and sma'. But I tellt him what Christians believed. I tellt him about the character and history o' Christ. But it didna seem to tak muckle hauld o' him. It wasna interesstin' till him. Just ance whan I tellt him some things He had said aboot his relation to God—sic as, 'I and my Father are one,'—and aboot the relation o' a' his disciples to God and himsel'—'I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one,' he said, wi' a smile, 'The man was a good Brahmin.'"

"It's little," said Robert, "the one great com-



mandment can do withoot the other. It's little we can ken what God to love, or hoo to love him, withoot 'thy neighbour as thyself.' Ony ane o' them withoot the ither stan's like the ae factor o' a multiplication, or ae wing upo' a laverock (*lark*)."

Towards the close of the week, he grew much feebler. Falconer scarcely left his room. He woke one midnight, and murmured as follows, with many pauses for breath and strength :

"Robert, my time's near, I'm thinkin'; for, wakin' an' sleepin', I'm a bairn again. I can hardly believe whiles 'at my father hasna a grup o' my han'. A meenute ago I was traivellin' throu a terrible driftin' o' snaw—eh, hoo it whustled and sang! and the cauld o' 't was stingin'; but my father had a grup o' me, an' I jist despised it, an' was stampin' 't doon wi' my wee bit feet, for I was like saiven year auld or thereabouts. An' syne I thocht I heard my mither singin', and kent by that that the ither was a dream. I'm thinkin' a hantle 'ill luik dreamy afore lang. Eh! I wonner what the final waukin' 'ill be like."

After a pause he resumed :

"Robert, my dear boy, ye 're i' the richt gait. Haud on an' lat naething turn ye aside. Man, it's a great comfort to me to think that ye're my ain flesh and blude, an' nae that far aff. My father an' your great-gran'father upo' the

gran'mither's side war ain brithers. I wonner hoo far doon it wad gang. Ye're the only ane upo' my father's side, you and yer father, gin he *be* alive, that I hae sib to me. My will's i' the bottom drawer upo' the left han' i' my writin' table i' the leebrary:—I hae left ye ilka plack 'at I possess. Only there's ae thing that I want ye to do. First o' a', ye maun gang on as yer doin' in London for ten year mair. Gin deein' men hae ony o' that foresicht that's been attreebuted to them in a' ages, it's borne in upo' me that ye *wull* see yer father again. At a' events, ye'll be helpin' some ill-faured sowls to a clean face and a bonny. But gin ye dinna fa' in wi' yer father within ten year, ye maun behaud a wee, an' jist pack up yer box, an' gang awa' ower the sea to Calcutta, an' du what I hae tellt ye to do i' that wull. I bind ye by nae promise, Robert, an' I winna hae nane. Things might happen to put ye in a terrible difficulty wi' a promise. I'm only tellin' ye what I wad like. Especially gin ye hae fund yer father, ye maun gang by yer ain jeedgment aboot it, for there 'll be a hantle to do wi' him efter ye hae gotten a grup o' 'im. An' noo, I maun lie still, an' may be sleep again, for I hae spoken ower muckle."

Hoping that he would sleep and wake yet again, Robert sat still. After an hour, he looked, and saw that, although hitherto much oppressed, he was now breathing like a child. There was

no sign save of past suffering: his countenance was peaceful as if he had already entered into his rest. Robert withdrew, and again seated himself. And the great universe became to him as a bird brooding over the breaking shell of the dying man.

On either hand we behold a birth, of which, as of the moon, we see but half. We are outside the one, waiting for a life from the unknown; we are inside the other, watching the departure of a spirit from the womb of the world into the unknown. To the region whither he goes, the man enters newly born. We forget that it is a birth, and call it a death. The body he leaves behind is but the *placenta* by which he drew his nourishment from his mother Earth. And as the child-bed is watched on earth with anxious expectancy, so the couch of the dying, as we call them, may be surrounded by the birth-watchers of the other world, waiting like anxious servants to open the door to which this world is but the wind-blown porch.

Extremes meet. As a man draws nigh to his second birth, his heart looks back to his childhood. When Dr. Anderson knew that he was dying, he retired into the *simulacrum* of his father's *beun end*.

As Falconer sat thinking, the doctor spoke. They were low, faint, murmurous sounds, for the lips were nearly at rest. Wanted no more for

utterance, they were going back to the holy dust, which is God's yet.

"Father, father!" he cried quickly, in the tone and speech of a Scotch laddie, "I'm gaein' doon. Haud a grup o' my han'."

When Robert hurried to the bedside, he found that the last breath had gone in the words. The thin right hand lay partly closed, as if it had been grasping a larger hand. On the face lay confidence just ruffled with apprehension: the latter melted away, and nothing remained but that awful and beautiful peace which is the farewell of the soul to its servant.

Robert knelt and thanked God for the noble man.

## CHAPTER V.

## A TALK WITH GRANNIE.

DR. ANDERSON'S body was, according to the fine custom of many of the people of Aberdeen, borne to the grave by twelve stalwart men in black, with broad round *bonnets* on their heads, the one-half relieving the other—a privilege of the company of shore-porters. Their exequies are thus freed from the artificial, grotesque, and pagan horror given by obscene mutes, frightful hearse, horses, and feathers. As soon as, in the beautiful phrase of the Old Testament, John Anderson was thus gathered to his fathers, Robert went to pay a visit to his grandmother.

Dressed to a point in the same costume in which he had known her from childhood, he found her little altered in appearance. She was one of those who instead of stooping with age, settle downwards: she was still as erect as ever, though shorter. Her step was feebler, and

when she prayed, her voice quavered more. On her face sat the same settled, almost hard repose, as ever; but her behaviour was still more gentle than when he had seen her last. Notwithstanding, however, that time had wrought so little change in her appearance, Robert felt that somehow the mist of a separation between her world and his was gathering; that she was, as it were, fading from his sight and presence, like the moon towards "her inter-lunar cave." Her face was gradually turning from him towards the land of light.

"I hae buried my best frien' but yersel', granny," he said, as he took a chair close by her side, where he used to sit when he read the Bible and Boston to her.

"I trust he's happy. He was a douce and a weel-behaved man; and ye hae rizzon to respect his memory. Did he dee the deith o' the richteous, think ye, laddie?"

"I do think that, grannie. He loved God and his Saviour."

"The Lord be praised!" said Mrs. Falconer. "I had guid houps o' 'im in 's latter days. And fowk says he 's made a rich man o' ye, Robert?"

"He 's left me ilka thing, excep' something till 's servan's—wha hae weel deserved it."

"Eh, Robert! but it's a terrible snare. Siller's an awfu' thing. My puir Anerew never begud

to gang the ill gait, till he began to hae ower muckle siller. But it badena lang wi' 'im."

"But it's no an ill thing itsel', grannie; for God made siller as weel 's ither things."

"He thinksna muckle o' 't, though, or he wad gie mair o' 't to some fowk. But as ye say, it's his, and gin ye hae grace to use 't aricht, it may be made a great blessin' to yersel' and ither fowk. But eh, laddie! tak guid tent 'at ye ride upo' the tap o' 't, an' no lat it rise like a muckle jaw (*billow*) ower yer heid; for it's an awfu' thing to be droont in riches."

"Them 'at prays no to be led into temptation hae a chance—haena they, grannie?"

"That hae they, Robert. And to be plain wi' ye, I haena that muckle fear o' ye; for I hae heard the kin' o' life 'at ye hae been leadin'. God's hearkent to my prayers for you; and gin ye gang on as ye hae begun, my prayers, like them o' David the son o' Jesse, are endit. Gang on, my dear lad, gang on to pluck brands frae the burnin.' Haud oot a helpin' han' to ilka son and dauchter o' Adam 'at will tak a grip o' 't. Be a burnin' an' a shinin' licht, that men may praise, no you, for ye're but clay i' the han's o' the potter, but yer Father in heaven. Tak the drunkard frae his whusky, the deboshed frae his debosh, the sweirer frae his aiths, the leear frae his lees; and giena ony o' them ower muckle o' yer siller at ance, for fear



'at they grow fat an' kick an' defy God and you. That's my advice to ye, Robert."

"And I houp I'll be able to haud gey and near till 't, grannie, for it's o' the best. But wha tellt ye what I was aboot in Lonnon?"

"Himsel'."

"Dr. Anderson?"

"Ay, jist himsel'. I hae had letter upo' letter frae 'im aboot you and a' 'at ye was aboot. He keepit me acquaint wi' 't a'."

This fresh proof of his friend's affection touched Robert deeply. He had himself written often to his grandmother, but he had never entered into any detail of his doings, although the thought of her was ever at hand beside the thought of his father.

"Do ye ken, grannie, what's at the hert o' my houns i' the meesery an' degradation that I see frae mornin' to nicht, and aftener yet frae nicht to mornin' i' the back closes and wynds o' the great city?"

"I trust it's the glory o' God, laddie."

"I houp that's no a'thegither wantin', grannie. For I love God wi' a' my hert. But I doobt it's aftener the savin' o' my earthly father nor the glory o' my heavenly ane that I'm thinkin' o'."

Mrs. Falconer heaved a deep sigh.

"God grant ye success, Robert," she said. "But that canna be richt."

"What canna be richt?"

“No to put the glory o’ God first and foremost.”

“Weel, grannie; but a body canna rise to the heicht o’ grace a’ at ance, nor yet in ten, or twenty year. Maybe gin I do richt, I may be able to come to that or a’ be dune. An’ efter a’, I’m sure I love God mair nor my father. But I canna help thinkin’ this, that gin God heardna ae sang o’ glory frae this ill-doin’ earth o’ his, he wadna be nane the waur; but——”

“Hoo ken ye that?” interrupted his grandmother.

“Because he wad be as gude and great and grand as ever.”

“Ow ay.”

“But what wad come o’ my father wantin’ his salvation? He can waur want that, remainin’ the slave o’ iniquity, than God can want his glory. Forby, ye ken there’s nae glory to God like the repentin’ o’ a sinner, justifeein’ God, an’ sayin’ till him—‘Father, ye’re a’ richt, an’ I’m a’ wrang.’ What greater glory can God hae nor that?”

“It’s a’ true ’at ye say. But still gin God cares for that same glory, ye ought to think o’ that first, afore even the salvation o’ yer father?”

“Maybe ye’re richt, grannie. An’ gin it be as ye say—he’s promised to lead us into a’ trowth, an’ he’ll lead me into that trowth. But I’m thinkin’ it’s mair for oor sakes than his ain ’at he cares about his glory. I dinna believe ’at he thinks

about his glory excep' for the sake o' the trowth an' men's herts deein' for want o' 't."

Mrs. Falconer thought for a moment.

"It may be 'at ye 'rè richt, laddie; but ye hae a way o' sayin' things 'at 's some fearsome."

"God 's nae like a prood man to tak offence, grannie. There's naething pleases him like the trowth, an' there's naething displeases him like leein', particularly whan it's by way o' uphaudin' him. He wants nae sic uphaudin.' Noo, *ye* say things aboot him whiles 'at soun's to me fearsome."

"What kin' o' things are they, laddie?" asked the old lady with offence glooming in the background.

"Sic like as whan ye speyk aboot him as gin he was a puir prood bailey-like body, fu' o' his ain importance, an' ready to be doon upo' onybody 'at didna ca' him by the name o' 's office—ay think-thinkin' aboot 's ain glory; in place o' the quaiet, mighty, gran', self-forgettin', a'-creatin', a'-uphaudin,' eternal bein', wha took the form o' man in Christ Jesus, jist that he nicht hae 't in 's pooer to beir and be humblet for oor sakes. Eh, grannie! think o' the face o' that man o' sorrows, that never said a hard word till a sinfu' wuman, or a despised publican: was he thinkin' aboot 's ain glory, think ye? An' we hae no richt to say we ken God save in the face o' Christ Jesus. Whatever 's no like Christ is no like God."

“But, laddie, he cam to saitisfee God’s justice by sufferin’ the punishment due to oor sins; to turn aside his wrath an’ curse; to reconcile him to us. Sae he cudna be *a’ thegither* like God.”

“He did naething o’ the kin’, grannie. It’s a’ a lee that. He cam to saitisfee God’s justice by giein’ him back his bairns; by garrin’ them see that God was just; by sendin’ them greetin’ hame to fa’ at his feet, an’ grip his knees an’ say, ‘Father, ye ’re i’ the richt.’ He cam to lift the weicht o’ the sins that God had curst aff o’ the shooters o’ them ’at did them, by makin’ them turn agen them, an’ be for God an’ no for sin. And there isna a word o’ reconceelin’ God till ’s in a’ the Testament, for there was no need o’ that: it was us that needed to be reconcilet to him. An’ sae he bore oor sins and carried oor sorrows; for those sins comin’ oot in the multitudes—ay and in his ain disciples as weel, caused him no en’ o’ grief o’ mind an’ pain o’ body, as a’body kens. It wasna his ain sins, for he had nane, but oors, that caused him sufferin’; and he took them awa’—they’re vainishin’ even noo frae the earth, though it doesna luik like it in Rag-fair or Petti-coat-lane. An’ for oor sorrows—they jist garred him greit. His richteousness jist annihilates oor guilt, for it’s a great gulf that swallows up and destroys ’t. And sae he gae his life a ransom for us: and he is the life o’ the world. He took oor sins upo’ him, for he cam into the middle o

them an' took them up—by no sleicht o' han', by no quibblin' o' the lawyers, aboot imputin' his richteousness to us, and sic like, which is no to be found i' the Bible at a', though I dinna say that there's no possible meanin' i' the phrase, but he took them and took them awa'; and here am I, grannie, growin' oot o' my sins in consequencc, and there are ye, grannie, growin' oot o' yours in consequencc, an, haein' nearhan' dune wi' them a'thegither er this time."

"I wis that may be true, laddie. But I carena hoo ye put it," returned his grandmother, bewildered no doubt with this outburst, "sae be that ye put him first an' last an' i' the mids' o' a' thing, an' say wi' a' yer hert, 'His will be dune!'"

"Wi' a' my hert, 'His will be dune,' grannie," responded Robert.

"Amen, amen. And noo, laddie, duv ye think there's ony likliheid that yer father 's still i' the body? I dream aboot him whiles sae lifelike that I canna believe him deid. But that's a' freits (*superstitions*)."

"Weel, grannie, I haena the least assurance. But I hae the mair houp. Wad ye ken him gin ye saw him?"

"Ken him!" she cried; "I wad ken him gin he had been no to say four, but forty days i' the sepulchre! My ain Anerew! Hoo cud ye speir sic a queston, laddie?"

“He maun be sair changed, grannie. He maun be turnin’ auld by this time.”

“Auld! Sic like ’s yersel, laddie.—Hoots, hoots! ye’re richt. I am forgettin’. But nane-theless wad I ken him.”

“I wis I kent what he was like. I saw him ance—hardly twise, but a’ that I min’ upo’ wad stan’ me in ill stead amo’ the streets o’ Lonnon.”

“I doobt that,” returned Mrs. Falconer—a form of expression rather oddly indicating sympathetic and somewhat regretful agreement with what has been said. “But,” she went on, “I can lat ye see a pictur’ o’ ’im, though I doobt it winna shaw sae muckle to you as to me. He had it paintit to gie to yer mother upo’ their weddin’ day. Och hone! She did the like for him; but what cam o’ that ane, I dinna ken.”

Mrs. Falconer went into the little closet to the old bureau, and bringing out the miniature, gave it to Robert. It was the portrait of a young man in antiquated blue coat and white waistcoat, looking innocent, and, it must be confessed, dull and uninteresting. It had been painted by a travelling artist, and probably his skill did not reach to expression. It brought to Robert’s mind no faintest shadow of recollection. It did not correspond in the smallest degree to what seemed his vague memory, perhaps half imagination, of the tall worn man whom he had seen that Sunday. He could not have a

hope that this would give him the slightest aid in finding him of whom it had once been a shadowy resemblance at least.

“Is ’t like him, grannie?” he asked.

As if to satisfy herself once more ere she replied, she took the miniature, and gazed at it for some time. Then with a deep hopeless sigh, she answered,

“Ay, it’s like him; but it’s no himsel’. Eh, the bonny broo, an’ the smilin’ een o’ him!—smilin’ upon a’body, an’ upo’ her maist o’ a’, till he took to the drink, and waur gin waur can be. It was a’ siller an’ company—company ’at cudna be merry ohn drunken. Verily their lauchter was like the cracklin’ o’ thorns aneath a pot. Het watter and whusky was aye the cry efter their denner an’ efter their supper, till my puir Anerew tuik till the bare whusky i’ the mornin’ to fill the ebb o’ the toddy. He wad never hae dune as he did but for the whusky. It jist drave oot a’ gude and loot in a’ ill.”

“Wull ye lat me tak this wi’ me, grannie?” said Robert; for though the portrait was useless for identification, it might serve a further purpose.

“Ow, ay, tak it. I dinna want it. I can see him weel wantin’ that. But I hae nae houp left ’at ye ’ll ever fa’ in wi’ him.”

“God’s aye doin’ unlikly things, grannie,” said Robert, solemnly.



“He’s dune a’ ’at he can for him, I doobt, already.”

“Duv ye think ’at God cudna save a man gin he liket, than, grannie?”

“God can do a’thing. There’s nae doobt but by the gift o’ his speerit he cud save a’body.”

“An’ ye think he’s no mercifu’ eneuch to do ’t?”

“It winna do to meddle wi’ fowk’s free wull. To gar fowk be gude wad be nae gudeness.”

“But gin God could actually create the free wull, dinna ye think he cud help it to gang richt, withoot ony garrin’? We ken sae little about it, grannie! Hoo does his speerit help onybody? Does he *gar* them ’at accep’s the offer o’ salvation?”

“Na, I canna think that. But he shaws them the trowth in sic a way that they jist canna bide themsel’s, but maun turn to him for verra peace an’ rist.”

“Weel, that’s something as I think. An’ until I’m sure that a man has had the trowth shawn till him in sic a way ’s that, I canna alloo mysel’ to think that hooever he may hae sinned, he has finally rejeckit the trowth. Gin I kent that a man had seen the trowth as I hae seen ’t whiles, and had deleeborately turned his back upo’ ’t and said, ‘I’ll nane o’ ’t,’ than I doobt I wad be maist compelled to alloo that there was nae mair salvation for him, but a cer-

tain and fearfu' luikin' for o' judgment and fiery indignation. But I dinna believe that ever man did sae. But even than, I dinna ken."

"I did a' for him that I kent hoo to do," said Mrs. Falconer, reflectingly. "Nicht an' mornin' an' aften midday prayin' for an' wi' him."

"Maybe ye scunnert him at it, grannie."

She gave a stifled cry of despair.

"Dinna say that, laddie, or ye'll drive me oot o' my min'. God forgie me, gin that be true. I deserve hell mair nor my Anerew."

"But, ye see, grannie, supposin' it war sae, that wadna be laid to your accoont, seein' ye did the best ye kent. Nor wad it be forgotten to him. It wad mak a hantle difference to his sin; it wad be a great excuse for him. An' jist think, gin it be fair for ae human being to influence anither a' 'at they can, and that's nae interferin' wi' their free wull—it's impossible to measure what God cud do wi' his speerit winnin' at them frae a' sides, and able to put sic thoughts an' sic pictures into them as we canna think. It wad a' be true that he tellt them, and the trowth can never be a meddlin' wi' the free wull."

Mrs. Falconer made no reply, but evidently went on thinking.

She was, though not a great reader, yet a good reader. Any book that was devout and thoughtful she read gladly. Through some

one or other of this sort she must have been instructed concerning free will, for I do not think such notions could have formed any portion of the religious teaching she had heard. Men in that part of Scotland then believed that the free will of man was only exercised in rejecting—never in accepting the truth; and that men were saved by the gift of the spirit, given to some and not to others, according to the free will of God, in the exercise of which no reason appreciable by men, or having anything to do with their notions of love or justice had any share. In the recognition of will and choice in the acceptance of the mercy of God, Mrs. Falconer was then in advance of her time. And it is no wonder if her notions did not all hang logically together.

“At ony rate, grannie,” resumed her grandson, “*I haena dune a’ for him ’at I can yet; and I’m no gaein’ to believe onything that wad mak me remiss in my endeavour. Houp for mysel’, for my father, for a’body, is what’s savin’ me, an’ garrin’ me work. An’ gin ye tell me that I’m no workin’ wi’ God, that God’s no the best an’ the greatest worker aboon a’, ye tak the verra hert oot o’ my breist, and I dinna believe in God nae mair, an’ my han’s drap doon by my sides, an’ my legs winna gang. No,*” said Robert, rising, “God ’ill gie me my father sometime, grannie; for what man can do want-

in' a father? Human bein' canna win at the hert o' things, canna ken a' the oots an' ins, a' the sides o' love, excep' he has a father amo' the lave to love; an' I hae had nane, grannie. An' that God kens."

She made him no answer. She dared not say that he expected too much from God. Is it likely that Jesus will say so of any man or woman when he looks for faith in the earth?

Robert went out to see some of his old friends, and when he returned it was time for supper and *worship*. These were the same as of old: a plate of porridge, and a wooden bowl of milk for the former; a chapter and a hymn, both read, and a prayer from grannie, and then from Robert for the latter. And so they went to bed.

But Robert could not sleep. He rose and dressed himself, went up to the empty garret, looked at the stars through the skylight, knelt and prayed for his father and for all men to the Father of all, then softly descended the stairs, and went out into the street.

## CHAPTER VI.

## SHARGAR'S MOTHER.

IT was a warm still night in July—moonless but not dark. There is no night there in the summer—only a long ethereal twilight. He walked through the sleeping town so full of memories, all quiet in his mind now—quiet as the air that ever broods over the house where a friend has dwelt. He left the town behind, and walked—through the odours of grass and of clover and of the yellow flowers on the old earthwalls that divided the fields—sweet scents to which the darkness is friendly, and which, mingling with the smell of the earth itself, reach the founts of memory sooner than even words or tones—down to the brink of the river that flowed scarcely murmuring through the night, itself dark and brown as the night, from its far-off birthplace in the peaty hills. He crossed the footbridge and turned into the bleachfield. Its houses were desolate, for that trade too had died away. The machinery stood

rotting and rusting. The wheel gave no answering motion to the flow of the water that glided away beneath it. The thundering *beatles* were still. The huge legs of the wauk-mill took no more seven-leagued strides nowhither. The rubbing-boards with their thickly-fluted surfaces no longer frothed the soap from every side, tormenting the web of linen into a brightness to gladden the heart of the housewife whose hands had spun the yarn. The terrible boiler that used to send up from its depths bubbling and boiling spouts and peaks and ridges, lay empty and cold. The little house behind, where its awful furnace used to glow, and which the pungent chlorine used to fill with its fumes, stood open to the wind and the rain : he could see the slow river through its unglazed window beyond. The water still went slipping and sliding through the deserted places, a power whose use had departed. The canal, the delight of his childhood, was nearly choked with weeds ; it went flowing over long grasses that drooped into it from its edges, giving a faint gurgle once and again in its flow, as if it feared to speak in the presence of the stars, and escaped silently into the river far below. The grass was no longer mown like a lawn, but was long and deep and thick. He climbed to the place where he had once lain and listened to the sounds of the belt of fir-trees behind him,

hearing the voice of Nature that whispered *God* in his ears, and there he threw himself down once more. All the old things, the old ways, the old glories of childhood—were they gone? No. Over them all, in them all, was God still. There is no past with him. An eternal present, He filled his soul and all that his soul had ever filled. His history was taken up into God: it had not vanished: his life was hid with Christ in God. To the God of the human heart nothing that has ever been a joy, a grief, a passing interest, can ever cease to be what it has been; there is no fading at the breath of time, no passing away of fashion, no dimming of old memories in the heart of him whose being creates time. Falconer's heart rose up to him as to his own deeper life, his indwelling deepest spirit—above and beyond him as the heavens are above and beyond the earth, and yet nearer and homelier than his own most familiar thought. "As the light fills the earth," thought he, "so God fills what we call life. My sorrows, O God, my hopes, my joys, the upliftings of my life are with thee, my root, my life. Thy comfortings, my perfect God, are strength indeed!"

He rose and looked around him. While he lay, the waning, fading moon had risen, weak and bleared and dull. She brightened and brightened until at last she lighted up the night



with a wan, forgetful gleam. "So should I feel," he thought, "about the past on which I am now gazing, were it not that I believe in the God who forgets nothing. That which has been, is." His eye fell on something bright in the field beyond. He would see what it was, and crossed the earthen dyke. It shone like a little moon in the grass. By humouring the reflection he reached it. It was only a cutting of *white iron*, left by some tinker. He walked on over the field, thinking of Shargar's mother. If he could but find her! He walked on and on. He had no inclination to go home. The solitariness of the night, the *uncanniness* of the moon, prevents most people from wandering far: Robert had learned long ago to love the night, and to feel at home with every aspect of God's world. How this peace contrasted with the nights in London streets! this grass with the dark flow of the Thames! these hills and those clouds half melted into moonlight with the lanes blazing with gas! He thought of the child who, taken from London for the first time, sent home the message: "Tell mother that it's dark in the country at night." Then his thoughts turned again to Shargar's mother! Was it not possible, being a wanderer far and wide, that she might be now in Rothieden? Such people have a love for their old haunts, stronger than that of orderly members of society

for their old homes. He turned back, and did not know where he was. But the lines of the hill-tops directed him. He hastened to the town, and went straight through the sleeping streets to the back wynd where he had found Shargar sitting on the doorstep. Could he believe his eyes? A feeble light was burning in the shed. Some other poverty-stricken bird of the night, however, might be there, and not she who could perhaps guide him to the goal of his earthly life. He drew near, and peeped in at the broken window. A heap of something lay in a corner, watched only by a long-snuffed candle.

The heap moved, and a voice called out querulously—

“Is that you, Shargar, ye shochlin deevil?”

Falconer's heart leaped. He hesitated no longer, but lifted the latch and entered. He took up the candle, snuffed it as he best could, and approached the woman. When the light fell on her face she sat up, staring wildly with eyes that shunned and sought it.

“Wha are ye that winna lat me dee in peace and quaietness?”

“I'm Robert Falconer.”

“Come to speir efter yer ne'er-do-weel o' a father, I reckon,” she said.

“Yes,” he answered.

“Wha's that ahin' ye?”

“Naeboddy’s ahin’ me,” answered Robert.

“Dinna lee. Wha’s that ahin’ the door?”

“Naeboddy. I never tell lees.”

“Whaur’s Shargar? What for doesna he come till ’s mither?”

“He’s hynd awa’ ower the seas—a captain o’ sodgers.”

“It’s a lee. He’s an ill-faured scoonrel no to come till ’s mither an’ bid her gude-bye, an’ her gaein’ to hell.”

“Gin ye speir at Christ, he’ll tak ye oot o’ the verra mou’ o’ hell, wuman.”

“Christ! wha’s that? Ow, ay! It’s him ’at they preach aboot i’ the kirks. Na, na. There’s nae gude o’ that. There’s nae time to repent noo. I doobt sic repentance as mine wadna gang for muckle wi’ the likes o’ him.”

“The likes o’ him ’s no to be gotten. He cam to save the likes o’ you an’ me.”

“The likes o’ you an’ me! said ye, laddie? There’s no like atween you and me. He’ll hae naething to say to me, but gang to hell wi’ ye for a bitch.”

“He never said sic a word in ’s life. He wad say, ‘Poor thing! she was ill-used. Ye maunna sin ony mair. Come, and I’ll help ye.’ He wad say something like that. He’ll save a body whan she wadna think it.”

“An’ I hae gien my bonnie bairn to the deevil wi’ my ain han’s! She’ll come to hell efter me

to girn at me, an' set them on me wi' their reid het taings, and curse me. Och hone! och hone!"

"Hearken to me," said Falconer, with as much authority as he could assume. But she rolled herself over again in the corner, and lay groaning.

"Tell me whaur she is," said Falconer, "and I'll tak her oot o' their grup, whaever they be."

She sat up again, and stared at him for a few moments without speaking.

"I left her wi' a wuman waur nor mysel'," she said at length. "God forgie me."

"He will forgie ye, gin ye tell me whaur she is."

"Do ye think he will? Eh, Maister Faukner! The wuman bides in a coort aff o' Clare Market. I dinna min' upo' the name o' 't, though I cud gang till 't wi' my een steekit. *Her* name's Widow Walker—an auld rowdie—damn her sowl!"

"Na, na, ye maunna say that gin ye want to be forgien yersel'. I'll fin' her oot. An' I'm thinkin' it winna be lang or I hae a grup o' her. I'm gaein' back to Lonnon in twa days or three."

"Dinna gang till I'm deid. Bide an' haud the deevil aff o' me. He has a grup o' my hert noo, rivin' at it wi' his lang nails—as lang's bird's nebs."

“I’ll bide wi’ ye till we see what can be dune for ye. What’s the maitter wi’ ye? I’m a doctor noo.”

There was not a chair or box or stool on which to sit down. He therefore kneeled beside her. He felt her pulse, questioned her, and learned that she had long been suffering from an internal complaint, which had within the last week grown rapidly worse. He saw that there was no hope of her recovery, but while she lived he gave himself to her service as to that of a living soul capable of justice and love. The night was more than warm, but she had fits of shivering. He wrapped his coat round her, and wiped from the poor degraded face the damps of suffering. The woman-heart was alive still, for she took the hand that ministered to her and kissed it with a moan. When the morning came she fell asleep. He crept out and went to his grandmother’s, where he roused Betty, and asked her to get him some peat and coals. Finding his grandmother awake, he told her all, and taking the coals and the peat, carried them to the hut, where he managed, with some difficulty, to light a fire on the hearth; after which he sat on the doorstep till Betty appeared with two men carrying a mattress and some bedding. The noise they made awoke her.

“Dinna tak me,” she cried. “I winna do ’t again, an’ I’m deein’, I tell ye I’m deein’, and

that'll clear a' scores—o' this side ony gait," she added.

They lifted her upon the mattress, and made her more comfortable than perhaps she had ever been in her life. But it was only her illness that made her capable of prizing such comfort. In health, the heather on a hill side was far more to her taste than bed and blankets. She had a wild, roving, savage nature, and the wind was dearer to her than house-walls. She had come of ancestors—and it was a poor little atom of truth that a soul bred like this woman could have been born capable of entertaining. But she too was eternal—and surely not to be fixed for ever in a bewilderment of sin and ignorance—a wild-eyed soul staring about in hell-fire for want of something it could not understand and had never beheld—by the changeless mandate of the God of love! She was in less pain than during the night, and lay quietly gazing at the fire. Things awful to another would no doubt cross her memory without any accompanying sense of dismay; tender things would return without moving her heart; but Falconer had a hold of her now. Nothing could be done for her body except to render its death as easy as might be; but something might be done for herself. He made no attempt to produce this or that condition of mind in the poor creature. He never made such attempts. "How can I tell

the next lesson a soul is capable of learning?" he would say. "The Spirit of God is the teacher. My part is to tell the good news. Let that work as it ought, as it can, as it will." He knew that pain is with some the only harbinger that can prepare the way for the entrance of kindness: it is not understood till then. In the lulls of her pain he told her about the man Christ Jesus—what he did for the poor creatures who came to him—how kindly he spoke to them—how he cured them. He told her how gentle he was with the sinning women, how he forgave them and told them to do so no more. He left the story without comment to work that faith which alone can redeem from selfishness and bring into contact with all that is living and productive of life, for to believe in him is to lay hold of eternal life: he is the Life—therefore the life of men. She gave him but little encouragement: he did not need it, for he believed in the Life. But her outcries were no longer accompanied with that fierce and dreadful language in which she sought relief at first. He said to himself, "What matter if I see no sign? I am doing my part. Who can tell, when the soul is free from the distress of the body, when sights and sounds have vanished from her, and she is silent in the eternal, with the terrible past behind her, and clear to her consciousness, how the words I have spoken to



her may yet live and grow in her; how the kindness God has given me to show her may help her to believe in the root of all kindness, in the everlasting love of her Father in heaven? That she can feel at all is as sure a sign of life as the adoration of an ecstatic saint."

He had no difficulty now in getting from her what information she could give him about his father. It seemed to him of the greatest import, though it amounted only to this, that when he was in London, he used to lodge at the house of an old Scotchwoman of the name of Macallister, who lived in Paradise Gardens, somewhere between Bethnal Green and Spitalfields. Whether he had been in London lately, she did not know; but if anybody could tell him where he was, it would be Mrs. Macallister.

His heart filled with gratitude and hope and the surging desire for the renewal of his London labours. But he could not leave the dying woman till she was beyond the reach of his comfort: he was her keeper now. And "he that believeth shall not make haste." Labour without perturbation, readiness without hurry, no haste, and no hesitation, was the divine law of his activity.

Shargar's mother breathed her last holding his hand. They were alone. He kneeled by the bed, and prayed to God, saying—

"Father, this woman is in thy hands. Take

thou care of her, as thou hast taken care of her hitherto. Let the light go up in her soul, that she may love and trust thee, O light, O gladness. I thank thee that thou hast blessed me with this ministration. Now lead me to my father. Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

He rose and went to his grandmother and told her all. She put her arms round his neck, and kissed him, and said,

"God bless ye, my bonny lad. And he will bless ye. He will; he will. Noo gang yer wa's, and do the wark he gies ye to do. Only min', it's no you; it's Him."

The next morning, the sweet winds of his childhood wooing him to remain yet a day among their fields, he sat on the top of the Aberdeen coach, on his way back to the horrors of court and alley in the terrible London.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SILK-WEAVER.

WHEN he arrived he made it his first business to find "Widow Walker." She was evidently one of the worst of her class; and could it have been accomplished without scandal, and without interfering with the quietness upon which he believed that the true effect of his labours in a large measure depended, he would not have scrupled simply to carry off the child. With much difficulty, for the woman was suspicious, he contrived to see her, and was at once reminded of the child he had seen in the cart on the occasion of Shargar's recognition of his mother. He fancied he saw in her some resemblance to his friend Shargar. The affair ended in his paying the woman a hundred and fifty pounds to give up the girl. Within six months she had drunk herself to death. He took little Nancy Kennedy home with him, and gave her in charge to his housekeeper. She cried a good deal at first, and wanted to go back to Mother

Walker, but he had no great trouble with her after a time. She began to take a share in the house-work, and at length to wait upon him. Then Falconer began to see that he must cultivate relations with other people in order to enlarge his means of helping the poor. He nowise abandoned his conviction that whatever good he sought to do or lent himself to aid must be effected entirely by individual influence. He had little faith in societies, regarding them chiefly as a wretched substitute, just better than nothing, for that help which the neighbour is to give to his neighbour. Finding how the unbelief of the best of the poor is occasioned by hopelessness in privation, and the sufferings of those dear to them, he was confident that only the personal communion of friendship could make it possible for them to believe in God. Christians must be in the world as He was in the world; and in proportion as the truth radiated from them, the world would be able to believe in Him. Money he saw to be worse than useless, except as a gracious outcome of human feelings and brotherly love. He always insisted that the Saviour healed only those on whom his humanity had laid hold; that he demanded faith of them in order to make them regard him, that so his personal being might enter into their hearts. Healing without faith in its source would have done them harm in-

stead of good—would have been to them a windfall, not a Godsend; at best the gift of magic, even sometimes the power of Satan casting out Satan. But he must not therefore act as if he were the only one who could render this individual aid, or as if men influencing the poor individually could not aid each other in their individual labours. He soon found, I say, that there were things he could not do without help, and Nancy was his first perplexity. From this he was delivered in a wonderful way.

One afternoon he was *prowling* about Spital-fields, where he had made many acquaintances amongst the silk-weavers and their families. Hearing a loud voice as he passed down a stair from the visit he had been paying further up the house, he went into the room whence the sound came, for he knew a little of the occupant. He was one De Fleuri, or as the neighbours called him, Diffeery, in whose countenance, after generations of want and debasement, the delicate lines and noble cast of his ancient race were yet emergent. This man had lost his wife and three children, his whole family except a daughter now sick, by a slow-consuming hunger; and he did not believe there was a God that ruled in the earth. But he supported his unbelief by no other argument than a hopeless bitter glance at his empty loom. At this moment he sat silent—a rock against which the noisy waves of a

combative Bible-reader were breaking in rude foam. His silence and apparent impassiveness angered the irreverent little worthy. To Falconer's humour he looked a vulgar bull-terrier barking at a noble, sad-faced staghound. His foolish arguments against infidelity, drawn from Paley's *Natural Theology*, and tracts about the inspiration of the Bible, touched the sore-hearted unbelief of the man no nearer than the clangour of negro kettles affects the eclipse of the sun. Falconer stood watching his opportunity. Nor was the eager disputant long in affording him one. Socratic fashion, Falconer asked him a question, and was answered; followed it with another, which, after a little hesitation, was likewise answered; then asked a third, the ready answer to which involved such a flagrant contradiction of the first, that the poor sorrowful weaver burst into a laugh of delight at the discomfiture of his tormentor. After some stammering, and a confused attempt to recover the line of argument, the would-be partizan of Deity roared out, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" and with this triumphant discharge of his swivel, turned and ran down the stairs precipitately.

Both laughed while the sound of his footsteps lasted. Then Falconer said:

"Mr. De Fleuri, I believe in God with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; though

not in that poor creature's arguments. I don't know that your unbelief is not better than his faith."

"I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Falconer. I haven't laughed so for years. What right has he to come pestering me?"

"None whatever. But you must forgive him, because he is well-meaning, and because his conceit has made a fool of him. They're not all like him. But how is your daughter?"

"Very poorly, sir. She's going after the rest. A Spitalfields weaver ought to be like the cats: they don't mind how many of their kittens are drowned."

"I beg your pardon. They don't like it. Only they forget it sooner than we do."

"Why do you say *we*, sir? *You* don't know anything of that sort."

"The heart knows its own bitterness, De Fleuri—and finds it enough, I daresay."

The weaver was silent for a moment. When he spoke again, there was a touch of tenderness in his respect.

"Will you go and see my poor Katey, sir?"

"Would she like to see me?"

"It does her good to see you. I never let that fellow go near her. He may worry me as he pleases; but she shall die in peace. That is all I can do for her."

"Do you still persist in refusing help—for



your daughter—I don't mean for yourself?"

Not believing in God, De Fleuri would not be obliged to his fellow. Falconer had never met with a similar instance.

"I do. I won't kill her, and I won't kill myself: I am not bound to accept charity. It's all right. I only want to leave the whole affair behind; and I sincerely hope there's nothing to come after. If I were God, I should be ashamed of such a mess of a world."

"Well, no doubt you would have made something more to your mind—and better, too, if all you see were all there is to be seen. But I didn't send that bore away to bore you myself. I'm going to see Katey."

"Very well, sir. I won't go up with you, for I won't interfere with what you think proper to say to her."

"That's rather like faith somewhere!" thought Falconer. "Could that man fail to believe in Jesus Christ if he only saw him—anything like as he is?"

Katey lay in a room overhead; for though he lacked food, this man contrived to pay for a separate room for his daughter, whom he treated with far more respect than many gentlemen treat their wives. Falconer found her lying on a wretched bed. Still it was a bed; and many in the same house had no bed to lie on. He had just come from a room overhead where lived a

widow with four children. All of them lay on a floor whence issued at night, by many holes, awful rats. The children could not sleep for horror. They did not mind the little ones, they said, but when the big ones came, they were awake all night.

“Well, Katey, how are you?”

“No better, thank God.”

She spoke as her father had taught her. Her face was worn and thin, but hardly death-like. Only extremes met in it—the hopelessness had turned through quietude into comfort. Her hopelessness affected him more than her father’s. But there was nothing he could do for her.

There came a tap at the door.

“Come in,” said Falconer, involuntarily.

A lady in the dress of a Sister of Mercy entered with a large basket on her arm. She started, and hesitated for a moment when she saw him. He rose, thinking it better to go. She advanced to the bedside. He turned at the door, and said,

“I won’t say good-bye yet, Katey, for I’m going to have a chat with your father, and if you will let me, I will look in again.”

As he turned he saw the lady kiss her on the forehead. At the sound of his voice she started again, left the bedside and came towards him. Whether he knew her by her face or her voice first, he could not tell.

“Robert,” she said, holding out her hand.

It was Mary St. John. Their hands met, joined fast, and lingered, as they gazed each in the other’s face. It was nearly fourteen years since they had parted. The freshness of youth was gone from her cheek, and the signs of middle age were present on her forehead. But she was statelier, nobler, and gentler than ever. Falconer looked at her calmly, with only a still swelling at the heart, as if they met on the threshold of heaven. All the selfishness of passion was gone, and the old earlier adoration, elevated and glorified, had returned. He was a boy once more in the presence of a woman-angel. She did not shrink from his gaze, she did not withdraw her hand from his clasp.

“I am so glad, Robert!” was all she said.

“So am I,” he answered quietly. “We may meet sometimes, then?”

“Yes. Perhaps we can help each other.”

“You can help me,” said Falconer. “I have a girl I don’t know what to do with.”

“Send her to me. I will take care of her.”

“I will bring her. But I must come and see you first.”

“That will tell you where I live,” she said, giving him a card. “Good-bye.”

“Till to-morrow,” said Falconer.

“*She’s* not like that Bible fellow,” said De Fleuri, as he entered his room again. “She

don't walk into your house as if it was her own."

He was leaning against his idle loom, which, like a dead thing, filled the place with the mournfulness of death. Falconer took a broken chair, the only one, and sat down.

"I am going to take a liberty with you, Mr. De Fleuri," he said.

"As you please, Mr. Falconer."

"I want to tell you the only fault I have to you."

"Yes?"

"You don't do anything for the people in the house. Whether you believe in God or not, you ought to do what you can for your neighbour."

He held that to help a neighbour is the strongest antidote to unbelief, and an open door out of the bad air of one's own troubles, as well.

De Fleuri laughed bitterly, and rubbed his hand up and down his empty pocket. It was a pitiable action. Falconer understood it.

"There are better things than money: sympathy, for instance. You could talk to them a little."

"I have no sympathy, sir."

"You would find you had, if you would let it out."

"I should only make them more miserable. If I believed as you do, now, there might be some use."

“There’s that widow with her four children in the garret. The poor little things are tormented by the rats: couldn’t you nail bits of wood over their holes?”

De Fleuri laughed again.

“Where am I to get the bits of wood, except I pull down some of those laths. And they wouldn’t keep them out a night.”

“Couldn’t you ask some carpenter?”

“I won’t ask a favour.”

“I shouldn’t mind asking, now.”

“That’s because you don’t know the bitterness of needing.”

“Fortunately, however, there’s no occasion for it. You have no right to refuse for another what you wouldn’t accept for yourself. Of course I could send in a man to do it; but if you would do it, that would do her heart good. And that’s what most wants doing good to—isn’t it, now?”

“I believe you’re right there, sir. If it wasn’t for the misery of it, I shouldn’t mind the hunger.”

“I should like to tell you how I came to go poking my nose into other people’s affairs. Would you like to hear my story now?”

“If you please, sir.”

A little pallid curiosity seemed to rouse itself in the heart of the hopeless man. So Falconer began at once to tell him how he had been brought up, describing the country and their

ways of life, not excluding his adventures with Shargar, until he saw that the man was thoroughly interested. Then all at once, pulling out his watch, he said :

“But it’s time I had my tea, and I haven’t half done yet. I am not fond of being hungry, like you, Mr. De Fleuri.”

The poor fellow could only manage a very dubious smile.

“I’ll tell you what,” said Falconer, as if the thought had only just struck him—“come home with me, and I’ll give you the rest of it at my own place.”

“You must excuse me, sir.”

“Bless my soul, the man’s as proud as Lucifer ! He wont accept a neighbour’s invitation to a cup of tea—for fear it should put him under obligations, I suppose.”

“It’s very kind of you, sir, to put it in that way ; but I don’t choose to be taken in. You know very well it’s not as one equal asks another you ask me. It’s charity.”

“Do I not behave to you as an equal ?”

“But you know that don’t make us equals.”

“But isn’t there something better than being equals ? Supposing, as you will have it, that we’re not equals, can’t we be friends ?”

“I hope so, sir.”

“Do you think now, Mr. De Fleuri, if you weren’t something more to me than a mere equal,

I would go telling you my own history? But I forgot: I have told you hardly anything yet. I have to tell you how much nearer I am to your level than you think. I had the design too of getting you to help me in the main object of my life. Come don't be a fool. I want you."

"I can't leave Katey," said the weaver, hesitatingly.

"Miss St. John is there still. I will ask her to stop till you come back."

Without waiting for an answer, he ran up the stairs, and had speedily arranged with Miss St. John. Then taking his consent for granted, he hurried De Fleuri away with him, and knowing how unfit a man of his trade was for walking, irrespective of feebleness from want, he called the first cab, and took him home. Here, over their tea, which he judged the safest meal for a stomach unaccustomed to food, he told him about his grandmother, and about Dr. Anderson, and how he came to give himself to the work he was at, partly for its own sake, partly in the hope of finding his father. He told him his only clue to finding him; and that he had called on Mrs. Macalister twice every week for two years, but had heard nothing of him. De Fleuri listened with what rose to great interest before the story was finished. And one of its ends at least was gained: the weaver was at home with him. The poor fellow felt that such close relation to an outcast,



did indeed bring Falconer nearer to his own level.

“Do you want it kept a secret, sir?” he asked.

“I don’t want it made a matter of gossip. But I do not mind how many respectable people like yourself know of it.”

He said this with a vague hope of assistance.

Before they parted, the unaccustomed tears had visited the eyes of De Fleuri, and he had consented not only to repair Mrs. Chisholm’s garret-floor, but to take in hand the expenditure of a certain sum weekly, as he should judge expedient, for the people who lived in that and the neighbouring houses—in no case, however, except of sickness, or actual want of bread from want of work. Thus did Falconer appoint a sorrow-made infidel to be the almoner of his christian charity, knowing well that the nature of the Son of Man was in him, and that to get him to do as the Son of Man did, in ever so small a degree, was the readiest means of bringing his higher nature to the birth. Nor did he ever repent the choice he had made.

When he waited upon Miss St John the next day, he found her in the ordinary dress of a lady. She received him with perfect confidence and kindness, but there was no reference made to the past. She told him that she had belonged to a sisterhood, but had left it a few days before, believing she could do better without its restrictions.

“It was an act of cowardice,” she said,—“wearing the dress yesterday. I had got used to it, and did not feel safe without it; but I shall not wear it any more.”

“I think you are right,” said Falconer. “The nearer any friendly act is associated with the individual heart, without intervention of class or creed, the more the humanity, which is the divinity of it, will appear.”

He then told her about Nancy.

“I will keep her about myself for a while,” said Miss St. John, “till I see what can be done with her. I know a good many people who without being prepared, or perhaps able to take any trouble, are yet ready to do a kindness when it is put in their way.”

“I feel more and more that I ought to make some friends,” said Falconer; “for I find my means of help reach but a little way. What had I better do? I suppose I could get some introductions.—I hardly know how.”

“That will easily be managed. I will take that in hand. If you will accept invitations, you will soon know a good many people—of all sorts,” she added with a smile.

About this time Falconer, having often felt the pressure of his ignorance of legal affairs, and reflected whether it would not add to his efficiency to rescue himself from it, began such a course of study as would fit him for the profession of

the law. Gifted with splendored health, and if with a slow strength of grasping, yet with a great power of holding, he set himself to work, and regularly read for the bar.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MY OWN ACQUAINTANCE.

IT was after this that my own acquaintance with Falconer commenced. I had just come out of one of the theatres in the neighbourhood of the Strand, unable to endure any longer the dreary combination of false magnanimity and real meanness, imported from Paris in the shape of a melodrama, for the delectation of the London public. I had turned northwards, and was walking up one of the streets near Covent Garden, when my attention was attracted to a woman who came out of a gin shop, carrying a baby. She went to the kennel, and bent her head over, ill with the poisonous stuff she had been drinking. And while the woman stood in this degrading posture, the poor, white, wasted baby was looking over her shoulder with the smile of a seraph, perfectly unconscious of the hell around her.

“Children *will* see things as God sees them,” murmured a voice beside me.

I turned and saw a tall man with whose form I had already become a little familiar, although I knew nothing of him, standing almost at my elbow, with his eyes fixed on the woman and the child, and a strange smile of tenderness about his mouth, as if he were blessing the little creature in his heart.

He too saw the wonder of the show, typical of so much in the world, indeed of the world itself—the seemingly vile upholding and ministering to the life of the pure, the gracious, the fearless. Aware from his tone more than from his pronunciation that he was a fellow-countryman, I ventured to speak to him, and in a home-dialect.

“It’s a wonnerfu’ sicht. It’s the cake o’ Eze-kiel ower again.”

He looked at me sharply, thought a moment, and said,

“You were going my way when you stopped. I will walk with you, if you will.”

“But what’s to be done about it?” I said.

“About what?” he returned.

“About the child there,” I answered.

“Oh! she is its mother,” he replied, walking on.

“What difference does that make?” I said.

“All the difference in the world. If God has given her that child, what right have you or I to interfere?”

“But I verily believe from the look of the child she gives it gin.”

“God saves the world by the new blood, the children. To take her child from her, would be to do what you could to damn her.”

“It doesn’t look much like salvation there.”

“You mustn’t interfere with God’s thousand years any more than his one day.”

“Are you sure she is the mother?” I asked.

“Yes. I would not have left the child with her otherwise.”

“What would you have done with it? Got it into some orphan asylum?—or the Foundling perhaps?”

“Never,” he answered. “All those societies are wretched inventions for escape from the right way. There ought not to be an orphan asylum in the kingdom.”

“What! Would you put them all down then?”

“God forbid. But I would, if I could, make them all useless.”

“How could you do that?”

“I would *merely* enlighten the hearts of childless people as to their privileges.”

“Which are?”

“To be fathers and mothers to the fatherless and motherless.”

“I have often wondered why more of them did not adopt children. Why don’t they?”

“For various reasons which a real love to child nature would blow to the winds—all comprised in this, that such a child would not be their own child. As if ever a child could be their own! That a child is God’s is of rather more consequence than whether it is born of this or that couple. Their hearts would surely be glad when they went into heaven to have the angels of the little ones that always behold the face of their Father coming round them, though they were not exactly their father and mother.”

“I don’t know what the passage you refer to means.”

“Neither do I. But it must mean something, if He said it. Are you a clergyman?”

“No. I am only a poor teacher of mathematics and poetry, shown up the back stairs into the nurseries of great houses.”

“A grand chance, if I may use the word.”

“I do try to wake a little enthusiasm in the sons and daughters—without much success, I fear.”

“Will you come and see me?” he said.

“With much pleasure. But, as I have given you an answer, you owe me one.”

“I do.”

“Have you adopted a child?”

“No.”

“Then you have some of your own?”

“No.”



“Then, excuse me, but why the warmth of your remarks on those who——”

“I think I shall be able to satisfy you on that point, if we draw to each other. Meantime I must leave you. Could you come to-morrow evening?”

“With pleasure.”

We arranged the hour and parted. I saw him walk into a low public-house, and went home.

At the time appointed, I rang the bell, and was led by an elderly woman up the stair, and shown into a large room on the first-floor—poorly furnished, and with many signs of bachelor-carelessness. Mr. Falconer rose from an old hair-covered sofa to meet me as I entered. I will first tell my reader something of his personal appearance.

He was considerably above six feet in height, square-shouldered, remarkably long in the arms, and his hands were uncommonly large and powerful. His head was large, and covered with dark wavy hair, lightly streaked with gray. His broad forehead projected over deep-sunk eyes, that shone like black fire. His features, especially his Roman nose, were large, and finely, though not delicately, modelled. His nostrils were remarkably large and flexible, with a tendency to slight motion: I found on further acquaintance that when he was excited, they expanded in a wild equine manner. The expres-

sion of his mouth was of tender power, crossed with humour. He kept his lips a little compressed, which gave a certain sternness to his countenance; but when this sternness dissolved in a smile, it was something enchanting. He was plainly, rather shabbily clothed. No one could have guessed at his profession or social position. He came forward and received me cordially. After a little indifferent talk, he asked me if I had any other engagement for the evening.

“I never have any engagements,” I answered—“at least, of a social kind. I am *burd alane*. I know next to nobody.”

“Then perhaps you would not mind going out with me for a stroll?”

“I shall be most happy,” I answered.

There was something about the man I found exceedingly attractive; I had very few friends; and there was besides something odd, almost romantic, in this beginning of an intercourse: I would see what would come of it.

“Then we’ll have some supper first,” said Mr. Falconer, and rang the bell.

While we ate our chops—

“I daresay you think it strange,” my host said, “that without the least claim on your acquaintance, I should have asked you to come and see me, Mr.—”

He stopped, smiling.

“My name is Gordon—Archie Gordon,” I said.

“Well, then, Mr. Gordon, I confess I have a design upon you. But you will remember that you addressed me first.”

“You *spoke* first,” I said.

“Did I?”

“I did not say you spoke to me, but you spoke.—I should not have ventured to make the remark I did make, if I had not heard your voice first. What design have you on me?”

“That will appear in due course. Now take a glass of wine, and we’ll set out.”

We soon found ourselves in Holborn, and my companion led the way towards the City. The evening was sultry and close.

“Nothing excites me more,” said Mr. Falconer, “than a walk in the twilight through a crowded street. Do you find it affect you so?”

“I cannot speak as strongly as you do,” I replied. “But I perfectly understand what you mean. Why is it, do you think?”

“Partly, I fancy, because it is like the primordial chaos, a concentrated tumult of undetermined possibilities. The germs of infinite adventure and result are floating around you like a snow-storm. You do not know what may arise in a moment and colour all your future. Out of this mass may suddenly start something marvellous, or, it may be, something you have been looking for for years.”

The same moment, a fierce flash of lightning, like a blue sword-blade a thousand times shattered, quivered and palpitated about us, leaving a thick darkness on the sense. I heard my companion give a suppressed cry, and saw him run up against a heavy drayman who was on the edge of the path, guiding his horses with his long whip. He begged the man's pardon, put his hand to his head, and murmured, "I shall know him now." I was afraid for a moment that the lightning had struck him, but he assured me there was nothing amiss. He looked a little excited and confused, however.

I should have forgotten the incident, had he not told me afterwards—when I had come to know him intimately, that in the moment of that lightning flash, he had had a strange experience: he had seen the form of his father, as he had seen him that Sunday afternoon, in the midst of the surrounding light. He was as certain of the truth of the presentation as if a gradual revival of memory had brought with it the clear conviction of its own accuracy. His explanation of the phenomenon was, that, in some cases, all that prevents a vivid conception from assuming objectivity, is the self-assertion of external objects. The gradual approach of darkness cannot surprise and isolate the phantasm; but the suddenness of the lightning could and did, obliterating everything without, and

leaving that over which it had no power standing alone, and therefore visible.

“But,” I ventured to ask, “whence the minuteness of detail, surpassing, you say, all that your memory could supply?”

“That I think was a quickening of the memory by the realism of the presentation. Excited by the vision, it caught at its own past, as it were, and suddenly recalled that which it had forgotten. In the rapidity of all pure mental action, this at once took its part in the apparent objectivity.”

To return to the narrative of my first evening in Falconer’s company.

It was strange how insensible the street population was to the grandeur of the storm. While the thunder was billowing and bellowing over and around us—

“A hundred pins for one ha’penny,” bawled a man from the gutter, with the importance of a Cagliostro.

“Evening Star! Telegrauwff!” roared an ear-splitting urchin in my very face. I gave him a shove off the pavement.

“Ah! don’t do that,” said Falconer. “It only widens the crack between him and his fellows—not much, but a little.”

“You are right,” I said. “I won’t do it again.”

The same moment we heard a tumult in a

neighbouring street. A crowd was execrating a policeman, who had taken a woman into custody, and was treating her with unnecessary rudeness. Falconer looked on for a few moments.

“Come, policeman!” he said at length, in a tone of expostulation. “You’re rather rough, are you not? She’s a woman, you know.”

“Hold your blasted humbug,” answered the man, an exceptional specimen of the force at that time at all events, and shook the tattered wretch, as if he would shake her out of her rags.

Falconer gently parted the crowd, and stood beside the two.

“I will help you,” he said, “to take her to the station, if you like, but you must not treat her that way.”

“I don’t want your help,” said the policeman; “I know you, and all the damned lot of you.”

“Then I shall be compelled to give you a lesson,” said Falconer.

The man’s only answer was a shake that made the woman cry out.

“I shall get into trouble if you get off,” said Falconer to her. “Will you promise me, on your word, to go with me to the station, if I rid you of the fellow?”

“I will, I will,” said the woman.

“Then, look out,” said Falconer to the police-

man; "for I'm going to give you that lesson."

The officer let the woman go, took his baton, and made a blow at Falconer. In another moment—I could hardly see how—he lay in the street.

"Now, my poor woman, come along," said Falconer.

She obeyed, crying gently. Two other policemen came up.

"Do you want to give that woman in charge, Mr. Falconer?" asked one of them.

"I give that man in charge," cried his late antagonist, who had just scrambled to his feet. "Assaulting the police in discharge of their duty."

"Very well," said the other. "But you're in the wrong box, and that you'll find. You had better come along to the station, sir."

"Keep that fellow from getting hold of the woman—you two, and we'll go together," said Falconer.

Bewildered with the rapid sequence of events, I was following in the crowd. Falconer looked about till he saw me, and gave me a nod which meant *come along*. Before we reached Bow Street, however, the offending policeman, who had been walking a little behind in conversation with one of the others, advanced to Falconer, touched his hat, and said something, to which Falconer replied.



“Remember, I have my eye upon you,” was all I heard, however, as he left the crowd and rejoined me. We turned and walked eastward again.

The storm kept on intermittently, but the streets were rather more crowded than usual notwithstanding.

“Look at that man in the woollen jacket,” said Falconer. “What a beautiful outline of face! There must be something noble in that man.”

“I did not see him,” I answered, “I was taken up with a woman’s face, like that of a beautiful corpse. It’s eyes were bright. There was gin in its brain.”

The streets swarmed with human faces gleaming past. It was a night of ghosts.

There stood a man who had lost one arm, earnestly pumping bilge-music out of an accordion with the other, holding it to his body with the stump. There was a woman, pale with hunger and gin, three match-boxes in one extended hand, and the other holding a baby to her breast. As we looked, the poor baby let go its hold, turned its little head, and smiled a wan, shrivelled, old-fashioned smile in our faces.

“Another happy baby, you see, Mr. Gordon,” said Falconer. “A child, fresh from God, finds its heaven where no one else would. The devil could drive woman out of Paradise; but the devil himself cannot drive the Paradise out of a woman.”

“What can be done for them?” I said, and at the moment, my eye fell upon a row of little children, from two to five years of age, seated upon the curb-stone.

They were chattering fast, and apparently carrying on some game, as happy as if they had been in the fields.

“Wouldn’t you like to take all those little grubby things, and put them in a great tub and wash them clean?” I said.

“They’d fight like spiders,” rejoined Falconer.

“They’re not fighting now.”

“Then don’t make them. It would be all useless. The probability is that you would only change the forms of the various evils, and possibly for worse. You would buy all that man’s glue-lizards, and that man’s three-foot rules, and that man’s dog-collars and chains, at three times their value, that they might get more drink than usual, and do nothing at all for their living to-morrow.—What a happy London you would make if you were Sultan Haroun!” he added, laughing. “You would put an end to poverty altogether, would you not?”

I did not reply at once.

“But I beg your pardon,” he resumed; “I am very rude.”

“Not at all,” I returned. “I was only thinking how to answer you. They would be no worse

after all than those who inherit property and lead idle lives.”

“ True ; but they would be no better. Would you be content that your quondam poor should be no better off than the rich ? What would be gained thereby ? Is there no truth in the words ‘ Blessed are the poor ? ’ A deeper truth than most Christians dare to see.—Did you ever observe that there is not one word about the vices of the poor in the Bible—from beginning to end ? ”

“ But they have their vices.”

“ Indubitably. I am only stating a fact. The Bible is full enough of the vices of the rich. I make no comment.”

“ But don’t you care for their sufferings ? ”

“ They are of secondary importance quite. But if you had been as much amongst them as I, perhaps you would be of my opinion, that the poor are not, cannot possibly feel so wretched as they seem to us. They live in a climate, as it were, which is their own, by natural law comply with it, and find it not altogether unfriendly. The Laplander will prefer his wastes to the rich fields of England, not merely from ignorance, but for the sake of certain blessings amongst which he has been born and brought up. The blessedness of life depends far more on its interest than upon its comfort. The need of exertion and the doubt of success, renders life much more interesting to the poor than

it is to those who, unblessed with anxiety for the bread that perisheth, waste their poor hearts about rank and reputation."

"I thought such anxiety was represented as an evil in the New Testament."

"Yes. But it is a still greater evil to lose it in any other way than by faith in God. You would remove the anxiety by destroying its cause: God would remove it by lifting them above it, by teaching them to trust in him, and thus making them partakers of the divine nature. Poverty is a blessing when it makes a man look up."

"But you cannot say it does so always."

"I cannot determine when, where, and how much; but I am sure it does. And I am confident that to free those hearts from it by any deed of yours would be to do them the greatest injury you could. Probably their want of foresight would prove the natural remedy, speedily reducing them to their former condition—not however without serious loss."

"But will not this theory prove at last an anaesthetic rather than an anodyne? I mean that, although you may adopt it at first for refuge from the misery the sight of their condition occasions you, there is surely a danger of its rendering you at last indifferent to it."

"Am I indifferent? But you do not know

me yet. Pardon my egotism. There may be such danger. Every truth has its own danger or shadow. Assuredly I would have no less labour spent upon them. But there can be no *true* labour done, save in as far as we are fellow-labourers with God. We must work with him, not *against* him. Everyone who works without believing that God is doing the best, the absolute good for them, is, must be, more or less, thwarting God. He would take the poor out of God's hands. For others, as for ourselves, we must trust him. If we could thoroughly understand anything, that would be enough to prove it undivine; and that which is but one step beyond our understanding must be in some of its relations as mysterious as if it were a hundred. But through all this darkness about the poor, at least I can see wonderful veins and fields of light, and with the help of this partial vision, I trust for the rest. The only and the greatest thing man is capable of is Trust in God."

"What then is a man to do for the poor? How is he to work with God?" I asked.

"He must be a man amongst them—a man breathing the air of a higher life, and therefore in all natural ways fulfilling his endless human relations to them. Whatever you do for them, let your own being, that is you in relation to them, be the background, that so you may be

a link between them and God, or rather I should say, between them and the knowledge of God."

While Falconer spoke, his face grew grander and grander, till at last it absolutely shone. I felt that I walked with a man whose faith was his genius.

"Of one thing I am pretty sure," he resumed, "that the same recipe Goethe gave for the enjoyment of life, applies equally to all work: 'Do the thing that lies next you.' That is all our business. Hurried results are worse than none. We must force nothing, but be partakers of the divine patience. How long it took to make the cradle! and we fret that the baby Humanity is not reading Euclid and Plato, even that it is not understanding the Gospel of St. John! If there is one thing evident in the world's history, it is that God hasteneth not. All haste implies weakness. Time is as cheap as space and matter. What they call the church militant is only at drill yet, and a good many of the officers too not out of the awkward squad. I am sure I, for a private, am not. In the drill a man has to conquer himself, and move with the rest by individual attention to his own duty: to what mighty battle-fields the recruit may yet be led, he does not know. Meantime he has nearly enough to do with his goose-step, while there is plenty of single combat, skirmish,



and light cavalry work generally, to get him ready for whatever is to follow. I beg your pardon: I am preaching."

"Eloquently," I answered.

Of some of the places into which Falconer led me that night I will attempt no description—places blazing with lights and mirrors, crowded with dancers, billowing with music, close and hot, and full of the saddest of all sights, the uninteresting faces of commonplace women.

"There is a passion," I said, as we came out of one of these dreadful places, "that lingers about the heart like the odour of violets, like a glimmering twilight on the borders of moonrise; and there is a passion that wraps itself in the vapours of patchouli and coffins, and streams from the eyes like gaslight from a tavern. And yet the line is ill to draw between them. It is very dreadful. These are women."

"They are in God's hands," answered Falconer. "He hasn't done with them yet. Shall it take less time to make a woman than to make a world? Is not the woman the greater? She may have her ages of chaos, her centuries of crawling slime, yet rise a woman at last."

"How much alike all those women were!"

"A family likeness, alas! which always strikes you first."

"Some of them looked quite modest."

"There are great differences. I do not know



anything more touching than to see how a woman will sometimes wrap around her the last remnants of a soiled and ragged modesty. It has moved me almost to tears to see such a one hanging her head in shame during the singing of a detestable song. That poor thing's shame was precious in the eyes of the Master, surely."

"Could nothing be done for her?"

"I contrived to let her know where she would find a friend if she wanted to be good: that is all you can do in such cases. If the horrors of their life do not drive them out at such an open door, you can do nothing else, I fear—for the time."

"Where are you going now, may I ask?"

"Into the city—on business," he added with a smile.

"There will be nobody there so late."

"Nobody! One would think you were the beadle of a city church, Mr. Gordon."

We came into a very narrow, dirty street. I do not know where it is. A slatternly woman advanced from an open door, and said,

"Mr. Falconer."

He looked at her for a moment.

"Why, Sarah, have you come to this already?" he said.

"Never mind me, sir. It's no more than you told me to expect. You knowed him better than I did. Leastways I'm an honest woman."

“Stick to that, Sarah; and be good-tempered.”

“I’ll have a try anyhow, sir. But there’s a poor cretur a dyin’ upstairs; and I’m afeard it’ll go hard with her, for she throwed a bible out o’ window this very morning, sir.”

“Would she like to see me? I’m afraid not.”

“She’s got Lilywhite, what’s a sort of a reader, readin’ that same bible to her now.”

“There can be no great harm in just looking in,” he said, turning to me.

“I shall be happy to follow you—anywhere,” I returned.

“She’s awful ill, sir; cholerer or summat,” said Sarah, as she led the way up the creaking stair.

We half entered the room softly. Two or three women sat by the chimney, and another by a low bed, covered with a torn patchwork counterpane, spelling out a chapter in the Bible. We paused for a moment to hear what she was reading. Had the book been opened by chance, or by design? It was the story of David and Bathsheba. Moans came from the bed, but the candle in a bottle, by which the woman was reading, was so placed that we could not see the sufferer.

We stood still and did not interrupt the reading.

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed a coarse voice from the side of the chimney: “the saint you see was no better than some of the rest of us!”

"I think he was a good deal worse just then," said Falconer, stepping forward.

"Gracious! there's Mr. Falconer," said another woman, rising, and speaking in a flattering tone.

"Then," remarked the former speaker, "there's a chance for old Moll and me yet. King David was a saint, wasn't he? Ha! ha!"

"Yes, and you might be one too, if you were as sorry for your faults as he was for his."

"Sorry, indeed! I'll be damned if I be sorry. What have I to be sorry for? Where's the harm in turning an honest penny? I ha' took no man's wife, nor murdered himself neither. There's yer saints! He was a rum 'un. Ha! ha!"

Falconer approached her, bent down and whispered something no one could hear but herself. She gave a smothered cry, and was silent.

"Give me the book," he said, turning towards the bed. "I'll read you something better than that. I'll read about some one that never did anything wrong."

"I don't believe there never was no sich a man," said the previous reader, as she handed him the book, grudgingly.

"Not Jesus Christ himself?" said Falconer.

"Oh! I didn't know as you meant him."

"Of course I meant him. There never was another."

“I have heard tell—p'raps it was yourself, sir—as how he didn't come down upon us over hard after all, bless him!”

Falconer sat down on the side of the bed, and read the story of Simon the Pharisee and the woman that was a sinner. When he ceased, the silence that followed was broken by a sob from somewhere in the room. The sick woman stopped her moaning, and said,

“Turn down the leaf there, please, sir. Lily-white will read it to me when you're gone.”

The some one sobbed again. It was a young slender girl, with a face disfigured by the small-pox, and, save for the tearful look it wore, poor and expressionless. Falconer said something gentle to her.

“Will he ever come again?” she sobbed.

“Who?” asked Falconer.

“Him—Jesus Christ. I've heard tell, I think, that he was to come again some day.”

“Why do you ask?”

“Because—” she said, with a fresh burst of tears, which rendered the words that followed unintelligible. But she recovered herself in a few moments, and, as if finishing her sentence, put her hand up to her poor, thin, colourless hair, and said,

“*My* hair ain't long enough to wipe his feet.”

“Do you know what he would say to you, my girl?” Falconer asked.

“No. What would he say to me? He would speak to me, would he?”

“He would say: Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

“Would he, though? Would he?” she cried, starting up. “Take me to him—take me to him. Oh! I forgot. He’s dead. But he will come again, won’t he? He was crucified four times, you know, and he must ha’ come four times for that. Would they crucify him again, sir?”

“No, they wouldn’t crucify him now—in England at least. They would only laugh at him, shake their heads at what he told them, as much as to say it wasn’t true, and sneer and mock at him in some of the newspapers.”

“Oh, dear! I’ve been very wicked.”

“But you won’t be so any more.”

“No, no, no. I won’t, I won’t, I won’t.”

She talked hurriedly, almost wildly. The coarse old woman tapped her forehead with her finger. Falconer took the girl’s hand.

“What is your name?” he said.

“Nell.”

“What more?”

“Nothing more.”

“Well, Nelly,” said Falconer.

“How kind of you to call me Nelly!” interrupted the poor girl. “They always calls me Nell, just.”

“Nelly,” repeated Falconer, “I will send a

lady here to-morrow to take you away with her, if you like, and tell you how you must do to find Jesus.—People always find him that want to find him.”

The elderly woman with the rough voice, who had not spoken since he whispered to her, now interposed with a kind of cowed fierceness.

“Don’t go putting humbug into my child’s head now, Mr. Falconer—’ticing her away from her home. Everybody knows my Nell’s been an idiot since ever she was born. Poor child!”

“I ain’t your child,” cried the girl, passionately. “I ain’t nobody’s child.”

“You are God’s child,” said Falconer, who stood looking on with his eyes shining, but otherwise in a state of absolute composure.

“Am I? Am I? You won’t forget to send for me, sir?”

“That I won’t,” he answered.

She turned instantly towards the woman, and snapped her fingers in her face.

“I don’t care that for you,” she cried. “You dare to touch me now, and I’ll bite you.”

“Come, come, Nelly, you mustn’t be rude,” said Falconer.

“No, sir, I won’t no more, leastways to nobody but she. It’s she makes me do all the wicked things, it is.”

She snapped her fingers in her face again, and then burst out crying.

“She will leave you alone now, I think,” said Falconer. “She knows it will be quite as well for her not to cross me.”

This he said very significantly, as he turned to the door, where he bade them a general good night. When we reached the street, I was too bewildered to offer any remark. Falconer was the first to speak.

“It always comes back upon me, as if I had never known it before, that women like some of those were of the first to understand our Lord.”

“Some of them wouldn’t have understood him any more than the Pharisee, though.”

“I’m not so sure of that. Of course there are great differences. There are good and bad amongst them as in every class. But one thing is clear to me, that no indulgence of passion destroys the spiritual nature so much as respectable selfishness.”

“I am afraid you will not get society to agree with you,” I said, foolishly.

“I have no wish that society should agree with me; for if it did, it would be sure to do so upon the worst of principles. It is better that society should be cruel, than that it should call the horrible thing a trifle: it would know nothing between.”

Through the city—though it was only when we crossed one of the main thoroughfares that I knew where we were—we came into the



region of Bethnal Green. From house to house till it grew very late, Falconer went, and I went with him. I will not linger on this part of our wanderings. Where I saw only dreadful darkness, Falconer always would see some glimmer of light. All the people into whose houses we went knew him. They were all in the depths of poverty. Many of them were respectable. With some of them he had long talks in private, while I waited near. At length he said,

“I think we had better be going home, Mr. Gordon. You must be tired.”

“I am, rather,” I answered. “But it doesn’t matter, for I have nothing to do to-morrow.”

“We shall get a cab, I daresay, before we go far.”

“Not for me. I am not so tired, but that I would rather walk,” I said.

“Very well,” he returned. “Where do you live?”

I told him.

“I will take you the nearest way.”

“You know London marvellously.”

“Pretty well now,” he answered.

We were somewhere near Leather Lane about one o’clock. Suddenly we came upon two tiny children standing on the pavement, one on each side of the door of a public-house. They could not have been more than two and three. They were sobbing a little—not much. The tiny

creatures stood there awfully awake in sleeping London, while even their own playmates were far off in the fairyland of dreams.

“This is the kind of thing,” I said, “that makes me doubt whether there be a God in heaven.”

“That is only because he is down here,” answered Falconer, “taking such good care of us all that you can’t see him. There is not a gin-palace, or yet lower hell in London, in which a man or woman can be out of God. The whole being love, there is nothing for you to set it against and judge it by. So you are driven to fancies.”

The house was closed, but there was light above the door. We went up to the children, and spoke to them, but all we could make out was that mammie was in there. One of them could not speak at all. Falconer knocked at the door. A good-natured-looking Irishwoman opened it a little way and peeped out.

“Here are two children crying at your door, ma’am,” said Falconer.

“Och, the darlin’s! they want their mother.”

“Do you know her, then?”

“True for you, and I do. She’s a mighty dacent woman in her way when the drink’s out uv her, and very kind to the childher; but oncet she smells the dhrop o’ gin, her head’s gone intirely. The purty craytures have waked up, an’

she not come home, and they 've run out to look after her."

Falconer stood a moment as if thinking what would be best. The shriek of a woman rang through the night.

"There she is!" said the Irishwoman. "For God's sake don't let her get a hould o' the darlints. She's ravin' mad. I seen her try to kill them oncet."

The shrieks came nearer and nearer, and after a few moments the woman appeared in the moonlight, tossing her arms over her head, and screaming with a despair for which she yet sought a defiant expression. Her head was uncovered, and her hair flying in tangles; her sleeves were torn, and her gaunt arms looked awful in the moonlight. She stood in the middle of the street, crying again and again, with shrill laughter between, "Nobody cares for me, and I care for nobody! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Mammie! mammie!" cried the elder of the children, and ran towards her.

The woman heard, and rushed like a fury towards the child. Falconer too ran, and caught up the child. The woman gave a howl and rushed towards the other. I caught up that one. With a last shriek, she dashed her head against the wall of the public-house, dropped on the pavement, and lay still.

Falconer set the child down, lifted the wasted

form in his arms, and carried it into the house. The face was blue as that of a strangled corpse. She was dead.

“Was she a married woman?” Falconer asked.

“It’s myself can’t tell you, sir,” the Irish-woman answered. “I never saw any boy with her.”

“Do you know where she lived?”

“No, sir. Somewhere not far off, though. The children will know.”

But they stood staring at their mother, and we could get nothing out of them. They would not move from the corpse.

“I think we may appropriate this treasure-trove,” said Falconer, turning at last to me; and as he spoke, he took the eldest in his arms. Then, turning to the woman, he gave her a card, saying, “If any inquiry is made about them, there is my address.—Will you take the other, Mr. Gordon?”

I obeyed. The children cried no more. After traversing a few streets, we found a cab, and drove to a house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury.

Falconer got out at the door of a large house, and rung the bell; then got the children out, and dismissed the cab. There we stood in the middle of the night, in a silent, empty square, each with a child in his arms. In a few minutes we heard the bolts being withdrawn. The door

opened, and a tall, graceful form wrapped in a dressing-gown, appeared.

"I have brought you two babies, Miss St. John," said Falconer. "Can you take them?"

"To be sure I can," she answered, and turned to lead the way. "Bring them in."

We followed her into a little back room. She put down her candle, and went straight to the cupboard, whence she brought a sponge-cake, from which she cut a large piece for each of the children.

"What a mercy they are, Robert,—those little gates in the face! Red Lane leads direct to the heart," she said, smiling, as if she rejoiced in the idea of taming the little wild angelets. "Don't you stop. You are tired enough, I am sure. I will wake my maid, and we'll get them washed and put to bed at once."

She was closing the door, when Falconer turned.

"Oh! Miss St. John," he said, "I was forgetting. Could you go down to No. 13 in Soap Lane—you know it, don't you?"

"Yes. Quite well."

"Ask for a girl called Nell—a plain, pock-marked young girl—and take her away with you."

"When shall I go?"

"To-morrow morning. But I shall be in. Don't go till you see me. Good-night."

We took our leave without more ado.

“What a lady-like woman to be the matron of an asylum!” I said.

Falconer gave a little laugh.

“That is no asylum. It is a private house.”

“And the lady?”

“Is a lady of private means,” he answered, who prefers Bloomsbury to Belgravia, because it is easier to do noble work in it. Her heaven is on the confines of hell.”

“What will she do with those children?”

“Kiss them and wash them and put them to bed.”

“And after that?”

“Give them bread and milk in the morning.”

“And after that?”

“Oh! there’s time enough. We’ll see. There’s only one thing she won’t do.”

“What is that?”

“Turn them out again.”

A pause followed, I cogitating.

“Are you a society, then,” I asked at length.

“No. At least we don’t use the word. And certainly no other society would acknowledge us.”

“What are you, then?”

“Why should we be anything, so long as we do our work?”

“Don’t you think there is some affectation in refusing a name?”

“Yes, if the name belongs to you? Not otherwise.”

“Do you lay claim to no epithet of any sort?”

“We are a church, if you like. There!”

“Who is your clergyman?”

“Nobody.”

“Where do you meet?”

“Nowhere.”

“What are your rules, then?”

“We have none.”

“What makes you a church?”

“Divine Service.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“The sort of thing you have seen to-night.”

“What is your creed?”

“Christ Jesus.”

“But what do you believe about him?”

“What we can. We count any belief *in* Him—the smallest—better than any belief about him—the greatest—or about anything else besides. But we exclude no one.”

“How do you manage without?”

“By admitting no one.”

“I cannot understand you.”

“Well, then: we are an undefined company of people, who have grown into human relations with each other naturally, through one attractive force—love for human beings, regarding them *as* human beings only in virtue of the divine in them.”



“But you must have some rules,” I insisted.

“None whatever. They would cause us only trouble. We have nothing to take us from our work. Those that are most in earnest, draw most together; those that are on the outskirts have only to do nothing, and they are free of us. But we do sometimes ask people to help us—not with money.”

“But who are the *we*?”

“Why *you*, if you will do anything, and I and Miss St. John, and twenty others—and a great many more I don’t know, for every one is a centre to others. It is our work that binds us together.”

“Then when that stops you drop to pieces.”

“Yes, thank God. We shall then die. There will be no corporate body—which means a bodied body, or an unsouled body, left behind to simulate life, and corrupt, and work no end of disease. We go to ashes at once, and leave no corpse for a ghoul to inhabit and make a vampire of. When our spirit is dead, our body is vanished.”

“Then you won’t last long.”

“Then we oughtn’t to last long.”

“But the work of the world could not go on so.”

“We are not the life of the world. God is. And when we fail, he can and will send out more and better labourers into his harvest-field.

It is a divine accident by which we are thus associated."

"But surely the church must be otherwise constituted."

"My dear sir, you forget: I said we were *a* church, not *the* church."

"Do you belong to the Church of England?"

"Yes, some of us. Why should we not? In as much as she has faithfully preserved the holy records and traditions, our obligations to her are infinite. And to leave her would be to quarrel, and start a thousand *vermiculate* questions, as Lord Byron calls them, for which life is too serious in my eyes. I have no time for that."

"Then you count the Church of England *the* Church?"

"Of England, yes; of the universe, no: that is constituted just like ours, with the living working Lord for the heart of it."

"Will you take me for a member?"

"No."

"Will you not, if——?"

"You may make yourself one if you will. I will not speak a word to gain you. I have shown you work. Do something, and you are of Christ's Church."

We were almost at the door of my lodging, and I was getting very weary in body, and indeed in mind, though I hope not in heart. Before we separated, I ventured to say,

“Will you tell me why you invited me to come and see you? Forgive my presumption, but you seemed to seek acquaintance with me, although you did make me address you first.

He laughed gently, and answered in the words of the ancient mariner :—

“The moment that his face I see,  
I know the man that must hear me :  
To him my tale I teach.”

Without another word, he shook hands with me, and left me. Weary as I was, I stood in the street until I could hear his footsteps no longer.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE BROTHERS.

ONE day, as Falconer sat at a late breakfast, Shargar burst into his room. Falconer had not even known that he was coming home, for he had outstripped the letter he had sent. He had his arm in a sling, which accounted for his leave.

“Shargar!” cried Falconer, starting up in delight.

“Major Shargar, if you please. Give me all my honours, Robert,” said Moray, presenting his left hand.

“I congratulate you, my boy. Well, this is delightful! But you are wounded.”

“Bullet—broken—that’s all. It’s nearly right again. I’ll tell you about it by and by. I am too full of something else to talk about trifles of that sort. I want you to help me.”

He then rushed into the announcement that he had fallen desperately in love with a lady who had come on board with her maid at Malta,

where she had been spending the winter. She was not very young, about his own age, but very beautiful, and of enchanting address. How she could have remained so long unmarried he could not think. It could not be but that she had had many offers. She was an heiress, too, but that Shargar felt to be a disadvantage for him. All the progress he could yet boast of was that his attentions had not been, so far as he could judge, disagreeable to her. Robert thought even less of the latter fact than Shargar himself, for he did not believe there were many women to whom Shargar's attentions would be disagreeable: they must always be simple and manly. What was more to the point, she had given him her address in London, and he was going to call upon her the next day. She was on a visit to Lady Janet Gordon, an elderly spinster, who lived in Park-street.

“Are you quite sure she's not an adventuress, Shargar?”

“It's o' no mainner o' use to tell ye what I'm sure or no sure o', Robert, in sic a case. But I'll manage, somehoo, 'at ye sall see her yersel', an' syne I'll speir back yer ain queston at ye.”

“Weel, hae ye tauld her a' aboot yersel'?”

“No!” answered Shargar, growing suddenly pale. “I never thoecht aboot that. But I had

no richt, for a' that passed, to intrude mysel' up' her to that extent."

"Weel, I reckon ye're richt. Yer wounds an' yer medals ought to weigh weel against a' that. There's this comfort in 't, that gin she bena richt weel worthy o' ye, auld frien', she winna tak ye."

Shargar did not seem to see the comfort of it. He was depressed for the remainder of the day. In the morning he was in wild spirits again. Just before he started, however, he said, with an expression of tremulous anxiety—

"Oucht I to tell her a' at ance—already—about—about my mither?"

"I dinna say that. Maybe it wad be equally fair to her and to yersel' to lat her ken ye a bit better afore ye do that.—We'll think that ower.—Whan ye gang doon the stair, ye'll see a bit brougham at the door waitin' for ye. Gie the coachman ony orders ye like. He's your servant as lang 's ye're in London. Commit yer way to the Lord, my boy."

Though Shargar did not say much, he felt strengthened by Robert's truth to meet his fate with something of composure. But it was not to be decided that day. Therein lay some comfort.

He returned in high spirits still. He had been graciously received both by Miss Hamilton and her hostess—a kind-hearted old lady, who

spoke Scotch with the pure tone of a gentleman, he said—a treat not to be had once in a twelvemonth. She had asked him to go to dinner in the evening, and to bring his friend with him. Robert, however, begged him to make his excuse, as he had an engagement in—a very different sort of place.

When Shargar returned, Robert had not come in. He was too excited to go to bed, and waited for him: It was two o'clock before he came home. Shargar told him there was to be a large party at Lady Patterdale's the next evening but one, and Lady Janet had promised to procure him an invitation.

The next morning Robert went to see Mary St. John, and asked if she knew anything of Lady Patterdale, and whether she could get him an invitation. Miss St. John did not know her, but she thought she could manage it for him. He told her all about Shargar, for whose sake he wished to see Miss Hamilton before consenting to be introduced to her. Miss St. John set out at once, and Falconer received a card the next day. When the evening came, he allowed Shargar to set out alone in his brougham, and followed an hour later in a hansom.

When he reached the house, the rooms were tolerably filled, and as several parties had arrived just before him, he managed to enter



without being announced. After a little while he caught sight of Shargar. He stood alone, almost in a corner, with a strange, rather *raised* expression in his eyes. Falconer could not see the object to which they were directed. Certainly, their look was not that of love. He made his way up to him and laid his hand on his arm. Shargar betrayed no little astonishment when he saw him.

“You here, Robert!” he said.

“Yes, I’m here. Have you seen her yet? Is she here?”

“Wha do ye think ’s speakin’ till her this verra minute? Look there!” Shargar said in a low voice, suppressed yet more to hide his excitement.

Following his directions, Robert saw, amidst a little group of gentlemen surrounding a seated lady, of whose face he could not get a peep, a handsome elderly man, who looked more fashionable than his years justified, and whose countenance had an expression which he felt repulsive. He thought he had seen him before, but Shargar gave him no time to come to a conclusion of himself.

“It’s my brither Sandy, as sure’s deith!” he said; “and he’s been hingin’ aboot her ever sin’ she cam in. But I dinna think she likes him a’thegither by the leuk o’ her.”

“What for dinna ye gang up till her yersel’,

man? I wadna stan' that gin 'twas me."

"I'm feared 'at he ken me. He's terrible gleg. A' the Morays are gleg, and yon marquis has an ee like a hawk."

"What does 't maitter? Ye hae dune naething to be ashamed o' like him."

"Ay; but it's this. I wadna hae her hear the trowth about me frae that boar's mou' o' his first. I wad hae her hear 't frae my ain, an' syne she canna think I meant to tak her in."

At this moment there was a movement in the group. Shargar, receiving no reply, looked round at Robert. It was now Shargar's turn to be surprised at his expression.

"Are ye seein' a vraith, Robert?" he said. "What gars ye leuk like that, man?"

"Oh!" answered Robert, recovering himself, "I thought I saw some one I knew. But I'm not sure. I'll tell you afterwards. We've been talking too earnestly. People are beginning to look at us."

So saying, he moved away towards the group of which the marquis still formed one. As he drew near he saw a piano behind Miss Hamilton. A sudden impulse seized him, and he yielded to it. He made his way to the piano, and seating himself, began to play very softly—so softly that the sounds could scarcely be heard beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the instrument. There was no change on the

storm of talk that filled the room. But in a few minutes a face white as a shroud was turned round upon him from the group in front, like the moon dawning out of a cloud. He stopped at once, saying to himself, "I was right;" and rising, mingled again with the crowd. A few minutes after, he saw Shargar leading Miss Hamilton out of the room, and Lady Janet following. He did not intend to wait his return, but got near the door, that he might slip out when he should re-enter. But Shargar did not return. For, the moment she reached the fresh air, Miss Hamilton was so much better that Lady Janet, whose heart was as young towards young people as if she had never had the unfortunate love affair tradition assigned her, asked him to see them home, and he followed them into her carriage. Falconer left a few minutes after, anxious for quiet that he might make up his mind as to what he ought to do. Before he had walked home, he had resolved on the next step. But not wishing to see Shargar yet, and at the same time wanting to have a night's rest, he went home only to change his clothes, and betook himself to a hotel in Covent Garden.

He was at Lady Janet's door by ten o'clock the next morning, and sent in his card to Miss Hamilton. He was shown into the drawing-room, where she came to him.

“May I presume on old acquaintance?” he asked, holding out his hand.

She looked in his face quietly, took his hand, pressed it warmly, and said,

“No one has so good a right, Mr. Falconer. Do sit down.”

He placed a chair for her, and obeyed.

After a moment’s silence on both sides :

“Are you aware, Miss ——?” he said and hesitated.

“Miss Hamilton,” she said with a smile. “I was Miss Lindsay when you knew me so many years ago. I will explain presently.”

Then with an air of expectation she awaited the finish of his sentence.

“Are you aware, Miss Hamilton, that I am Major Moray’s oldest friend?”

“I am quite aware of it, and delighted to know it. He told me so last night.”

Somewhat dismayed at this answer, Falconer resumed :

“Did Major Moray likewise communicate with you concerning his own history?”

“He did. He told me all.”

Falconer was again silent for some moments.

“Shall I be presuming too far if I venture to conclude that my friend will not continue his visits?”

“On the contrary,” she answered, with the same delicate blush that in old times used to

overspread the lovely whiteness of her face, "I expect him within half an hour."

"Then there is no time to be lost," thought Falconer.

"Without presuming to express any opinion of my own," he said quietly, "a social code far less severe than that which prevails in England, would take for granted that an impassable barrier existed between Major Moray and Miss Hamilton."

"Do not suppose, Mr. Falconer, that I could not meet Major Moray's honesty with equal openness on my side."

Falconer, for the first time almost in his life, was incapable of speech from bewilderment. But Miss Hamilton did not in the least enjoy his perplexity, and made haste to rescue both him and herself. With a blush that was now deep as any rose, she resumed:

"But I owe you equal frankness, Mr. Falconer. There is no barrier between Major Moray and myself but the foolish—no, wicked—indiscretion of an otherwise innocent and ignorant girl. Listen, Mr. Falconer: under the necessity of the circumstances you will not misjudge me if I compel myself to speak calmly. This, I trust, will be my final penance. I thought Lord Rothie was going to marry me. To do him justice, he never said so. Make what excuse for my folly you can. I was lost in a mist of vain

imagination. I had had no mother to teach me anything, Mr. Falconer, and my father never suspected the necessity of teaching me anything. I was very ill on the passage to Antwerp, and when I began to recover a little, I found myself beginning to doubt both my own conduct and his lordship's intentions. Possibly the fact that he was not quite so kind to me in my illness as I had expected, and that I felt hurt in consequence, aided the doubt. Then the thought of my father returning and finding that I had left him, came and burned in my heart like fire. But what was I to do? I had never been out of Aberdeen before. I did not know even a word of French. I was altogether in Lord Rothie's power. I thought I loved him, but it was not much of love that sea-sickness could get the better of. With a heart full of despair I went on shore. The captain slipped a note into my hand. I put it in my pocket, but pulled it out with my handkerchief in the street. Lord Rothie picked it up. I begged him to give it me, but he read it, and then tore it in pieces. I entered the hotel, as wretched as a girl could well be. I began to dislike him. But during dinner he was so kind and attentive that I tried to persuade myself that my fears were fanciful. After dinner he took me out. On the stairs we met a lady whose speech was Scotch. Her maid called her Lady Janet. She



looked kindly at me as I passed. I thought she could read my face. I remembered afterwards that Lord Rothie turned his head away when we met her. We went into the cathedral. We were standing under that curious dome, and I was looking up at its strange lights, when down came a rain of bell-notes on the roof over my head. Before the first tune was over, I seemed to expect the second, and then the third, without thinking how I could know what was coming; but when they ended with the ballad of the Witch Lady, and I lifted up my head and saw that I was not by my father's fireside, but in Antwerp Cathedral with Lord Rothie, despair filled me with a half insane resolution. Happily Lord Rothie was at some little distance talking to a priest about one of Rubens's pictures. I slipped unseen behind the nearest pillar, and then flew from the church. How I got to the hotel I do not know, but I did reach it. 'Lady Janet,' was all I could say. The waiter knew the name, and led me to her room. I threw myself on my knees, and begged her to save me. She assured me no one should touch me. I gasped 'Lord Rothie,' and fainted. When I came to myself—but I need not tell you all the particulars. Lady Janet did take care of me. Till last night I never saw Lord Rothie again. I did not acknowledge him, but he persisted in talking to me, behave as I



would, and I saw well enough that he knew me.”

Falconer took her hand and kissed it.

“Thank God,” he said. “That spire was indeed the haunt of angels as I fancied while I played upon those bells.”

“I knew it was you—that is, I was sure of it when I came to think about it; but at the time I took it for a direct message from heaven, which nobody heard but myself.”

“It was such none the less that I was sent to deliver it,” said Falconer. “I little thought during my imprisonment because of it, that the end of my journey was already accomplished.”

Mysie put her hand in his.

“You have saved me, Mr. Falconer.”

“For Ericson’s sake, who was dying and could not,” returned Falconer.

“Ah!” said Mysie, her large eyes opening with wonder. It was evident she had had no suspicion of his attachment to her.

“But,” said Falconer, “there was another in it, without whom I could have done nothing.”

“Who was that?”

“George Moray.”

“Did he know me then?”

“No. Fortunately not. You would not have looked at him then. It was all done for love of me. He is the truest fellow in the world, and altogether worthy of you, Miss Ha-

milton. I will tell you the whole story some day, lest he should not do himself justice."

"Ah, that reminds me. Hamilton sounds strange in your voice. You suspected me of having changed my name to hide my history?"

It was so, and Falconer's silence acknowledged the fact.

"Lady Janet brought me home, and told my father all. When he died a few years after, she took me to live with her, and never rested till she had brought me acquainted with Sir John Hamilton, in favour of whom my father had renounced his claim to some disputed estates. Sir John had lost his only son, and he had no daughter. He was a kind-hearted old man, rather like my own father. He took to me, as they say, and made me change my name to his, leaving me the property that might have been my father's, on condition that whoever I married should take the same name. I don't think your friend will mind making the exchange," said Mysie in conclusion, as the door opened and Shargar came in.

"Robert, ye're a' gait (*everywhere*)!" he exclaimed as he entered. Then, stopping to ask no questions, "Ye see I'm to hae a name o' my ain efter a'," he said, with a face which looked even handsome in the light of his gladness.

Robert shook hands with him, and wished him joy heartily.

“Wha wad hae thocht it, Shargar,” he added, “that day’at ye pat bonnets for hose upo’ Black Geordie’s huves?”

The butler announced the Marquis of Boarshead. Mysie’s eyes flashed. She rose from her seat, and advanced to meet the marquis, who entered behind the servant. He bowed and held out his hand. Mysie retreated one step, and stood.

“Your lordship has no right to force yourself upon me. You must have seen that I had no wish to renew the acquaintance I was unhappy enough to form—now, thank God, many years ago.”

“Forgive me, Miss Hamilton. One word in private,” said the marquis.

“Not a word,” returned Mysie.

“Before these gentlemen, then, whom I have not the honour of knowing, I offer you my hand.”

“To accept that offer would be to wrong myself even more than your lordship has done.”

She went back to where Moray was standing, and stood beside him. The evil spirit in the marquis looked out at its windows.

“You are aware, madam,” he said, “that your reputation is in the hand I offer you?”

“The worse for it, my lord,” returned Mysie, with a scornful smile. “But your lordship’s brother will protect it.”

“My brother!” said the marquis. “What do you mean? I have no brother!”

“Ye hae mair brithers than ye ken o’, Lord Sandy, and I’m ane o’ them,” said Shargar.

“You are either a liar or a bastard, then,” said the marquis, who had not been brought up in a school of which either self-restraint or respect for women were prominent characteristics.

Falconer forgot himself for a moment, and made a stride forward.

“Dinna hit him, Robert,” cried Shargar. “He ance gae me a shillin’, an’ it helpit, as ye ken, to haud me alive to face him this day.—No liar, my lord, but a bastard, thank heaven.” Then, with a laugh, he instantly added, “Gin I had been ain brither to you, my lord, God only knows what a rascal I micht hae been.”

“By God, you shall answer for your damned insolence,” said the marquis, and, lifting his riding-whip from the table where he had laid it, he approached his brother.

Mysie rang the bell.

“Haud yer han’, Sandy,” cried Shargar. “I hae faced mair fearsome foes than you. But I hae some faimily-feelin’, though ye hae nane: I wadna willin’ly strike my brither.”

As he spoke, he retreated a little. The marquis came on with raised whip. But Falconer stepped between, laid one of his great hands on the marquis’s chest, and flung him to the other

end of the room, where he fell over an ottoman. The same moment the servant entered.

“Ask your mistress to oblige me by coming to the drawing-room,” said Mysie.

The marquis had risen, but had not recovered his presence of mind when Lady Janet entered. She looked inquiringly from one to the other.

“Please, Lady Janet, will you ask the Marquis of Boarshead to leave the house,” said Mysie.

“With all my hert,” answered Lady Janet; “and the mair that he’s a kin’ o’ a cousin o’ my ain. Gang yer wa’s, Sandy. Ye’re no fit company for decent fowk; an’ that ye wad ken yer-sel’, gin ye had ony idea left o’ what decency means.”

Without heeding her, the marquis went up to Falconer.

“Your card, sir.”

Lady Janet followed him.

“’Deed ye s’ get nae cairds here,” she said, pushing him aside.

“So you allow your friends to insult me in your own house as they please, cousin Janet?” said the marquis, who probably felt her opposition the most formidable of all.

“’Deed they canna say waur o’ ye nor I think. Gang awa’, an’ repent. Consider yer gray hairs, man.”

This was the severest blow he had yet received. He left the room, "swearing at large."

Falconer followed him; but what came of it nobody ever heard.

Major and Miss Hamilton were married within three months, and went out to India together, taking Nancy Kennedy with them.

## CHAPTER X.

## A NEOPHYTE.

**B**EFORE many months had passed, without the slightest approach to any formal recognition, I found myself one of the church of labour of which Falconer was clearly the bishop. As he is the subject, or rather object of my book, I will now record a fact which may serve to set forth his views more clearly. I gained a knowledge of some of the circumstances, not merely from the friendly confidences of Miss St. John and Falconer, but from being a kind of a Scotch cousin of Lady Janet Gordon, whom I had taken an opportunity of acquainting with the relation. She was old-fashioned enough to acknowledge it even with some eagerness. The ancient clan-feeling is good in this, that it opens a channel whose very existence is a justification for the flow of simply human feelings along all possible levels of social position. And I would there were more of it. Only something better is coming instead of it—a recognition of the infinite



brotherhood in Christ. All other relations, all attempts by churches, by associations, by secret societies—of Freemasons and others, are good merely as they tend to destroy themselves in the wider truth; as they teach men to be dissatisfied with their limitations. But I wander; for I mentioned Lady Janet now, merely to account for some of the information I possess concerning Lady Georgina Betterton.

I met her once at my so-called cousin's, whom she patronized as a dear old thing. To my mind, she was worth twenty of her, though she was wrinkled and Scottishly sententious. "A sweet old bat," was another epithet of Lady Georgina's. But she came to see her, notwithstanding, and did not refuse to share in her nice little dinners, and least of all, when Falconer was of the party, who had been so much taken with Lady Janet's behaviour to the Marquis of Boarshead, just recorded, that he positively *cultivated* her acquaintance thereafter.

Lady Georgina was of an old family—an aged family, indeed; so old, in fact, that some envious people professed to think it decrepit with age. This, however, may well be questioned if any argument bearing on the point may be drawn from the person of Lady Georgina. She was at least as tall as Mary St. John, and very handsome—only with somewhat masculine features and expression. She had very sloping

shoulders and a long neck, which took its finest curves when she was talking to inferiors : condescension was her forte. Of the admiration of *the men*, she had had more than enough, although either they were afraid to go farther, or she was hard to please.

She had never contemplated anything admirable long enough to comprehend it ; she had never looked up to man or woman with anything like reverence ; she saw too quickly and too keenly into the foibles of all who came near her to care to look farther for their virtues. If she had ever been humbled, and thence taught to look up, she might by this time have been a grand woman, worthy of a great man's worship. She patronized Miss St. John, considerably to her amusement, and nothing to her indignation. Of course she could not understand her. She had a vague notion of how she spent her time ; and believing a certain amount of fanaticism essential to religion, wondered how so sensible and lady-like a person as Miss St. John could *go in for* it.

Meeting Falconer at Lady Janet's, she was taken with him. Possibly she recognized in him a strength that would have made him her master, if he had cared for such a distinction ; but nothing she could say attracted more than a passing attention on his part. Falconer was out of her sphere, and her influences were powerless to reach him.

At length she began to have a glimmering of the relation of labour between Miss St. John and him, and applied to the former for some enlightenment. But Miss St. John was far from explicit, for she had no desire for such assistance as Lady Georgina's. What motives next led her to seek the interview I am now about to record, I cannot satisfactorily explain, but I will hazard a conjecture or two, although I doubt if she understood them thoroughly herself.

She was, if not *blasée*, at least *ennuyée*, and began to miss excitement, and feel blindly about her for something to make life interesting. She was gifted with far more capacity than had ever been exercised, and was of a large enough nature to have grown sooner weary of trifles than most women of her class. She might have been an artist, but she drew like a young lady; she might have been a prophetess, and Byron was her greatest poet. It is no wonder that she wanted something she had not got.

Since she had been foiled in her attempt on Miss St. John, which she attributed to jealousy, she had, in quite another circle, heard strange, wonderful, even romantic stories about Falconer and his doings among the poor. A new world seemed to open before her longing gaze—a world, or a calenture, a mirage? for would she cross the “wandering fields of barren foam,” to reach the green grass that did wave on the far

shore? the dewless desert to reach the fair water that did lie leagues beyond its pictured sweetness? But I think, mingled with whatever motives she may have had, there must have been some desire to be a nobler, that is a more useful woman than she had been.

She had not any superabundance of feminine delicacy, though she had plenty of good-breeding, and she trusted to her position in society to cover the eccentricity of her present undertaking.

One morning after breakfast she called upon Falconer; and accustomed to visits from all sorts of people, Mrs. Ashton showed her into his sitting-room without even asking her name. She found him at his piano, apologized in her fashionable drawl, for interrupting his music, and accepted his offer of a chair without a shade of embarrassment. Falconer seated himself and sat waiting.

“I fear the step I have taken will appear strange to you, Mr. Falconer. Indeed it appears strange to myself. I am afraid it may appear stranger still.”

“It is easy for me to leave all judgment in the matter to yourself, Miss — I beg your pardon; I know we have met; but for the moment I cannot recall your name.”

“Lady Georgina Betterton,” drawled the visi-

tor carelessly, hiding whatever annoyance she may have felt.

Falconer bowed. Lady Georgina resumed.

“Of course it only affects myself; and I am willing to take the risk, notwithstanding the natural desire to stand well in the opinion of any one with whom even *my* boldness could venture such a step.”

A smile, intended to be playful, covered the retreat of the sentence. Falconer bowed again. Lady Georgina had yet again to resume.

“From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard of you—excuse me, Mr. Falconer—I cannot help thinking that you know more of the secret of life than other people—if indeed it has any secret.”

“Life certainly is no burden to me,” returned Falconer. “If that implies the possession of any secret which is not common property, I fear it also involves a natural doubt whether such secret be communicable.”

“Of course I mean only some secret everybody ought to know.”

“I do not misunderstand you.”

“I want to live. You know the world, Mr. Falconer. I need not tell you what kind of life a girl like myself leads. I am not old, but the gilding is worn off. Life looks bare, ugly, uninteresting. I ask you to tell me whether there is any reality in it or not; whether *its* past glow

was only gilt; whether the best that can be done is to get through with it as fast as possible?"

"Surely your ladyship must know some persons whose very countenances prove that they have found a reality at the heart of life."

"Yes. But none whose judgment I could trust. I cannot tell how soon they may find reason to change their minds on the subject. Their satisfaction may only be that they have not tried to rub the varnish off the gilding so much as I, and therefore the gilding itself still shines a little in their eyes."

"If it be only gilding, it is better it should be rubbed off."

"But I am unwilling to think it is. I am not willing to sign a bond of farewell to hope. Life seemed good once. It is bad enough that it seems such no longer, without consenting that it must and shall be so. Allow me to add, for my own sake, that I speak from the bitterness of no chagrin. I have had all I ever cared—or condescended to wish for. I never had anything worth the name of a disappointment in my life."

"I cannot congratulate you upon that," said Falconer, seriously. "But if there be a truth or a heart in life, assurance of the fact can only spring from harmony with that truth. It is not to be known save by absolute contact with it;

and the sole guide in the direction of it must be duty: I can imagine no other possible conductor. We must do before we can know."

"Yes, yes," replied Lady Georgina, hastily, in a tone that implied, "Of course, of course: we know all about that." But aware at once, with the fine instinct belonging to her mental organization, that she was thus shutting the door against all further communication, she added instantly: "But what *is* one's duty? There is the question."

"The thing that lies next you, of course. You are, and must remain, the sole judge of that. Another cannot help you."

"But that is just what I do not know."

I interrupt Lady Georgina to remark—for I too have been a pupil of Falconer—that I believe she must have suspected what her duty was, but would not look firmly at her own suspicion. She added:

"I want direction."

But the same moment she proceeded to indicate the direction in which she wanted to be directed; for she went on:

"You know that now-a-days there are so many modes in which to employ one's time and money that one does not know which to choose. The lower strata of society, you know, Mr. Falconer—so many channels! I want the advice of a man of experience, as to the best invest-



ment, if I may use the expression : I do not mean of money only, but of time as well."

"I am not fitted to give advice in such a matter."

"Mr. Falconer !"

"I assure you I am not. I subscribe to no society myself—not one."

"Excuse me, but I can hardly believe the rumours I hear of you—people will talk, you know—are all inventions. They say you are for ever burrowing amongst the poor. Excuse the phrase."

"I excuse or accept it, whichever you please. Whatever I do, I am my own steward."

"Then you are just the person to help me ! I have a fortune, not very limited, at my own disposal : a gentleman who is his own steward, would find his labours merely facilitated by administering for another as well—such labours, I mean."

"I must beg to be excused, Lady Georgina. I am accountable only for my own, and of that I have quite as much as I can properly manage. It is far more difficult to use money for others than to spend it for yourself."

"Ah !" said Lady Georgina, thoughtfully, and cast an involuntary glance round the untidy room, with its horse-hair furniture, its ragged array of books on the wall, its side-table littered with pamphlets he never read, with papers he

never printed, with pipes he smoked by chance turns. He saw the glance and understood it.

“I am accustomed,” he said, “to be in such sad places for human beings to live in, that I sometimes think even this dingy old room an absolute palace of comfort.—But,” he added, checking himself, as it were, “I do not see in the least how your proposal would facilitate an answer to your question.”

“You seem hardly inclined to do me justice,” said Lady Georgina, with, for the first time, a perceptible, though slight shadow crossing the disc of her resolution. “I only meant it,” she went on, “as a step towards a further proposal, which I think you will allow looks at least in the direction you have been indicating.”

She paused.

“May I beg of you to state the proposal?” said Falconer.

But Lady Georgina was apparently in some little difficulty as to the proper form in which to express her object. At last it appeared in the cloak of a question.

“Do you require no assistance in your efforts for the elevation of the lower classes?” she asked.

“I don’t make any such efforts,” said Falconer.

Some of my lady-readers will probably be remarking to themselves, “How disagreeable of him! I can’t endure the man.” If they knew how Falconer had to beware of the forwardness

and annoyance of well-meaning women, they would not dislike him so much. But Falconer could be indifferent to much dislike, and therein I know some men that envy him.

When he saw, however, that Lady Georgina was trying to swallow a lump in her throat, he hastened to add,

“I have only relations with individuals—none with classes.”

Lady Georgina gathered her failing courage. “Then there is the more hope for me,” she said. “Surely there are things a woman might be useful in that a man cannot do so well—especially if she would do as she was told, Mr. Falconer?”

He looked at her, inquiring of her whole person what *numen* abode in the fane. She misunderstood the look.

“I could dress very differently, you know. I will be a sister of charity, if you like.”

“And wear a uniform?—as if the god of another world wanted to make proselytes or traitors in this! No, Lady Georgina, it was not of a dress so easily altered that I was thinking; it was of the *habit*, the dress of mind, of thought, of feeling. When you laid aside your beautiful dress, could you avoid putting on the garment of *condescension*, the most unchristian virtue attributed to Deity or saint? Could you—I must be plain with you, Lady Georgina, for this has

nothing to do with the forms of so-called society—could your temper endure the mortifications of low opposition and misrepresentation of motive and end—which, avoid intrusion as you might, would yet force themselves on your perception? Could you be rudely, impudently thwarted by the very persons for whom you were spending your strength and means, and show no resentment? Could you make allowances for them as for your own brothers and sisters, your own children?”

Lady Georgina was silent.

“I shall seem to glorify myself, but at that risk I must put the reality before you.—Could you endure the ugliness both moral and physical which you must meet at every turn? Could you look upon loathsomeness, not merely without turning away in disgust, and thus wounding the very heart you would heal, but without losing your belief in the Fatherhood of God, by losing your faith in the actual blood-relationship to yourself of these wretched beings? Could you believe in the immortal essence hidden under all this garbage—God at the root of it all? How would the delicate senses you probably inherit receive the intrusions from which they could not protect themselves? Would you be in no danger of finding personal refuge in the horrid fancy, that these are but the slimy borders of humanity where it slides into, and is

one with bestiality? I could show you one fearful baboonlike woman, whose very face makes my nerves shudder: could you believe that woman might one day become a lady, beautiful as yourself, and *therefore* minister to her? Would you not be tempted, for the sake of your own comfort, if not for the pride of your own humanity, to believe that, like untimely blossoms, these must fall from off the boughs of the tree of life, and come to nothing at all—a theory that may do for the preacher, but will not do for the worker: him it would paralyse?—or, still worse, infinitely worse, that they were doomed, from their birth, to endless ages of a damnation, filthy as that in which you now found them, and must probably leave them? If you could come to this, you had better withhold your hand; for no desire for the betterment of the masses, as they are stupidly called, can make up for a lack of faith in the individual. If you cannot hope for them in your heart, your hands cannot reach them to do them good. They will only hurt them.”

Lady Georgina was still silent. Falconer's eloquence had perhaps made her ashamed.

“I want you to sit down and count the cost, before you do any mischief by beginning what you are unfit for. Last week I was compelled more than once to leave the house where my duty led me, and to sit down upon a stone in

the street, so ill that I was in danger of being led away as intoxicated, only the policeman happened to know me. Twice I went back to the room I had left, crowded with human animals, and one of them at least dying. It was all I could do, and I have tolerable nerve and tolerable experience."

A mist was gathering over Lady Georgina's eyes. She confessed it afterwards to Miss St. John. And through the mist he looked larger than human.

"And then the time you must spend before you can lay hold upon them at all, that is with the personal relation which alone is of any real influence! Our Saviour himself had to be thirty years in the world before he had footing enough in it to justify him in beginning to teach publicly: he had been laying the needful foundations all the time. Not under any circumstances could I consent to make use of you before you had brought yourself into genuine relations with some of them first."

"Do you count societies, then, of no use whatever?" Lady Georgina asked, more to break the awkwardness of her prolonged silence than for any other reason.

"In as far as any of the persons they employ fulfil the conditions of which I have spoken, they are useful—that is, just in as far as they come into genuine human relations with those



whom they would help. In as far as their servants are incapable of this, the societies are hurtful. The chief good which societies might effect would be the procuring of simple justice for the poor. That is what they need at the hands of the nation, and what they do not receive. But though few can have the knowledge of the poor I have, many could do something, if they would only set about it simply, and not be too anxious to convert them; if they would only be their friends after a common-sense fashion. I know, say, a hundred wretched men and women far better than a man in general knows him with whom he claims an ordinary intimacy. I know many more by sight whose names in the natural course of events I shall probably know soon. I know many of their relations to each other, and they talk about each other to me as if I were one of themselves, which I hope in God I am. I have been amongst them a good many years now, and shall probably spend my life amongst them. When I went first, I was repeatedly robbed; now I should hardly fear to carry another man's property. Two years ago I had my purse taken, but next morning it was returned, I do not know by whom: in fact it was put into my pocket again—every coin, as far as I could judge, as it left me. I seldom pretend to teach them—only now and then drop a word of advice. But possibly,



before I die, I may speak to them in public. At present I avoid all attempt at organization of any sort, and as far as I see, am likely of all things to avoid it. What I want is first to be their friend, and then to be at length recognized as such. It is only in rare cases that I seek the acquaintance of any of them: I let it come naturally. I bide my time. Almost never do I offer assistance. I wait till they ask it, and then often refuse the sort they want. The worst thing you can do for them is to attempt to save them from the natural consequences of wrong: you may sometimes help them out of them. But it is right to do many things for them when you know them, which it would not be right to do for them until you know them. I am amongst them; they know me; their children know me; and something is always occurring that makes this or that one come to me. Once I have a footing, I seldom lose it. So you see, in this my labour I am content to do the thing that lies next me. I wait events. You have had no training, no blundering to fit you for such work. There are many other modes of being useful; but none in which I could undertake to direct you. I am not in the habit of talking so much about my ways—but that is of no consequence. I think I am right in doing so in this instance.”

“I cannot misunderstand you,” faltered Lady Georgina.

Falconer was silent. Without looking up from the floor on which her eyes had rested all the time he spoke, Lady Georgina said at last:

“Then what is *my* next duty? What is the thing that lies nearest to me?”

“That, I repeat, belongs to your every-day history. No one can answer that question but yourself. Your next duty is just to determine what your next duty is.—Is there nothing you neglect? Is there nothing you know you ought not to do?—You would know your duty, if you thought in earnest about it, and were not ambitious of great things.”

“Ah then,” responded Lady Georgina, with an abandoning sigh, “I suppose it is something very commonplace, which will make life more dreary than ever. That cannot help me.”

“It will, if it be as dreary as reading the newspapers to an old deaf aunt. It will soon lead you to something more. Your duty will begin to comfort you at once, but will at length open the unknown fountain of life in your heart.”

Lady Georgina lifted up her head in despair, looked at Falconer through eyes full of tears, and said vehemently,

“Mr. Falconer, you can have no conception how wretched a life like mine is. And the futility of everything is embittered by the consciousness that it is from no superiority to such things that I do not care for them.”

“It is from superiority to such things that you do not care for them. You were not made for such things. They cannot fill your heart. It has whole regions with which they have no relation.”

“The very thought of music makes me feel ill. I used to be passionately fond of it.”

“I presume you got so far in it that you asked, ‘Is there nothing more?’ Concluding there was nothing more, and yet needing more, you turned from it with disappointment?”

“It is the same,” she went on hurriedly, “with painting, modelling, reading—whatever I have tried. I am sick of them all. They do nothing for me.”

“How can you enjoy music, Lady Georgina, if you are not in harmony with the heart and source of music?”

“How do you mean?”

“Until the human heart knows the divine heart, it must sigh and complain like a petulant child, who flings his toys from him because his mother is not at home. When his mother comes back to him he finds his toys are good still. When we find Him in our own hearts, we shall find him in everything, and music will be deep enough then, Lady Georgina. It is this that the Brahmin and the Platonist seek; it is this that the mystic and the anchorite sigh for; towards this the teaching of the greatest of men

would lead us: Lord Bacon himself says, 'Nothing can fill, much less extend the soul of man, but God, and the contemplation of God.' It is Life you want. If you will look in your New Testament, and find out all that our Lord says about Life, you will find the only cure for your malady. I know what such talk looks like; but depend upon it, what I am talking about is something very different from what you fancy it. Anyhow to this you must come, one day or other."

"But how am I to gain this indescribable good, which so many seek, and so few find?"

"Those are not my words," said Falconer emphatically. "I should have said—'which so few yet seek; but so many shall at length find.'"

"Do not quarrel with my foolish words, but tell me how I am to find it; for I suppose there must be something in what so many good people assert."

"You thought I could give you help?"

"Yes. That is why I came to you."

"Just so. I cannot give you help. Go and ask it of one who can."

"Speak more plainly."

"Well then: if there be a God, he must hear you if you call to him. If there be a father, he will listen to his child. He will teach you everything."

"But I don't know what I want."

“He does: ask him to tell you what you want. It all comes back to the old story: ‘If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him!’ But I wish you would read your New Testament—the Gospels I mean: you are not in the least fit to understand the Epistles yet. Read the story of our Saviour as if you had never read it before. He at least was a man who seemed to have that secret of life after the knowledge of which your heart is longing.”

Lady Georgina rose. Her eyes were again full of tears. Falconer too was moved. She held out her hand to him, and without another word left the room. She never came there again.

Her manner towards Falconer was thereafter much altered. People said she was in love with him: if she was, it did her no harm. Her whole character certainly was changed. She sought the friendship of Miss St. John, who came at length to like her so much, that she took her with her in some of her walks among the poor. By degrees she began to do something herself after a quiet modest fashion. But within a few years, probably while so engaged, she caught a fever from which she did not recover. It was not till after her death that Falconer told any one of the interview he had had with her. And by that time I had the honour of being very intimate

with him. When she knew that she was dying, she sent for him. Mary St. John was with her. She left them together. When he came out, he was weeping.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE SUICIDE.

FALCONER lived on and laboured on in London. Wherever he found a man fitted for the work, he placed him in such office as De Fleuri already occupied. At the same time he went more into society, and gained the friendship of many influential people. Besides the use he made of this to carry out plans for individual rescue, it enabled him to bestir himself for the first and chief good which he believed it was in the power of the government to effect for the class amongst which he laboured. As I have shown, he did not believe in any positive good being effected save through individual contact—through faith, in a word—faith in the human helper—which might become a stepping-stone through the chaotic misery towards faith in the Lord and in his Father. All that association could do, as such, was only, in his judgment, to remove obstructions from the way of individual growth and education—to put better conditions



within reach—first of all, to provide that the people should be able, if they would, to live decently. He had no notion of domestic inspection, or of offering prizes for cleanliness and order. He knew that misery and wretchedness are the right and best condition of those who live so that misery and wretchedness are the natural consequences of their life. But there ought always to be the possibility of emerging from these; and as things were, over the whole country, for many who would if they could, it was impossible to breathe fresh air, to be clean, to live like human beings. And he saw this difficulty ever on the increase, through the rapacity of the holders of small house-property, and the utter wickedness of railway companies, who pulled down every house that stood in their way, and did nothing to provide room for those who were thus ejected—most probably from a wretched place, but only to be driven into a more wretched still. To provide suitable dwellings for the poor he considered the most pressing of all necessary reforms. His own fortune was not sufficient for doing much in this way, but he set about doing what he could by purchasing houses in which the poor lived, and putting them into the hands of persons whom he could trust, and who were immediately responsible to him for their proceedings: they had to make them fit for human abodes, and let them to those who desired better

accommodation, giving the preference to those already tenants, so long as they paid their reasonable rent, which he considered far more necessary for them to do than for him to have done.

One day he met by appointment the owner of a small block, of which he contemplated the purchase. They were in a dreadfully dilapidated condition, a shame that belonged more to the owner than the inhabitants. The man wanted to sell the houses, or at least was willing to sell them, but put an exorbitant price upon them. Falconer expostulated.

“I know the whole of the rent these houses could bring you in,” he said, “without making any deduction for vacancies and defalcations: what you ask is twice as much as they would fetch if the full rent were certain.”

The poor wretch looked up at him with the leer of a ghoul. He was dressed like a broken-down clergyman, in rusty black, with a neckcloth of whitey-brown.

“I admit it,” he said in good English, and a rather educated tone. “Your arguments are indisputable. I confess besides that so far short does the yield come of the amount on paper, that it would pay me to give them away. But it’s the funerals, sir, that make it worth my while. I’m an undertaker, as you may judge from my costume. I count back-rent in the burying. People may cheat their landlord, but they can’t

cheat the undertaker. They *must* be buried. That's the one indispensable—ain't it, sir?"

Falconer had let him run on that he might have the measure of him. Now he was prepared with his reply.

"You've told me your profession," he said: "I'll tell you mine. I am a lawyer. If you don't let me have those houses for five hundred, which is the full market value, I'll prosecute you. It'll take a good penny from the profits of your coffins to put those houses in a state to satisfy the inspector."

The wretched creature was struck dumb. Falconer resumed.

"You're the sort of man that ought to be kept to your pound of filthy flesh. I know what I say; and I'll do it. The law costs me nothing. *You* won't find it so."

The undertaker sold the houses, and no longer in that quarter killed the people he wanted to bury.

I give this as a specimen of the kind of thing Falconer did. But he took none of the business part in his own hands, on the same principle on which Paul the Apostle said it was unmeet for him to leave the preaching of the word in order to serve tables—not that the thing was beneath him, but that it was not his work so long as he could be doing more important service still.

De Fleuri was one of his chief supports. The

whole nature of the man mellowed under the sun of Falconer, and over the work that Falconer gave him to do. His daughter recovered, and devoted herself to the same labour that had rescued her. Miss St. John was her *superior*. By degrees, without any laws or regulations, a little company was gathered, not of ladies and gentlemen, but of men and women, who aided each other, and without once meeting as a whole, laboured not the less as one body in the work of the Lord, bound in one by bonds that had nothing to do with cobweb committee meetings or public dinners, chairmen or wine-flushed subscriptions. They worked like the leaven of which the Lord spoke.

But De Fleuri, like almost every one in the community I believe, had his own private schemes subserving the general good. He knew the best men of his own class and his own trade, and with them his superior intellectual gifts gave him influence. To them he told the story of Falconer's behaviour to him, of Falconer's own need, and of his hungry-hearted search. An enthusiasm of help seized upon the men. To aid your superior is such a rousing gladness!—Was anything of this in St. Paul's mind when he spoke of our being fellow-workers with God? I only put the question.—Each one of these had his own trustworthy acquaintances, or neighbours, rather—for like

finds out like all the world *through*, as well as *over*—and to them he told the story of Falconer and his father, so that in all that region of London it became known that the man who loved the poor was himself needy, and looked to the poor for their help. Without them he could not be made perfect.

Some of my readers may be inclined to say that it was dishonourable in Falconer to have occasioned the publishing of his father's disgrace. Such may recall to their minds that concealment is no law of the universe; that, on the contrary, the Lord of the Universe said once: "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." Was the disgrace of Andrew Falconer greater because a thousand men knew it, instead of forty, who could not help knowing it? Hope lies in light and knowledge. Andrew would be none the worse that honest men knew of his vice: they would be the first to honour him if he should overcome it. If he would not—the disgrace was just, and would fall upon his son only in sorrow, not in dishonour. The grace of God—the making of humanity by his beautiful hand—no, heart—is such, that disgrace clings to no man after repentance, any more than the feet defiled with the mud of the world come yet defiled from the bath. Even the things that proceed out of the man, and do terribly defile him, can be cast off

like the pollution of the leper by a grace that goes deeper than they ; and the man who says, " I have sinned : I will sin no more," is even by the voice of his brothers crowned as a conqueror, and by their hearts loved as one who has suffered and overcome. Blessing on the God-born human heart ! Let the hounds of God, not of Satan, loose upon sin ;—God only can rule the dogs of the devil ;—let them hunt it to the earth ; let them drag forth the demoniac to the feet of the Man who loved the people while he let the devil take their swine ; and do not talk about disgrace from a thing being known, when the disgrace is that the thing should exist.

One night I was returning home from some poor attempts of my own. I had now been a pupil of Falconer for a considerable time, but having my own livelihood to make, I could not do so much as I would.

It was late, nearly twelve o'clock, as I passed through the region of Seven Dials. Here and there stood three or four brutal-looking men, and now and then a squalid woman with a starveling baby in her arms, in the light of the gin-shops. The babies were the saddest to see—nursery-plants already in training for the places these men and women now held, then to fill a pauper's grave, or perhaps a perpetual cell—say rather, for the awful spaces of silence, where the railway director can no longer be

guilty of a worse sin than house-breaking, and his miserable brother will have no need of the shelter of which he deprived him. Now and then a flaunting woman wavered past—a *night-shade*, as our old dramatists would have called her. I could hardly keep down an evil disgust that would have conquered my pity, when a scanty white dress would stop beneath a lamp, and the gay dirty bonnet, turning round, reveal a painted face, from which shone little more than an animal intelligence, *not* brightened by the gin she had been drinking. Vague noises of strife and of drunken wrath fitted around me as I passed an alley, or an opening door let out its evil secret. Once I thought I heard the dull *thud* of a blow on the head. The noisome vapours were fit for any of Swedenborg's hells. There were few sounds, but the very quiet seemed infernal. The night was hot and sultry. A skinned cat, possibly still alive, fell on the street before me. Under one of the gas-lamps lay something long: it was a tress of dark hair, torn perhaps from some woman's head: she had beautiful hair at least. Once I heard the cry of *murder*, but where, in that chaos of humanity, right or left, before or behind me, I could not even guess. *Home* to such regions, from gorgeous stage-scenery and dresses, from splendid, mirror-beladen casinos, from singing-halls, and places of private and pro-



longed revelry, trail the daughters of men at all hours from midnight till morning. Next day they drink hell-fire that they may forget. Sleep brings an hour or two of oblivion, hardly of peace; but they must wake, worn and miserable, and the waking brings no hope: their only known help lies in the gin-shop. What can be done with them? But the secrets God keeps must be as good as those he tells.

But no sights of the night ever affected me so much as walking through this same St. Giles's on a summer Sunday morning, when churchgoers were in church. Oh! the faces that creep out into the sunshine then, and haunt their doors! Some of them but skins drawn over skulls, living Death's-heads, grotesque in their hideousness.

I was not very far from Falconer's abode. My mind was oppressed with sad thoughts and a sense of helplessness. I began to wonder what Falconer might at that moment be about. I had not seen him for a long time—a whole fortnight. He might be at home: I would go and see, and if there were light in his windows I would ring his bell.

I went. There was light in his windows. He opened the door himself, and welcomed me. I went up with him, and we began to talk. I told him of my sad thoughts, and my feelings of helplessness.

“He that believeth shall not make haste,” he said. “There is plenty of time. You must not imagine that the result depends on you, or that a single human soul can be lost because you may fail. The question, as far as you are concerned, is, whether you are to be honoured in having a hand in the work that God is doing, and will do, whether you help him or not. Some will be honoured: shall it be me? And this honour gained excludes no one: there is work, as there is bread in his house, enough and to spare. It shows no faith in God to make frantic efforts or frantic lamentations. Besides, we ought to teach ourselves to see, as much as we may, the good that is in the condition of the poor.”

“Teach me to see that, then,” I said. “Show me something.”

“The best thing is their kindness to each other. There is an absolute divinity in their self-denial for those who are poorer than themselves. I know one man and woman, married people, who pawned their very furniture and wearing apparel to procure cod-liver oil for a girl dying in consumption. She was not even a relative, only an acquaintance of former years. They had found her destitute and taken her to their own poor home. There are fathers and mothers who will work hard all the morning, and when dinner time comes ‘don’t want any,’

that there may be enough for their children—or half enough, more likely. Children will take the bread out of their own mouths to put in that of their sick brother, or to stick in the fist of baby crying for a crust—giving only a queer little helpless grin, half of hungry sympathy, half of pleasure, as they see it disappear. The marvel to me is that the children turn out so well as they do; but that applies to the children in all ranks of life. Have you ever watched a group of poor children, half a dozen of them with babies in their arms?”

“I have, a little, and have seen such a strange mixture of carelessness and devotion.”

“Yes. I was once stopped in the street by a child of ten, with face absolutely swollen with weeping, asking me to go and see baby who was very ill. She had dropped him four times that morning, but had no idea that could have done him any harm. The carelessness is ignorance. Their form of it is not half so shocking as that of the mother who will tremble at the slightest sign of suffering in her child, but will hear him lie against his brother without the smallest discomfort. Ah! we shall all find, I fear, some day, that we have differed from each other, where we have done best, only in mode—perhaps not even in degree. A grinding tradesman takes advantage of the over supply of labour to get his work done at starvation prices :

I owe him love, and have never thought of paying my debt except in boundless indignation."

"I wish I had your faith and courage, Mr. Falconer," I said.

"You are in a fair way of having far more," he returned. "You are not so old as I am, by a long way. But I fear you are getting out of spirits. Is to-morrow a hard day with you?"

"I have next to nothing to do to-morrow."

"Then will you come to me in the evening? We will go out together."

Of course I was only too glad to accept the proposal. But our talk did not end here. The morning began to shine before I rose to leave him; and before I reached my abode it was broad daylight. But what a different heart I carried within me! And what a different London it was outside of me! The scent of the hayfields came on the hardly-moving air. It was a strange morning—a new day of unknown history—in whose young light the very streets were transformed, looking clear and clean, and wondrously transparent in perspective, with unknown shadows lying in unexpected nooks, with projection and recess, line and bend, as I had never seen them before. The light was coming as if for the first time since the city sprang into being—as if a thousand years had rolled over it in darkness and lamplight, and now, now, after the prayers and longings of

ages, the sun of God was ascending the awful east, and the spirit-voice had gone forth: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come."

It was a well-behaved, proper London through which I walked home. Here and there, it is true, a debauched-looking man, with pale face, and red sleepy eyes, or a weary, withered girl, like a half-moon in the daylight, straggled somewhat. But they looked strange to the London of the morning. They were not of it. Alas for those who creep to their dens, like the wild beasts when the sun arises, because the light has shaken them out of the world. All the horrid phantasms of the Valley of the Shadow of Death that had risen from the pit with the vaporous night had sunk to escape the arrows of the sun, once more into its bottomless depth. If any horrid deed was doing now, how much more horrid in the awful still light of this first hour of a summer morn! How many evil passions now lay sunk under the holy waves of sleep! How many heart-aches were gnawing only in dreams, to wake with the brain, and gnaw in earnest again! And over all brooded the love of the Lord Christ, who is Lord over all blessed for ever, and shall yet cast death and hell into the lake of fire—the holy purifying Fate.

I got through my sole engagement—a very dreary one, for surely never were there stupider

young people in the whole region of rank than those to whom duty and necessity sent me on the Wednesday mornings of that London season—even with some enjoyment. For the lessons Falconer had been giving me clung to me and grew on me until I said thus to myself: “Am I to believe only for the poor, and not for the rich? Am I not to bear with conceit even, hard as it is to teach? for is not this conceit itself the measure as the consequence of incapacity and ignorance? They cannot help being born stupid, any more than some of those children in St. Giles’s can help being born preternaturally, unhealthily clever. I am going with my friend this evening: that hope is enough to make me strong for one day at least.” So I set myself to my task, and that morning wiled the first gleam of intelligent delight out of the eyes of one poor little washed-out ladyship. I could have kissed her from positive thankfulness.

The day did wear over. The evening did come. I was with my friend—for friend I could call him none the less and all the more that I worshipped him.

“I have business in Westminster,” he said, “and then on the other side of the water.”

“I am more and more astonished at your knowledge of London, Mr. Falconer,” I said. “You must have a great faculty for places.”

“I think rather the contrary,” he answered. “But there is no end to the growth of a faculty, if one only uses it—especially when his whole nature is interested in its efficiency, and makes demands upon it. The will applies to the intellect; the intellect communicates its necessities to the brain; the brain bestirs itself, and grows more active; the eyes lend their aid; the memory tries not to be behind; and at length you have a man gifted in localities.”

“How is it that people generally can live in such quiet ignorance of the regions that surround them, and the kind of humanity so near them?” I said after a pause.

“It does seem strange. It is as if a man should not know who were in his own house. Would-be civilization has for the very centre of its citadel, for the citizens of its innermost city, for the heart around which the gay and fashionable, the learned, the artistic, the virtuous, the religious are gathered, a people some of whom are barbarous, some cruel, many miserable, many unhappy, save for brief moments not of hope, but of defiance, distilled in the alembic of the brain from gin: what better life could steam up from such a Phlegethon! Look there: ‘Cream of the Valley!’ As if the mocking serpent must with sweet words of Paradise deepen the horrors of the hellish compound, to which so many of our brothers and sisters made in the image of



God, fly as to their only Saviour from the misery of feeling alive."

"How is it that the civilized people of London do not make a simultaneous inroad upon the haunts of the demons and drive them out?"

"It is a mercy they do not. They would only do infinite mischief. The best notion civilization seems to have is—not to drive out the demons, but to drive out the possessed; to take from them the poor refuges they have, and crowd them into deeper and more fetid hells—to make room for what?—more and more temples in which Mammon may be worshipped. The good people on the other hand invade them with foolish tracts, that lie against God; or give their money to build churches, where there is as yet no people that will go to them. Why, the other day, a young clergyman bored me, and would have been boring me till now, I think, if I would have let him, to part with a block of my houses, where I know every man, woman, and child, and keep them in comparative comfort and cleanliness and decency, to say no more, that he might pull them down and build a church upon the site—not quite five minutes' walk from the church where he now officiates."

It was a blowing, moon-lit night. The gas-lights flickered and wavered in the gusts of wind. It was cold, very cold for the season. Even Falconer buttoned his coat over his chest.

He got a few paces in advance of me sometimes, when I saw him towering black and tall and somewhat gaunt, like a walking shadow. The wind increased in violence. It was a north-easter, laden with dust, and a sense of frozen Siberian steppes. We had to stoop and head it at the corners of streets. Not many people were out, and those who were, seemed to be hurrying home. A few little provision-shops, and a few inferior butchers' stalls were still open. Their great jets of gas, which looked as if they must poison the meat, were flaming fierce and horizontal, roaring like fiery flags, and anon dying into a blue hiss. Discordant singing, more like the howling of wild beasts, came from the corner houses, which blazed like the gates of hell. Their doors were ever on the swing, and the hot odours of death rushed out, and the cold blast of life rushed in. We paused a little before one of them—over the door, upon the sign, was in very deed the name *Death*. There were ragged women within who took their half-dead babies from their bare, cold, cheerless bosoms, and gave them of the poison of which they themselves drank renewed despair in the name of comfort. They say that most of the gin consumed in London is drunk by women. And the little clay-coloured baby-faces made a grimace or two, and sank to sleep on the thin tawny breasts of the mothers, who having ga-

thered courage from the essence of despair, faced the scowling night once more, and with bare necks and hopeless hearts went—whither? Where do they all go when the gin-hells close their yawning jaws? Where do they lie down at night? They vanish like unlawfully risen corpses in the graves of cellars and garrets, in the charnel-vaults of pestiferously-crowded lodging-houses, in the prisons of police-stations, under *dry* arches, within hoardings; or they make vain attempts to rest the night out upon door-steps or curbstones. All their life long man denies them the one right in the soil which yet is so much theirs, that once that life is over, he can no longer deny it—the right of room to lie down. Space itself is not allowed to be theirs by any right of existence: the voice of the night-guardian commanding them to move on, is as the howling of a death-hound hunting them out of the air into their graves.

In St. James's we came upon a group around the gates of a great house. Visitors were coming and going, and it was a show to be had for nothing by those who had nothing to pay. Oh! the children with clothes too ragged to hold pockets for their chilled hands, that stared at the childless duchess descending from her lordly carriage! Oh! the wan faces, once lovely as theirs, it may be, that gazed meagre and pinched and hungry on the young maidens in rose-

colour and blue, tripping lightly through the avenue of their eager eyes—not yet too envious of unattainable felicity to gaze with admiring sympathy on those who seemed to them the angels, the goddesses of their kind. “Oh God!” I thought, but dared not speak, “and thou couldst make *all* these girls so lovely! Thou could give them all the gracious garments of rose and blue and white if thou wouldst! Why should these not be like those? They are hungry even, and wan and torn. These too are thy children. There is wealth enough in thy mines and in thy green fields, room enough in thy starry spaces, O God!” But a voice—the echo of Falconer’s teaching, awoke in my heart—“Because I would have these more blessed than those, and those more blessed with them, for they *are* all my children.”

By the Mall we came into Whitehall, and so to Westminster Bridge. Falconer had changed his mind, and would cross at once. The present bridge was not then finished, and the old bridge alongside of it was still in use for pedestrians. We went upon it to reach the other side. Its centre rose high above the other, for the line of the new bridge ran like a chord across the arc of the old. Through chance gaps in the boarding between, we looked down on the new portion which was as yet used by carriages alone. The moon had, throughout the evening, alter-

nately shone in brilliance from amidst a lake of blue sky, and been overwhelmed in billowy heaps of wind-tormented clouds. As we stood on the apex of the bridge, looking at the night, the dark river, and the mass of human effort about us, the clouds gathered and closed and tumbled upon her in crowded layers. The wind howled through the arches beneath, swept along the boarded fences, and whistled in their holes. The gas-lights blew hither and thither, and were perplexed to live at all.

We were standing at a spot where some shorter pieces had been used in the hoarding; and, although I could not see over them, Falconer, whose head rose more than half a foot above mine, was looking on the other bridge below. Suddenly he grasped the top with his great hands, and his huge frame was over it in an instant. I was on the top of the hoarding the same moment, and saw him prostrate some twelve feet below. He was up the next instant, and running with huge paces diagonally towards the Surrey side. He had seen the figure of a woman come flying along from the Westminster side, without bonnet or shawl. When she came under the spot where we stood, she had turned across at an obtuse angle towards the other side of the bridge, and Falconer, convinced that she meant to throw herself into the river, went over as I have related. She had all but

scrambled over the fence—for there was no parapet yet—by the help of the great beam that ran along to support it, when he caught her by her garments. So poor and thin were those garments, that if she had not been poor and thin too, she would have dropped from them into the darkness below. He took her in his arms, lifted her down upon the bridge, and stood as if protecting her from a pursuing death. I had managed to find an easier mode of descent, and now stood a little way from them.

“Poor girl! poor girl!” he said, as if to himself: “was this the only way left?”

Then he spoke tenderly to her. What he said I could not hear—I only heard the tone.

“O sir!” she cried, in piteous entreaty, “do let me go. Why should a wretched creature like me be forced to live? It’s no good to you, sir. Do let me go.”

“Come here,” he said, drawing her close to the fence. “Stand up again on the beam. Look down.”

She obeyed, in a mechanical kind of way. But as he talked, and she kept looking down on the dark mystery beneath, flowing past with every now and then a dull vengeful glitter—continuous, forceful, slow, he felt her shudder in his still clasping arm.

“Look,” he said, “how it crawls along—black and slimy! how silent and yet how fierce! Is



that a nice place to go to down there? Would there be any rest there, do you think, tumbled about among filth and creeping things, and slugs that feed on the dead; among drowned women like yourself drifting by, and murdered men, and strangled babies? Is that the door by which you would like to go out of the world?"

"It's no worse," she faltered, "—not so bad as what I should leave behind."

"If this were the only way out of it, I would not keep you from it. I would say 'Poor thing! there is no help: she must go.' But there is another way."

"There is no other way, sir—if you knew all," she said.

"Tell me, then."

"I cannot. I dare not. Please—I would rather go."

She looked, from the mere glimpses I could get of her, somewhere about five and twenty, making due allowance for the wear of suffering so evident even in those glimpses. I think she might have been beautiful if the waste of her history could have been restored. That she had had at least some advantages of education, was evident from both her tone and her speech. But oh, the wild eyes, and the tortured lips, drawn back from the teeth with an agony of hopelessness, as she struggled anew, perhaps mistrusting them, to



escape from the great arms that held her!

“But the river cannot drown *you*,” Falconer said. “It can only stop your breath. It cannot stop your thinking. You will go on thinking, thinking, all the same. Drowning people remember in a moment all their past lives. All their evil deeds come up before them, as if they were doing them all over again. So they plunge back into the past and all its misery. While their bodies are drowning, their souls are coming more and more awake.”

“That is dreadful,” she murmured, with her great eyes fixed on his, and growing steadier in their regard. She had ceased to struggle, so he had slackened his hold of her, and she was leaning back against the fence.

“And then,” he went on, “what if, instead of closing your eyes, as you expected, and going to sleep, and forgetting everything, you should find them come open all at once, in the midst of a multitude of eyes, all round about you, all looking at you, all thinking about you, all judging you? What if you should hear, not a tumult of voices and noises, from which you could hope to hide, but a solemn company talking about you—every word clear and plain, piercing your heart with what you could not deny,—and you standing naked and shivering in the midst of them?”

“It is too dreadful!” she cried, making a

movement as if the very horror of the idea had a fascination to draw her towards the realization of it. "But," she added, yielding to Falconer's renewed grasp, "they wouldn't be so hard upon me there. They would not be so cruel as men are here."

"Surely not. But all men are not cruel. I am not cruel," he added, forgetting himself for a moment, and caressing with his huge hand the wild pale face that glimmered upon him as it were out of the infinite night—all but swallowed up in it.

She drew herself back, and Falconer, instantly removing his hand, said,

"Look in my face, child, and see whether you cannot trust me."

As he uttered the words, he took off his hat, and stood bare-headed in the moon, which now broke out clear from the clouds. She did look at him. His hair blew about his face. He turned it towards the wind and the moon, and away from her, that she might be undisturbed in her scrutiny. But how she judged of him, I cannot tell; for the next moment he called out in a tone of repressed excitement:

"Gordon, Gordon, look there—above your head, on the other bridge."

I looked and saw a gray head peering over the same gap through which Falconer had looked a few minutes before. I knew something of

his personal quest by this time, and concluded at once that he thought it was or might be his father.

“I cannot leave the poor thing—I dare not,” he said.

I understood him, and darted off at full speed for the Surrey end of the bridge. What made me choose that end, I do not know; but I was right.

I had some reason to fear that I might be stopped when I reached it, as I had no business to be upon the new bridge. I therefore managed, where the upper bridge sank again towards a level with the lower, to scramble back upon it. As I did so the tall gray-headed man passed me with an uncertain step. I did not see his face. I followed him a few yards behind. He seemed to hear and dislike the sound of my footsteps, for he quickened his pace. I let him increase the distance between us, but followed him still. He turned down the river. I followed. He began to double. I doubled after him. Not a turn could he get before me. He crossed all the main roads leading to the bridges till he came to the last—when he turned toward London Bridge. At the other end, he went down the stairs into Thames Street, and held eastward still. It was not difficult to keep up with him, for his stride though long was slow. He never looked round, and I never saw his face; but I could not help

fancying that his back and his gait and his carriage were very like Falconer's.

We were now in a quarter of which I knew nothing, but as far as I can guess from after knowledge, it was one of the worse districts in London, lying to the east of Spital Square. It was late, and there were not many people about.

As I passed a court, I was accosted thus:

"'Ain't you got a glass of ale for a poor cove, gov'nor?"

"I have no coppers," I said hastily. "I am in a hurry besides," I added as I walked on.

"Come, come!" he said, getting up with me in a moment, "that ain't a civil answer to give a cove after his lush, that 'ain't got a blessed mag."

As he spoke he laid his hand rather heavily on my arm. He was a lumpy-looking individual, like a groom who had been discharged for stealing his horse's provender, and had not quite worn out the clothes he had brought with him. From the opposite side at the same moment, another man appeared, low in stature, pale, and marked with the small-pox.

He advanced upon me at right angles. I shook off the hand of the first, and I confess would have taken to my heels, for more reasons than one, but almost before I was clear of him, the other came against me, and shoved me into

one of the low-browed entries which abounded.

I was so eager to follow my chase that I acted foolishly throughout. I ought to have emptied my pockets at once; but I was unwilling to lose a watch which was an old family piece, and of value besides.

“Come, come! I don’t carry a barrel of ale in my pocket,” I said, thinking to keep them in good-humour. I know better now. Some of these roughs will take all you have in the most good-humoured way in the world, bandying chaff with you all the time. I had got amongst another set, however.

“Leastways you’ve got as good,” said a third, approaching from the court, as villanous looking a fellow as I have ever seen.

“This is hardly the right way to ask for it,” I said, looking out for a chance of bolting, but putting my hand in my pocket at the same time. I confess again I acted very stupidly throughout the whole affair, but it was my first experience.

“It’s a way we’ve got down here, anyhow,” said the third with a brutal laugh. “Look out, Savoury Sam,” he added to one of them.

“Now I don’t want to hurt you,” struck in the first, coming nearer, “but if you gives tongue, I’ll make cold meat of you, and gouge your pockets at my leisure, before ever a blueskin can turn the corner.”

Two or three more came sidling up with their hands in their pockets.

“What have you got there, Slicer?” said one of them, addressing the third, who looked like a ticket-of-leave man.

“We’ve cotched a pig-headed counter-jumper here, that didn’t know Jim there from a man-trap, and went by him as if he’d been a bull-dog on a long chain. He wants to fight cocum. But we won’t trouble him. We’ll help ourselves. Shell out now.”

As he spoke he made a snatch at my watch chain. I forgot myself and hit him. The same moment I received a blow on the head, and felt the blood running down my face. I did not quite lose my senses, though, for I remember seeing yet another man—a tall fellow, coming out of the gloom of the court. How it came into my mind, I do not know, and what I said I do not remember, but I must have mentioned Falconer’s name somehow.

The man they called Slicer, said,

“Who’s he? Don’t know the ——.”

Words followed which I cannot write.

“What! you devil’s gossoon!” returned an Irish voice I had not heard before. “You don’t know Long Bob, you gonnof!”

All that passed I heard distinctly, but I was in a half faint, I suppose, for I could no longer see.



“Now what the devil in a dice-box do you mean?” said Slicer, possessing himself of my watch. “Who is the blasted cove?—not that I care a flash of damnation.”

“A man as ’ll knock you down if he thinks you want it, or give you a half-a-crown if he thinks you want it—all’s one to him, only he’ll have the choosing which.”

“What the hell’s that to me? Look spry. He mustn’t lie there all night. It’s too near the ken. Come along, you Scotch haddock.”

I was aware of a kick in the side as he spoke.

“I tell you what it is, Slicer,” said one whose voice I had not yet heard, “if so be this gentleman’s a friend of Long Bob, you just let him alone, *I say*.”

I opened my eyes now, and saw before me a tall rather slender man in a big loose dress-coat, to whom Slicer had turned with the words:

“*You say!* Ha! ha! Well, *I say*—There’s my Scotch haddock! who’ll touch him?”

“I’ll take him home,” said the tall man advancing towards me. I made an attempt to rise. But I grew deadly ill, fell back, and remember nothing more.

When I came to myself I was lying on a bed in a miserable place. A middle-aged woman of degraded countenance but kindly eyes, was putting something to my mouth with a teaspoon: I knew it by the smell to be gin. But I



could not yet move. They began to talk about me, and I lay and listened. Indeed, while I listened, I lost for a time all inclination to get up, I was so much interested in what I heard.

“He’s comin’ to hisself,” said the woman. “He’ll be all right by and by. I wonder what brings the likes of him into the likes of this place. It must look a kind of a hell to them gentle folks, though *we* manage to live and die in it.”

“I suppose,” said another, “he’s come on some of Mr. Falconer’s business.”

“That’s why Job’s took him in charge. They say he was after somebody or other, they think. —No friend of Mr. Falconer’s would be after another for any mischief,” said my hostess.

“But who is this Mr. Falconer?—Is Long Bob and he both the same alias?” asked a third.

“Why, Bessy, ain’t you no better than that damned Slicer, who ought to ha’ been hung up to dry this many a year? But to be sure you ’aint been long in our quarter. Why, every child hereabouts knows Mr. Falconer. Ask Bobby there?”

“Who’s Mr. Falconer, Bobby?”

A child’s voice made reply:

“A man with a long, long beard, that goes about, and sometimes grows tired and sits on a door-step. I see him once. But he ain’t Mr. Falconer, nor Long Bob neither,” added Bobby

in a mysterious tone. "I know who he is."

"What do you mean, Bobby? Who is he, then?"

The child answered very slowly and solemnly:

"He's Jesus Christ."

The woman burst into a rude laugh.

"Well," said Bobby in an offended tone, "Slicer's own Tom says so, and Polly too. We all says so. He allus pats me on the head, and gives me a penny."

Here Bobby began to cry, bitterly offended at the way Bessy had received his information, after considering him sufficiently important to have his opinion asked.

"True enough," said his mother. "I see him once a sittin' on a door-step, lookin' straight afore him, and worn-out like, an' a lot o' them childer standin' all about him; an' starin' at him as mum as mice, for fear of disturbin' of him. When I come near, he got up with a smile on his face, an' give each on 'em a penny all round, and walked away. Some do say he's a bit crazed like; but I never saw no sign o' that; and if any one ought to know, that one's Job's Mary; and you may believe me when I tell you that he was here night an' mornin' for a week, and after that off and on, when we was all down in the cholerer. Ne'er a one of us would ha' come through but for him."

I made an attempt to rise. The woman came to my bedside.

"How does the gentleman feel hisself now?" she asked kindly.

"Better, thank you," I said. "I am ashamed of lying like this, but I feel very queer."

"And it's no wonder, "when that devil Slicer give you one o' his even down blows on the top o' your head. Nobody knows what he carry in his sleeve that he do it with—only you've got off well, young man, and that *I* tell you, with a decent cut like that. Only don't you go tryin' to get up now. Don't be in a hurry till your blood comes back like."

I lay still again for a little. When I lifted my hand to my head, I found it was bandaged up. I tried again to rise. The woman went to the door, and called out,

"Job, the gentleman's feelin' better. He'll soon be able to move, I think. What will you do with him now?"

"I'll go and get a cab," said Job; and I heard him go down a stair.

I raised myself, and got on the floor, but found I could not stand. By the time the cab arrived, however, I was able to crawl to it. When Job came, I saw the same tall thin man in the long dress coat. His head was bound up too.

"I am sorry to see you too have been hurt—

for my sake, of course," I said. "Is it a bad blow?"

"Oh! it ain't over much. I got in with a smeller afore he came right down with his slogger. But I say, I hope as how you *are* a friend of Mr. Falconer's, for you see we can't afford the likes of this in this quarter for every chance that falls in Slicer's way. Gentlemen has no business here."

"On the contrary, I mean to come again soon, to thank you all for being so good to me."

"Well, when you comes next, you'd better come with *him*, you know."

"You mean with Mr. Falconer?"

"Yes, who else? But are you able to go now? for the sooner you're out of this the better."

"Quite able. Just give me your arm."

He offered it kindly. Taking a grateful farewell of my hostess, I put my hand in my pocket, but there was nothing there. Job led me to the mouth of the court, where a cab, evidently of a sort with the neighbourhood, was waiting for us. I got in. Job was shutting the door.

"Come along with me, Job," I said. "I'm going straight to Mr. Falconer's. He will like to see you, especially after your kindness to me."

"Well, I don't mind if I do look arter you a little longer; for to tell the truth," said Job, as he opened the door, and got in beside me, "I

don't over and above like the look of the—horse.”

“It's no use trying to rob me over again,” I said; but he gave no reply. He only shouted to the cabman to drive to John Street, telling him the number.

I can scarcely recall anything more till we reached Falconer's chambers. Job got out and rang the bell. Mrs. Ashton came down. Her master was not come home.

“Tell Mr. Falconer,” I said, “that I'm all right, only I couldn't make anything of it.”

“Tell him,” growled Job, “that he's got his head broken, and won't be out o' bed to-morrow. That's the way with them fine bred ones. They lies a-bed when the likes o' me must go out what they calls a custamongering, broken head and all.”

“You shall stay at home for a week if you like, Job—that is if I've got enough to give you a week's earnings. I'm not sure though till I look, for I'm not a rich man any more than yourself.”

“Rubbish!” said Job as he got in again; “I was only flummuxing the old un. Bless your heart, sir, I wouldn't stay in—not for nothink. Not for a bit of a pat on the crown, nohow. Home ain't none so nice a place to go snoozing in—nohow. Where do you go to, gov'nor?”

I told him. When I got out, and was open-

ing the door, leaning on his arm, I said I was very glad they hadn't taken my keys.

"Slicer nor Savoury Sam neither's none the better o' you, and I hopes you're not much the worse for them," said Job, as he put into my hands my purse and watch. "Count it, gov'nor, and see if it's all right. Them pusses is mannyfactured express for the convenience o' the fakers. Take my advice, sir, and keep a yellow dump (*sovereign*) in yer coat-tails, a flatch yenork (*half-crown*) in yer waistcoat, and yer yeneps (*pence*) in yer breeches. You won't lose much nohow then. Good night, sir, and I wish you better."

"But I must give you something for plaster," I said. "You'll take a yellow dump, at least?"

"We'll talk about that another day," said Job; and with a second still heartier good night, he left me. I managed to crawl up to my room, and fell on my bed once more fainting. But I soon recovered sufficiently to undress and get into it. I was feverish all night and next day, but towards evening began to recover.

I kept expecting Falconer to come and inquire after me; but he never came. Nor did he appear the next day or the next, and I began to be very uneasy about him. The fourth day I sent for a cab, and drove to John Street. He was at home, but Mrs. Ashton, instead of showing me into his room, led me into her kitchen, and left me there.

A minute after, Falconer came to me. The instant I saw him I understood it all. I read it in his face: He had found his father.



## CHAPTER XII.

## ANDREW AT LAST.

HAVING at length persuaded the woman to go with him, Falconer made her take his arm, and led her off the bridge. In Parliament Street he was looking about for a cab as they walked on, when a man he did not know, stopped, touched his hat, and addressed him.

“I’m thinkin’, sir, ye’ll be sair wantit at hame the nicht. It wad be better to gang at ance, an’ lat the puir fowk luik efter themsels for ae nicht.”

“I’m sorry I dinna ken ye, man. Do ye ken me?”

“Fine that, Mr. Falconer. There’s mony ane kens you and praises God.”

“God be praised!” returned Falconer. “Why am I wanted at home?”

“’Deed I wad raither not say, sir.—Hey!”

This last exclamation was addressed to a cab just disappearing down King Street from White-

hall. The driver heard, turned, and in a moment more was by their side.

“Ye had better gang into her an’ awa’ hame, and lea’ the poor lassie to me. I’ll tak guid care o’ her.”

She clung to Falconer’s arm. The man opened the door of the cab. Falconer put her in, told the driver to go to Queen Square, and if he could not make haste, to stop the first cab that could, got in himself, thanked his unknown friend, who did not seem quite satisfied, and drove off.

Happily Miss St. John was at home, and there was no delay. Neither was any explanation of more than six words necessary. He jumped again into the cab and drove home. Fortunately for his mood, though in fact it mattered little for any result, the horse was fresh, and both able and willing.

When he entered John Street, he came to observe before reaching his own door that a good many men were about in little quiet groups—some twenty or so, here and there. When he let himself in with his pass-key, there were two men in the entry. Without stopping to speak, he ran up to his own chambers. When he got into his sitting-room, there stood De Fleuri, who simply waved his hand towards the old sofa. On it lay an elderly man, with his eyes half open, and a look almost of idiocy upon his

pale, puffed face, which was damp and shining. His breathing was laboured, but there was no further sign of suffering. He lay perfectly still. Falconer saw at once that he was under the influence of some narcotic, probably opium; and the same moment the all but conviction darted into his mind that Andrew Falconer, his grandmother's son, lay there before him. That he was his own father he had no feeling yet. He turned to De Fleuri.

"Thank you, friend," he said. "I shall find time to thank you."

"Are we right?" asked De Fleuri.

"I don't know. I think so," answered Falconer; and without another word the man withdrew.

His first mood was very strange. It seemed as if all the romance had suddenly deserted his life, and it lay bare and hopeless. He felt nothing. No tears rose to the brim of their bottomless wells—the only wells that have no bottom, for they go into the depths of the infinite soul. He sat down in his chair, stunned as to the heart and all the finer chords of his nature. The man on the horsehair sofa lay breathing—that was all. The gray hair about the pale ill-shaven face glimmered like a cloud before him. What should he do or say when he awaked? How approach this far-estranged soul? How ever send the cry of *father* into that fog-filled

world? Could he ever have climbed on those knees and kissed those lips, in the far-off days when the sun and the wind of that northern atmosphere made his childhood blessed beyond dreams? The actual—that is the present phase of the everchanging—looked the ideal in the face; and the mirror that held them both, shook and quivered at the discord of the faces reflected. A kind of moral cold seemed to radiate from the object before him, and chill him to the very bones. This could not long be endured. He fled from the actual to the source of all the ideal—to that Saviour who, the infinite mediator, mediates between all hopes and all positions; between the most debased actual and the loftiest ideal; between the little scoffer of St. Giles's and his angel that ever beholds the face of the Father in heaven. He fell on his knees, and spoke to God, saying that he had made this man; that the mark of his fingers was on the man's soul somewhere. He prayed to the making Spirit to bring the man to his right mind, to give him once more the heart of a child, to begin him yet again at the beginning. Then at last, all the evil he had done and suffered would but swell his gratitude to Him who had delivered him from himself and his own deeds. Having breathed this out before the God of his life, Falconer rose, strengthened to meet the honourable debased soul when it should at length look

forth from the dull smeared windows of those ill-used eyes.

He felt his pulse. There was no danger from the narcotic. The coma would pass away. Meantime he would get him to bed. When he began to undress him a new reverence arose which overcame all disgust at the state in which he found him. At length one sad little fact about his dress, revealing the poverty-stricken attempt of a man to preserve the shadow of decency, called back the waters of the far-ebbed ocean of his feelings. At the prick of a pin the heart's blood will flow: at the sight of—a pin it was—Robert burst into tears, and wept like a child; the deadly cold was banished from his heart, and he not only loved, but knew that he loved—felt the love that was there. Everything then about the worn body and shabby garments of the man smote upon the heart of his son, and through his very poverty he was sacred in his eyes. The human heart awakened the filial—reversing thus the ordinary process of Nature, who by means of the filial, when her plans are unbroken, awakes the human; and he reproached himself bitterly for his hardness, as he now judged his late mental condition—unfairly, I think. He soon had him safe in bed, unconscious of the helping hands that had been busy about him in his heedless sleep; unconscious of the radiant planet of love that had been fold-

ing him round in its atmosphere of affection.

But while he thus ministered, a new question arose in his mind—to meet with its own new, God-given answer. What if this should not be the man after all?—if this love had been spent in mistake, and did not belong to him at all? The answer was, that he was a man. The love Robert had given he could not, would not withdraw. The man who had been for a moment as his father he could not cease to regard with devotion. At least he was a man with a divine soul. He might at least be somebody's father. Where love had found a moment's rest for the sole of its foot, there it must build its nest.

When he had got him safe in bed, he sat down beside him to think what he would do next. This sleep gave him very needful leisure to think. He could determine nothing—not even how to find out if he was indeed his father. If he approached the subject without guile, the man might be fearful and cunning—might have reasons for being so, and for striving to conceal the truth. But this was the first thing to make sure of, because, if it was he, all the hold he had upon him lay in his knowing it for certain. He could not think. He had had little sleep the night before. He must not sleep this night. He dragged his bath into his sitting-room, and refreshed his faculties with plenty of cold water, then lighted his pipe and went on thinking—not without

prayer to that Power whose candle is the understanding of man. All at once he saw how to begin. He went again into the chamber, and looked at the man, and handled him, and knew by his art that a waking of some sort was nigh. Then he went to a corner of his sitting-room, and from beneath the table drew out a long box, and from the box lifted Dooble Sandy's auld wife, tuned the somewhat neglected strings, and laid the instrument on the table.

When, keeping constant watch over the sleeping man, he judged at length that his soul had come near enough to the surface of the ocean of sleep to communicate with the outer world through that bubble his body, which had floated upon its waves all the night unconscious, he put his chair just outside the chamber door, which opened from his sitting-room, and began to play gently, softly, far away. For a while he extemporized only, thinking of Rothieden, and the grandmother, and the bleach-green, and the hills, and the waste old factory, and his mother's portrait and letters. As he dreamed on, his dream got louder, and, he hoped, was waking a more and more vivid dream in the mind of the sleeper. "For who can tell," thought Falconer, "what mysterious sympathies of blood and childhood's experience there may be between me and that man?—such, it may be, that my utterance on the violin will wake in his soul the



very visions of which my soul is full while I play, each with its own nebulous atmosphere of dream-light around it." For music wakes its own feeling, and feeling wakes thought, or rather, when perfected, blossoms into thought, thought radiant of music as those lilies that shine phosphorescent in the July nights. He played more and more forcefully, growing in hope. But he had been led astray in some measure by the fulness of his expectation. Strange to tell, doctor as he was, he had forgotten one important factor in his calculation: how the man would awake from his artificial sleep. He had not reckoned of how the limbeck of his brain would be left discoloured with vile deposit, when the fumes of the narcotic should have settled and given up its central spaces to the faintness of desertion.

Robert was very keen of hearing. Indeed he possessed all his senses keener than any other man I have known. He heard him toss on his bed. Then he broke into a growl, and damned the miauling, which, he said, the strings could never have learned anywhere but in a cat's belly. But Robert was used to bad language; and there are some bad things, which seeing that there they are, it is of the greatest consequence to get used to. It gave him, no doubt, a pang of disappointment to hear such an echo to his music from the soul which he had hoped especially fitted to respond in harmonious unison

with the wail of his violin. But not for even this moment did he lose his presence of mind. He instantly moderated the tone of the instrument, and gradually drew the sound away once more into the distance of hearing. But he did not therefore let it die. Through various changes it floated in the thin æther of the soul, changes delicate as when the wind leaves the harp of the reeds by a river's brink, and falls a ringing at the heather bells, or playing with the dry silvery pods of honesty that hang in the poor man's garden, till at length it drew nearer once more, bearing on its wings the wail of red Flodden, *The Flowers of the Forest*. Listening through the melody for sounds of a far different kind, Robert was aware that those sounds had ceased; the growling was still; he heard no more turnings to and fro. How it was operating he could not tell, further than that there must be some measure of soothing in its influence. He ceased quite, and listened again. For a few moments there was no sound. Then he heard the half articulate murmuring of one whose organs have been all but overcome by the beneficent paralysis of sleep, but whose feeble will would compel them to utterance. He was nearly asleep again. Was it a fact, or a fancy of Robert's eager heart? Did the man really say:

“Play that again, father. It's bonnie, that!

I aye likit the *Floors o' the Forest*. Play awa'. I hae had a frichtsome dream. I thocht I was i' the ill place. I doobt I'm no weel. But yer fiddle aye did me gude. Play awa', father?"

All the night through, till the dawn of the gray morning, Falconer watched the sleeping man, all but certain that he was indeed his father. Eternities of thought passed through his mind as he watched—this time by the couch, as he hoped, of a new birth. He was about to see what could be done by one man, strengthened by all the aids that love and devotion could give, for the redemption of his fellow. As through the darkness of the night and a sluggish fog to aid it, the light of a pure heaven made its slow irresistible way, his hope grew that athwart the fog of an evil life, the darkness that might be felt, the light of the Spirit of God would yet penetrate the heart of the sinner, and shake the wickedness out of it. Deeper and yet deeper grew his compassion and his sympathy, in prospect of the tortures the man must go through, before the will that he had sunk into a deeper sleep than any into which opium could sink his bodily being, would shake off its deathly lethargy, and arise, torn with struggling pain, to behold the light of a new spiritual morning. All that he could do he was prepared to do, regardless of entreaty, regardless of torture, anger, and hate, with the inex-

orable justice of love, the law that will not, must not, dares not yield—strong with an awful tenderness, a wisdom that cannot be turned aside, to redeem the lost soul of his father. And he strengthened his heart for the conflict by saying that if he would do thus for his father, what would not God do for his child? Had He not proved already, if there was any truth in the grand story of the world's redemption through that obedience unto the death, that his devotion was entire, and would leave nothing undone that could be done to lift this sheep out of the pit into whose darkness and filth he had fallen out of the sweet Sabbath of the universe?

He removed all his clothes, searched the pockets, found in them one poor shilling and a few coppers, a black *cutty* pipe, a box of snuff, a screw of pigtail, a knife with a buckhorn handle and one broken blade, and a pawn-ticket for a keyed flute, on the proceeds of which he was now sleeping—a sleep how dearly purchased, when he might have had it free, as the gift of God's gentle darkness! Then he destroyed the garments, committing them to the fire as the hoped farewell to the state of which they were the symbols and signs.

He found himself perplexed, however, by the absence of some of the usual symptoms of the habit of opium, and concluded that his poor father was in the habit of using stimulants as well

as narcotics, and that the action of the one interfered with the action of the other.

He called his housekeeper. She did not know whom her master supposed his guest to be, and regarded him only as one of the many objects of his kindness. He told her to get some tea ready, as the patient would most likely wake with a headache. He instructed her to wait upon him as a matter of course, and explain nothing. He had resolved to pass for the doctor, as indeed he was ; and he told her that if he should be at all troublesome, he would be with her at once. She must keep the room dark. He would have his own breakfast now ; and if the patient remained quiet, would sleep on the sofa.

He woke murmuring, and evidently suffered from headache and nausea. Mrs. Ashton took him some tea. He refused it with an oath—more of discomfort than of ill-nature, and was too unwell to show any curiosity about the person who had offered it. Probably he was accustomed to so many changes of abode, and to so many bewilderments of the brain, that he did not care to inquire where he was or who waited upon him. But happily for the heart's desire of Falconer, the debauchery of his father had at length reached one of many crises. He had caught cold before De Fleuri and his comrades found him. He was now ill—feverish and op-

pressed. Through the whole of the following week they nursed and waited upon him without his asking a single question as to where he was or who they were; during all which time Falconer saw no one but De Fleuri and the many poor fellows who called to inquire after him and the result of their supposed success. He never left the house, but either watched by the bedside, or waited in the next room. Often would the patient get out of bed, driven by the longing for drink or for opium, gnawing him through all the hallucinations of delirium; but he was weak, and therefore manageable. If in any lucid moments he thought where he was, he no doubt supposed that he was in a hospital, and probably had sense enough to understand that it was of no use to attempt to get his own way there. He was soon much worn, and his limbs trembled greatly. It was absolutely necessary to give him stimulants, or he would have died, but Robert reduced them gradually as he recovered strength.

But there was an infinite work to be done beyond even curing him of his evil habits. To keep him from strong drink and opium, even till the craving after them was gone, would be but the capturing of the merest outwork of the enemy's castle. He must be made such that, even if the longing should return with tenfold force, and all the means for its gratification

should lie within the reach of his outstretched hand, **hê would** not touch them. God only was able to do that for him. He would do all that he knew how to do, and God would not fail of his part. For for this he had raised him up; to this he had called him; for this work he had educated him, made him a physician, given him money, time, the love and aid of his fellows, and, beyond all, a rich energy of hope and faith in his heart, emboldening him to attempt whatever his hand found to do.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## ANDREW REBELS.

AS Andrew Falconer grew better, the longing of his mind after former excitement and former oblivion, roused and kept alive the longing of his body, until at length his thoughts dwelt upon nothing but his diseased cravings. His whole imagination, naturally not a feeble one, was concentrated on the delights in store for him as soon as he was well enough to be his own master, as he phrased it, once more. He soon began to see that, if he was in a hospital, it must be a private one, and at last, irresolute as he was both from character and illness, made up his mind to demand his liberty. He sat by his bedroom fire one afternoon, for he needed much artificial warmth. The shades of evening were thickening the air. He had just had one of his frequent meals, and was gazing, as he often did, into the glowing coals. Robert had come in, and after a little talk was sitting silent at the opposite corner of the chimney-piece.

“Doctor,” said Andrew, seizing the opportunity, “you’ve been very kind to me, and I don’t know how to thank you, but it is time I was going. I am quite well now. Would you kindly order the nurse to bring me my clothes to-morrow morning, and I will go.”

This he said with the quavering voice of one who speaks because he has made up his mind to speak. A certain something, I believe a vague molluscos form of conscience, made him wriggle and shift uneasily upon his chair as he spoke.

“No, no,” said Robert, “you are not fit to go. Make yourself comfortable, my dear sir. There is no reason why you should go.”

“There is something I don’t understand about it. I want to go.”

“It would ruin my character as a professional man to let a patient in your condition leave the house. The weather is unfavourable. I cannot—I must not consent.”

“Where am I? I don’t understand it. I want to understand it.”

“Your friends wish you to remain where you are for the present.”

“I have no friends.”

“You have one, at least, who puts his house here at your service.”

“There’s something about it I don’t like. Do you suppose I am incapable of taking care of myself?”

“I do indeed,” answered his son with firmness.

“Then you are quite mistaken,” said Andrew, angrily. “I am quite well enough to go, and have a right to judge for myself. It is very kind of you, but I am in a free country, I believe.”

“No doubt. All honest men are free in this country. But——”

He saw that his father winced, and said no more. Andrew resumed, after a pause in which he had been rousing his feeble drink-exhausted anger.

“I tell you I will not be treated like a child. I demand my clothes and my liberty.”

“Do you know where you were found that night you were brought here?”

“No. But what has that to do with it? I was ill. You know that as well as I.”

“You are ill now because you were lying then on the wet ground under a railway-arch—utterly incapable from the effects of opium, or drink, or both. You would have been taken to the police-station, and would probably have been dead long before now, if you had not been brought here.”

He was silent for some time. Then he broke out:

“I tell you I *will* go. I do not choose to live on charity. I will *not*. I demand my clothes.”

“I tell you it is of no use. When you are

well enough to go out you shall go out, but not now."

"Where am I? Who are you?"

He looked at Robert with a keen, furtive glance, in which were mingled bewilderment and suspicion.

"I am your best friend at present."

He started up—fiercely and yet feebly, for a thought of terror had crossed him.

"You do not mean I am in a madhouse?"

Robert made no reply. He left him to suppose what he pleased. Andrew took it for granted that he was in a private asylum, sank back in his chair, and from that moment was quiet as a lamb. But it was easy to see that he was constantly contriving how to escape. This mental occupation, however, was excellent for his recovery; and Robert dropped no hint of his suspicion. Nor were many precautions necessary in consequence; for he never left the house without having De Fleuri there, who was a man of determination, nerve, and, now that he ate and drank, of considerable strength.

As he grew better, the stimulants given him in the form of medicine at length ceased. In their place Robert substituted other restoratives, which prevented him from missing the stimulants so much, and at length got his system into a tolerably healthy condition, though at his age, and after so long indulgence, it could

hardly be expected ever to recover its tone.

He did all he could to provide him with healthy amusement—played backgammon, draughts, and cribbage with him, brought him Sir Walter's and other novels to read, and often played on his violin, to which he listened with great delight. At times of depression, which of course were frequent, *The Flowers of the Forest* made the old man weep. Falconer put yet more soul into the sounds than he had ever put into them before. He tried to make the old man talk of his childhood, asking him about the place of his birth, the kind of country, how he had been brought up, his family, and many questions of the sort. His answers were vague, and often contradictory. Indeed, the moment the subject was approached, he looked suspicious and cunning. He said his name was John Mac-kinnon, and Robert, although his belief was strengthened by a hundred little circumstances, had as yet received no proof that he was Andrew Falconer. Remembering the pawn-ticket, and finding that he could play on the flute, he brought him a beautiful instrument—in fact a silver one—the sight of which made the old man's eyes sparkle. He put it to his lips with trembling hands, blew a note or two, burst into the tears of weakness, and laid it down. But he soon took it up again, and evidently found both pleasure in the tones and sadness in the

memories they awakened. At length Robert brought a tailor, and had him dressed like a gentleman—a change which pleased him much. The next step was to take him out every day for a drive, upon which his health began to improve more rapidly. He ate better, grew more lively, and began to tell tales of his adventures, of the truth of which Robert was not always certain, but never showed any doubt. He knew only too well that the use of opium is especially destructive to the conscience. Some of his stories he believed more readily than others, from the fact that he suddenly stopped in them, as if they were leading him into regions of confession which must be avoided, resuming with matter that did not well connect itself with what had gone before. At length he took him out walking, and he comported himself with perfect propriety.

But one day as they were going along a quiet street, Robert met an acquaintance, and stopped to speak with him. After a few moments' chat he turned, and found that his father, whom he had supposed to be standing beside him, had vanished. A glance at the other side of the street showed the probable refuge—a public-house. Filled but not overwhelmed with dismay, although he knew that months might be lost in this one moment, Robert darted in. He was there, with a glass of whisky in his hand,

trembling now more from eagerness than weakness. He struck it from his hold. But he had already swallowed one glass, and he turned in a rage. He was a tall and naturally powerful man—almost as strongly built as his son, with long arms like his, which were dangerous even yet in such a moment of factitious strength and real excitement. Robert could not lift his arm even to defend himself from his father, although, had he judged it necessary, I believe he would not, in the cause of his redemption, have hesitated to knock him down, as he had often served others whom he would rather a thousand times have borne on his shoulders. He received his father's blow on the cheek. For one moment it made him dizzy, for it was well delivered. But when the bar-keeper jumped across the counter and approached with his fist doubled, that was another matter. He measured his length on the floor, and Falconer seized his father, who was making for the street, and notwithstanding his struggles and fierce efforts to strike again, held him secure and himself scathless, and bore him out of the house.

A crowd gathers in a moment in London, speeding to a fray as the vultures to carrion. On the heels of the population of the neighbouring mews came two policemen, and at the same moment out came the barman to the assistance of Andrew. But Falconer was as well



known to the police as if he had a ticket-of-leave, and a good deal better.

“Call a four-wheel cab,” he said to one of them. “I’m all right.”

The man started at once. Falconer turned to the other.

“Tell that man in the apron,” he said, “that I’ll make him all due reparation. But he oughtn’t to be in such a hurry to meddle. He gave me no time but to strike hard.”

“Yes, sir,” answered the policeman obediently. The crowd thought he must be a great man amongst the detectives; but the bar-keeper vowed he would “summons” him for the assault.

“You may, if you like,” said Falconer. “When I think of it, you shall do so. You know where I live?” he said, turning to the policeman.

“No, sir, I don’t. I only know you well enough.”

“Put your hand in my coat-pocket, then, and you’ll find a card-case. The other. There! Help yourself.”

He said this with his arms round Andrew’s, who had ceased to cry out when he saw the police.

“Do you want to give this gentleman in charge, sir?”

“No. It is a little private affair of my own, this.”

“Hadn’t you better let him go, sir, and we’ll find him for you when you want him?”

“No. He may give me in charge if he likes. Or if you should want him, you will find him at my house.”

Then pinioning his prisoner still more tightly in his arms, he leaned forward, and whispered in his ear,

“Will you go home quietly, or give me in charge? There is no other way, Andrew Falconer.”

He ceased struggling. Through all the flush of the contest his face grew pale. His arms dropped by his side. Robert let him go, and he stood there without offering to move. The cab came up; the policeman got out; Andrew stepped in of his own accord, and Robert followed.

“You see it’s all right,” he said. “Here, give the barman a sovereign. If he wants more, let me know. He deserved all he got, but I was wrong. John Street.”

His father did not speak a word, or ask a question all the way home. Evidently he thought it safer to be silent. But the drink he had taken, though not enough to intoxicate him, was more than enough to bring back the old longing with redoubled force. He paced about the room the rest of the day like a wild beast in a cage, and in the middle of the night, got up and dressed,

and would have crept through the room in which Robert lay, in the hope of getting out. But Robert slept too anxiously for that. The captive did not make the slightest noise, but his very presence was enough to wake his son. He started at a bound from his couch, and his father retreated in dismay to his chamber.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE BROWN LETTER.

AT length the time arrived when Robert would make a further attempt, although with a fear and trembling to quiet which he had to seek the higher aid. His father had recovered his attempt to rush anew upon destruction. He was gentler and more thoughtful, and would again sit for an hour at a time gazing into the fire. From the expression of his countenance upon such occasions, Robert hoped that his visions were not of the evil days, but of those of his innocence.

One evening when he was in one of these moods—he had just had his tea, the gas was lighted, and he was sitting as I have described—Robert began to play in the next room, hoping that the music would sink into his heart, and do something to prepare the way for what was to follow. Just as he had played over *The Flowers of the Forest* for the third time, his housekeeper entered the room, and receiving permission from

her master, went through into Andrew's chamber, and presented a packet, which she said, and said truly, for she was not in the secret, had been left for him. He received it with evident surprise, mingled with some consternation, looked at the address, looked at the seal, laid it on the table, and gazed again with troubled looks into the fire. He had had no correspondence for many years. Falconer had peeped in when the woman entered, but the moment she retired he could watch him no longer. He went on playing a slow, lingering voluntary, such as the wind plays, of an amber autumn evening, on the æolian harp of its pines. He played so gently that he must hear if his father should speak.

For what seemed hours, though it was but half an hour, he went on playing. At length he heard a stifled sob. He rose, and peeped again into the room. The gray head was bowed between the hands, and the gaunt frame was shaken with sobs. On the table lay the portraits of himself and his wife; and the faded brown letter, so many years folded in silence and darkness, lay open beside them. He had known the seal, with the bush of rushes and the Gaelic motto. He had gently torn the paper from around it, and had read the letter from the grave—no, from the land beyond, the land of light, where human love is glorified. Not then did Falconer read the sacred words of his mother;

but afterwards his father put them into his hands. I will give them as nearly as I can remember them, for the letter is not in my possession.

“My beloved Andrew, I can hardly write, for I am at the point of death. I love you still—love you as dearly as before you left me. Will you ever see this? I will try to send it to you. I will leave it behind me, that it may come into your hands when and how it may please God. You may be an old man before you read these words, and may have almost forgotten your young wife. Oh! if I could take your head on my bosom where it used to lie, and without saying a word, think all that I am thinking into your heart. Oh! my love, my love! will you have had enough of the world and its ways by the time this reaches you? Or will you be dead, like me, when this is found, and the eyes of your son only, my darling little Robert, read the words? O Andrew, Andrew! my heart is bleeding, not altogether for myself, not altogether for you, but both for you and for me. Shall I never, never be able to let out the sea of my love that swells till my heart is like to break with its longing after you, my own Andrew? Shall I never, never see you again? That is the terrible thought—the only thought almost that makes me shrink from dying. If I should go to sleep, as some think, and not even dream about you, as I dream and weep every night now! If

I should only wake in the crowd of the resurrection, and not know where to find you! Oh! Andrew, I feel as if I should lose my reason when I think that you may be on the left hand of the Judge, and I can no longer say *my love*, because you do not, cannot any more love God. I will tell you the dream I had about you last night, which I think was what makes me write this letter. I was standing in a great crowd of people, and I saw the empty graves about us on every side. We were waiting for the great white throne to appear in the clouds. And as soon as I knew that, I cried, 'Andrew, Andrew!' for I could not help it. And the people did not heed me; and I cried out and ran about everywhere, looking for you. At last I came to a great gulf. When I looked down into it, I could see nothing but a blue deep, like the blue of the sky, under my feet. It was not so wide but that I could see across it, but it was oh! so terribly deep. All at once, as I stood trembling on the very edge, I saw you on the other side, looking towards me, and stretching out your arms as if you wanted me. You were old and much changed, but I knew you at once, and I gave a cry that I thought all the universe must have heard. You heard me. I could see that. And I was in a terrible agony to get to you. But there was no way, for if I fell into the gulf I should go down for ever, it was so deep. Some-



thing made me look away, and I saw a man coming quietly along the same side of the gulf, on the edge, towards me. And when he came nearer to me, I saw that he was dressed in a gown down to his feet, and that his feet were bare and had a hole in each of them. So I knew who it was, Andrew. And I fell down and kissed his feet, and lifted up my hands, and looked into his face—oh, such a face! And I tried to pray. But all I could say was, ‘O Lord, Andrew, Andrew!’ Then he smiled, and said, ‘Daughter, be of good cheer. Do you want to go to him?’ And I said, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then he said, ‘And so do I. Come.’ And he took my hand and led me over the edge of the precipice; and I was not afraid, and I did not sink, but walked upon the air to go to you. But when I got to you, it was too much to bear; and when I thought I had you in my arms at last, I awoke, crying as I never cried before, not even when I found that you had left me to die without you. Oh, Andrew, what if the dream should come true! But if it should *not* come true! I dare not think of that, Andrew. I *couldn't* be happy in heaven without you. It may be very wicked, but I do not feel as if it were, and I can't help it if it is. But, dear husband, come to me again. Come back, like the prodigal in the New Testament. God will forgive you everything. Don't touch drink again, my dear

love. I know it was the drink that made you do as you did. *You* could never have done it. It was the drink that drove you to do it. You didn't know what you were doing. And then you were ashamed, and thought I would be angry, and could not bear to come back to me. Ah, if you were to come in at the door, as I write, you would see whether or not I was proud to have my Andrew again. But I would not be nice for you to look at now. You used to think me pretty—you said beautiful—so long ago. But I am so thin now, and my face so white, that I almost frighten myself when I look in the glass. And before you get this I shall be all gone to dust, either knowing nothing about you, or trying to praise God, and always forgetting where I am in my psalm, longing so for you to come. I am afraid I love you too much to be fit to go to heaven. Then, perhaps, God will send me to the other place, all for love of you, Andrew. And I do believe I should like that better. But I don't think he will, if he is anything like the man I saw in my dream. But I am growing so faint that I can hardly write. I never felt like this before. But that dream has given me strength to die, because I hope you will come too. O my dear Andrew, do, do repent and turn to God, and he will forgive you. Believe in Jesus, and he will save you, and bring me to you across the deep place. But I must

make haste. I can hardly see. And I must not leave this letter open for anybody but you to read after I am dead. Good-bye, Andrew. I love you all the same. I am, my dearest Husband, your affectionate Wife,

“ H. FALCONER.”

Then followed the date. It was within a week of her death. The letter was feebly written, every stroke seeming more feeble by the contrasted strength of the words. When Falconer read it afterwards, in the midst of the emotions it aroused—the strange lovely feelings of such a bond between him and a beautiful ghost, far away somewhere in God’s universe, who had carried him in her lost body, and nursed him at her breasts—in the midst of it all, he could not help wondering, he told me, to find the forms and words so like what he would have written himself. It seemed so long ago when that faded, discoloured paper, with the gilt edges, and the pale brown ink, and folded in the large sheet, and sealed with the curious wax, must have been written; and here were its words so fresh, so new! not withered like the rose-leaves that scented the paper from the work-box where he had found it, but as fresh as if just shaken from the rose-trees of the heart’s garden. It was no wonder that Andrew Falconer should be sitting with his head in his hands when Ro-

bert looked in on him, for he had read this letter.

When Robert saw how he sat, he withdrew, and took his violin again, and played all the tunes of the old country he could think of, recalling Dooble Sandy's workshop, that he might recall the music he had learnt there.

No one who understands the bit and bridle of the association of ideas, as it is called in the skeleton language of mental philosophy, wherewith the Father-God holds fast the souls of his children—to the very last that we see of them, at least, and doubtless to endless ages beyond—will sneer at Falconer's notion of making God's violin a ministering spirit in the process of conversion. There is a well-authenticated story of a convict's having been greatly reformed for a time, by going, in one of the colonies, into a church, where the matting along the aisle was of *the same pattern as that in the church to which he had gone when a boy*—with his mother, I suppose. It was not the matting that so far converted him: it was not to the music of his violin that Falconer looked for aid, but to the memories of childhood, the mysteries of the kingdom of innocence which that could recall—those memories which

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

For an hour he did not venture to go near

him. When he entered the room he found him sitting in the same place, no longer weeping, but gazing into the fire with a sad countenance, the expression of which showed Falconer at once that the soul had come out of its cave of obscuration, and drawn nearer to the surface of life. He had not seen him look so much like one "clothed, and in his right mind," before. He knew well that nothing could be built upon this; that this very emotion did but expose him the more to the besetting sin; that in this mood he would drink, even if he knew that he would in consequence be in danger of murdering the wife whose letter had made him weep. But it was progress, notwithstanding. He looked up at Robert as he entered, and then dropped his eyes again. He regarded him perhaps as a presence doubtful whether of angel or devil, even as the demoniacs regarded the Lord of Life who had come to set them free. Bewildered he must have been to find himself, towards the close of a long life of debauchery, wickedness, and the growing pains of hell, caught in a net of old times, old feelings, old truths.

Now Robert had carefully avoided every indication that might disclose him to be a Scotchman even, nor was there the least sign of suspicion in Andrew's manner. The only solution of the mystery that could have presented itself

to him was, that his friends were at the root of it—probably his son, of whom he knew absolutely nothing. His mother could not be alive still. Of his wife's relatives there had never been one who would have taken any trouble about him after her death, hardly even before it. John Lammie was the only person, except Dr. Anderson, whose friendship he could suppose capable of this development. The latter was the more likely person. But he would be too much for him yet; he was not going to be treated like a child, he said to himself, as often as the devil got uppermost.

My reader must understand that Andrew had never been a man of resolution. He had been wilful and headstrong; and these qualities, in children especially, are often mistaken for resolution, and generally go under the name of strength of will. There never was a greater mistake. The mistake, indeed, is only excusable from the fact that extremes meet, and that this disposition is so opposite to the other, that it looks to the careless eye most like it. He never resisted his own impulses, or the enticements of evil companions. Kept within certain bounds at home, after he had begun to go wrong, by the weight of opinion, he rushed into all excesses when abroad upon business, till at length the vessel of his fortune went to pieces, and he was a waif on the waters of the world. But in

feeling he had never been vulgar, however much so in action. There was a feeble good in him that had in part been protected by its very feebleness. He could not sin so much against it as if it had been strong. For many years he had fits of shame, and of grief without repentance; for repentance is the active, the divine part—the turning again; but taking more steadily both to strong drink and opium, he was at the time when De Fleuri found him only the dull ghost of Andrew Falconer walking in a dream of its lost carcass.



## CHAPTER XV.

## FATHER AND SON.

ONCE more Falconer retired, but not to take his violin. He could play no more. Hope and love were swelling within him. He could not rest. Was it a sign from heaven that the hour for speech had arrived? He paced up and down the room. He kneeled and prayed for guidance and help. Something within urged him to try the rusted lock of his father's heart. Without any formed resolution, without any conscious volition, he found himself again in his room. There the old man still sat, with his back to the door, and his gaze fixed on the fire, which had sunk low in the grate. Robert went round in front of him, kneeled on the rug before him, and said the one word,

“Father!”

Andrew started violently, raised his hand, which trembled as with a palsy, to his head, and stared wildly at Robert. But he did not speak. Robert repeated the one great word. Then

Andrew spoke, and said in a trembling, hardly audible voice,

“Are you my son?—my boy Robert, sir?”

“I am. I am. O father, I have longed for you by day, and dreamed about you by night, ever since I saw that other boys had fathers, and I had none. Years and years of my life—I hardly know how many—have been spent in searching for you. And now I have found you!”

The great tall man, in the prime of life and strength, laid his big head down on the old man’s knee, as if he had been a little child. His father said nothing, but laid his hand on the head. For some moments the two remained thus, motionless and silent. Andrew was the first to speak. And his words were the voice of the spirit that striveth with man.

“What am I to do, Robert?”

No other words, not even those of passionate sorrow, or overflowing affection, could have been half so precious in the ears of Robert. When a man once asks what he is to do, there is hope for him. Robert answered instantly:

“You must come home to your mother.”

“My mother!” Andrew exclaimed. “You don’t mean to say she’s alive?”

“I heard from her yesterday—in her own hand, too,” said Robert.

“I daren’t. I daren’t,” murmured Andrew.

“You must, father,” returned Robert. “It is

a long way, but I will make the journey easy for you. She knows I have found you. She is waiting and longing for you. She has hardly thought of anything but you ever since she lost you. She is only waiting to see you, and then she will go home, she says. I wrote to her and said, 'Grannie, I have found your Andrew.' And she wrote back to me and said, 'God be praised. I shall die in peace.'

A silence followed.

"Will she forgive me?" said Andrew.

"She loves you more than her own soul," answered Robert. "She loves you as much as I do. She loves you as God loves you."

"God can't love me," said Andrew, feebly. "He would never have left me if he had loved me."

"He has never left you from the very first. You would not take his way, father, and he just let you try your own. But long before that he had begun to get me ready to go after you. He put such love to you in my heart, and gave me such teaching and such training, that I have found you at last. And now I have found you, I will hold you. You cannot escape—you will not want to escape any more, father?"

Andrew made no reply to this appeal. It sounded like imprisonment for life, I suppose. But thought was moving in him. After a long pause, during which the son's heart was hunger-

ing for a word whereon to hang a further hope, the old man spoke again, muttering as if he were only speaking his thoughts unconsciously.

“Where’s the use? There’s no forgiveness for me. My mother is going to heaven. I must go to hell. No. It’s no good. Better leave it as it is. I daren’t see her. It would kill me to see her.”

“It will kill her not to see you; and that will be one sin more on your conscience, father.”

Andrew got up and walked about the room. And Robert only then arose from his knees.

“And there’s *my* mother,” he said.

Andrew did not reply; but Robert saw when he turned next towards the light, that the sweat was standing in beads on his forehead.

“Father,” he said, going up to him.

The old man stopped in his walk, turned, and faced his son.

“Father,” repeated Robert, “you’ve got to repent; and God won’t let you off; and you needn’t think it. You’ll have to repent some day.”

“In hell, Robert,” said Andrew, looking him full in the eyes, as he had never looked at him before. It seemed as if even so much acknowledgment of the truth had already made him bolder and honester.

“Yes. Either on earth or in hell. Would it not be better on earth?”

“But it will be no use in hell,” he murmured.

In those few words lay the germ of the preference for hell of poor souls, enfeebled by wickedness. They will not have to *do* anything there—only to moan and cry and suffer for ever, they think. It is effort, the out-going of the living will that they dread. The sorrow, the remorse of repentance, they do not so much regard: it is the action it involves; it is the having to turn, be different, and do differently, that they shrink from; and they have been taught to believe that this will not be required of them there—in that awful refuge of the willless. I do not say they think thus: I only say their dim, vague, feeble feelings are such as, if they grew into thought, would take this form. But tell them that the fire of God without and within them will compel them to bethink themselves; that the vision of an open door beyond the smoke and the flames will ever urge them to call up the ice-bound will, that it may obey; that the torturing spirit of God in them will keep their consciences awake, not to remind them of what they ought to have done, but to tell them what they *must* do now, and hell will no longer fascinate them. Tell them that there is *no* refuge from the compelling Love of God, save that Love itself—that He is in hell too, and that if they make their bed in hell they shall not escape him, and then, perhaps, they will

have some true presentiment of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.

“Father, it *will* be of use in hell,” said Robert. “God will give you no rest even there. You will have to repent some day, I do believe—if not now under the sunshine of heaven, then in the torture of the awful world where there is no light but that of the conscience. Would it not be better and easier to repent now, with your wife waiting for you in heaven, and your mother waiting for you on earth?”

Will it be credible to my reader?—that Andrew interrupted his son with the words,

“Robert, it is dreadful to hear you talk like that. Why, you don’t believe in the Bible!”

His words will be startling to one who has never heard the lips of a hoary old sinner drivel out religion. To me they are not so startling as the words of Christian women and bishops of the Church of England, when they say that the doctrine of the everlasting happiness of the righteous stands or falls with the doctrine of the hopeless damnation of the wicked. Can it be that to such the word is everything, the spirit nothing? No. It is only that the devil is playing a very wicked prank, not with them, but in them: they are pluming themselves on being selfish after a godly sort.

“I do believe the Bible, father,” returned Robert, “and have ordered my life by it. If I had

not believed the Bible, I fear I should never have looked for you. But I won't dispute about it. I only say I believe that you will be compelled to repent some day, and that now is the best time. Then, you will not only have to repent, but to repent that you did not repent now. And I tell you, father, that you *shall* go to my grandmother."



## CHAPTER XVI.

## CHANGE OF SCENE.

BUT various reasons combined to induce Falconer to postpone yet for a period their journey to the North. Not merely did his father require an unremitting watchfulness, which it would be difficult to keep up in his native place amongst old friends and acquaintances, but his health was more broken than he had at first supposed, and change of air and scene without excitement was most desirable. He was anxious too that the change his mother must see in him should be as little as possible attributable to other causes than those that years bring with them. To this was added that his own health had begun to suffer from the watching and anxiety he had gone through; and for his father's sake, as well as for the labour which yet lay before him, he would keep that as sound as he might. He wrote to his grandmother and explained the matter. She begged him to do as he thought best, for she was so happy that

she did not care if she should never see Andrew in this world : it was enough to die in the hope of meeting him in the other. But she had no reason to fear that death was at hand ; for, although much more *frail*, she felt as well as ever.

By this time Falconer had introduced me to his father. I found him in some things very like his son ; in others, very different. His manners were more polished ; his pleasure in pleasing much greater : his humanity had blossomed too easily, and then *run to seed*. Alas to no seed that could bear fruit ! There was a weak expression about his mouth—a wavering interrogation : It was so different from the firmly-closed portals whence issued the golden speech of his son ! He had a sly, sidelong look at times, whether of doubt or cunning, I could not always determine. His eyes, unlike his son's, were of a light blue, and hazy both in texture and expression. His hands were long-fingered and tremulous. He gave your hand a sharp squeeze, and the same instant abandoned it with indifference. I soon began to discover in him a tendency to patronize any one who showed him a particle of respect as distinguished from common-place civility. But under all outward appearances it seemed to me that there was a change going on : at least being very willing to believe it, I found nothing to render belief impossible.

He was very fond of the flute his son had

given him, and on that sweetest and most expressionless of instruments he played exquisitely.

One evening when I called to see them, Falconer said :

“ We are going out of town for a few weeks, Gordon : will you go with us ? ”

“ I am afraid I can't. ”

“ Why ? You have no teaching at present, and your writing you can do as well in the country as in town. ”

“ That is true ; but still I don't see how I can. I am too poor for one thing. ”

“ Between you and me that is nonsense. ”

“ Well, I withdraw that, ” I said. “ But there is so much to be done, especially as you will be away, and Miss St John is at the Lakes. ”

“ That is all very true ; but you need a change. I have seen for some weeks that you are failing. Mind it is our best work that He wants, not the dregs of our exhaustion. I hope you are not of the mind of our friend Mr. Watts, the curate of St. Gregory's. ”

“ I thought you had a high opinion of Mr. Watts, ” I returned.

“ So I have. I hope it is not necessary to agree with a man in everything before we can have a high opinion of him. ”

“ Of course not. But what is it you hope I am not of his opinion in ? ”

“ He seems ambitious of killing himself with

work—of wearing himself out in the service of his master—and as quickly as possible. A good deal of that kind of thing is a mere holding of the axe to the grindstone, not a lifting of it up against thick trees. Only he won't be convinced till it comes to the helve. I met him the other day; he was looking as white as his surplice. I took upon me to read him a lecture on the holiness of holidays. 'I can't leave my poor,' he said. 'Do you think God can't do without you?' I asked. 'Is he so weak that he cannot spare the help of a weary man? But I think he must prefer quality to quantity, and for healthy work you must be healthy yourself. How can you be the visible sign of the Christ-present amongst men, if you inhabit an exhausted, irritable brain? Go to God's infirmary and rest a while. Bring back health from the country to those that cannot go to it. If on the way it be transmuted into spiritual forms, so much the better. A little more of God will make up for a good deal less of you.'"

"What did he say to that?"

"He said our Lord died doing the will of his Father. I told him—'Yes, when his time was come, not sooner. Besides, he often avoided both speech and action.' 'Yes,' he answered, 'but he could tell when, and we cannot.' 'Therefore,' I rejoined, 'you ought to accept your exhaustion as a token that your absence

will be the best thing for your people. If there were no God, then perhaps you ought to work till you drop down dead—I don't know.' ”

“Is he gone yet?”

“No. He won't go. I couldn't persuade him.”

“When do you go?”

“To-morrow.”

“I shall be ready, if you really mean it.”

“That's an *if* worthy only of a courtier. There may be much virtue in an *if*, as Touchstone says, for the taking up of a quarrel; but that *if* is bad enough to breed one,” said Falconer laughing. “Be at the Paddington Station at noon to-morrow. To tell the whole truth, I want you to help me with my father.”

This last was said at the door as he showed me out.

In the afternoon we were nearing Bristol. It was a lovely day in October. Andrew had been enjoying himself; but it was evidently rather the pleasure of travelling in a first-class carriage like a gentleman than any delight in the beauty of heaven and earth. The country was in the rich sombre dress of decay.

“Is it not remarkable,” said my friend to me, “that the older I grow, I find autumn affecting me the more like spring?”

“I am thankful to say,” interposed Andrew, with a smile in which was mingled a shade of

superiority, "that no change of the seasons ever affects *me*."

"Are you sure you are right in being thankful for that, father?" asked his son.

His father gazed at him for a moment, seemed to bethink himself after some feeble fashion or other, and rejoined:

"Well, I must confess I did feel a touch of the rheumatism this morning."

How I pitied Falconer! Would he ever see of the travail of his soul in this man? But he only smiled a deep sweet smile, and seemed to be thinking divine things in that great head of his.

At Bristol we went on board a small steamer, and at night were landed at a little village on the coast of North Devon. The hotel to which we went was on the steep bank of a tumultuous little river, which tumbled past its foundation of rock, like a troop of watery horses galloping by with ever-dissolving limbs. The elder Falconer retired almost as soon as we had had supper. My friend and I lighted our pipes, and sat by the open window, for although the autumn was so far advanced, the air here was very mild. For some time we only listened to the sound of the waters.

"There are three things," said Falconer at last, taking his pipe out of his mouth with a smile, "that give a peculiarly perfect feeling of

abandonment: the laughter of a child; a snake lying *across* a fallen branch; and the rush of a stream like this beneath us, whose only thought is to get to the sea."

We did not talk much that night, however, but went soon to bed. None of us slept well. We agreed in the morning that the noise of the stream had been too much for us all, and that the place felt close and torpid. Andrew complained that the ceaseless sound wearied him, and Robert that he felt the aimless endlessness of it more than was good for him. I confess it irritated me like an anodyne unable to soothe. We were clearly all in want of something different. The air between the hills clung to them, hot and moveless. We would climb those hills, and breathe the air that flitted about over their craggy tops.

As soon as we had breakfasted, we set out. It was soon evident that Andrew could not ascend the steep road. We returned and got a carriage. When we reached the top, it was like a resurrection, like a dawning of hope out of despair. The cool friendly wind blew on our faces, and breathed strength into our frames. Before us lay the ocean, the visible type of the invisible, and the vessels with their white sails moved about over it like the thoughts of men feebly searching the unknown. Even Andrew Falconer spread out his arms to the wind,



and breathed deep, filling his great chest full.

“I feel like a boy again,” he said.

His son strode to his side, and laid his arm over his shoulders.

“So do I, father,” he returned; “but it is because I have got you.”

The old man turned and looked at him with a tenderness I had never seen on his face before. As soon as I saw that, I no longer doubted that he could be saved.

We found rooms in a farm-house on the top-most height.

“These are poor little hills, Falconer,” I said. “Yet they help one like mountains.”

“The whole question is,” he returned, “whether they are high enough to lift you out of the dirt. Here we are in the airs of heaven—that is all we need.”

“They make me think how often, amongst the country people of Scotland, I have wondered at the clay-feet upon which a golden head of wisdom stood! What poor needs, what humble aims, what a narrow basement generally, was sufficient to support the statues of pure-eyed Faith and white-handed Hope.”

“Yes,” said Falconer: “he who is faithful over a few things is a lord of cities. It does not matter whether you preach in Westminster Abbey, or teach a ragged class, so you be faithful. The faithfulness is all.”

After an early dinner we went out for a walk, but we did not go far before we sat down upon the grass. Falconer laid himself at full length and gazed upwards.

“When I look like this into the blue sky,” he said, after a moment’s silence, “it seems so deep, so peaceful, so full of a mysterious tenderness, that I could lie for centuries, and wait for the dawning of the face of God out of the awful loving-kindness.”

I had never heard Falconer talk of his own present feelings in this manner; but glancing at the face of his father with a sense of his unfitness to hear such a lofty utterance, I saw at once that it was for his sake that he had thus spoken. The old man had thrown himself back too, and was gazing into the sky, puzzling himself, I could see, to comprehend what his son could mean. I fear he concluded, for the time, that Robert was not gifted with the amount of common-sense belonging of right to the Falconer family, and that much religion had made him a dreamer. Still, I thought I could see a kind of awe pass like a spiritual shadow across his face as he gazed into the blue gulfs over him. No one can detect the first beginnings of any life, and those of spiritual emotion must more than any lie beyond our ken: there is infinite room for hope. Falconer said no more. We betook ourselves early within doors, and he

read King Lear to us, expounding the spiritual history of the poor old king after a fashion I had never conceived—showing us how the said history was all compressed, as far as human eye could see of it, into the few months that elapsed between his abdication and his death; how in that short time he had to learn everything that he ought to have been learning all his life; and how, because he had put it off so long, the lessons that had then to be given him were awfully severe.

I thought what a change it was for the old man to lift his head into the air of thought and life, out of the sloughs of misery in which he had been wallowing for years.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## IN THE COUNTRY.

THE next morning Falconer, who knew the country, took us out for a drive. We passed through lanes and gates out upon an open moor, where he stopped the carriage, and led us a few yards on one side. Suddenly, hundreds of feet below us, down what seemed an almost precipitous descent, we saw the wood-embosomed, stream-trodden valley we had left the day before. Enough had been cleft and scooped seawards out of the lofty table-land to give room for a few little conical hills with curious peaks of bare rock. At the bases of these hills flowed noisily two or three streams, which joined in one, and trotted out to sea over rocks and stones. The hills and the sides of the great cleft were half of them green with grass, and half of them robed in the autumnal foliage of thick woods. By the streams and in the woods nestled pretty houses; and away at

the mouth of the valley and the stream lay the village. All around, on our level, stretched farm and moorland.

When Andrew Falconer stood so unexpectedly on the verge of the steep descent, he trembled and started back with fright. His son made him sit down a little way off, where yet we could see into the valley. The sun was hot, the air clear and mild, and the sea broke its blue floor into innumerable sparkles of radiance. We sat for awhile in silence.

“Are you sure,” I said, in the hope of setting my friend talking, “that there is no horrid pool down there? no half-trampled thicket, with broken pottery and shreds of tin lying about? no dead carcass, or dirty cottage, with miserable wife and greedy children? When I was a child, I knew a lovely place that I could not half enjoy, because, although hidden from my view, an ugly stagnation, half mud, half water, lay in a certain spot below me. When I had to pass it, I used to creep by with a kind of dull terror, mingled with hopeless disgust, and I have never got over the feeling.”

“You remind me much of a friend of mine of whom I have spoken to you before,” said Falconer, “Eric Ericson. I have shown you many of his verses, but I don’t think I ever showed you one little poem containing an expression of the same feeling. I think I can repeat it.

Some men there are who cannot spare  
A single tear until they feel  
The last cold pressure, and the heel  
Is stamped upon the outmost layer.

And, waking, some will sigh to think  
The clouds have borrowed winter's wing—  
Sad winter when the grasses spring  
No more about the fountain's brink.

And some would call me coward-fool:  
I lay a claim to better blood;  
But yet a heap of idle mud  
Hath power to make me sorrowful."

I sat thinking over the verses, for I found the feeling a little difficult to follow, although the last stanza was plain enough. Falconer resumed.

"I think this is as likely as any place," he said, "to be free of such physical blots. For the moral I cannot say. But I have learned, I hope, not to be too fastidious—I mean so as to be unjust to the whole because of the part. The impression made by a whole is just as true as the result of an analysis, and is greater and more valuable in every respect. If we rejoice in the beauty of the whole, the other is sufficiently forgotten. For moral ugliness, it ceases to distress in proportion as we labour to remove it, and regard it in its true relations to all that surrounds it. There is an old legend which I daresay you know. The Saviour and his dis-

ciples were walking along the way, when they came upon a dead dog. The disciples did not conceal their disgust. The Saviour said: "How white its teeth are!"

"That is very beautiful," I rejoined. "Thank God for that. It is true, whether invented or not. But," I added, "it does not quite answer to the question about which we have been talking. The Lord got rid of the pain of the ugliness by finding the beautiful in it."

"It does correspond, however, I think, in principle," returned Falconer; "only it goes much farther, making the exceptional beauty hallow the general ugliness—which is the true way, for beauty is life, and therefore infinitely deeper and more powerful than ugliness which is death. 'A dram of sweet,' says Spenser, 'is worth a pound of sour.'"

It was so delightful to hear him talk—for what he said was not only far finer than my record of it, but the whole man spoke as well as his mouth—that I sought to start him again.

"I wish," I said, "that I could see things as you do—in great masses of harmonious unity. I am only able to see a truth sparkling here and there, and to try to lay hold of it. When I aim at more, I am like Noah's dove, without a place to rest the sole of my foot."

"That is the only way to begin. Leave the large vision to itself, and look well after your



sparkles. You will find them grow and gather and unite, until you are afloat on a sea of radiance—with cloud shadows no doubt.”

“And yet,” I resumed, “I never seem to have room.”

“That is just why.”

“But I feel that I cannot find it. I know that if I fly to that bounding cape on the far horizon there, I shall only find *a place*—a place to want another in. There is no fortunate island out on that sea.

“I fancy,” said Falconer, “that until a man loves space, he will never be at peace in a place. At least so I have found it. I am content if you but give me room. All space to me throbs with being and life; and the loveliest spot on the earth seems but the compression of space till the meaning shines out of it, as the fire flies out of the air when you drive it close together. To seek place after place for freedom, is a constant effort to flee from space, and a vain one, for you are ever haunted by the need of it, and therefore when you seek most to escape it, fancy that you love it and want it.”

“You are getting too mystical for me now,” I said. “I am not able to follow you.”

“I fear I was on the point of losing myself. At all events I can go no further now. And indeed I fear I have been but skirting the Limbo of Vanities.”

He rose, for we could both see that this talk was not in the least interesting to our companion. We got again into the carriage, which, by Falconer's orders, was turned and driven in the opposite direction, still at no great distance from the lofty edge of the heights that rose above the shore.

We came at length to a lane bounded with stone walls, every stone of which had its moss and every chink its fern. The lane grew more and more grassy; the walls vanished; and the track faded away into a narrow winding valley, formed by the many meeting curves of opposing hills. They were green to the top with sheep-grass, and spotted here and there with patches of fern, great stones, and tall withered foxgloves. The air was sweet and healthful, and Andrew evidently enjoyed it because it reminded him again of his boyhood. The only sound we heard was the tinkle of a few tender sheep-bells, and now and then the tremulous bleating of a sheep. With a gentle winding, the valley led us into a more open portion of itself, where the old man paused with a look of astonished pleasure.

Before us, seaward, rose a rampart against the sky, like the turreted and embattled wall of a huge eastern city, built of loose stones piled high, and divided by great peaky rocks. In the centre rose above them all one solitary

curiously-shaped mass, one of the oddest peaks of the Himmalays in miniature. From its top on the further side was a sheer descent to the waters far below the level of the valley from which it immediately rose. It was altogether a strange freaky fantastic place, not without its grandeur. It looked like the remains of a frolic of the Titans, or rather as if reared by the boys and girls, while their fathers and mothers "lay stretched out huge in length," and in breadth too, upon the slopes around, and laughed thunderously at the sportive invention of their sons and daughters. Falconer helped his father up to the edge of the rampart that he might look over. Again he started back, "afraid of that which was high," for the lowly valley was yet at a great height above the diminished waves. On the outside of the rampart ran a narrow path whence the green hill-side went down steep to the sea. The gulls were screaming far below us; we could see the little flying streaks of white. Beyond was the great ocean. A murmurous sound came up from its shore.

We descended and seated ourselves on the short springy grass of a little mound at the foot of one of the hills, where it sank slowly, like the dying gush of a wave, into the hollowest centre of the little vale.

"Everything tends to the cone-shape here," said Falconer,— "the oddest and at the same

time most wonderful of mathematical figures.”

“It is not strange,” I said, “that oddity and wonder should come so near?”

“They often do in the human world as well,” returned he. “Therefore it is not strange that Shelley should have been so fond of this place. It is told of him that repeated sketches of the spot were found on the covers of his letters. I know nothing more like Shelley’s poetry than this valley—wildly fantastic and yet beautiful—as if a huge genius were playing at grandeur, and producing little models of great things. But there is one grand thing I want to show you a little further on.”

We rose, and walked out of the valley on the other side, along the lofty coast. When we reached a certain point, Falconer stood and requested us to look as far as we could, along the cliffs to the face of the last of them.

“What do you see?” he asked.

“A perpendicular rock, going right down into the blue waters,” I answered.

“Look at it: what is the outline of it like? Whose face is it?”

“Shakspeare’s, by all that is grand!” I cried.

“So it is,” said Andrew.

“Right. Now I’ll tell you what I would do, If I were very rich, and there were no poor people in the country. I would give a commission to some great sculptor to attack that rock and

work out its suggestion. Then, if I had any money left, we should find one for Bacon, and one for Chaucer, and one for Milton; and, as we are about it, we may fancy as many more as we like; so that from the bounding rocks of our island, the memorial faces of our great brothers should look abroad over the seas into the infinite sky beyond."

"Well, now," said the elder, "I think it is grander as it is."

"You are quite right, father," said Robert. "And so with many of our fancies for perfecting God's mighty sketches, which he only can finish."

Again we seated ourselves and looked out over the waves.

"I have never yet heard," I said, "how you managed with that poor girl that wanted to drown herself—on Westminster Bridge, I mean—that night, you remember."

"Miss St. John has got her in her own house at present. She has given her those two children we picked up at the door of the public house to take care of. Poor little darlings! they are bringing back the life in her heart already. There is actually a little colour in her cheek—the dawn, I trust, of the eternal life. That is Miss St. John's way. As often as she gets hold of a poor hopeless woman, she gives her a motherless child. It is wonderful what the childless

woman and motherless child do for each other.”

“I was much amused the other day with the lecture one of the police magistrates gave a poor creature who was brought before him for attempting to drown herself. He did give her a sovereign out of the poor box, though.”

“Well, that might just tide her over the shoal of self-destruction,” said Falconer. “But I cannot help doubting whether any one has a *right* to prevent a suicide from carrying out his purpose, who is not prepared to do a good deal more for him than that. What would you think of the man who snatched the loaf from a hungry thief, threw it back into the baker’s cart, and walked away to his club-dinner? Harsh words of rebuke, and the threat of severe punishment upon a second attempt—what are they to the wretch weary of life? To some of them the *kindest* punishment would be to hang them for it. It is something else than punishment that they need. If the comfortable alderman had but ‘a feeling of their afflictions,’ felt in himself for a moment how miserable *he* must be, what a waste of despair must be in his heart, before he would do it himself, before the awful river would appear to him a refuge from the upper air, he would change his tone. I fear he regards suicide chiefly as a burglarious entrance into the premises of the respectable firm of Venison, Port, & Co.”

“But you mustn't be too hard upon him, Falconer; for if his God is his belly, how can he regard suicide as other than the most awful sacrilege?”

“Of course not. His well-fed divinity gives him one great commandment: ‘Thou shalt love thyself with all thy heart. The great breach is to hurt thyself—worst of all to send thyself away from the land of luncheons and dinners, to the country of thought and vision.’ But, alas! he does not reflect on the fact that the god Belial does not feed all his votaries; that he has his elect; that the altar of his inner-temple too often smokes with no sacrifice of which his poor meagre priests may partake. They must uphold the Divinity which has been good to *them*, and not suffer his worship to fall into disrepute.”

“Really, Robert,” said his father, “I am afraid to think what you will come to. You will end in denying there is a God at all. You don't believe in hell, and now you justify suicide. Really—I must say—to say the least of it—I have not been accustomed to hear such things.”

The poor old man looked feebly righteous at his wicked son. I verily believe he was concerned for his eternal fate. Falconer gave a pleased glance at me, and for a moment said nothing. Then he began, with a kind of logical composure:



“In the first place, father, I do not believe in such a God as some people say they believe in. Their God is but an idol of the heathen, modified with a few Christian qualities. For hell, I don’t believe there is any escape from it but by leaving hellish things behind. For suicide, I do not believe it is wicked because it hurts yourself, but I do believe it is very wicked. I only want to put it on its own right footing.”

“And pray what do you consider its right footing?”

“My dear father, I recognize no duty as owing to a man’s self. There is and can be no such thing. I am and can be under no obligation to myself. The whole thing is a fiction, and of evil invention. It comes from the upper circles of the hell of selfishness. Or, perhaps, it may with some be merely a form of metaphysical mistake; but an untruth it is. Then for the duty we do owe to other people: how can we expect the men or women who have found life to end, as it seems to them, in a dunghill of misery—how can we expect such to understand any obligation to live for the sake of the general *others*, to no individual of whom, possibly, do they bear an endurable relation? What remains?—The grandest, noblest duty from which all other duty springs: the duty to the possible God. Mind I say *possible* God, for I judge it the first of my duties towards my neighbour to

regard his duty from his position, not from mine."

"But," said I, "how would you bring that duty to bear on the mind of a suicide?"

"I think some of the tempted could understand it, though I fear not one of those could who judge them hardly, and talk sententiously of the wrong done to a society which has done next to nothing for him, by the poor, starved, refused, husband-tortured wretch perhaps, who hurries at last to the might of the filthy flowing river which, the one thread of hope in the web of despair, crawls through the city of death. What should I say to him? I should say: 'God liveth: thou art not thine own but his. Bear thy hunger, thy horror in his name. I in his name will help thee out of them, as I may. To go before he calleth thee, is to say "Thou forgettest," unto him who numbereth the hairs of thy head. Stand out in the cold and the sleet and the hail of this world, O son of man, till thy Father open the door and call thee. Yea, even if thou knowest him not, stand and wait, lest there should be, after all, such a loving and tender one, who, for the sake of a good with which thou wilt be all-content, and without which thou never couldst be content, permits thee there to stand—for a time—long to his sympathizing as well as to thy suffering heart.'"

Here Falconer paused, and when he spoke again it was from the ordinary level of conversation. Indeed I fancied that he was a little uncomfortable at the excitement into which his feelings had borne him.

“Not many of them could understand this, I daresay: but I think most of them could feel it without understanding it. Certainly the ‘belly with good capon lined’ will neither understand nor feel it. Suicide is a sin against God, I repeat, not a crime over which human laws have any hold. In regard to such, man has a duty alone—that, namely, of making it possible for every man to live. And where the dread of death is not sufficient to deter, what can the threat of punishment do? Or what great thing is gained if it should succeed? What agonies a man must have gone through in whom neither the horror of falling into such a river, nor of the knife in the flesh instinct with life, can extinguish the vague longing to wrap up his weariness in an endless sleep!”

“But,” I remarked, “you would, I fear, encourage the trade in suicide. Your kindness would be terribly abused. What would you do with the pretended suicides?”

“Whip them, for trifling with and trading upon the feelings of their kind.”

“Then you would drive them to suicide in earnest.”

“Then they might be worth something, which they were not before.”

“We are a great deal too humane for that now-a-days, I fear. We don’t like hurting people.”

“No. We are infested with a philanthropy which is the offspring of our mammon-worship. But surely our tender mercies are cruel. We don’t like to hang people, however unfit they may be to live amongst their fellows. A weakling pity will petition for the life of the worst murderer—but for what? To keep him alive in a confinement as like their notion of hell as they dare to make it—namely, a place whence all the sweet visitings of the grace of God are withdrawn, and the man has not a chance, so to speak, of growing better. In this hell of theirs they will even pamper his beastly body.”

“They have the chaplain to visit them.”

“I pity the chaplain, cut off in his labours from all the aids which God’s world alone can give for the teaching of these men. Human beings have *not* the right to inflict such cruel punishment upon their fellow man. It springs from a cowardly shrinking from responsibility, and from mistrust of the mercy of God;—perhaps first of all from an over-valuing of the mere life of the body. Hanging is tenderness itself to such a punishment.”

“I think you are hardly fair, though, Fal-

coner. It is the fear of sending them to hell that prevents them from hanging them."

"Yes. You are right, I daresay. They are not of David's mind, who would rather fall into the hands of God than of men. They think their hell is not so hard as his, and may be better for them. But I must not, as you say, forget that they do believe their everlasting fate hangs upon their hands, for if God once gets his hold of them by death, they are lost for ever."

"But the chaplain may awake them to a sense of their sins."

"I do not think it is likely that talk will do what the discipline of life has not done. It seems to me, on the contrary, that the clergyman has no commission to rouse people to a sense of their sins. That is not his work. He is far more likely to harden them by any attempt in that direction. Every man does feel his sins, though he often does not know it. To turn his attention away from what he does feel by trying to rouse in him feelings which are impossible to him in his present condition, is to do him a great wrong. The clergyman has the message of salvation, not of sin, to give. Whatever oppression is on a man, whatever trouble, whatever conscious something that comes between him and the blessedness of life, is his sin; for whatever is not of faith is sin; and from all this He came to save us. Salvation alone can

rouse in us a sense of our sinfulness. One must have got on a good way before he can be sorry for his sins. There is no condition of sorrow laid down as necessary to forgiveness. Repentance does not mean sorrow: it means turning away from the sins. Every man can do that, more or less. And that every man must do. The sorrow will come afterwards, all in good time. Jesus offers to take us out of our own hands into his, if we will only obey him."

The eyes of the old man were fixed on his son as he spoke. He did seem to be thinking. I could almost fancy that a glimmer of something like hope shone in his eyes.

It was time to go home, and we were nearly silent all the way.

The next morning was so wet that we could not go out, and had to amuse ourselves as we best might in-doors. But Falconer's resources never failed. He gave us this day story after story about the poor people he had known. I could see that his object was often to get some truth into his father's mind without exposing it to rejection by addressing it directly to himself; and few subjects could be more fitted for affording such opportunity than his experiences among the poor.

The afternoon was still rainy and misty. In the evening I sought to lead the conversation towards the gospel-story; and then Falconer



talked as I never heard him talk before. No little circumstance in the narratives appeared to have escaped him. He had thought about everything, as it seemed to me. He had looked under the surface everywhere, and found truth—mines of it—under all the upper soil of the story. The deeper he dug the richer seemed the ore. This was combined with the most pictorial apprehension of every outward event, which he treated as if it had been described to him by the lips of an eye-witness. The whole thing lived in his words and thoughts.

“When anything looks strange, you must look the deeper,” he would say.

At the close of one of our fits of talk, he rose and went to the window.

“Come here,” he said, after looking for a moment.

All day a dropping cloud had filled the space below, so that the hills on the opposite side of the valley were hidden, and the whole of the sea, near as it was. But when we went to the window we found that a great change had silently taken place. The mist continued to veil the sky, and it clung to the tops of the hills; but, like the rising curtain of a stage, it had rolled halfway up from their bases, revealing a great part of the sea and shore, and half of a cliff on the opposite side of the valley: this, in itself of a deep red, was now smitten by the rays



of the setting sun, and glowed over the waters a splendour of carmine. As we gazed, the vaporous curtain sank upon the shore, and the sun sank under the waves, and the sad gray evening closed in the weeping night, and clouds and darkness swathed the weary earth. For doubtless the earth needs its night as well as the creatures that live thereon.

In the morning the rain had ceased, but the clouds remained. But they were high in the heavens now, and like a departing sorrow, revealed the outline and form which had appeared before as an enveloping vapour of universal and shapeless evil. The mist was now far enough off to be seen and thought about. It was clouds now—no longer mist and rain. And I thought how at length the evils of the world would float away, and we should see what it was that made it so hard for us to believe and be at peace.

In the afternoon the sky had partially cleared, but clouds hid the sun as he sank towards the west. We walked out. A cold autumnal wind blew, not only from the twilight of the dying day, but from the twilight of the dying season. A sorrowful hopeless wind it seemed, full of the odours of dead leaves—those memories of green woods, and of damp earth—the bare graves of the flowers. Would the summer ever come again?

We were pacing in silence along a terraced walk which overhung the shore far below.

More here than from the hill top we seemed to look immediately into space, not even a parapet intervening betwixt us and the ocean. The sound of a mournful lyric, never yet sung, was in my brain; it drew nearer to my mental grasp; but ere it alighted, its wings were gone, and it fell dead on my consciousness. Its meaning was this: "Welcome, Requiem of Nature. Let me share in thy Requiescat. Blow, wind of mournful memories. Let us moan together. No one taketh from us the joy of our sorrow. We may mourn as we will."

But while I brooded thus, behold a wonder! The mass about the sinking sun broke up, and drifted away in cloudy bergs, as if scattered on the diverging currents of solar radiance that burst from the gates of the west, and streamed east and north and south over the heavens and over the sea. To the north, these masses built a cloudy bridge across the sky from horizon to horizon, and beneath it shone the rosy-sailed ships floating stately through their triumphal arch up the channel to their home. Other clouds floated stately too in the upper sea over our heads, with dense forms, thinning into vaporous edges. Some were of a dull angry red; some of as exquisite a primrose hue as ever the flower itself bore on its bosom; and betwixt their edges beamed out the sweetest, purest, most melting, most transparent blue, the heavenly

blue which is the symbol of the spirit as red is of the heart. I think I never saw a blue to satisfy me before. Some of these clouds threw shadows of many-shaded purple upon the green sea; and from one of the shadows, so dark and so far out upon the glooming horizon that it looked like an island, arose as from a pier, a wondrous structure of dim, fairy colours, a multitude of rainbow-ends, side by side, that would have spanned the heavens with a gorgeous arch, but failed from the very grandeur of the idea, and grew up only a few degrees against the clouded west. I stood rapt. The two Falconers were at some distance before me, walking arm in arm. They stood and gazed likewise. It was as if God had said to the heavens and the earth and the chord of the seven colours, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." And I said to my soul: "Let the tempest rave in the world; let sorrow wail like a sea-bird in the midst thereof; and let thy heart respond to her shivering cry; but the vault of heaven incloses the tempest and the shrieking bird and the echoing heart; and the sun of God's countenance can with one glance from above change the wildest winter day into a summer evening compact of poets' dreams."

My companions were walking up over the hill. I could see that Falconer was earnestly speaking in his father's ear. The old man's

head was bent towards the earth. I kept away. They made a turn from home. I still followed at a distance. The evening began to grow dark. The autumn wind met us again, colder, stronger, yet more laden with the odours of death and the frosts of the coming winter. But it no longer blew as from the charnel-house of the past; it blew from the stars through the chinks of the unopened door on the other side of the sepulchre. It was a wind of the worlds, not a wind of the leaves. It told of the march of the spheres, and the rest of the throne of God. We were going on into the universe—home to the house of our Father. Mighty adventure! Sacred repose! And as I followed the pair, one great star throbbed and radiated over my head.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THREE GENERATIONS.

THE next week I went back to my work, leaving the father and son alone together. Before I left, I could see plainly enough that the bonds were being drawn closer between them. A whole month passed before they returned to London. The winter then had set in with unusual severity. But it seemed to bring only health to the two men. When I saw Andrew next, there was certainly a marked change upon him. Light had banished the haziness from his eye, and his step was a good deal firmer. I can hardly speak of more than the physical improvement, for I saw very little of him now. Still I did think I could perceive more of judgment in his face, as if he sometimes weighed things in his mind. But it was plain that Robert continued very careful not to let him a moment out of his knowledge. He busied him with the various sights of London, for Andrew, although he knew all its miseries well,

had never yet been inside Westminster Abbey. If he could only trust him enough to get him something to do! But what was he fit for? To try him, he proposed once that he should write some account of what he had seen and learned in his wanderings; but the evident distress with which he shrunk from the proposal was grateful to the eyes and heart of his son.

It was almost the end of the year when a letter arrived from John Lammie, informing Robert that his grandmother had caught a violent cold, and that, although the special symptoms had disappeared, it was evident her strength was sinking fast, and that she would not recover.

He read the letter to his father.

“We must go and see her, Robert, my boy,” said Andrew.

It was the first time that he had shown the smallest desire to visit her. Falconer rose with glad heart, and proceeded at once to make arrangements for their journey.

It was a cold, powdery afternoon in January, with the snow thick on the ground, save where the little winds had blown the crown of the street bare before Mrs. Falconer’s house. A post-chaise with four horses swept wearily round the corner, and pulled up at her door. Betty opened it, and revealed an old withered face very sorrowful, and yet expectant. Falconer’s feelings I dare not, Andrew’s I cannot attempt

to describe, as they stepped from the chaise and entered. Betty led the way without a word into the little parlour. Robert went next, with long quiet strides, and Andrew followed with gray, bowed head. Grannie was not in her chair. The doors which during the day concealed the bed in which she slept, were open, and there lay the aged woman with her eyes closed. The room was as it had always been, only there seemed a filmy shadow in it that had not been there before.

“She’s deein’, sir,” whispered Betty. “Ay is she. Och hone!”

Robert took his father’s hand, and led him towards the bed. They drew nigh softly, and bent over the withered, but not even yet very wrinkled face. The smooth, white, soft hands lay on the sheet, which was folded back over her bosom. She was asleep, or rather, she slumbered.

But the soul of the child began to grow in the withered heart of the old man as he regarded his older mother, and as it grew it forced the tears to his eyes, and the word to his lips.

“Mother!” he said, and her eyelids rose at once. He stooped to kiss her, with the tears rolling down his face. The light of heaven broke and flashed from her aged countenance. She lifted her weak hands, took his head, and held it to her bosom.



“Eh! the bonnie gray heid!” she said, and burst into a passion of weeping. She had kept some tears for the last. Now she would spend all that her griefs had left her. But there came a pause in her sobs, though not in her weeping, and then she spoke.

“I kent it a’ the time, O Lord. I kent it a’ the time. He’s come hame. My Anerew, my Anerew! I’m as happy’s a bairn. O Lord! O Lord!”

And she burst again into sobs, and entered paradise in radiant weeping.

Her hands sank away from his head, and when her son gazed in her face he saw that she was dead. She had never looked at Robert.

The two men turned towards each other. Robert put out his arms. His father laid his head on his bosom, and went on weeping. Robert held him to his heart.

When shall a man dare to say that God has done all he can?

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE WHOLE STORY.

THE men laid their mother's body with those of the generations that had gone before her, beneath the long grass in their country churchyard near Rothieden—a dreary place, one accustomed to trim cemeteries and sentimental wreaths would call it—to Falconer's mind so friendly to the forsaken dust, because it lapt it in sweet oblivion.

They returned to the dreary house, and after a simple meal such as both had used to partake of in their boyhood, they sat by the fire, Andrew in his mother's chair, Robert in the same chair in which he had learned his Sallust and written his versions. Andrew sat for a while gazing into the fire, and Robert sat watching his face, where in the last few months a little feeble fatherhood had begun to dawn.

“It was there, father, that grannie used to sit, every day, sometimes looking in the fire for

hours, thinking about you, I know," Robert said at length.

Andrew stirred uneasily in his chair.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"If there was one thing I could be sure of, it was when grannie was thinking about you, father. Who wouldn't have known it, father, when her lips were pressed together, as if she had some dreadful pain to bear, and her eyes were looking away through the fire—so far away! and I would speak to her three times before she would answer? She lived only to think about God and you, father. God and you came very close together in her mind. Since ever I can remember, almost, the thought of you was just the one thing in this house."

Then Robert began at the beginning of his memory, and told his father all that he could remember. When he came to speak about his solitary musings in the garret, he said—and long before he reached this part, he had relapsed into his mother tongue:

"Come and luik at the place, father. I want to see 't again, mysel'."

He rose. His father yielded and followed him. Robert got a candle in the kitchen, and the two big men climbed the little narrow stair and stood in the little sky of the house, where their heads almost touched the ceiling.

"I sat upo' the flure there," said Robert, "an'

thought and thought what I wad du to get ye, father, and what I wad du wi' ye whan I had gotten ye. I wad greit whiles, 'cause ither laddies had a father an' I had nane. An' there's whaur I fand mamma's box wi' the letter in 't and her ain picter : grannie gae me that ane o' you. An' there's whaur I used to kneel doon an' pray to God. An' he's heard my prayers, and grannie's prayers, and here ye are wi' me at last. Instead o' thinkin' about ye, I hae yer ain sel'. Come, father, I want to say a word o' thanks to God, for hearin' my prayer."

He took the old man's hand, led him to the bedside, and kneeled with him there.

My reader can hardly avoid thinking it was a poor sad triumph that Robert had after all. How the dreams of the boy had dwindled in settling down into the reality! He had his father, it was true, but what a father! And how little he had him!

But this was not the end; and Robert always believed that the end must be the greater in proportion to the distance it was removed, to give time for its true fulfilment. And when he prayed aloud beside his father, I doubt not that his thanksgiving and his hope were equal.

The prayer over, he took his father's hand and led him down again to the little parlour, and they took their seats again by the fire; and Robert began again and went on with his story,

not omitting the parts belonging to Mary St. John and Eric Ericson.

When he came to tell how he had encountered him in the deserted factory :

“Luik here, father, here’s the mark o’ the cut,” he said, parting the thick hair on the top of his head.

His father hid his face in his hands.

“It wasna muckle o’ a blow that ye gied me, father,” he went on, “but I fell against the grate, and that was what did it. And I never tellt onybody, nae even Miss St. John, wha plaistered it up, hoo I had gotten ’t. And I didna mean to say onything about it; but I wantit to tell ye a queer dream, sic a queer dream it garred me dream the same nicht.”

As he told the dream, his father suddenly grew attentive, and before he had finished, looked almost scared; but he said nothing. When he came to relate his grandmother’s behaviour after having discovered that the papers relating to the factory were gone, he hid his face in his hands once more. He told him how grannie had mourned and wept over him, from the time when he heard her praying aloud as he crept through her room at night to their last talk together after Dr. Anderson’s death. He set forth, as he could, in the simplest language, the agony of her soul over her lost son. He told him then about Ericson, and Dr. Anderson,

and how good they had been to him, and at last of Dr. Anderson's request that he would do something for him in India.

"Will ye gang wi' me, father?" he asked.

"I'll never leave ye again, Robert, my boy," he answered. "I have been a bad man, and a bad father, and now I gie mysel' up to you to mak the best o' me ye can. I daurna leave ye, Robert."

"Pray to God to tak care o' ye, father. He'll do a'thing for ye, gin ye'll only lat him."

"I will, Robert."

"I was mysel' dreidfu' miserable for a while," Robert resumed, "for I cudna see or hear God at a'; but God heard me, and loot me ken that he was there an' that a' was richt. It was jist like whan a bairnie waukens up an' cries oot, thinkin' it's its lane, an' through the mirk comes the word o' the mither o' 't, sayin', 'I'm here, cratur: dinna greit.' And I cam to believe 'at he wad mak you a good man at last. O father, it's been my dream waukin' an' sleepin' to hae you back to me an' grannie, an' mamma, an' the Father o' 's a', an' Jesus Christ that's done a'thing for 's. An' noo ye maun pray to God, father. Ye *will* pray to God to haud a grip o' ye—willna ye, father?"

"I will, I will, Robert. But I've been an awfu' sinner. I believe I was the death o' yer mother, laddie."

Some fount of memory was opened ; some tide of old tenderness gushed up in his heart ; at some window of the past the face of his dead wife looked in : the old man broke into a great cry, and sobbed and wept bitterly. Robert said no more, but wept with him.

Henceforward the father clung to his son like a child. The heart of Falconer turned to his Father in heaven with speechless thanksgiving. The ideal of his dreams was beginning to dawn, and his life was new-born.

For a few days Robert took Andrew about to see those of his old friends who were left, and the kindness with which they all received him, moved Andrew's heart not a little. Every one who saw him seemed to feel that he or she had a share in the redeeming duty of the son. Robert was in their eyes like a heavenly messenger, whom they were bound to aid ; for here was the possessed of demons clothed and in his right mind. Therefore they overwhelmed both father and son with kindness. Especially at John Lammie's was he received with a perfection of hospitality ; as if that had been the father's house to which he had returned from his prodigal wanderings.

The good old farmer begged that they would stay with him for a few days.

"I hae sae mony wee things to luik efter at Rothieden, afore we gang," said Robert.



“Weel, lea’ yer father here. We s’ tak guid care o’ ’im, I promise ye.”

“There’s only ae difficulty. I believe ye are my father’s frien’, Mr. Lammie, as ye hae been mine, and God bless ye; sae I’ll jist tell you the trowth, what for I canna lea’ him. I’m no sure eneuch yet that he could withstan’ temptation. It’s the drink ye ken. It’s months sin’ he ’s tasted it; but—ye ken weel eneuch—the temptation’s awfu’. Sin’ ever I got him back, I haena tasted ae mou’fu’ o’ onything that cud be ca’d strong drink mysel’, an’ as lang ’s he lives, not ae drap shall cross my lips—no to save my life.”

“Robert,” said Mr. Lammie, giving him his hand with solemnity, “I sweir by God that he shanna see, smell, taste, nor touch drink in this hoose. There’s but twa boatles o’ whusky, i’ the shape o’ drink, i’ the hoose; an’ gin ye say ’at he sall bide, I’ll gang and mak them an’ the midden weel acquaint.”

Andrew was pleased at the proposal. Robert too was pleased that his father should be free of him for a while. It was arranged for three days. Half an hour after, Robert came upon Mr. Lammie emptying the two bottles of whisky into the dunghill in the farm-yard.

He returned with glad heart to Rothieden. It did not take him long to arrange his grandmother’s little affairs. He had already made up his

mind about her house and furniture. He rang the bell one morning for Betty.

“Hae ye ony siller laid up, Betty?”

“Ay. I hae feifteen poun’ i’ the savin’s bank.”

“An’ what do ye think o’ doin’.”

“I’ll get a bit roomy, an’ tak in washin’.”

“Weel, I’ll tell ye what I wad like ye to do. Ye ken Mistress Elshender?”

“Fine that. An’ a verra dacent body she is.”

“Weel, gin ye like, ye can haud this hoose, an’ a’ ’at’s in’t, jist as it is, till the day o’ yer deith. And ye’ll aye keep it in order, an’ the ga’le room ready for me at ony time I may happen to come in upo’ ye in want o’ a nicht’s quarters. But I wad like ye, gin ye hae nae objections, to tak Mistress Elshender to bide wi’ ye. She’s turnin’ some frail noo, and I’m unner great obligation to her Sandy, ye ken.”

“Ay, weel that. He learnt ye to fiddle, Robert—I hoombly beg your pardon, sir, Mister Robert.”

“Nae offence, Betty, I assure ye. Ye hae been aye gude to me, and I thank ye hertily.”

Betty could not stand this. Her apron went up to her eyes.

“Eh, sir,” she sobbed, “ye was aye a gude lad.”

“Excep’ whan I spak o’ Muckledrum, Betty.” She laughed and sobbed together.

“Weel, ye’ll tak Mistress Elshender in, winna ye?”

“I’ll do that, sir. And I’ll try to do my best wi’ her.”

“She can help ye, ye ken, wi’ yer washin’, an’ sic like.”

“She’s a hard-workin’ wuman, sir. She wad do that weel.”

“And whan ye’re in ony want o’ siller, jist write to me. An’ gin onything suld happen to me, ye ken, write to Mr. Gordon, a frien’ o’ mine. There’s his address in Lonnon.”

“Eh, sir, but ye are kin’. God bless ye for a’.”

She could bear no more, and left the room crying.

Everything settled at Rothieden, he returned to Bodyfauld. The most welcome greeting he had ever received in his life, lay in the shine of his father’s eyes when he entered the room where he sat with Miss Lammie. The next day they left for London.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE VANISHING.

THEY came to see me the very evening of their arrival. As to Andrew's progress there could be no longer any doubt. All that was necessary for conviction on the point was to have seen him before and to see him now. The very grasp of his hand was changed. But not yet would Robert leave him alone.

It will naturally occur to my reader that his goodness was not much yet. It was not. It may have been greater than we could be sure of, though. But if any one object that such a conversion, even if it were perfected, was poor, inasmuch as the man's free will was intromitted with, I answer: "The development of the free will was the one object. Hitherto it was not free." I ask the man who says so: "Where would your free will have been if at some period of your life you could have had everything you wanted?" If he says it is nobler in a man to do with less help, I answer, "Andrew was not

noble : was he therefore to be forsaken ? The prodigal was not left without the help of the swine and their husks, at once to keep him alive and disgust him with the life. Is the less help a man has from God the better ?” According to you, the grandest thing of all would be for a man sunk in the absolute abysses of sensuality all at once to resolve to be pure as the empyrean, and be so, without help from God or man. But is the thing possible ? As well might a hyena say : I will be a man, and become one. That would be to create. Andrew must be kept from the evil long enough to let him at least see the good, before he was let alone. But when would we be let alone ? For a man to be fit to be let alone, is for a man not to need God, but to be able to live without him. Our hearts cry out, “To have God is to live. We want God. Without him no life of ours is worth living. We are not then even human, for that is but the lower form of the divine. We are immortal, eternal : fill us, O Father, with thyself. Then only all is <sup>\*</sup>well.” More : I heartily believe, though I cannot understand the boundaries of will and inspiration, that what God will do for us at last is infinitely beyond any greatness we could gain, even if we could will ourselves from the lowest we could be, into the highest we can imagine. It is essential divine life we want ; and there is grand truth, however incomplete or

perverted, in the aspiration of the Brahmin. He is wrong, but he wants something right. If the man had the power in his pollution to will himself into the right without God, the fact that he was in that pollution with such power, must damn him there for ever. And if God must help ere a man can be saved, can the help of man go too far towards the same end? Let God solve the mystery—for he made it. One thing is sure: We are his, and he will do his part, which is no part but the all in all. If man could do what in his wildest self-worship he can imagine, the grand result would be that he would be his own God, which is the Hell of Hells.

For some time I had to give Falconer what aid I could in being with his father while he arranged matters in prospect of their voyage to India. Sometimes he took him with him when he went amongst his people, as he called the poor he visited. Sometimes, when he wanted to go alone, I had to take him to Miss St. John, who would play and sing as I had never heard any one play or sing before. Andrew on such occasions carried his flute with him, and the result of the two was something exquisite. How Miss St. John did lay herself out to please the old man! And pleased he was. I think her kindness did more than anything else to make him feel like a gentleman again. And in his condition that was much.

At length Falconer would sometimes leave him with Miss St. John, till he or I should go for him: he knew she could keep him safe. He knew that she *would* keep him if necessary.

One evening when I went to see Falconer, I found him alone. It was one of these occasions.

"I am very glad you have come, Gordon," he said. "I was wanting to see you. I have got things nearly ready now. Next month, or at latest, the one after, we shall sail; and I have some business with you which had better be arranged at once. No one knows what is going to happen. The man who believes the least in chance knows as little as the man who believes in it the most. My will is in the hands of Dobson. I have left you everything."

I was dumb.

"Have you any objection?" he said, a little anxiously.

"Am I able to fulfil the conditions?" I faltered.

"I have burdened you with no conditions," he returned. "I don't believe in conditions. I know your heart and mind now. I trust you perfectly."

"I am unworthy of it."

"That is for me to judge."

"Will you have no trustees?"

"Not one."

"What do you want me to do with your property?"



“You know well enough. Keep it going the right way.”

“I will always think what you would like.”

“No; do not. Think what is right; and where there is no right or wrong plain in itself, then think what is best. You may see good reason to change some of my plans. You may be wrong; but you must do what you see right—not what I see or might see right.”

“But there is no need to talk so seriously about it,” I said. “You will manage it yourself for many years yet. Make me your steward, if you like, during your absence: I will not object to that.”

“You do not object to the other, I hope?”

“No.”

“Then so let it be. The other, of course. I have, being a lawyer myself, taken good care not to trust myself only with the arranging of these matters. I think you will find them all right.”

“But supposing you should not return—you have compelled me to make the supposition——”

“Of course. Go on.”

“What am I to do with the money in the prospect of following you?”

“Ah! that is the one point on which I want a word, although I do not think it is necessary. I want to entail the property.”

“How?”

“By word of mouth,” he answered, laughing. “You must look out for a right man, as I have done, get him to know your ways and ideas, and if you find him *worthy*—that is a grand wide word—our Lord gave it to his disciples—leave it all to him in the same way I have left it to you, trusting to the spirit of truth that is in him, the spirit of God. You can copy my will—as far as it will apply, for you may have, one way or another, lost the half of it by that time. But, by word of mouth, you must make the same condition with him as I have made with you—that is, with regard to his leaving it, and the conditions on which he leaves it, adding the words, ‘that it may descend thus *in perpetuum.*’ And he must do the same.”

He broke into a quiet laugh. I knew well enough what he meant. But he added :

“That means, of course, for as long as there is any.”

“Are you sure you are doing right, Falconer?” I said.

“Quite. It is better to endow one man, who will work as the Father works, than a hundred charities. But it is time I went to fetch my father. Will you go with me?”

This was all that passed between us on the subject, save that, on our way, he told me to move to his rooms, and occupy them until he returned.

“My papers,” he added, “I commit to your discretion.”

On our way back from Queen Square, he joked and talked merrily. Andrew joined in. Robert showed himself delighted with every attempt at gaiety or wit that Andrew made. When we reached the house, something that had occurred on the way made him turn to Martin Chuzzlewit, and he read Mrs. Gamp’s best to our great enjoyment.

I went down with the two to Southampton, to see them on board the steamer. I staid with them there until she sailed. It was a lovely morning in the end of April, when at last I bade them farewell on the quarter-deck. My heart was full. I took his hand and kissed it. He put his arms round me, and laid his cheek to mine. I was strong to bear the parting.

The great iron steamer went down in the middle of the Atlantic, and I have not yet seen my friend again.

THE END.

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