

OLD JOE

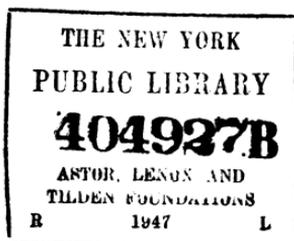
AND OTHER VESPER STORIES

By
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PREFACE

FOR a number of years, at the Sunday Vesper Service of the church which I serve, a story has taken the place of the customary sermon, or, rather, the sermon has been preached in the form of a story. These narratives were not read from manuscript, but were told extemporaneously; and at the time there was no thought of making them serve any purpose beyond that of their first hearing. A few of them were afterward told to groups of American soldiers and marines in the Y. M. C. A. huts at Saint Nazaire and Chaumont and in that "hut de luxe," le Grand Cercle, at Aix-les-Bains, the first of the American Leave Areas in France. Now, using the notes made at the time of their original telling, and taking advantage of the leisure of a summer holiday, I have written out the ones which appear in this volume, in the hope that they will have some interest and value for another audience.

Why do not the Christian teachers of the present day make a larger use of the narrative method? It gives such welcome aid in attaining variety, simplicity, and concreteness. It serves so admirably the important purpose of holding

people's attention and helping them to remember what they have heard. I hope that the stories in this volume will stir up some of my fellow parsons to try their hands at pulpit story-telling.

SHEPHERD KNAPP.

March 16, 1922

Worcester, Massachusetts.

OLD JOE

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow-ing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”

OLD JOE

It is supper time at the ranch, and a dozen or fifteen are seated around the table in the grub-shack, all of them men. The cook, also, who is moving about in the background, is a man. Almost all of them are young—in their twenties or younger: these are the ranch hands. There are, besides, a few who are older—the cook, for instance, and the horse-wrangler, and the foreman. These are the three on whom rests the responsibility for the ranch's successful management. And then there is Joe, older than any of them by a good many years, "Old Joe," as everybody calls him, whom everybody makes fun of in a good-natured fashion, and everybody likes.

The meal is well under way, and the first pangs of hunger have been satisfied, so that they are now indulging in conversation. They are talking about the owner of the ranch; and there is special reason for this, because of a letter from him, which the foreman brought yesterday, when he came back from Creekville, the nearest railroad station, forty-five miles away.

For the boss, or "the master," as Old Joe calls him (and some of the others have caught the

habit), is away, and has been for nearly fifteen years. No one supposed, when he went, that he would be gone so long. His going at all was sudden and unexpected. He had been married less than a year, and was in the midst of prosperity and happiness, when his young wife was stricken down with an obscure malady. He took her to Chicago for expert advice, but letters came from there, saying that the trouble was even more serious than had been supposed: indeed, it was feared that there was little chance for life. A certain famous specialist in Europe was suggested as a sort of forlorn hope, and haste was recommended. On they went, therefore, without delay. Under the skillful care of the great doctor the disease was arrested, but not cured, for it was found that the moment the treatment was discontinued, the alarming symptoms returned, and that even an attempt to dispense with the immediate supervision of the great specialist, though continuing the treatment prescribed by him, was futile. Once they got as far as England, hoping to spend a month, resting there, and then sail for America, but before the month was up, the disease showed plain signs of reasserting itself, and back they went to the one place where there was a chance of coping with the subtle enemy. And now even that has failed. The letter just received reports



that the end has come, and that the master is returning home. Perhaps he will arrive as soon as the letter: certainly soon after.

The younger men are asking questions about him. All of them came to the ranch after his departure, so that to them he is a mere name. "Is he hard or easy to get on with?" "Will he want to boss everything himself?" "How old is he?" "What does he look like?" Each of the older men takes some part in answering the questions, except Old Joe, who sits silent. But when it comes to this last question, as to the master's looks, he is not satisfied with the foreman's attempted description. Joe says that he can tell them exactly how the master looks: he can describe accurately every detail of his appearance, just as he looked when he went out at that door there.

"All right; you tell 'em, then," says the foreman good-naturedly; and there is a great knocking on the table of fists and knife handles. "Quit your noise there: Joe has the floor. Let Old Joe tell his yarn."

So Joe describes the master. He is a man of middle height or a little above it, Joe says, of slender build, with a longish neck, smooth face, brown hair, gray eyes. Then as to his clothes: Joe begins that part of his description.

"What's the color of his boots?" one of the

young fellows asks, with a wink at the others.

But Old Joe, quite unaware of any irony in the question, soberly reports that item, as well as everything else about the master's outfit, his chaps, his shirt, the silk handkerchief at his neck, his hat, quite as though the clothes were a permanent part of the man. Old Joe, it is evident, lives in the past rather than the present.

At last he comes to the belt. There is a renewed clatter of knives on the table. Evidently, this belt has been referred to on previous occasions. "What sort of a belt was it?" asks the cook mischievously, as he stands behind Joe, "that old rawhide one he used to wear sometimes?"

"Rawhide nothin'; says Old Joe. "It was a real belt, a new one. It was a belt I give him myself."

Cheers from the listeners. "Don't tell us you bought it, Joe."

"I did though," says Joe. "It was one of those lucky things. I'd bought it for myself only a week before, down at Creekville; and when we knew that the master was going away, I give it to him. He had it on when he went. It was the best belt they had in the store, when I bought it; and the master, when I give it to him, and he put it on, just before he started—

he said it was the neatest belt he'd ever owned."

Loud applause, suspiciously prompt and vigorous, but Old Joe is delighted at this appreciative reception of his narrative.

"So it's fifteen years since he went away?" says one of the younger men. "Ain't he never been back all that time?"

"Not once."

"I suppose you'll recognize him all right, when he comes, Joe."

"Recognize him? Well, I should say I would."

"You'll all have a chance soon to see him for yourselves," says the foreman, pushing back his chair from the table, and rising. All the rest do the same, with a noise of the scraping of chair legs on the floor and the rattle of dishes on the shaken table. "And, boys," continues the foreman, waiting a moment for comparative silence, "I advise you all to be right on the job these days. When he does come he'll have a keen eye for the man who isn't, you may be sure of that."

As they scatter toward stable and bunk-house, the foreman, the horse-wrangler and Old Joe take chairs outside, where it is cooler, and sit there chatting. Even out of doors it is very warm, for it has been one of the hottest days of summer. A little later the cook brings out a fourth chair and joins them. He says that he

has been setting aside a good lunch in case the master should possibly get in to-night.

"Yes," says the foreman, "that's possible, but not likely. At least, if he comes to-night, he'll be here before sunset, that's my bet. The master is not the kind of a man to start on a long cross-country ride at haphazard. He'll have calculated the time and distance so as to arrive by daylight."

The sun is already nearing the line of the western mountains. At the cook's suggestion they walk down the road to the little rise just beyond the corral, to see whether there is perhaps some sign of a traveler coming. There is no one in sight.

By the time they have returned the sun has set. They tilt their chairs back against the house front, and sit with their heads against the wall, their feet dangling, each pulling at his pipe. Twilight comes on while they talk, and as it grows darker, they talk less and less.

"Well, boys," says the foreman after the last trace of day has disappeared and the stars are out in full array, "I guess I'll turn in."

The horse-wrangler makes no move to go. The cook says he'll hang around for a while yet. He goes inside to see whether the coffee is keeping hot on the back of the stove. Old Joe, whose job is that of night watchman—that has been

his job all these years since the master went away—gets up, now that darkness has fallen, to make his first round.

“I say, Joe,” calls back the foreman, as he walks off, “if you want to turn in toward morning, it’s perfectly safe; and there’ll be a lot to be done to-morrow getting ready for the master. You’d better be as fresh as you can.”

The truth is that Old Joe’s job is not taken very seriously by anyone except himself. The rest regard it as little more than an act of kindness on the master’s part, making a place for a faithful worker of long standing; for Old Joe has been on the ranch from the time when the master’s father bought it, before the master himself was born.

“Turn in?” says Joe. “No, *sir*. The master told me that night watchman was my job, and you don’t catch me letting up on it.”

“I know,” answers the foreman; “but conditions have changed a good deal. It’s not so necessary now as it was in the old days.”

“Maybe so,” says Joe, “but I’ll see it through all the same.”

The foreman laughs. “Suit yourself, Joe; perhaps you’re right,” he says, and is off to bed.

Between the tours of his duty, Old Joe joins the other two still sitting outside the kitchen,

silent for the most part. Hour follows hour, accompanied by the loud ticking of the kitchen clock inside.

At last the clock strikes twelve. The cook says, "What's the use? He's not coming to-night, that's sure. I'm hungry: let's have a bite. What do you say?" He goes in, and brings out the materials which he laid aside on the chance of the master's coming. He and the horse-wrangler do justice to the lunch, and drink a cup of coffee apiece. Old Joe drinks some coffee, but says he doesn't want anything to eat just now. But he cuts and butters several slices of bread, and, together with a good-sized piece of cheese, puts them on the mantel shelf. Maybe he'll eat them by and by, he says. The cook puts away what is left, and goes off to bed.

Joe and the horse-wrangler are alone now. The horse-wrangler dozes. Joe, besides his regular patrols, goes several times along the road to the rise near the corral. He can see quite a way along the road in the starlight, but there is nothing there to see, except the road itself.

And now the first faint streak of dawn makes its appearance. There is a stirring down in the barnyard. A rooster, mounted on the pole of a wagon, crows. The horse-wrangler wakes, yawns, drops the front legs of his chair to the

ground, stretches (as though stiff from the night air) and, still yawning, goes off to bed. Joe comes back from his last tour of inspection and finds him gone.

"Humph," says Old Joe. "A nice welcome for the master, if he comes now. Every man jack of them in bed."

To be sure, he is hardly expectant himself any longer. Still, he will see it through to broad daylight, as he has night after night all these fifteen years. Then he will get his sleep.

Once more he goes to the rise beyond the corral. He stands looking along the road, eastward, where the colors of sunrise are deepening. As he stands there, he closes his eyes and says in words barely audible: "God bless the master, and bring him home soon, soon. God help the master in the sorrow that he is bringing home in his heart. And God bless all the boys, and help Old Joe to be faithful." He opens his eyes.

Someone is coming along the road, a man, walking, and leading a horse. Can it be the master at last? The figure comes nearer. No, this is a very different sort of person, much heavier than the master, and bearded. Well, never mind the disappointment. The master will come later, and meantime this stranger looks as though he needed tending to. Evidently the reason for his walking is that his horse has

gone lame, can hardly hobble: the man himself seems footsore. He is covered with dust.

"Good morning, stranger," says Old Joe.

The stranger looks at him curiously before answering, as though searching for something in the old man's face. Then he faintly smiles, or to Joe it seems so, though he is not quite sure. Then he opens his mouth to speak, but closes it again; and finally he asks whether he can get care for his lame horse. It went lame miles back.

Joe says, "Our horse-wrangler knows everything there is to know about a lame horse, but he isn't around yet. Until he comes out, I'll just put your horse in the stable and shake down something for him to eat."

That done, Joe again turns his thoughts to the stranger himself. He is hungry probably. Joe is about to say that the cook will be starting breakfast as soon as he gets up, maybe in an hour or so. But hold on: it is not necessary to wait for the cook. For Joe has remembered that bread and cheese on the mantel, which he saved in the hope of the master's coming. Well, it is fortunate that he has it to give to this hungry traveler.

The stranger says he needs a bite only: bread and cheese is just the thing. Sleep is what he wants most. Can he lie down somewhere, and sleep till breakfast?

"Sure thing," says Joe. He can't offer anything extra swell, he explains. The foreman, if he were around, would probably provide better quarters; but there's Joe's own bed, if that will do. The stranger says that anything will do, and starts to take off his coat before he lies down. Joe helps him.

What is Joe doing now? He bends forward to look at the stranger's waist: he feels it with his hand, a hand that trembles. Then he looks up into the man's bearded face. And suddenly the stranger is putting out his arm to keep Old Joe from falling; for sometimes to an old man joy, coming suddenly, may be almost as great a shock as a sudden sorrow would be, and Joe has recognized, first the belt, his own gift to the master so many years ago, and then beneath the beard and the dust and the lines made by years of anxiety and sorrow, his master. Yes, the master has come home, delayed long beyond his calculation by his horse's lamed leg; but late though he is, he has found one man waiting and watching for him.

I guess no one will make fun of Old Joe at breakfast.

REPENTANCE FOR A PURPOSE
“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

REPENTANCE FOR A PURPOSE

ONE Sunday evening in the middle of December, old Dr. Hunnewell sat by the fire in the dining room of the parsonage. He had returned from evening service, had gotten into his velveteen jacket and his slippers, and was settling down to the enjoyment of what he called "that delicious Sunday evening feeling," by which he meant the quiet pause between one week's work completed and another not yet due to begin. Presently Mrs. Hunnewell, entering from the kitchen and placing sundry dishes on the table, told him that supper was ready. She took the best of care of him, as every one in the parish knew, though she surprised some of them by the freedom with which she disagreed with him, even with his sermons. That was not what they had been brought up to expect in the pastor's wife. But their pastor himself did not seem to be disturbed by it.

As they sat down at the table, where the jellied chicken, the thin slices of buttered toast, and a steaming pitcher of cocoa were ready to stimulate appetite—if any stimulation were necessary—he asked her what she had thought of the session of the Sunday school that morning.

"Very good," she answered, "except for the increase in the number of scholars."

"There was not as large an increase as you could wish?" queried her husband.

"No. Too large," she replied in an incisive tone.

"Too large?" said Dr. Hunnewell. "What do you mean?"

"Christmas is coming," she answered, enigmatically.

"Eh?" said Dr. Hunnewell, still in the dark.

"The Winslow boy, for example, who lives across the way: you know him."

"Yes," said Dr. Hunnewell, "I know him. A delightful little boy."

Mrs. Hunnewell looked at her husband sternly. "He hasn't been to the Sunday school for weeks," said she. "Indeed, he has hardly shown his face there this fall. As far as I can see, he has no true appreciation of his religious privileges."

"Few of them have, in the way you mean," interjected Dr. Hunnewell.

His wife, ignoring his remark, continued, "And now, because Christmas is coming, and there is definite material advantage in view, he makes his appearance."

"I don't see much harm in that," said Dr. Hunnewell, looking benignly at his next mouth-

ful of jellied chicken, balanced upon his fork. "It simply means that he recognizes a good thing when he sees it: that's a sign of intelligence. You may even call him far-seeing, for apparently he recognizes good things that are yet to come. And he's provident, too, for he gets in line for them. I should think he *would* want to share our Christmas festivities. I'd hate to miss them myself if I were a boy of his age."

"I call it hypocritical," declared Mrs. Hunnewell.

For a moment she seemed to have the last word, for the Doctor had taken the opportunity to put the jellied chicken into his mouth. "No," he said when he had swallowed it, "he is merely following a biblical injunction."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Hunnewell, as though she thought this was really going too far.

"A biblical injunction," her husband repeated serenely, 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' You see, my dear, it doesn't say to repent for repentance's own sake, but because, if you don't, you'll be shut out from something that you'll be sorry to miss: 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' At Harry's age a Christmas festival at our Sunday school is a pretty good substitute for 'the kingdom of heaven,' I should say; and according to your report he's repenting in time."

"I should have supposed," said Mrs. Hunnewell, "that the kingdom of heaven is a more serious matter."

"I'm afraid you mean, 'less enjoyable,'" said the Doctor, smiling at her slyly. "Alas for my preaching!" he added. "All these years, and even you do not yet think of the kingdom of heaven as something infinitely delightful."

"Well, you'll see," said his wife in a tone which pronounced all these comments of her husband irrelevant, if not frivolous. "He'll be gone again by the middle of January, mark my word."

"Very likely," said Dr. Hunnewell, "but I shall expect him to return later."

She was perfectly right, for Harry Winslow disappeared from the Sunday school not long after New Year's. (Mrs. Hunnewell did *not* say, "I told you so": her spirit was in reality much more Christian than her manner seemed to indicate.) Later in the year he came off and on, with considerable intervals between: once or twice he was regular for a brief period, arousing hopes in his teacher, which were doomed to disappointment.

In subsequent years it was much the same. Seven or eight years passed in this way. Then he began quite suddenly to attend the church service on Sunday mornings. He attended reg-

ularly, and the most interesting thing about it was that the regularity lasted for a much longer time than any of his earlier periods of Sunday school attendance.

Dr. Hunnewell said one day to his wife, "Do you by any chance remember a conversation we had a number of years ago about Harry Winslow and his religious or, as you thought, his irreligious habits?"

"Yes," said she, and her face assumed a peculiar sort of half smile which meant, "If you say what I think you are going to say, I have an answer ready that will make your idea look extremely foolish?"

"Well," continued Dr. Hunnewell, "it's been a long while in arriving, I admit, but the very thing has happened that I then prophesied. For the past three months Harry has been attending morning service with the utmost regularity. He sits in the fourth pew from the back on the north aisle. I look for him each Sunday, and I find him there every time. It began some time back in April."

"You dear, innocent soul," said his wife. "Of course you have no idea *why* he is now attending church so regularly, and *why* he always sits on the north aisle."

"I suppose you refer to his admiration for Deacon Strait's pretty daughter, Virginia."

"Oh, you have noticed, then?"—Mrs. Hunnewell looked a little disappointed, as though the wind had been taken out of her sails. The Doctor was not always as innocent as he seemed. "At any rate," she continued, "you may take my word for it, that's all there is to his church-going."

"But isn't that a good deal?" suggested Dr. Hunnewell. "Virginia is a dear, good girl, worth going to even worse places than church for, I should say."

"You are perfectly hopeless," declared his wife, but she could not help laughing at the same time. "I suppose," she added, "that you will describe it as another case of 'seeking the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Why not?" said he. "And, according to my judgment of them both, of finding it too, most probably. At least the home that they would make together might prove to be something very like it."

In due time Harry's courtship ended in the wedding at which old Dr. Hunnewell officiated with much satisfaction. He asked his wife afterward whether the sight of the radiant happiness of the young couple did not make her feel sorry for all her suspicions and accusations in the past.

"Wait and see," was her answer. "He'll soon

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begin to be less regular at church, now that he has gotten what he went there for, and the Deacon's favorable opinion is no longer indispensable."

For nearly a year, however, this did not happen. Practically every Sunday morning Harry Winslow and his wife were in church. But then the baby came, and after that Harry's church attendance was suddenly reduced to a minimum. He came once while his wife was still at the hospital, and later he appeared on a very few occasions, when Virginia was free to go with him because her mother volunteered to take care of the baby. For the rest of the time Harry's piety took the form of taking care of the baby himself, and letting Virginia, if she wished, go to church for the family.

This time Mrs. Hunnewell did say to her husband, "I told you so." (Even good Christians cannot always resist it.)

"But he'll be back again later on," said Dr. Hunnewell, unperturbed. "Wait till the baby is old enough to come, and is scheduled to hold a cord of the Sunday school banner at the Children's Day Service, or to sing in the children's choir, or to act the part of a gnome in the Christmas play. Harry won't be willing to be left out of that. There will come to him, besides, the question how to bring up his boy in

the right way, how to make sure that the youngster gets his full share of every good thing that life affords. Religion will be one of the good things that he wants for his children, you'll find. Then he'll come looking for it."

Perhaps it would have happened that way: but before the time for that had arrived, the great war came, and interrupted and disarranged practically everything in creation. Old Dr. Hunnewell was reported to be preaching very strong sermons in those days. "Really remarkable for such an old man."—"There's a lot of fire in him yet."—"The war seems to have waked him up," said one and another of his parishioners. The fact was that he was preaching the very same truths that he had preached for forty-odd years, and often in almost the same words; only now the times cried out for them. People came to church who had seldom been seen there, partly to see for themselves whether Dr. Hunnewell's patriotic sermons were as good as they were reported to be; partly, also, because there had been awakened in themselves a new sense of need for the thing he preached, that is, the heroic religion of Jesus Christ.

Among these was Harry Winslow. He came occasionally during the first year of the war. In the second and third years of it he had become almost regular. About a month after America's

entrance into the war had taken place, he came one evening to see Dr. Hunnewell at the parsonage.

“Dr. Hunnewell,” he said, “I’ve never been a Christian. I don’t mean merely that I’ve never come out and said I was one: I’ve never been one. But I want to be one now; in a way, I’ve got to be one (I’ll tell you in a minute what I mean). And I think perhaps it will help me to be one, if I make a sort of public promise, the sort of thing people do who join the church—isn’t that the idea of it? The point is this: The Government has got to raise an army, and I’ve decided to enlist. Virginia thinks I’m right. You know the kind of girl she is, and of course she’d back me up. Besides that, as you probably know, her father, when he died, left her pretty well off, she being his only child; so that she and the children are provided for, if anything should happen to me.

“I want to tell you, sir,” he went on, “that your preaching has helped me a lot to see the thing the way I do, what a big thing it is we’re fighting for, how it’s no time for people to go on living in their own selfishness. The only trouble is I feel I’m not fit for it. I’m not big enough. As I look back over the past I feel that I’ve been selfish and lazy and negligent. I haven’t anywhere near deserved the blessings I’ve had,

a wife like Virginia, and such children as that little son and daughter of mine. I suppose one can't make up for lost time in the past; but at least I want now to start right. That's what I've come to see you about."

"Who was it that called on you last evening?" asked Mrs. Hunnewell next morning at breakfast. She had gone to bed early the night before, and had been asleep when Dr. Hunnewell finally came upstairs.

"It was Harry Winslow," he answered. "He has repented again, for again he sees the kingdom of heaven at hand."

Something in his manner warned her to make no comment, till she heard more.

"You can't say it's not serious enough this time," he continued. "It's the war that is calling him. He won't be happy until he has a share in it. And he cares enough about measuring up to his task to want to leave his old smaller self behind, and go as a Christian." Then he added with a twinkle in his eye, "Wasn't it lucky that he had been practicing 'repentance for a purpose' from time to time, ever since he was a little boy?"

"You'll never get me to acknowledge that there is any sense in that notion," said Mrs. Hunnewell, "but you're an old dear just the same."

THE NURSE

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

THE NURSE

THE Rev. Mr. Pointdexter had intended anyway to telephone to the District Nursing Society when he reached home, but as an errand on the way took him by the door of the office of the Society, he went in and gave his message in person. It was about old Joseph Littlejohn, a well-known character in the town, who had already been old when Mr. Pointdexter was a boy, and who now, when he was drawing near to the end of his journey, needed help and care for the last stage.

Joseph Littlejohn had always been rather eccentric, especially in the matter of living alone and talking out loud to himself; and in recent years his peculiarities had become even more marked. People were no longer surprised when his talk was rambling and his ideas seemed misty or fantastic. He lived quite by himself in a tiny two-room house just beyond the bridge as one left the town going south, and all attempts to move him to a safer or a better place had been in vain. Two circumstances, however, made this solitary life less unfavorable than it would otherwise have been. In the first place, his nearest neighbors, though busy people, were

kind and interested. They kept an eye on him, and when need arose could be counted on to help him, or else report the need to some one who could do so. The other favorable fact was that he himself, in spite of his simple-mindedness, had nothing harsh or mean or irritable in his makeup, so that he never repelled kindness, nor made it hard for people to be gentle and patient with his eccentricities. In fact, in a way, people were very fond of him, though they laughed at him more or less. He was like an apple tree in a deserted orchard, gnarled and broken, with many dead boughs, yet in May on its few living branches holding out a wealth of delicate blossoms, for wayfarers to smile at and bees to get honey from.

Often up to the time when the weakness of old age kept him indoors and finally put him to bed for the last time, you would see one or another of the townspeople sitting for a while beside him on the seat by his door. Usually they took away with them some quaint and unexpected word, and always a sense of gentleness and restfulness. Even some of the boys would sit there sometimes and talk to him, especially the boys who had anything of the dreamer in their make-up. For them he had a sort of fascination. Mr. Pointdexter, who had grown up in this town which afterward became his

parish, had been one of those boys, and without being able to say just how or why, he always felt, as he looked back on those days, that he owed a certain debt to old Joseph Littlejohn. Some of the old man's fancies seemed a bit like voices from another world; and as life goes on, one is grateful for whatever has encouraged the habit of listening for any far-off echoes from that silent land.

Recently it had been evident that the end of Joseph Littlejohn's journey was near. Till now the neighbors and a few others like Mr. Pointdexter had been able to do all that was necessary for his safety and comfort, for he had not been sick in any definite way; but now his weakness was much more evident, and it was plain that more regular and skillful help was needed. So Mr. Pointdexter stopped at the District Nursing Society to say that old Mr. Littlejohn down by the south bridge was growing very feeble: he was not in pain, and was perfectly conscious in his own queer, flighty, rambling way; "but could one of the nurses go in regularly from now on, to render him such kind and helpful service as only a skilled nurse knows how to give?"

"Yes, indeed," said the superintendent, and made a note of it on a card: and she added, "Miss Stickney is working down in that part of

the town now. I'll have her begin to call there this afternoon."

Miss Stickney. That reminded Mr. Pointdexter of another matter which had slipped his mind for the moment. A letter had come only the day before from the pastor of a church in another State, who wrote that the daughter of one of his church members, a Miss Helen Stickney, a trained nurse, was working in Mr. Pointdexter's town, and would Mr. Pointdexter look her up and help her in any way he could, especially in spiritual matters? The writer was not sure, but he feared that she was rather neglecting her Christian privileges and obligations. The close confinement to her work during her hospital training and afterward, and perhaps the materialistic point of view of many of the people she worked with, had had a certain negative influence; but Miss Stickney was a fine woman at heart, and—in short, would Mr. Pointdexter, as a Christian minister, do his best for her?

Accordingly, when he heard her name spoken by the superintendent, he asked whether Miss Stickney happened to be about just then. Yes, she was in the next room, and the superintendent called her and introduced them. Mr. Pointdexter welcomed her as a new recruit to the philanthropic forces of the town, and then

spoke at some length about Joseph Littlejohn, whose case she was now to look after in her daily rounds.

“I think you’ll not find him difficult to care for,” he said. “There’s something winning about the old man. Clouded as his mind is, a sort of light shines through. You will grow to love him, after you have known him a little. He makes you feel as though he were somehow in the keeping of good spirits. He’s very religious, too, by the way, in his own queer fashion, and I’m sure that that side of him also—for all it seems so hazy and fantastic—will make a certain appeal to you.” He said this partly to draw her out on the subject of religion, or at least to make an opening for some word about it from himself. She made no response, however. Indeed, she was thinking, “Much of the religion of perfectly sane and normal people is so hazy and fantastic, that this old man’s queer notions may seem only a little more queer than theirs.”

Miss Stickney, according to her orders, made her first call at the little house by the south bridge that afternoon, and after that went there daily. The old man took her coming and her ministry most serenely and as a matter of course; but there was no doubt that he liked to have her come. He welcomed her with a smile, and showed that he was sorry when the time came

for her to go; and he soon talked with her as though he had known her for years instead of days. At first, when he drifted into the realm of his fancies, she did not listen closely to what he said, but after a while, just to please him by questions and comments, she paid more attention, and not without deriving a certain pleasure from it, just as Mr. Pointdexter had expected. It was all mere moonshine, no doubt, his report of the things he had been thinking or dreaming about, the things he supposed he had been seeing and doing, yet there was a kind of sweetness in it all somehow—like music so far away that you can't catch the tune, and yet music.

After a while she got into the habit of walking down that way several times a week in the evening after her work was over. It was spring and the time of late twilights, and unless he already had a visitor, one of the friendly townspeople, she would sit with him for perhaps half an hour in the fading light. There was nothing very much to do for him, but he evidently liked to have her come, liked to talk to her, liked to have her question him and listen to his answers. She smiled at herself sometimes for spending so much time with an old man who had lost his wits, and listening to his dreams and visions; but she kept on going.

Much of his talk was of excursions which he

imagined that he had been making into heavenly places, and of the heavenly beings he had seen there and talked with. From his own account he made no more of talking to angels than a housewife does of giving her morning orders to the grocer; and heaven was as familiar to him apparently as a city street to those who live on it. It was not at all surprising, therefore, that in his narratives he often spoke of seeing and talking with the Lord himself, "the good Lord Jesus," as he always called him.

One night, when Miss Stickney came in, he was so eager to tell her his latest adventure that he was ready to begin before she had fairly come in at the door.

"Well, what is it to-night, Mr. Littlejohn?" she said. "Have you seen the good Lord Jesus this afternoon?"—for she had fallen into the way of humoring him in his fancies, and even of using his way of expressing them.

"Better than that," said he.

"Better than seeing the good Lord Jesus? But I thought that that was the very best of all."

"No, there is something better than that."

"And what is it, then, that is better than seeing the good Lord Jesus, Mr. Littlejohn?"

"Working for him," said he. Then he told her. He had met the good Lord Jesus by a little river, and people were waiting for him on the

other side. "So he turned to me," Mr. Littlejohn continued, "and he said, 'Joseph, you must help me.' That was right in my line"—Mr. Littlejohn, it seems, had been a stonemason in his youth—"right in my line: so I took the stones that were lying about, and I built a bridge over the little river, and the good Lord Jesus walked over it to the people who were waiting for him on the other side. But before he went over, he turned to me and said, 'I thank you, Joseph'; yes, that was what he said: the good Lord Jesus said, 'I thank you, Joseph.'"

That was the first of many similar fancies; and he was always happiest when he had a story of that particular sort to tell. When Miss Stickney saw his happiest look on his face she knew what was coming, and would say, "Well, Mr. Littlejohn, have you been working for the good Lord Jesus again to-day?" and sure enough, it was the story of some other humble service rendered and thanked for. One day it was a wall built to keep away the wind, while the good Lord Jesus was telling stories to children on a windy hill. Again it was a flight of steps up a steep slope which the good Lord Jesus was wearily climbing. Only a few hours before the end of old Joseph's life he had been working for the good Lord Jesus and telling Miss Stickney about it, as she sat beside him,

helping him over the last rough steps of the journey. His story was that this time he had broken down a wall for the good Lord Jesus, who was trying to let an old man out of prison. Joseph had broken a hole in the wall, and the good Lord Jesus had reached in his hand and drawn the poor old man out of the darkness into the light.

The Rev. Mr. Pointdexter was there also, when that last story was told. He left soon after, promising to come back in the late evening—they thought that the old man's flickering candle of life would probably burn till the small hours of the next morning. When Mr. Pointdexter had gotten outside he went back and called Miss Stickney to the door. The sun was setting. Its low light came slanting through the trees, and lit up the front of the little house, and the woman in the doorway.

"I almost forgot to give you a message that I have for you," he said. "The good Lord Jesus wishes that you would let him thank you for all you have been doing for him."

"What?" she asked. And he repeated: "The good Lord Jesus wishes that you would let him thank you for all you have been doing for him."

"What do you mean?" said Miss Stickney.

"It *has* been done for the Lord Jesus, all this ministry of yours to Mr. Littlejohn," he said.

"No," she answered, "I've done it all for Mr. Littlejohn himself. I don't see that the Lord Jesus has anything to do with it."

"Yet he wishes me to thank you for it."

"How do you make that out?"

Mr. Pointdexter waited a moment before answering, to let his smile speak to her before his words, and thus make sure that she would think of the speaker as a man rather than as a minister: then, "Didn't the Lord Jesus say once, when he was on earth, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me?'"

"But that is only a word of the Bible, nineteen hundred years old. What I have been doing has not really had anything to do with Jesus Christ."

"Yes, it has, though," he persisted, smiling, "because such service—kind, faithful, compassionate—as you have been giving to this poor old man with useless body and clouded mind, is the sort of thing that was hardly dreamed of till Jesus Christ began to change the spirit of the world. You have been doing here what he taught us to do. You have been working in his spirit. And now, for his sake and your own too, he wants you to let me thank you."

She made no answer that time, except to reach out her hand and grasp his for an instant,

before she turned back into the house. There she sat down once more by the old man's bedside, to moisten his lips from time to time, or smooth his hand, watching and thinking, till the end came.

It came earlier than they had been expecting, so that Mr. Pointdexter had not yet returned. Instead of waiting for him to arrive at the promised time, she decided to go at once to tell him. As she went out of the house, she stood still for a moment in the doorway, thinking what a curious happiness had come to her with her visits to that house, and of the three people who had there found their way into her life. Then she closed the door behind her and crossed the bridge.

MONSIEUR LE CURÉ

**“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not
able to kill the soul.”**

MONSIEUR LE CURÉ

THERE is a town in France a few miles north of the Marne, which contained in peace times, before the war, between four and five thousand inhabitants; but when the Germans took it early in the summer of 1918, only about two hundred and fifty people remained—women, children, and old men.

One of these old men was the parish priest, **Monsieur le curé**, as all the townspeople called him. He had been their priest for nearly fifty years; almost his whole active life had been spent in the service of that one church: and he loved it as other men love the homes which they have inherited from their fathers, and in which their own children have been born. **Monsieur le curé's** children were the people of his parish.

The nave of the church and one of the short transepts had been partly demolished by shells from the German guns, before the town was taken, but even in its ruined state the building was indescribably dear to the old priest. He counted it a special blessing that the chancel remained untouched. There, at the high altar, he still said daily mass; and always at that time a dozen of the people came to worship—a

dozen, neither more nor less, for the gathering of more was forbidden by the German orders, and it was a matter of honor with the French never to drop below that number. Whether the rain fell through the great hole in the nave roof upon the broken pavement, or the sun brought warmth and dryness, the little group of twelve devout worshipers always knelt in the space between the chancel steps and the ruin of the nave, while Monsieur le curé performed his sacred office.

Each morning, while the mass was being said, a curious thing happened, to which the curé paid no attention, although he was perfectly aware of it. It was known, moreover, to all or almost all who knelt below the chancel steps; yet except for the actor in it no one of them seemed conscious of its occurrence. Had a stranger entered, not by so much as a glance would they have drawn his attention to the woman who knelt near the base of the pillar where nave and transept joined, between the ragged heaps of ruin, from the roof of the nave, on the one hand, and from the demolished north wall of the little transept, on the other. The stranger, even had he happened to look in her direction, would have noticed nothing.

Yet each day, before the mass was over, and she rose from her knees to join the other re-

tiring worshipers, she had taken from under her skirt, and laid beside her on the pavement between herself and the wall, a flat bundle. Then cautiously her right hand had felt along the wall's base till it encountered a fine cord hanging from above. To this with infinite care her fingers had attached the bundle, over which, once it was made fast, she placed carefully one of the many pieces of broken slate which lay about, fallen from the damaged roof. There in its concealment the bundle remained all the rest of the day, like a fish that has dived under a rock at the bottom of the pool, after swallowing the bait and hook left dangling in the water by some shiftless fisherman. But again at the mass the next morning the line would be hanging free, as before, waiting for another fish. What was the explanation of this singular performance?

The German soldiers in the town were commanded by a young Prussian captain, who on his arrival quartered himself in the curé's house, occupying the whole of it, so that it was necessary for the curé to move to the house of his brother, a notary, on the next street.

On the second day after his arrival the captain, as he left his house, noticed a young woman standing in a neighboring doorway. He stopped, and, addressing her in French, ordered her curtly to tell her name.

"Marie Guichet."

Did she live there?

"Yes."

Were those her children? (A boy and a girl were clinging to her skirts.)

Yes, they were her children.

She had a husband?

"At the war."

"Marie," said the captain, "you will take care of the housework at my headquarters, as long as I am here. Report to me this evening, when I have finished my dinner: I will then tell you how your duties are to be performed."

But Marie did not await the evening. The captain was barely out of sight, before she was on her way to Monsieur le curé at the notary's. There she told her story, ending with the declaration: "He is bad, that officer: I know it. I am afraid of him. I am afraid to work there."

"And of course you are right," said the curé.

"What shall I do, then?" Marie asked him.

Prompt action was necessary. "Bring the children here," said the curé, "and meantime I shall think of some plan."

There was in the church a small chapel built into the wall of the north transept near its junction with the nave. The door to it was blocked by fallen masonry, but entrance was still possible by another route. There was a

stone stairway, leading up from the chapel to the roof of the church, and from the stairway a door opened upon a little gallery about fifteen feet above the level of the transept. A ladder, therefore, as a means of mounting to this gallery was all that was necessary to make the chapel accessible to those who knew the secret; and already the church plate had been concealed there, also some of the notary's most important papers and a few other articles of special value belonging to the priest and his parishioners. Here was a hidingplace for Marie. In order to keep her supplied with the necessary food, without the danger of arousing suspicion by frequent night visits to the church, the method of the hanging cord and the kneeling worshiper had been adopted.

The curé himself became nurse for Marie's children.

The day after this sudden change had been effected the curé was summoned to the captain's presence. "Where is Marie Guichet?" asked the officer, regarding him with a look of stern disapprobation.

"She is sick," said the curé.

"Where is she?" repeated the captain, scowling.

"She is in the house of a friend," answered the curé. He did not hesitate to lie, in order to pro-

tect his sheep from this wolf, but he took a special pleasure in blinding his adversary with the truth; for how could he more accurately describe the House of God, in which Marie had taken refuge, than by calling it the house of a friend?

"She must recover from her sickness without delay," said the captain.

The next day he again sent for the curé. He was very angry. "Why has not Marie obeyed my orders?" he demanded.

"It will not be possible for her to obey them," said the curé.

The captain regarded him with angry amazement, and seemed on the point of expressing his displeasure by a violent outburst, but he restrained himself. "It is foolish for you to try to balk me," he said. "I shall soon discover where she is hidden." And he added, "I could punish you for your obstinacy with something far worse than imprisonment, but I desire to respect your office."

The curé thought to himself, "He means to track her by watching me." And he made a point of paying daily visits to several houses in different parts of the parish. It pleased him to learn that each of them was searched more than once by German soldiers. But neither under the bed on which Père Cartier had lain paralyzed

for half a dozen years, nor in the attic of the widow Pauvre, nor in the little parlor back of Madame Blé's *epicerie* did they find any clue to the whereabouts of Marie Guichet.

The captain became more threatening. "Understand once for all that you are in my power," he said on one of the occasions when he tried in vain to draw the curé's secret from him; and he hinted darkly at severe penalties which would be inflicted without delay for any further defiance of his wishes.

That evening there arrived in an army automobile a group of Austrian officers and officials, who announced their intention of spending the night, and were provided with the best entertainment at the captain's disposal. Among them was a church dignitary, an Austrian like the rest. He, before leaving the next morning, had a brief interview with the curé.

"I hear that you have a woman in hiding," he said. "I can imagine your benevolent motives, and in a way I sympathize. But you are foolish. The captain tells me that she is known to have had communication with the enemy. I strongly advise you to reveal her hidingplace. Even though she is one of your flock, she has done wrong, and has forfeited her natural claim to your protection. Besides, you place your own life in peril. I speak to you as your friend and

affectionate adviser. Thus far your age and your holy office have protected you; but beware. These young Prussians are obstinate and quick-tempered."

"Your Eminence," replied the curé, "the accusation against this young woman is utterly groundless. You can readily guess for yourself what the captain's real motive is, in demanding her surrender. As for my own peril, is it not written for our guidance, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul'? I am not afraid of this man."

The Austrian shrugged his shoulders. "I have warned you," he said.

Search elsewhere having failed, the captain's suspicions fell upon the church. But the closest following of the curé, as he went and came, and the closest observation of his actions revealed nothing. The sacristy beside the chancel, where the curé donned and doffed his vestments, was found, when examined, to contain no possible hidingplace. Twice the crypt was searched: the curé smiled to himself, when for the second time he met a group of soldiers entering the chancel from the stairway which led up from the darkness below, blowing out their candles as they emerged, and manifestly bored by their futile search.

Yet it was by no means comfortable to have

the church under such close surveillance. For two days, while the search there was at its height, it was necessary to interrupt Marie's customary supply of food, lest, before she had opportunity to draw it up, an investigation among the ruins should reveal the bundle tied to the hanging cord.

Doubtless, had there been time enough, the captain's persistence would at length have succeeded. But now his attention was forcibly turned to other matters. A new activity had developed to the south. Even the French people in the town were conscious of it. There were rapid movements of troops. A certain excitement and concern were noticeable among the Germans. Laden army trucks and some of the heavier guns and ammunition were being hurriedly moved—northward! Was it possible that a retreat was contemplated? New hopes ran through the town like wildfire. Whether it was a crazy rumor or the blessed truth, the whisper went from mouth to mouth, "The Americans are coming."

The captain made a last threat. "She is in the church," he said to the curé: "I am fully aware of that. I warn you that if you do not bring her out, you endanger not only your own life and hers, but perhaps the lives of others also." The curé smiled, and turned his good ear toward the

south. The guns were certainly nearer than on the day before.

But the captain's final threat was not an empty one. When those visits to the crypt of the church had been made by his order, the purpose had not been wholly that of search. Even then the captain's forethought had caused a small quantity of high explosive to be stored there; and in the hurry of his final departure northward he did not forget to order the lighting of the fuse.

There was no announcement of the German evacuation, and the near approach of the rescuers was as yet unsuspected by the French civilians. It was the hour of mass. The little group of worshipers knelt below the chancel steps. The curé stood at the altar. Marie, in her dim refuge, her ear pressed against the wall, could hear, as from far off, the measured sounds of his voice. Then the earth under her was shaken as though by an earthquake. The wall against which she leaned seemed to rock and totter under the stress of a great explosion. For a moment she stood still, paralyzed with terror: then, finding that the walls about her remained firm, she sprang to the spiral stairway, and ran swiftly upward, opened the door upon the little gallery, passed through it, and peered over the railing.

A cloud of dust still obscured the scene below, and her eye was drawn for the moment to the breach in the north wall, through which she could see soldiers in khaki passing swiftly, and a flag, not the hated flag of Germany, nor the tricolor, but a flag of stripes and stars. Then her eye returned to nearer objects, for the dust was already clearing. A scene of ruin and confusion revealed itself. Some of those, who had but a few moments before been kneeling in worship lay prone in death. Others were climbing frantically over the piles of fallen masonry, rushing away from the place whence death and destruction had so suddenly leaped forth. Two or three sat or crouched, dazed and terrified, among the ruins. One, an old woman, still kneeling, the blood flowing from a deep cut on her forehead, was supported by a man still older, who himself trembled and seemed upon the point of falling. Beyond, where the altar had stood, was now a yawning hole, surrounded by shapeless heaps of rubbish; and on the shattered steps before it, half covered by fragments of stone and mortar, the curé lay, quite still. His body they had killed.

THE HEAD OF THE FIRM

**“Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s;
and to God the things that are God’s.”**

THE HEAD OF THE FIRM

"HAVE you found out the reason why Henry wasn't here yesterday?" asked Mr. Rockhill of his head clerk one Saturday in June.

"Yes, sir. He says that he was sick."

"Send him to me."

Henry was the office boy. He was the son of a long ago college friend of Mr. Rockhill's. Of his father Mr. Rockhill had not seen much in recent years, but he had a kindly feeling for him for the sake of old times. When a letter had come from John Lester, telling of prolonged ill health and other troubles, and asking aid in finding work for his youngest boy, Henry, Mr. Rockhill had been very glad that he was just dismissing his office boy and could give Henry the job. He had written to Lester at once to this effect; at least, he had dictated such a letter to his stenographer, and had closed it by saying that he was particularly sorry to hear of Lester's ill health, and would run in to see him some day, when he could find the time. He had been very busy, however, and had not yet made that friendly call; but meantime Henry had been installed as office boy, and had now filled the position for nearly three months.

Sent in by the head clerk, Henry appeared before Mr. Rockhill.

"I hear you didn't come to work yesterday," said his employer.

"No, sir."

"What was the matter?"

"I was sick, sir."

"What ailed you?"

"I don't know exactly, sir, but I was awfully sick."

"Humph! Something the matter with your stomach, perhaps?"

"I think so, sir. Something I'd eaten must have disagreed with me."

"Something you'd eaten, eh? Been stuffing yourself, I suppose. Of course you were sick: what do you expect? I believe that this is the fourth time you've been out for sickness in a month."

"Only the third, sir."

"And three times is enough, in all conscience. Now, look here, Henry. You know I gave you this job for your father's sake, because he asked me to give you a chance. But I want you to take notice that I will not put up with any nonsense. Understand that you are here for business, and act as though you understood it. Whatever it is you eat that makes you sick and keeps you away from work, cut it out. You'll please to

remember that your first duty is to your employer, and that you're expected not to get sick. On the contrary, you are expected to report regularly for work, and in a condition fit for work. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, sir," said Henry; and seeing that he was dismissed, he retired with pleasure.

Henry had a chair assigned to him in the outer office, on which he sat when not more actively employed. The chair was set against the wall beside a large safe, which more or less concealed the chair, and Henry also, when he was seated on it. Usually Henry was perfectly content to sit there idle, while waiting to be summoned to one of the many miscellaneous tasks for which he drew his pay.

On this particular Saturday, however, he had in his pocket a Boy Scout manual, which had been presented to him the night before. In the middle of the morning, not having been given anything to do for nearly an hour, he took out this book, and became very much engrossed in the section of it devoted to first aid to the injured. Soon in imagination he was binding up broken legs, carrying the dead and dying on improvised stretchers, and receiving praise from admiring onlookers for prompt and efficient service. In fact, for the time being he had quite lost himself in these alluring occupations. This

was unfortunate, because Mr. Rockhill, having come into the outer office for some reason, spoke Henry's name twice without attracting his attention. The first thing Henry knew, there was his employer frowning down upon him.

"How many times must I call you, before you answer?" asked Mr. Rockhill.

"I didn't hear you, sir."

"You don't need to tell me that. What have you got there?"

Henry showed him the book.

"Ah! Improving your mind, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Is that what I pay you for?"

"No, sir."

"Yet I do pay for your time, while you are here in the office, do I?"

"Yes, sir."

"And do you think it is honest to take pay for doing my work, and then get into a corner and read a book, so that I have to call you half a dozen times before you pay any attention?"

"I don't suppose it is, sir."

"All I can say, Henry," concluded Mr. Rockhill, "is that, if this goes on much longer, you are going to be sorry; that is, if you want to remain in my employ."

At noon, when the whistles all over the city were blowing, and Henry had started to get his

hat, thinking with much eagerness of the Saturday half holiday which now lay immediately ahead of him, he was told that Mr. Rockhill wanted to see him before he went.

"Another lecture," he thought to himself.

But it wasn't that: it was something worse.

"You go home for your dinner, I suppose," said Mr. Rockhill.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, when you've had your dinner, come back to the office. I shall be here myself till two, so if you get here by quarter-of, it will be time enough. I want you to carry a box of papers up to my house."

Henry made no answer—the disappointment of having the half holiday thus broken into was too keen; he merely waited for Mr. Rockhill to turn to his desk and let him go. But Mr. Rockhill sat back in his chair, looking at him.

"Really, I don't understand you, Henry," he said. "It seems to me that a boy who really wanted to get on, or even a boy who wanted to hold onto his job, especially if his recent record hadn't been over and above satisfactory, would be ready to take a little work after hours, without looking as though he was being persecuted. If even I have to stay into the afternoon, and then take work home with me which will very likely keep me busy half of to-morrow, it would

seem as though the office boy could put up with a little of the same thing."

("That's all very well," thought Henry to himself, "but he isn't scheduled to play short-stop in a base ball game.")

"Somebody," continued Mr. Rockhill, "ought to take you in hand and educate you. A few lessons in ordinary business morality are what you seem to need. Do you go to Sunday school?"

"Sometimes."

"You need it. I advise you to go more often. Did you ever hear of the saying, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's?'"

"I think I have, sir."

"Do you know what it means?"

"Not exactly, sir."

"I'll tell you what it means. In your case, 'Cæsar' means business, work, your job; and the thing you need to learn is that the man or boy who is paid for a job ought to attend to his job. He ought to 'render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' Do you get me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, go to your dinner, and be back at one-forty-five." And as Henry departed, Mr. Rockhill turned to his desk with the feeling that that Cæsar quotation of his had been pretty pat to the case.

At two o'clock, when Mr. Rockhill left the office to go to a restaurant for his belated lunch, he placed in a filing case the pile of papers on which he had been working, and gave them to Henry, who had returned at the appointed time. The boy, with a swiftness which did not always characterize his professional activities, carried the box to Mr. Rockhill's house, and when he had left it at the front door, was off like a shot, ardently hoping that the substitute shortstop in a certain game of base ball had made a poor showing, so that he would now be displaced at once in favor of the player who had originally been assigned to that position, but who had heartlessly been held back from the field of glory by the sordid demands of business. As he races to the ball field, Henry Lester runs quite out of our story, except for one more far-off glimpse of him; for the story's interest centers, not in the office boy, but in the head of the firm. It is the subsequent experience of Mr. Rockhill that we are to follow—a different matter; and yet not as completely different as might be supposed. Witness, for instance, the fact that not an hour after Henry had caught his first man out, Mr. Rockhill, feeling that air and exercise were necessary if he was to stand up under the strain of heavy business cares, was making the first hole at the golf links at the Country Club.

The next morning being Sunday, the Rockhills had breakfast late. Late breakfast, of which the orthodox Sunday morning fishcakes were the distinctive feature, formed a regular part of their observance of the day. The fishcake custom had been inherited from a long line of Mr. Rockhill's ancestors, who had been good New Englanders. The hour for Sunday breakfast was nine o'clock. Even in the earlier days, when there had been three children to get ready for church and Sunday school, breakfast on Sunday had been set half an hour later than on weekdays; and now that the children were all grown up and married, it was possible to have it even later than that, since no more time was needed, between a very leisurely breakfast and church, than would suffice Mrs. Rockhill for "putting on her things." Mr. Rockhill had a theory, to be sure, that that process was a very lengthy one, and on the Sundays when he went to church with his wife he usually made a great point of urging her to hurry, or they should be late. But when she came downstairs, ready to go, he, as like as not, was still reading the newspaper, so that, after all, it was he who delayed the start.

On this particular Sunday, however, he announced at breakfast that he couldn't go to church with her at all that day. There were

some important papers, he told her, which must be gone over carefully before Monday. He had had them brought up from the office for that purpose. Business had been very rushed for the last fortnight, and unless this work could be cleared out of the way before Monday morning, he should be perfectly swamped.

When Mrs. Rockhill went upstairs to get ready for church he went into the library, drew up a small table beside the desk, and on it placed the box containing the papers. Then he stepped out onto the front piazza, to see what the thermometer said. The day seemed likely to be a fairly hot one, for early June. A neighbor in the next yard was looking at his rosebushes. As the distance between was not great, Mr. Rockhill stood at the end of his own piazza, and conversed with his neighbor about the weather, the rosebushes, and the state of business, until Mrs. Rockhill came down, hat and gloves on, parasol and fan in hand.

“Good-by, dear,” she said. “Don’t work too hard over those papers. Perhaps I can help you with them this afternoon, if you’ve not finished.” She put up her parasol as she spoke, passed out at the gate, and was soon out of sight in the direction of the church.

Mr. Rockhill talked for a few moments more with his neighbor, then went into the house. He

took out of the box a number of the papers, and without sitting down laid them in a pile on the desk. Then, however, he took up the newspaper, saying to himself, "I'll just glance at the headlines before I go to work," and sat down in a wicker easy chair beside the open window where a pleasant breeze was blowing. He read the headlines across the front page, and then he started to read one of the more important news columns. "I'll dip into this for a moment," he thought. It had to do with a threatened strike, which was likely to affect business to a considerable degree, and proved to be particularly interesting. So he read it through, following it over to the fifteenth page, where it was completed. Then he thought he must take a look at the financial review of the past week. After some little time on that and on two other articles which looked important (he did not take particular notice of just how long this took, but he would have told you, if you had asked him, that it was "only a few minutes") he started to gather up the numerous sections of the paper, in order to lay them aside. In doing so, he noticed one of the pictures in the pictorial supplement, a striking photograph illustrating a public event much talked of during the preceding week. Indeed, all the pictures in the supplement he found to be unusually good, for he looked at them all before he put them down.

As he thus completed his examination of the newspaper he noticed a sound of voices on the street. He glanced out through the window. The Abbott family were walking along the sidewalk in the direction of their house. What had happened that the Abbotts should be walking homeward in the middle of church-time, faithful church people as they were? It couldn't be, that— He looked at his watch. Ten minutes past twelve! Good heavens! How was it possible that the time had slipped away like that? His wife might be home any minute. Yes, he could see her already on the opposite side of the street two blocks away. At least it looked like her blue parasol.

Hastily he laid the parts of the newspaper together, and placed the whole packet on the sofa, where it had been at the beginning. Then he sat down at his desk, getting his fountain pen ready as he did so. From the pile of papers which lay waiting on the table he drew one, and laid it before him. The others he laid together at his left, and slightly disarranged them. He heard Mrs. Rockhill, as she came in and let the screen door swing to behind her. He heard the rattle of her parasol and fan, as she laid them down on the oak chest which stood in the front hall under the mirror. Then he heard her come into the library through the open door behind

him. But he did not turn around: he was busy making a note on the margin of the paper before him.

Said she, "Have you worked very hard, dear? You must be tired."

"No," he answered, not looking up. "I've taken it pretty easy." He continued making notes.

She went upstairs to take her hat off.

At dinner, which, in spite of their late breakfast, was usually a hearty meal of especially good food, a sort of feast in honor of the day, Mrs. Rockhill said, "It's such perfectly beautiful weather—I don't suppose you could possibly finish your work in time to go for a walk with me out toward the pine woods. Or at least you might get far enough on with it soon after dinner, to let you go for the walk, and still finish with the papers in the evening."

"I'm afraid not," he answered. "There's a lot left to do."

"I'd love to help any way I could," she added.

"It isn't work that you could help in very well," replied Mr. Rockhill. "It's a matter of passing judgment on things rather than the actual writing. But I'll see how it's going when I've worked for an hour or so after dinner. Perhaps I can manage it."

Mrs. Rockhill sighed. "I do hope you can," she said. "I enjoy it so much when we go for walks together. Sunday is the only time when you're not occupied with other things, and lately it seems to rain almost every Sunday. This is the first clear one in nearly a month."

But after half an hour's work, he found that unfortunately the hearty dinner had made him drowsy. He was "worthless," he said, till he could have forty winks of sleep. So he lay down on the sofa in the library, and Mrs. Rockhill covered him with a light shawl. When he waked three-quarters of an hour later he said he was sorry, but with this delay he was afraid they would have to give up the idea of going for a walk that afternoon. It seemed to Mrs. Rockhill, however, that the day was too good to be wholly wasted, so at about three o'clock she set out for a walk by herself.

Returning at a little after five, she came into the library, where Mr. Rockhill was again seated at the desk.

"How is it getting on?" she asked.

"Pretty well," he answered, looking up. "I'll be able to finish before supper, I think."

"You won't mind, then, if I talk to you for just a moment?"

"No."

She sat on the arm of his chair, and fingered the lapel of his coat, while she spoke.

"You don't know how thankful I'm feeling," she said. "It came of something I saw while I was out walking. It made me ashamed that I should forget how blessed I am; because I'm afraid I was a bit complaining at dinner time, and I feel repentant. Instead of walking up to the pines, I went in the other direction, away out by North Park, where we hardly ever walk: I wanted to save the pine woods for next Sunday, when perhaps you can go too. Well, out near the park I saw an old man, as I thought, walking toward me, leaning on a young lad's arm; and who do you suppose it was?"

"I can't imagine. Who?"

"It was John Lester and his boy Henry. I knew about Henry's working at the office, of course, and I happened to see him from the window yesterday, when he brought that box. Otherwise, I doubt whether I should have recognized Mr. Lester at all. You haven't seen him lately, have you?"

"No."

"You can't imagine," she continued, "what a shock I had, when I got near them and saw who it was. Why, Mr. Lester is just about your age, isn't he? Wasn't he in college in your time?"

"Yes, in the class below me."

"He looks twenty years older," Mrs. Rockhill declared. "But, of course, I could see when I observed him carefully, that it was sickness rather than age that made him look so feeble. Isn't it sad for a young man to go like that. And oh, how thankful I felt to think of you, so strong and well and young. I stopped and talked to him. He didn't know me, naturally, till I had told him who I was; but then he spoke so warmly of your kindness in giving his boy work at the office. He said he hoped he could thank you himself some time. It seemed to me that there was a wistful look in his eyes, when he said that, and I wondered whether he knew that he wasn't going to live long. Do you know what I wish you'd do?"

"What?" asked Mr. Rockhill after a moment's pause, as though he would have been as well pleased not to ask.

"I wish you'd put your hat on, and run right up to see him to-day," she answered.

"Now, my dear," said her husband in an irritated tone, "don't be unreasonable. I will go some time and see him, of course, but to rush right off an hour after you have talked with him would look ridiculous."

"I suppose it would," Mrs. Rockhill ad-

mitted. "But I was thinking"—she said this as though offering an apology—"that you won't have another chance probably till next Sunday, and if you should go to see him then, it would mean putting off our walk to the pine woods for still another week."

"Nonsense!" he answered. "We could take our walk in the direction of Lester's house, and kill two birds with one stone." He half turned to the desk, as he spoke, and she rose from the arm of the chair and left him.

He did finish his work on the papers by supper time, or, rather, at his suggestion, the supper was deferred until the work had been completed. This was easy, for it was the maid's "Sunday afternoon out," and supper under those conditions was always a very informal and adjustable meal.

After they had eaten, the evening being rather close, as though a storm were brewing, they sat on the piazza to get what air there was. They chatted in a desultory way about various matters, avoiding by tacit consent any further mention of John Lester or the projected walk to the pine woods. Mrs. Rockhill decided that the gossip of the morning's churchgoing was a safe topic. Mrs. Gadsby, just back from a visit in the Middle West, had seen the Rockhills' married daughter

Stella in Detroit, her home, and reported that she seemed to be in good health and spirits. The women of the church were invited to a garden party at Mrs. McNaughton's on the eighteenth, weather permitting. Mrs. Rockhill said she had no intention of going, for she could not stand the airs put on by Mrs. McNaughton. Dr. Wordsworth had preached a rather striking sermon on "Being Satisfied with Nothing but the Highest and Best in Life." His text, Mrs. Rockhill reported, was taken from the place where Saint Paul said, "I appeal unto Cæsar," and Dr. Wordsworth, in a very interesting way, had introduced as an illustration a law case that had been carried to the Supreme Court of the United States. Mr. Rockhill would have been especially interested in that part, his wife thought.

"Is it in connection with that text that the Bible says, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's?'" asked Mr. Rockhill, his mind running off onto certain recollections of his own. He could go thus far, he decided, without revealing that the question was in any way related to Lester's boy Henry.

"I don't think so," answered Mrs. Rockhill.

"It would come in there very naturally, it seems to me," said her husband.

"You may be right," she admitted, "but I

have a feeling that 'Render to Cæsar' belongs in a different connection. I'll get the Bible and see. I think I can find the place where Saint Paul makes his appeal. It's somewhere in the Book of Acts."

She went into the house, and returning with the Bible, stood near the open window of the library, where the light from within would enable her to read, for by this time it was dark outside. After a little while of hunting, she found the place for which she was looking, and, when she had glanced through the page preceding the appeal to Cæsar and the one following it, she announced that she had been right: "Render to Cæsar" did not come in there. It was in the Gospels somewhere, she thought; but after turning over a good many pages without finding it, she gave up the attempt.

She had just closed the book and laid it on a chair beside her, when the neighbors called over from next door to ask whether Mrs. Rock-hill would't go with them for a short spin in their auto: they had one spare seat. Yes, they admitted, it did look as though it were going to rain, but the top was up, and they could get home quickly, or run into the Country Club, if necessary. Anyway, it was a good idea to get a bit of fresh air: they would all

sleep the better for it. Mr. Rockhill urged his wife to "Go ahead," so she accepted, and a few moments later they were off.

The neighbors, being economical people, and having a house lighted by electricity, which lends itself to this kind of economy, had turned out all their lights, before going to ride. The lights in the library and hall of the Rockhill house were therefore all the more conspicuous as a goal for swarms of moths and flying beetles. To end this nuisance, Mr. Rockhill stepped inside, and switched off all the lights in his house, also. This left him in almost complete darkness. Mr. Rockhill noticed that when a man went by, smoking, he could see barely anything but the light at the end of his cigar—just a faint black shadow for the rest of him. His footsteps sounded absurdly loud in contrast with his invisibility, and were still further accentuated by the prevailing quiet of the city, broken only by the occasional passing of an automobile in some nearby street, the rumble of a trolley car further away, and once or twice the far-off muttering of thunder.

Half an hour, perhaps, after his wife had gone off in the automobile, Mr. Rockhill was aware of another shadowy figure of a man moving along the sidewalk, at a leisurely pace. He looked intently at him, not because he

supposed that it was anyone he knew, but simply because he was curious to see how much he could make out in the obscurity. He was considerably surprised, therefore, when the figure turned in at the gate and came up the front steps.

Mr. Rockhill rose and went toward him, and was about to speak, when the newcomer said, "Mr. Rockhill," as though making, not an inquiry, but an announcement. Mr. Rockhill did not recognize the voice, and, though he looked as hard as he could, he was unable in the dimness to identify the visitor by his appearance. Quite at a loss to imagine who it might be, yet fearing lest he should blunder if he confessed his perplexity, he merely said, "Good evening," and held out his hand in welcome. The visitor, however, did not see his outstretched hand, or at any rate did not take it. Instead, he seemed to be peering about in the shadow for a chair. He found one, and sat down. Mr. Rockhill did the same.

For a few moments they sat in silence—rather uncomfortable moments for Mr. Rockhill. Then the visitor said—again a statement, not an inquiry, which struck Mr. Rockhill as odd—"You looked at the news this morning."

"What news do you refer to?" asked Mr. Rockhill in a somewhat frigid tone.

"The news in the paper," answered the visitor, unperturbed. "The strike. The financial column. The pictures." ("Who is this, anyway?" thought Mr. Rockhill.)

"You were unable to accompany your wife to church," announced the stranger. ("Has she been talking to someone?" thought Mr. Rockhill, rather relieved at the chance to feel angry about something in connection with this singular conversation.)

"Do you think it was honest?" said the other. He asked a question this time. (Mr. Rockhill made no answer. That question, or the tone in which it was spoken, reminded him of something: what was it? He could not hit upon an explanation.)

The stranger went on, after a pause: "Was it honest to take time that you owed to your Maker, and use it for reading the newspaper?" ("Upon my word," thought Mr. Rockhill, "this person is not lacking in presumption, whoever he is." All the same, another feeling back of this, vague but somewhat insistent, prevented him from immediately expressing his annoyance in words.)

Again there was a pause. Then—"You could not go to walk with your wife," an-

nounced this extraordinary individual. "It was because you did not finish your work in time; and you did not finish your work in time, because you were too sleepy after dinner. You were sleepy, because you had eaten too much. Been stuffing yourself, I suppose." (What *was* it that all this reminded Mr. Rockhill of? It was as though this same conversation had taken place before, only in a different shape, somehow.)

The stranger continued: "If an indulgence like overeating prevents a man from meeting some of his highest and most important obligations, my advice to him is, Cut it out. Do I make myself clear?" (Mr. Rockhill had it now. These remarks of the stranger bore a very curious resemblance to some of the things he had himself said to his office boy only the day before. For a moment he had a thought that perhaps this was Henry masquerading; but no, that was impossible. The figure was six inches taller than Henry, and the voice was not a boy's voice, but most decidedly a man's.)

Again there was a pause. These pauses were almost worse than speech. Mr. Rockhill waited with something very like fright for what might come next. It came.

"You did not go to see your sick friend Les-

ter. And yet one would suppose that a man who wanted to get on in God's world, and to hold onto the job his Maker had given him, especially if his recent record hadn't been over and above satisfactory, would be ready to take on a little extra work, without acting as though he were being persecuted. You think you will do it next Sunday, but it will be too late. John Lester died at sunset."

"Who are you?" cried Mr. Rockhill, starting forward in his chair.

The stranger did not reply; but Mr. Rockhill could stand the uncertainty no longer. He must see who this was. He leaped from his chair and strode to the hall door. Stepping inside, he felt for the electric switch which controlled the light on the piazza; found it, and turned it. Then, half shrinking, he looked back toward the piazza, now flooded with light.

There was no one there.

He stared into the darkness beyond: he could see nothing. He listened. Not a sound, Bewildered, he looked about him. In the light it was hard to believe that that extraordinary conversation in the dark had actually taken place a few moments before. Yet here was the chair where he himself had sat, and in that other chair opposite— But hold on a mo-

ment: *was* that the chair in which the stranger had seated himself? Yes, it certainly was. There was no other chair near that spot. And yet there on the seat of that very chair lay the Bible, where Mrs. Rockhill had put it down. Another queer thing: the Bible now lay open on the chair. Certainly it was closed when she laid it down. He remembered that distinctly. He picked up the book, and looked at the open page, as though to ask it for an explanation of these perplexities; and as he did so, the word "Cæsar" caught his eye. Strangest thing of all! Here was that verse which his wife had looked for in vain: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and"—there was more to it apparently: he had forgotten about this other half of it—"and unto God the things that are God's."

A cold sweat broke out on Mr. Rockhill's forehead. But no, these fears were ridiculous. He would put the whole thing out of his mind. He was not a child to be frightened by shadows.

All the same he went into the house and turned on the lights. He turned on the lights in the hall, he turned on the lights in the parlor beyond the hall, he turned on the lights in the library. He shut the windows too, and

latched them; and he pulled down the shades. He closed the front door and turned the key in the lock. When his wife came home from her ride, she had to ring the doorbell to get in. He opened the door.

"What's the matter?" she asked, having evidently been surprised by the closed and lighted house; and then, after she had seen his face, "What is the matter?" she added, anxiously.

"I felt a bit sick," he said.

"Chilly?" she asked, taking his hand to see whether it felt cold. The storm had gone round or blown over, but, in passing, it had distinctly lowered the temperature, and a cool breeze had sprung up.

"No, not exactly chilly," he answered. "You'll laugh," he went on, and he gave a queer constrained sort of laugh himself, "but I had the fidgets, sitting alone out there in the dark; got to imagining things. So I came in."

"You poor boy," she said. "You've been working too hard."

"No, it wasn't that," he said, quite positively.

THE GARDEN

“Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?”

THE GARDEN

AFTER the thought of writing to her Uncle Isaac first came into her mind, Miss Arabella Pierce waited a whole week before she sat down at her desk and took up her pen to write the letter. If it had been something definite that she wanted from him, it would have been easier, she thought, the answer to some definite question, the performance of some definite service. But to say to him in effect, "Dear Uncle Isaac, I'm all adrift; my life is in hopeless confusion; I don't know what I need; I don't altogether know what ails me; and I haven't the least idea what you can do to help me: but may I come and make you a visit, and see whether you can tell me what to do?"—this was particularly hard. As a matter of fact, she did not write all this, but left most of it to be read by him between the lines. The main point of the letter was, would he let her come up to Broadfield, and spend a few quiet days with him? "It seems as though it would do me good," she wrote. By the earliest possible mail came back a hearty letter of welcome, in his fine, old-fashioned Spencerian handwriting, saying, "Come on

Wednesday, or Thursday, or Friday, whichever is most convenient, and stay as long as you can put up with an old man's company, who is more pleased than he can say that you should want to come."

Arabella Pierce was forty-seven years of age, and, except for her parents' death when she was in her teens, she had never had any really serious trouble until recent years. But now she had more trouble than she seemed able to bear. It was not sickness. She was well enough, though not with a very sparkling sort of vigor. She had no money troubles. When Mr. Pierce, her father, died, a year after his wife, he left a competence to his two children, Arabella, then just out of school, and the older daughter, Mrs. Helmuth, who was already a widow although only twenty-four. The two sisters had lived on in the old home, a quiet, uneventful, and comfortable life, with the friends whom they had known from girlhood and a few new ones, not many, their interests being confined almost entirely to their own household and this small circle of friends and neighbors. They lived much in books, and Arabella spent a great deal of time at her desk, writing. The results of her writing were not large, some detached "thoughts" or "reflections," occasionally an "essay," or a simple

narrative. There was no thought, at first, of anything more than her own satisfaction in this literary exercise, shared as a matter of course by her sister.

But a somewhat more ambitious narrative than usual, written when Arabella was a little over thirty, had so delighted Mrs. Helmuth, that she had insisted on reading it to a few of their most intimate friends. They also praised it highly: so did the minister and his wife, to whom it was read when they came to tea (an annual ceremony, punctually observed in the second or third week of May each year). Emboldened by these praises, the sisters sent the manuscript to the editor of a well-known weekly magazine, accompanied by a polite note requesting its return if not accepted ("for we must be prepared for disappointment, my dear," said Arabella). It was accepted, however, and, after what seemed to them a rather long delay, was published. To be sure, it appeared in the back part of the issue, in columns flanked right and left by advertisements; but at any rate it was in print, and it was dignified by a very satisfactory illustration. This did well enough for a beginning. Mrs. Helmuth cut it out, and pasted it into a new scrapbook bought for the purpose. The many blank pages which remained suggested

more to come, and indeed Mrs. Helmuth's chief idea in starting the scrapbook was to spur Arabella on to new triumphs. From time to time during the years that followed a few other publications from Arabella's pen were added. Most of these, it is true, appeared in the local newspaper: the publishers of periodicals with a wider fame and circulation had at times shown a lack of appreciation, which Mrs. Helmuth declared to be surprising. Several of Arabella's very best stories had been returned. These, being too good for the local paper, Mrs. Helmuth had copied into the scrapbook in her own handwriting. Friends who were privileged to read them there, or to hear them read, agreed heartily in Mrs. Helmuth's verdict that they were "really unusual."

These successes were the cause of Miss Arabella's great undertaking, which was begun when she was well on toward forty, and which occupied the best part of five years—her novel. It was in reality the life-story of her own parents, discreetly disguised of course, with some added touches from her own and her sister's experiences, and from imagination. It was an easy-going narrative, and was written very slowly. Chapter by chapter it was read to her sister, discussed, revised, submitted to the judgment of one or two esteemed critics,

copied on legal cap paper by Mrs. Helmuth, and kept between cardboard covers tied with a lavender ribbon. The completion of each new chapter was an event. The reading of selected portions was granted to guests as a special honor, and with a proper show of reluctance, the matter being usually decided by a word from Mrs. Helmuth, such as "Arabella, I am sure that dear Mrs. Chatterton does really wish to hear it. I suggest the chapter about the croquet party and the tête-à-tête in the rose arbor."

At last it was finished. Then came the selection of a publisher. After considerable discussion and consultation, they decided on a New York house, and the precious manuscript was sent. Promptly it came back again with a printed form of polite and colorless refusal: "We thank you for the privilege of reading this manuscript, but regret that at this time," etc.

After two months, another trial was made. The result was the same, though this time the manuscript did not return so soon. The ultimate disappointment was only the keener. Five times in all the manuscript was submitted to unresponsive publishers; then by silent consent the attempt was finally abandoned. The manuscript, tied once more in the lavender

ribbon, was laid in the shallow drawer of the highboy in Miss Arabella's bedroom, and "the Story," which for so long had been the sisters' constant topic of conversation, was now seldom referred to. It was to Arabella a painful subject. The disappointment had struck deep. Her five years of labor, her lifework, had been in vain.

She was past her forty-fifth birthday by this time, and it was hard at that age to be forced to the realization that she was a woman without any particular purpose. What should she have done then without her sister? There was something restorative about Mrs. Helmuth's unshaken confidence in her sister's literary ability, in fact, in everything that Arabella did and was. To hear her say to the few new people they met, "Yes, my sister is an authoress in a quiet way. Some of her stories have been much admired, and have even been compared to the writings of Miss Mitford," was soothing to Arabella's wounded spirit. And aside from any definite word spoken, there was always the feeling of Mrs. Helmuth's staunch championship, against all the attacks of time and fate. It is easy to realize, then, how great a blow fell, when, not eighteen months after the manuscript of "the Story" had finally been laid away, Mrs. Helmuth,

after a short illness—apparently the result of a mere cold—died, and left her sister alone.

It was in the dreary days after the funeral that Arabella thought of her Uncle Isaac. He was her mother's brother, and had always been thought of as the distinctly religious member of the family. Her own parents had lived estimable lives, and shared in the customary religious conventions, but the sort of intimate personal religion which Isaac Lee illustrated was foreign to them. The daughters had continued the habits of thought and feeling in which they had been brought up. They maintained a certain relation to things Christian, like all the other respectable people of their circle. They had their pew in church (the same one in which their father had sat) and they practiced a few small charities; but religion as a personal concern played little part in their lives. The truth was they did not feel the need of it, and did not understand people who did. Uncle Isaac had in earlier years been a good deal laughed at in the family for his "piety." It had been considered necessary for the household to assume habits of unusually good behavior when he came to visit. "It's fortunate that Isaac is not here," was a common saying, when some agreeable little wickedness of speech or action had been in-

dulged in, for it had been assumed as a sort of axiom in the Pierce family that Isaac Lee had been a bit dehumanized by his religion. As time went on, however, this feeling changed to some extent. As he grew old, his godliness seemed in a way to harmonize with his white hair. His benignant expression and peaceful, kindly smile helped to disarm criticism. Somehow it was of him that Arabella thought, in her trouble, rather than of her other uncles, brothers of her father, a lawyer and a doctor, who lived in a city not twenty miles from her own town.

She made the journey to Broadfield on Thursday, the second of the three days which her Uncle Isaac had suggested. Wednesday, she thought, might seem a little over-eager, and to wait till Friday might seem not sufficiently appreciative of his cordiality. It was late afternoon when she arrived, and she found her uncle in his garden. He received her as naturally as though she had been a frequent visitor, and was soon showing her his flowers, for his garden was his special pride. At supper and during the evening there was a steady flow of pleasant talk. "How really delightful he is, and how kind," she said to herself more than once. Much of the talk was of old family memories, and though some of it brought a

touch of sadness—and a few tears—there was real comfort in it too. To be with someone who knew all these things without being told, took away some of the miserable lonely feeling which hung over her like a cloud.

After she had reached her room at bedtime, and was thinking over the events of the day, she realized that except for the grace at dinner (in which he had inserted one sentence personal to herself, dimming her eyes for a moment) there had not been a word of religion spoken between them. Yet something of what she had come for she had already gotten, and frankly it was for something of a religious sort that she had come, something that would reach down into her sad and lonely heart in a way that the ordinary influences of her life had failed to do. She had come in order to see whether a religion like that which made Uncle Isaac so calm and confident could be gotten hold of by a woman with her experience, at her age, in her need.

On the days that followed, it is true, there were words now and then in which Uncle Isaac's religious outlook on life found definite expression, but they came out in a casual sort of way. It was all simpler and more natural than she had imagined it. It was more in the atmosphere, after all, than in the words. But

the effect of it, as she gladly acknowledged, was neither small nor uncertain. At the end of a fortnight she went back home really cheered and encouraged—and grateful.

She took back with her, besides this inner help, a new idea, a scheme, a plan to put into practice. It grew out of Mr. Lee's devotion to his flower garden. He had succeeded in interesting her in that, not merely in his garden, but in gardening. She went home resolved to start a garden in her own yard, which never till now had boasted anything in the way of flowers except two lilacs, one purple, one white, on either side of the front door, and a syringa bush near the gate. She took back with her some slips and seeds. It was to be a hardy garden, like Uncle Isaac's, with perpetual bloom, an all-summer succession. She found not a little happiness in this new interest. She remembered too a word of her Uncle's as she parted from him at the station, "Think of the new garden, Arabella dear, as a gift from your heavenly Father; perhaps as a message from him; for how can we tell by what channel he will send his help to us? Everything in the world is his to use in that way. So keep your eyes and your heart open."

But, oh, the awful drop back into the old

sadness and discouragement, when she found herself in the lonely home again, away from Uncle Isaac's serene and comfortable presence! She tried hard to hold fast the help he had given her, to think thoughts like his, to see life as he saw it—and after a time perhaps things did look a little less gloomy—but it was uphill work; and there were times when she seemed to herself to be slipping downhill again as fast as she had climbed up. Was religion the help that at Uncle Isaac's she had been almost convinced it was? She doubted.

The one real and continuing comfort was her garden, the planning for it, the working in it. Early and late all that next spring she was busy in its beds, planting and transplanting, watering and weeding. What delight she took in the first growth, and in her expectations of the varied bloom later in the summer. She saw already in her mind's eye the masses of blending and contrasted color. But it was really Uncle Isaac's garden that she had thus transported to her own yard in imagination, and she experienced something of a shock when the actual results of the first year's growth were finally visible. Had even her garden gone back on her? She was reassured by another visit to her uncle at Broadfield. A year in a garden, he said, was no time at all.

He had been working for a dozen years at his. "Wait. Be patient."

The second summer showed a real improvement, which renewed her energies and interest. In the third summer her garden was a place of glory on the village street, commented on by all the townspeople, visited and admired, pointed out to strangers. "It is not to be compared with the one that it is copied from, my uncle Isaac Lee's," she would say deprecatingly; but she was none the less pleased at the admiration, happy at her success. She was proud to show it to Uncle Isaac himself; for, old as he was, he made the journey from Broadfield especially to see it. At least that was the reason that he gave for coming.

He admired; he praised; he rejoiced with her. "Wasn't it worth all the work and the patience and the waiting?"

"It was, indeed," she answered. "But, oh, Uncle Isaac," she said, as they sat in the sitting room late that evening, "if only I could find a peace of heart like yours! You must have had your troubles and disappointments too. Why is it that I cannot conquer mine? Why is it that the awful loneliness and the bitter sorrow of it all still surges up so sharply some days, that all my striving seems hardly to have made any difference? I am

afraid that it's useless for me to keep on trying. Perhaps you have a religious nature, and I have not. What else can be the reason why I fail where I most need success? I have succeeded in making a garden that is gay with flowers, but my own heart is still a tangle of weeds."

"Not even a flower here and there?" he said. "No signs of better things? No days when the sun shines?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, "I won't say there is no progress at all. But, oh, it is so slow."

"And how about the garden?" he said, "Even that has been a matter of several years, hasn't it? You couldn't hasten that either. I remember your telling me how absurdly sparse and scrawny those peonies and phlox plants looked the first summer, and how only two bits of Canterbury bells came up away off in one corner of a bed and three or four spears of foxglove in another. And yet, in time, in time, see what has come of it. In time! My dear," he went on, taking her hand—he had risen to go up to bed, and his face looked down on her like a benediction—"My dear, there is more in that garden of yours than you have yet realized. Study it. Don't you see what it is? A parable; your parable; a message to you from God, written plainly here in your

own dooryard. Surely you are not going to miss the meaning of it. It is like that time when Jesus said to his disciples, 'Know ye not this parable? How then shall ye know all parables?' And it is by parables that some of God's best messages come to us."

THE FIELD

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”

THE FIELD

THE field had never been of much use. Its soil was sandy and its vegetation sparse. Rocks and boulders covered a considerable section of it at one end. It may at some time have been used for a pasture, but that must have been a long time ago, for at the time when Richard and Harry discovered it, it had stood unused and neglected as long as anyone could remember.

Richard Layton and Harry Bates were about twelve years old when they made the discovery. They were the sons of neighbors and friends, who lived a little way outside of a small town; and since there were no other boys of their age thereabouts, they were foreordained to close comradeship. They did everything together. Naturally, they went to school together; but more important than that, they played together.

The field offered special opportunities for boys' play, as they realized at once the day they first saw it. The very things about it that made it unfit for other uses made it just the place for two small boys to play in. For their purposes the rocks and boulders, for in-

stance, were invaluable. There were even two bowlders that leaned toward one another, so as to make between them a sort of cave. Then, the field at one side ran down to the edge of a shallow pond. There the sandy shore had almost the charm of a sea beach. A small willow thicket in that part of the field was also useful: it was a fair substitute for the jungle of the tropics or the primeval forest of the Great North, whichever might happen to be demanded by the exigencies of the case. The boys expected that a place with such unusually attractive features would, of course, be declared out of bounds by their parents; such places usually were, they had observed. But, as it happened, the field was adjacent to the rear end of the land of Harry's father, so that the boys, while there, were really within easy reach; the pond, when inspected, was judged to be too shallow to be dangerous; and the land was not posted against trespassers. Indeed, the owner, who did not live in that neighborhood, seemed to take no interest in it whatever; did not even keep the fences in repair.

The boys were just a bit disappointed when they found that there was no objection whatever to their going to the field to play whenever they chose. It took away some of the

feeling of strangeness and adventure with which the field, at its discovery, had inspired them. Still, there were practical advantages in not having to escape parental vigilance in order to visit it; and, besides, its natural advantages were too great to be neglected. It soon became the almost invariable custom for Richard, who lived a little nearer the town, to appear at Harry's house soon after breakfast in holiday time, or, when school claimed the morning hours, to proceed with Harry after the briefest possible report of himself at his own house in passing. Then the two went down through the garden back of Harry's house, past the pigsty, over a stone wall, across a small field planted with cabbages, through a ragged hedge—and they were in the field.

There was a considerable variety of games for which the field provided the appropriate scenery. The life and adventures of the American Indian (as conceived by Harry and Richard) were very thoroughly exploited there. White men were relentlessly pursued through the trackless (willow) forest. Scalps were taken as the victims lay sleeping by the campfire in the mountains (the rocky portion of the field was understood to be a perilous mountain region). Adventures of the sea were also enacted. Sad farewells were said on the sandy

shore (of the pond), as Columbus or the Pilgrim Fathers set sail across the broad Atlantic, and in due time on a sandy shore (which looked much like the one from which they had departed, but was, of course, entirely different, seeing that it was in another hemisphere) they landed safely on American soil.

For a few weeks at one time a favorite game in the field was the game of Saul and David. Let it not be supposed from this fact that there was an unusual degree of piety in the make-up of these boys. They did not give this impression to those who knew them. Their temporary interest in a game which uncontestably was of biblical origin arose from the fact that their Sunday school teacher had a happy faculty for story-telling, and had succeeded one Sunday in making especially graphic the narrative of Saul and David in the Cave of Engedi. Harry thought immediately of their cave in the field, and exchanged intelligent glances with Richard. They took the first opportunity to transfer the ancient story in full detail to that modern setting, even to providing the skirt of Saul's robe in the form of one of Saul's mother's petticoats, which David skillfully cut off with a pair of scissors borrowed from that same lady's work basket. This touch of realism led, however, to com-

plications, and was not repeated; and it seemed for a while as though the whole game must be abandoned, the expurgated form of it seeming too great a come-down to be endured, till Harry saved the day by suggesting a skirt constructed of newspaper.

But best of all the games that the field afforded was Hunting for Buried Treasure. Part of the fun of this game was the burying of the treasure first; for it was thought best not to depend altogether on chance and good luck. Deposited in an old tomato can, the treasure was well buried, and the surface of the ground carefully restored to its natural state, so that only the most acute observation (such as was characteristic of Captain Harry and Boatswain Richard) could have discovered that any digging or burying had taken place there. The treasure deposited within the tin treasure chest aforesaid was of varied character. Old nails would do: they made an interesting sound when rattled. One would quickly draw one's sword in order to obtain one's fair share of a treasure with a metallic sound like that. Or, if it were preferred to appeal rather to the sense of sight, buttons looked very much like coins. If circumstances permitted, it was even possible to include a few real gold doubloons or pieces-of-eight in the form of shiny new

one-cent pieces; but that was extravagant, and required digging up the treasure the same day on which it was buried, lest someone else should find the treasure first, and enjoy the privilege of transforming the negotiable portion of it into lemon sticks. The game was more exciting when the treasure could be left overnight, or even for several days, until with the help of the weather and the lapse of time, the discoverers could really feel some doubt as to whether there was any treasure there, or, if there was, whether they could find it. Then came the long journey across burning deserts or a wilderness inhabited by savages and wild beasts, guided probably by a chart marked with red arrows and black crosses. Or very likely there was a sea voyage, which always included a shipwreck (whether planned by the voyagers or not). In due time the desert island was reached, a landing made, the flag of the United States, or else the black pirates' flag, was hoisted, and at last, after several false starts and much fruitless digging, the right spot was found and the buried gold was laid bare before the astonished eyes of the triumphant treasure hunters, now rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

It would be pleasant to linger over this chapter of the field's history, but, after all,

this is only the beginning, and a rather far-off beginning, at that, for the next chapter of the story follows after an interval of twenty years. The boys Richard and Harry had long disappeared by that time; two men past thirty, Mr. Richard Layton and Mr. Henry Bates, had taken their places. The field was far less changed; indeed, in itself it was hardly changed at all. But its surroundings were a good deal different, for the town had grown out toward it, becoming a city in the process. If one stood on top of one of the large boulders, so as to see over a hedge of briars and elders and choke cherries that had grown up, one could see, quite near at hand, the roofs of several factories, rows of homes, one or two new church steeples. But the chief difference for the field was the fact that it had returned to being just a field: it was no longer forest and mountain, desert and seashore, for no boys played there.

Richard Layton, who was married and had one child, a daughter now six years old, lived in the same house in which he had been born and brought up, and he carried on the same hardware store that his father had kept before him, near the center of the adjoining community. When he married he was already a partner in the business, and he had planned

to buy land and build himself a home somewhere in the city, but at just that time his father died (his mother had died several years before); so Richard inherited the old home and lived in it.

Harry Bates, on the other hand, lived in another part of the State. He had gone to college, and after specializing there in sociology, had, through the influence of his professor in that subject, chosen a practical form of social work as his life profession. He was now at the head of a flourishing Settlement House in a city of considerable size, and by means of clubs, classes, lectures, concerts, and all the other agencies usually employed by such an institution, was endeavoring to bring to a crowded neighborhood, filled for the most part with recent immigrants, the higher influences of American civilization. He too was married.

Although thus separated, the two friends met from time to time, for Harry came occasionally to visit his parents, who still lived in the old home, and often he spent his brief vacation with them. When the friends did meet, especially if they were long in one another's company, their feelings with regard to one another were somewhat mixed. Time and differing conditions had caused them to grow apart to a considerable degree. To Harry

Bates, with his more varied experience and broader outlook, Richard Layton's life seemed narrow and self-centered: his house, his store, his wife and daughter, and a very limited round of occupations and pleasures made up the whole of it. To Richard Layton, on the other hand, Harry Bates seemed visionary and over enthusiastic; "not practical" was the phrase by which Richard was most apt to express to himself his present judgment of his boyhood friend. And yet each had still a warm place for the other in his heart, for the sake of the past. The safe topic of conversation between them, and the one to which they soon drifted, or steered their course, at every meeting was, "the old days, when we were boys." Always at such times they were sure to speak of the field where they had had such famous sport together long ago. Sometimes they even walked over to it; would sit side by side on one of the bowlders, and talk and laugh over the games they used to play there; would perhaps stoop and look into the "cave" (how absurdly small and uncavelike it really was!). One day, Richard turned up a rusted old tin can. Was it possible that that dilapidated scrap of metal had once played the honorable part of a treasure chest?

This second chapter in the field's history is

an uneventful one, it will be observed, only a sort of far-off echo of the first. Proceed then, to the third, reached by leaping another interval of twenty years.

Again changes had taken place, and greater ones than before. The city had grown, until it quite surrounded Richard Layton's home, and the field, too. It now extended a considerable distance beyond them both. The field was more shabby than ever; for several years one end of it had been used for a general rubbish dump. Otherwise it was still unused, but a large sign, announcing that it was "For Sale," had recently been erected on it. For years the land had been tied up by a legal question connected with the estate to which it belonged, so that it could not be bought and built on at the time when the city surged past it. Now, when the demand for real estate in that vicinity had diminished, it was in the market.

Richard Layton had seen sad changes in those twenty years. Both his wife and his little daughter had died, and left him alone in the old home, a man of fifty-two and seeming sixty. Daily, as of old, he went back and forth between the house and the store, which was still a good paying business, though patronized by a wholly different class of people.

Outside of business hours he busied himself with his chickens, his flowers, and his fruit orchard. These were his real interests, and whatever pleasure he got out of life was derived from them. To them he devoted all the land around his house, all that remained of his grandfather's farm, most of which his father had sold when he had decided to give up farming and go into trade.

The city, as has been said, now completely surrounded him. Streets bordered his property on every side, and one of them cut his land in two, separating his orchard from the rest, a great inconvenience. And the whole neighborhood round about was occupied by cheap and crowded dwellings, inhabited by a foreign population. This feature of the change was one that Richard deeply resented. He lived as a complete stranger among these people: knew none of them, did not wish to know any of them. He would have been best pleased to have no dealings with them at all, but that was made impossible by certain actions on their part, especially on the part of their boys. He had all sorts of trouble with these boys. His chickens were stolen; his flower-beds were trampled; his fruit orchard was raided. He shut himself in by high fences, but this did not seem to be of much use: apparently a boy-

proof fence was not easy to produce. He lived in a perpetual state of wrath and indignation.

This was the situation when Professor Bates (for Harry was now in charge of the Social Service Department of an up-to-date divinity school) came with his wife to spend the summer vacation in the house where he had lived as a boy. His parents had lived in it till their death: since then it had been rented. But this summer it was without a tenant, and the time had evidently come when it must be made over into a two or three-family house, in order to be made to pay. Professor Bates, who had a taste for carpentry and a certain amount of amateur ability and experience in it, had decided to live for the summer in one corner of the house—half camping out, it would be like—while he made the necessary changes, calling in professional help when it came to the plumbing. For three months, therefore, he was to live in Richard Layton's neighborhood, the first time in many years that he had been near him for more than a few days at a time.

He was shocked and distressed by the changes that he found in his old friend, not so much by the changes in the outward circumstances of his life and surroundings, about which he had known in advance, and for which

he was prepared, but by the changes in Richard himself. There was no real reason, Professor Bates thought, why Richard should seem so much older than he really was, so much deader, so out of sorts with the world and with life itself. He tried his best to arouse him, by going often to see him, by inviting him to supper, by persuading him to go into town with him to the movies (though he himself was rather bored by them), by taking a lively interest in Richard's hobbies, and claiming from Richard a similar interest in the quite different subjects and enterprises in which he himself was interested. He started discussions; and he used books and magazine articles as opening wedges, in his attempt to start new trains of thought. His wife ably seconded him in these endeavors.

To a moderate extent Layton responded, and Bates was encouraged. But soon it became evident that the change was all on the surface. It simply meant that Layton was glad of his friend's company, and was willing to make a certain temporary adjustment of his life in order to secure the pleasure of that companionship while it lasted. But if any more permanent change was to be effected, something more thoroughgoing was needed, apparently, than the simple methods of friendly

intercourse which Professor Bates had thus far tried. And there were times when Layton even refused to respond to the most potent of all forms of appeal that Professor Bates used, the reminder of old times, "when we were boys." Usually that was an effective means of breaking up the hard crust of apathy and pessimism in which Layton seemed to be encased, and of stirring a spark in the ashes of the hopeful enthusiasms of long ago. But it did not always work. They had walked, for instance, one Sunday afternoon, at the suggestion of Professor Bates, to the old field, and Bates had begun to recall some of the good times they had had there nearly half a century before. But Layton did not rise to the lure of boyhood recollections. Instead, he broke in with a disgusted exclamation about the new kind of boy that had appeared in recent years, totally different from the sort of boy that he and Bates had been. These modern boys were no longer capable of innocent play, but were mischievous, thieving, destructive, incorrigible. Indeed, Layton's mind was more or less obsessed by this particular subject, and his complaint against boyish depredations in his orchard and chicken yard were constant. Bates had almost despaired of doing him any good, when a new scheme occurred to

him, a quite different way of arriving at the desired result.

Instead of trying to pacify Layton, when he began his usual complaints, Bates now made a point of seconding them. It was a shame, he declared, that Richard should be so annoyed and wronged. It ought to be stopped. He didn't see how Richard stood it. Why didn't he do something about it?

Layton said he had done something, everything he could think of.

"What, for instance?" asked Bates.

Well, there were the fences that he had built; but they didn't keep the boys out.

And was that the only thing he had tried?

No, he had also hired a watchman.

"With what success?"

"While the watchman guards one side of the orchard," said Layton, "the boys swarm in on any of the other three, or on all three together; or if he waits for them inside the orchard, they go for the chickens. I'd have to have a regiment of watchmen to keep them out."

"I see," said Bates, thoughtfully, and then as though a new idea had struck him, "I'll tell you what, Richard. Instead of merely waiting for those boys along the boundary of your land, the thing to do is to drive them off to a distance. What is it that the military historians

talk about? An offensive defensive, isn't it? That's what you ought to organize."

"How, for instance?" asked Layton, not greatly impressed by his friend's proposal.

"I can't suggest any way at this moment," answered Bates (careful not to let it be seen that this was a deeply laid scheme of his), "but surely there is a way, and if we put our minds on it we'll find it out."

The next day, "I have it," he exclaimed, as soon as he saw Layton—"the way to settle that boy problem. By the offensive-defensive method, you know. You must arrange a place to drive them to, a place that they'll stay at, when you've driven them to it. It mustn't be too far off, or it will be hard to get them to go there; and it mustn't be right at hand, either, because then it will be too easy for them to slip back again. Now don't say that I'm a mere theorist, for I've thought of the very place, not too near, and not too far, and, above all, foreordained to hold boys when once it has gotten hold of them, as you and I have good reason to know—the old field!"

Layton was decidedly skeptical at first. But his friend's enthusiasm and certainty of success were contagious; and he was full of ideas as to the best way of putting the plan into operation. (Here his professional experience

stood him in good stead: this sort of enterprise was right in his line.) Once he had gotten Layton to talk seriously about the possible ways and means, half the battle was won. The only way to do, Bates said, was to make a thorough job of it. There must be a baseball field laid out, over at the level end of the field. There must be swings and parallel bars. A certain amount of athletic equipment must be provided. In short, the field must be turned into something resembling an up-to-date playground with a special view to interesting boys.

“But who is going to do all this?” asked Layton; “I’d be willing enough to pay the bills up to a reasonable amount, if the thing seemed likely to work, but I certainly am not going to be bothered with managing it myself. There’s a good deal in what you say, I suppose, about the boys being less interested in my apples and pullets if there’s a perfectly good athletic field handy for them to spend their superfluous energies on; but you don’t seem to realize, Harry, that it’s no small job to get a thing like that going.”

“Why, I’ll organize it for you myself,” cried Bates. “Nothing I’d like better. I’ve got a lot of time on my hands, now that the plumbers are at work at the house, and it will be no end of fun to see what sort of a boys’ paradise

I can make out of that old field where you and I used to have such splendid times ourselves.”

Acquiring the use of the field for the purpose proved to be a not difficult matter. The real estate agent had not had a nibble for it since he threw out his bait in the form of the sign announcing that the land was in the market, and the owner was willing to rent it at a reasonable rate, with the understanding that he could terminate the lease at any time on a month's notice, in case he should have an opportunity to make a sale. Furthermore, Professor Bates soon had all the manual labor he needed, for the promise of an athletic field, which only awaited the assistance of so many pairs of arms and legs to put it into shape, enlisted at once the energies of a dozen boys, and after a few days the chief trouble was in limiting the number of workers to those who were most capable and reliable. There was usually an audience around the edge, kept from pressing in and getting in the way by a boy police force which Bates had created, partly in order to provide a job for the most insistent of the superfluous volunteer laborers.

“Why, the thing's working already,” Bates said to Layton. “Pretty soon you won't be able to pry the boys loose from that field with a crowbar.”

And, whether by accident or really as a result of the new enterprise, there had been a very noticeable falling off in the attacks on Layton's fruits and chickens. But Layton refused to indulge in any premature rejoicings: and he did not appear to share any of his friend's enthusiasm for the scheme itself, aside from its character as a crime-preventive. It was even difficult to get him to walk over to the field and see how things were coming on. When he did go, and saw the corps of workers with their sleeves rolled up, some of them erecting the baseball back-stop, others putting together the parallel bars (which Bates had secured second-hand and almost for nothing from an athletic club to which he had done certain favors in the past), it was undeniable that a gleam of interest did show for a moment in Layton's eyes. The keen watchfulness of Professor Bates observed it, and he, accordingly, was not unduly discouraged, when Layton persisted in expressing in words nothing but a matter-of-fact concern regarding the effect of the whole scheme on his cherished Baldwins and Plymouth Rocks. Nor was Bates surprised, on the other hand, when one evening, going direct to the field, he found Layton standing on the edge of it, trying apparently to look as though he had been passing

along the street on other business, but manifestly interested in the baseball game which was in progress—for the ball field was now complete.

On another day, when Professor Bates had taken Layton with him to the field for the ostensible purpose of consulting him about erecting some sort of bleachers to accommodate the increasing number of spectators at the ball games (for one purpose or another he got Layton to the field two or three times a week at least), Layton seemed to notice particularly some of the smaller boys who were playing a rather listless game of tag among the bowlders at the far end of the field. Bates saw him walk over to them, and supposed at first that he had gone to find fault with them for something, but from the way the boys listened to what he was saying and showed no desire to edge away, it was evident that Layton had some other purpose. When, a moment after, followed by the whole group of little boys, Layton picked his way among the rocks to where the two bowlders formed the "cave," and he and the boys, stooping down together, looked into it, he still talking, Bates knew in a moment what was up. Richard Layton was telling those boys about the games he used to play there. Bates chuckled. Victory was in sight at last.

"It was all I could do to keep from shouting and throwing my hat in the air," Bates said to his wife, when telling her what had happened; "but if Richard should ever guess that he is being converted, he'd crawl back into his hole at once, and all that we've gained would be lost. I must stick closely to the indirect method: that's essential to this secular unorthodox plan that I've invented for the saving of his soul."

"I don't know about its being secular and unorthodox," said his wife, smiling. "It strikes me as being quite the opposite."

"What are you getting at?" he asked.

She replied with a quotation: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

"By Jove," he exclaimed, laughing, "I never thought of that. It's a little strong, to be sure, for the shy interest that Richard is beginning to show, but the principle expressed by it certainly does correspond. I'll have to withdraw my adjectives."

"Richard," he said to his friend, one day in the first week of September, "we'll have to decide soon whether the athletic field is worth continuing or not."

"What do you mean?" asked Layton in a tone of surprise.

"I mean," said Bates, "that you've had time now to see whether our scheme really accomplishes the purpose we had in view. If not, then there's no use in your continuing to spend your time and energy on it."

"Well," said Layton, slowly, "it certainly has helped. They leave my chickens alone, and I have had but little trouble with the fruit, compared with other years. I don't know but that it's worth while to let it go on."

"But is it worth the extra trouble it'll be to you when I'm gone? For my vacation will be over in ten days or so," said Bates. "The college opens on the twenty-first, and I must get back a few days before that. Of course the field would soon run down, the boys would get squabbling among themselves, and the whole thing would gradually go to pieces if someone didn't keep an eye on it. You see, I've been over there for an hour or so practically every evening, and some afternoons, ever since we got it going. Naturally, that will fall on you when I'm gone."

"Um," grunted Layton. He had not foreseen this turn in the road.

"Perhaps we'd better give it up," said Bates.

"Well, not yet, anyway," said Layton; "I'll

think it over, Harry. Perhaps for the sake of my chickens and the orchard, it would be worth while to put some of my time into the thing."

Nothing more was said by either of them after that about abandoning the enterprise, and for the remainder of the professor's stay, Layton was at the field about as often as he was. "If I'm going to keep the thing going, I've got to get onto the ropes," he said, as though excusing what otherwise might be interpreted as genuine personal interest.

After Professor Bates had gone back to his winter home and begun the new season's work with his classes, he had frequent letters from Layton, more in a month than for a good many years past; for ordinarily Richard was a poor correspondent. Most of the letters were prompted by the need of practical advice regarding the affairs of the field. What would Harry do to meet this emergency which had arisen? What was the best solution for such and such a problem? But while he was writing, it was natural for him to report how things were going, and though he evidently did not mean to admit that he was growing daily more enthusiastic over the field for its own sake, Bates could read between the lines, and was satisfied.

Late the next winter, when Mr. Layton was spending his evenings planning for the next season out-of-doors, aided by a pile of seed catalogues, catalogues of nursery men and poultry men—and catalogues of dealers in athletic equipment—he was called on the telephone by the real estate agent, through whom the field had been rented, who said he was sorry, but he was afraid they'd have to discontinue that temporary lease, for a man was seriously considering the land as a site for a button factory. The deal might not go through, but he had thought it was only fair to give early notice, before any fresh expense was incurred.

“That’s all right,” said Layton—he had the athletic catalogue open before him at the page which showed basket-ball nets and balls. “Thanks for letting me know: but I was getting tired of the thing, anyway, and this will give me a chance to get out of it gracefully.” This, however, was merely business prudence on Layton’s part. No use to let on that the man whose money was already invested in improvements on the land was in the market to buy it. To approach the matter through a discreet third party, who would seem no more interested in that field than in a dozen other pieces of land—say, with a view to erecting workmen’s tenements—that was

the sensible way to go about it, in Richard Layton's judgment. And a month later the field was his, with all that appertained thereto, rock, sand, willow scrub, pond shore, and the good will of one hundred and fifty boys.

"I didn't have the ready money to pay for it," he wrote Bates, "but I decided to sell off most of the land around my house and use the proceeds of that. I'd about made up my mind to quit chicken-raising anyway, and the orchard needs more personal attention than I have time for nowadays. Last fall I was over at the field so much that I had to sort of neglect other things; and of course in the spring it would be still worse. I'll tell you what it is, Harry, you hadn't any idea what you were getting me into when you proposed that athletic field as a means of putting the boys of the neighborhood somewhere where they wouldn't make nuisances of themselves. You were right as far as you went, but there was a lot more to it than you realized. You'll be surprised when I tell you, but running that field (and the boys without their knowing it) is the most interesting thing I've tackled in I don't know when. Honestly, I haven't had such fun since you and I were boys ourselves, and played at hunting for buried treasure in that very field."

THE ART OF KNOWING HOW

“If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

THE ART OF KNOWING HOW

MR. AND MRS. KENYON as they grew older—with two of their children married and the third in college, so that they two were much alone together—felt more and more dissatisfied with living in the city: a home in the country was the haven to which they looked forward. It must be near enough to the city, however, to permit Mr. Kenyon to go back and forth in his car, for the large business interests for which he was responsible made it necessary for him to be at his office for the working hours of each working day.

But even with that restriction why should they not establish themselves in a country home? There they could really live, while to be cooped up in a house that was only a stone's throw from the houses on either side, and had for a prospect nothing but more houses—that was mere existence. How absurd to put up with such cramped and uncongenial quarters when the city was surrounded by open country on every side!

And they had found the ideal place, a farm, within practical distance of Mr. Kenyon's office, with a house that could readily be remodeled for their uses; for the sills and frame

were sound, and the rooms were of good size and good proportions. It would need to be considerably changed, of course, and added to, but neither the trouble nor the expense would be anything like that involved in building a new house. Although the soil of the farm had run out for want of proper use and care, there was still enough good ground to afford ample garden space for both vegetables and flowers. By cutting a few trees an extensive and delightful view could be opened up toward the southwest, while a grove of pine trees on the north would give protection from the winter winds.

There was only one "out" about the place, but that was a serious one—the water problem. The water from the old well was excellent in quality, but there was not enough of it to supply a house equipped with modern plumbing. This difficulty had not been realized at first. Mr. Kenyon was counting on the old well, planning to make it available by means of a small gasoline pump and a tank. The bargain for the purchase of the place had all but been completed, when, the season being very dry, the well actually gave out. The owners declared, of course, that this had never happened before; they couldn't understand it. But there the fact was, a practically dry well.

It looked for a moment as though the Kenyons' whole plan of purchasing the farm would have to be abandoned, and the search for a country home begun all over again.

Two or three days after this new situation had developed Mr. Kenyon said to his wife at breakfast time, "Rachel, didn't I hear you stirring about the room in the middle of the night?"

"Yes," she answered, "I was distressed over this water trouble at the farm and the threatened disappointment, so that I couldn't sleep. I got up and sat in the window for a while, until I felt quieter."

"Did some idea come to you of a way to get enough water?" he asked.

"No, not that."

"What, then?"

She answered hesitatingly: "Well, the stars over the houses, the stillness, the glimpse of the church steeple against the sky, lifted up my heart somehow, and I said a prayer about it all. It did me good to tell *Him* how our hearts are all wrapped up in this plan, and to ask for help, or for strength to bear the disappointment. I felt so much better then; and when I went back to bed it was only a little while before I fell asleep."

He made no reply to this, though he had

met her eyes squarely while she was speaking, and his eyes were smiling.

"I know you don't feel the way I do about such things, James," she said.

"No," he answered, gently, "but, my dear, don't you think I'm criticizing or objecting. It's all right if it helps you; only, I'm made differently."

"You wouldn't think it of any use to pray?" she said, and though she asked the question, it was plain she knew the answer.

"Not about a thing like this," said he. "To pray for enough water where nature hasn't provided it—what could one expect to get by such a prayer? Some modification of the climate or of the law of gravitation? for that, of course, is the sort of thing that controls it. Don't think I am unsympathetic with you, my dear; it's only that I see things in a different way. I was awake last night, too—that's how I knew you were—but I was *thinking*, thinking how to do what needs to be done. As I see it, there are two possible ways. First, there is that hill up back of the pines. It is not a part of the farm, I know, but probably it could be bought. I bet there's a spring up there, and if there is it could easily be piped and stored, though it would be expensive. The other way is to dig an artesian well. In that case, the

thing to do is to get an expert to look over the land. He can tell something about the likelihood of finding a sufficient supply of water and where we would best look for it. Of course, there would still be uncertainty, but acting on his advice there would at least be an excellent chance of securing a steady and abundant water supply at a not prohibitive cost.

“I don’t know much myself about this water question, I admit,” concluded Mr. Kenyon, “but I flatter myself that I do know how to go about solving a practical problem of this sort, that is, how to get hold of the people who do know, specialists in this particular line; and I shall know how to use their advice when I’ve gotten it.”

The final solving of the water problem (for it was solved—by an artesian well, for which they had to bore but twenty-seven feet), the solving of that problem and the installation of the new plumbing in the remodeled and extended house proved to be of even greater importance than had been foreseen. The work was at length finished, and the water turned on. It splashed gayly in the porcelain wash basins and bathtubs upstairs and in the up-to-date washtubs in the laundry; it even filled the cement pool in the garden, designed to contain

lilies and gold fish. Not a week had passed after the Kenyons had celebrated the completion of this engineering feat when their youngest son Charles came home from college in an ambulance.

They were never quite certain what the cause of the injury was; most probably a strain in rowing, for he was pulling an oar in the college crew that year. At any rate, something tragically serious had happened in the region of his spine, of which one of the symptoms was a partial and intermittent paralysis. The paralysis was a relief from the excruciating pain of which it was the alternative. But the doctor welcomed the pain as a clear indication of something very much alive there, as distinguished from the hopeless condition of a complete paralysis. The Kenyons considered that they were fortunate indeed to have not only a finished but a well-equipped house, ready for such a siege of sickness as this implied, with its physicians and surgeons and nurses, and their various demands.

It was a day of terrible strain and anxious activity when the boy was brought home, all the more severe because of the necessity of keeping for him an atmosphere of calm and quiet. At night with the help of an opiate he was put to sleep, to the relief of all. The

parents looked in several times in the course of the evening; the nurse was there and reported that the patient was resting quietly, so they returned to the library, and passed the hours apparently reading and playing solitaire, but in reality devoured by anxious thoughts. At eleven, when the nurse went to the kitchen to make preparations for the night—to replenish her supply of ice, milk, and the like—Mrs. Kenyon took her place in the sick room. Ten minutes later Mr. Kenyon locked up downstairs, according to his custom, turned out the lights, and on his way to his own bedroom, looked in at his son's. His wife was kneeling by the bed. He stood still in the doorway. She had not heard him. A lump rose in his throat to see her there; and even though he was not in intellectual agreement with what he knew she was doing as she knelt there, yet so wholly was he one with her in anxiety and longing that if he had not feared to say too much by doing so, he would have knelt down beside her. It seemed honest not to; but standing where he was he bowed his head. She rose, and saw him. The nurse returning at that moment, they went together to their own room.

As they entered it Mrs. Kenyon turned to her husband and laid her hand appealingly on

his arm. "James," she said, "you did say a prayer for him, didn't you?"

"Not quite that, Rachel, I'm afraid," he said, "but as near it as I could. We're going to fight this battle through together, dear heart; you feel that, don't you?"

"Together, and with *Him*," she answered, pointing upward. "How can we help praying at such a time as this, when there seems to be no help anywhere else? Explain to me, James, how you can hold back now."

"I'm afraid I can't explain, dear, in a way that will seem convincing to you," he said. "But it's just the way it was with the water—you remember? Charles's body, where this horrible obscure sickness is, is governed by natural laws just as the flow of water is. There is no use expecting God to change those laws; we've just got to accept that fact, and for us to pray as if it weren't so is to me only a useless self-deception, with a sad awakening at the end."

"But what are we to do, then?" she cried. "Is it all utterly hopeless? Must we leave him to die? or what is even worse, to suffer, when the opiates lose their effect?"

"By no means," he answered. "Haven't I already telegraphed to Dr. Raymond? He'll be here to-morrow. Haven't we an excellent

nurse? and we'll have another, if we need one, as we probably shall. You may be sure I'll leave absolutely no stone unturned. And I shall not trust to any single authority, even the best. I may not hit on the right man at first, but I shall find him, for I shall keep on looking until I do. Surely in this age of science there is someone who has the skill we need, and we are going to find that person."

"Yes, we shall find him," said Mrs. Kenyon, "and God will help us to find him, for I shall never stop praying to God for help."

Thus began their great battle for their boy's life, a day, an hour at a time, but running into weeks, into months, yes, it was three years and a half before they could say, "We have won." At first there was a series of consultations, decisions, tentative experiments. Then an operation. Unsuccessful! Oh, that awful week of hope and suspense and disappointment. They almost despaired for a little. But then a new start was made, guided by a new theory. There was another operation, less severe than the first, but this time with hopeful results. All this time there were appalling doses of morphia, and even with that help there were days and nights of agony, both for the patient and no less for his parents. Is there any greater suffering than to watch the

suffering of those you love, when you are powerless to help them?

At length came improvement, very slow, to be sure, and with several setbacks, and yet genuine, till at length they could feel that the corner had been turned and the disease checked. But even then the hardest part of the battle was yet to come, more discouraging, more doubtful, more slow, than the fight with the disease, namely, the task of reducing gradually those doses of morphia which had been depended upon so long, of delivering Charlie from the mastery of that drug which is thrice merciful in the time of need, but may afterward become a merciless tyrant of the soul.

By this time the patient was well enough to be moved, and the doctors thought it important to take him south, where he could live in the open air, and occupy his mind and body in moderate and healthful exercise. Had it been really necessary, Mr. Kenyon would, of course, have left everything to go with him, but his business interests were pressing, so that a prolonged absence at that time was difficult to arrange. Mrs. Kenyon declared that she could perfectly well manage the expedition. The nurse would go with them, and would stay until it was certain that she was not needed; and after that it was only a question of pa-

tience. Mr. Kenyon could run down for brief visits now and then to see how they were getting on.

Mrs. Kenyon knew, in truth, that the task ahead of her was not as easy as she said, and her husband was not deceived by her description of it. He knew that that patience, of which she spoke so lightly, must be of a rare sort, but he felt instinctively that she was capable of it, and far more capable of it than he himself was. Neither of them, however, had any full conception of what an ordeal it was to be, the strain of keeping on week after week, cheerful, hopeful, brave, and above all, determined; supplying will for two. How did she, a frail little woman, wholly unused to such an experience, ever live through it? (There was just one way, she knew.) Tiny fraction by tiny fraction the doses of morphia were reduced; and meantime normal interests were created and maintained, out-of-door life, reading, people, games, and music—whatever she could think of to occupy his mind. There were times when she wondered whether, with all the persistence and ingenuity that she could muster, the battle against the drug could ever be wholly won. Sometimes Charlie declared that it was useless, urged that they were going too fast, pleaded for delay, or even for a par-

tial surrender of the ground already gained. How hard to decide at such a juncture: when to be firm, when to comply or compromise! Yet, in spite of many periods of doubt and discouragement, there was a gradual advance. The report changed from "Hope" to "Progress," and at last it was "Victory" and "Home."

Mr. Kenyon went about feeling as if he walked on air the day this final good news reached him, confirmed by a letter from the doctor down in Virginia under whose care Charlie had been. "And I must add a word about that wonderful wife of yours," the doctor's letter continued. "There are not many women, not many men or women—and indeed, to be honest, fewer men than women—who could have won out as she has. I take off my hat to her. It has been a tremendous, an extraordinary victory, moral as well as physical, and seldom achieved, I assure you. The boy, good stuff as there is in him, could never have done it alone. The morphia would have downed him."

The day of the home-coming was a gala occasion. The two older sons and their wives were there to join in it, and from the moment when Mrs. Kenyon and Charlie came in at the door there seemed to be no cessation in the

happy talk and laughter. The very house seemed to take part in welcoming them. To Charlie the country home was practically new, for till now he had seen it only with the distorted vision of sickness and pain; and to Mrs. Kenyon how changed from the hospital into which it had been turned immediately after their original entrance into it. As she went from room to room, stood at the great south window of the library to enjoy the view, went out into the garden where flowers now lined the paths and gold fish were swimming in the pool, how everything seemed to smile and clap its hands!

Mr. Kenyon followed her out. She turned, tears of joy and thankfulness standing in her eyes, and took both his hands. "How wonderful it all is!" she said.

"I told you we would win him back," said Mr. Kenyon. "It was harder than we realized, but we've done it."

"We and *He*," she answered.

He smiled down upon her, loving her for the very belief in which he did not share. "You've never stopped praying, I know," he said.

"Never. And don't you believe in it yet? Haven't you seen how almost funny your doubts about it were? I've thought it all over a thousand times during these hard months of

separation, but I couldn't write it: it had to wait till we could talk. I remember your saying that it was the same thing with Charlie's pain as with that old water problem. Both times you declared that God could do nothing, because it was all fixed by law, and then both times you yourself started to do something, just as though those fixed laws were no obstacle to *you* at all. You said you knew how to go about it, that at least you knew how to find the people who did know, and to set them to work. You, with your expert adviser, made the water flow up through the pipes and into the wash basins. You found the surgeon who could with his knife work that miracle for Charlie's spine. How could you think, then, that God was more stupid and helpless than you? Couldn't he even work through other people, though you could? It came to me all of a sudden one day, when I was reading in the Sermon on the Mount—not the certainty, for I'd felt that instinctively all along, the way a woman does, you know, but it gave me words for expressing what I felt—'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father.' That's what I say: if you know how, why not he?

"But, James," she went on, "perhaps you

think that even if God does know how, he hasn't shown any definite sign of it, hasn't really done anything. Do you think that?"

"I'm afraid I do a little, Rachel. What is there that he has done?"

She looked down and hesitated, as though embarrassed. "You'll forgive me," she said, "if I seem to be asking for praise for myself, won't you?"

"Take all the praise I can give," he said, heartily; "you deserve it all."

"You do think I've been of use?" she asked, looking up at him half slyly.

"Use! Where would the boy be to-day but for you? Still in the grip of that fearful drug, and better dead almost, in spite of all that the surgeons had done for him. You? Why, you saved him a second time, and from a worse evil than the first."

She was looking him full in the face now, her embarrassment quite gone, the look of self-consciousness replaced by something very like a look of triumph.

"And don't you see," she said to him; "don't you see what made me strong enough for those months of fighting for him, with him, in him it seemed at times, those dreadful months, those wonderful months? James! The strength came to me day by day, hour by

hour, minute by minute, from my Father in heaven. I asked him for it. I felt it come. He never failed me. He used me to do what needed to be done. Oh, James, he *knows how*, never doubt it. And, James, forgive me for boasting" (but in truth her face showed no humility: plainly this boasting was something she gloried in. Was there ever a woman to compare with her? her husband was thinking) —"forgive me for boasting, but I too knew how. Though I am so much less wise than you in many ways, this time I was the one of us who knew. I knew to whom to go for the help we were in such desperate need of, and how to use his help when he had given it."

THE MOUNTAIN PASS

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?”

THE MOUNTAIN PASS

It often happens that a mountain range, if high or broad enough, so completely separates the two regions on either side of it that they have practically no communication with one another, and, accordingly, may be totally different, in spite of their comparative nearness.

Mr. Reichenarr lived on the east side of just such a towering range, and he had neither visited the country on the western side, nor taken any special interest in it, until an unexpected chain of circumstances not only turned his thoughts in that direction but led him to go in person to see what the country west of the great divide was like. Up to that time he had been so closely identified with the country to the east of the mountains that no one for a moment thought of his leaving it, he himself least of all. The little city in which he lived, and of which he was one of the prosperous citizens, dated from scarcely earlier than his own arrival in America, at the time when he and his brother migrated thither from the land of their birth. The growth of the city's prosperity had been coincident with his own, and though he had not entered into the

civic life of the community, nor taken any active part in its financial or industrial enterprises—for he did not like to trust his money to the management of others—still he was recognized as one of the oldest inhabitants and one of the most wealthy, for he owned an extensive tract of land just outside of the city, on the side nearest its business section, bound to prove highly valuable as the city grew.

Mr. Reichenarr, therefore, had plenty to occupy his mind in the region where he lived. Moreover, the country on the other side of the mountains was rarely so much as mentioned by the people with whom Mr. Reichenarr chiefly associated, and, as it happened, he had never in his life met anyone who had come from there. This was not as strange as it might seem, for the only pass over the mountains was rough and steep, and was traversed by nothing but a narrow trail. The defile through which it passed at the summit, with its overhanging rocks, added an especially forbidding element to the journey. According to popular belief in the east country, that chasm was so deep and narrow that the sun did not shine into it even at midday, and the traveler must expect to encounter the chill of its perpetual shade in addition to the natural cold of the high altitude.

But the chief reason why Mr. Reichenarr gave the western country no more than an occasional passing thought was because he was too busy with his own affairs. He had devoted himself to the cultivation of his land. The soil was rich, and he had developed it intensively, adapting his plans to the changing conditions of the region and to the growth of the city. It had been an engrossing occupation, and, owing both to his own industry and resourcefulness, and to the ready and reliable market which the city provided, it had been very profitable.

The time came, however, when further development was not to be expected. For one thing, the city, after its period of phenomenal growth, became practically stable in population, another and newer city further north taking the lead; but in addition to this, Mr. Reichenarr's land had itself been developed to its full capacity. It would doubtless continue to produce as abundantly and pay as well for many years to come, but Mr. Reichenarr was not content with the mere continuance of what he had already achieved. A merely stable condition left him unsatisfied. Even the city in which he had lived contentedly through the period of its expansion, lost much of its attraction for him, when it seemed to be

settling down into a sort of prosaic middle age. Mr. Reichenarr's whole life had consisted, not only in the making of money, but especially in the devising of skillful methods of making it. And this had been almost his sole interest. He had formed no friendships, and had remained unmarried; he was solitary by habit, had no hobbies, took no holidays, was never seen to read a book, except for some distinctly practical purpose, and even the newspapers had no interest for him except as they reported crops and market prices. His whole energy had been expended in the task of making that particular tract of land and the opportunity inherent in time and place yield the largest possible results in the way of increased income and additions to capital. The time had arrived, however, when no further progress seemed possible, and in consequence Mr. Reichenarr had begun to feel dissatisfied.

It was at this juncture that a gentleman called on him one evening in the interest of a projected railroad; ostensibly to offer Mr. Reichenarr a chance to invest in what was painted as an enterprise promising large returns to the original promoters, but really to persuade him to sell to the company his tract of land, which was admirably situated for the railroad's freight yards, engine house, re-

pair shops, etc. It was hoped that, properly approached, Mr. Reichenarr would sell willingly and at once, so that an inconvenient delay and probably greater expense might be avoided. Mr. Reichenarr, largely because of his discontent at the thought of continuing in the old rut, listened with interest to the new proposition. He asked many questions and made some suggestions of his own, holding the railroad's agent in conversation till late in the evening, when by accident their attention was turned for a short time to another subject.

The projected railroad was to run north to the thriving city which had recently come into existence there, and south into an undeveloped but very promising territory; indeed, it was to connect up the whole region east of the great mountain range.

"But there is more to the plan than I have yet told you," said the agent, led on by Mr. Reichenarr's evident interest, "though we do not mention this to everybody, because it cannot be carried out at once, and someone else might get in ahead of us. It is part of our plan to build a branch line, later, over the range, and thus establish relations with the great country on the west. Our surveyors have proposed a tentative route, and while some consider this feature of the scheme im-

practicable, the most progressive of our directors favor the attempt. If successful, there is no doubt that there would be big money in it."

"But is the country on the west of the range worth the risk of such a venture?" asked Mr. Reichenarr. "My impression has always been that from a business point of view that western region was negligible."

"Between ourselves," said the agent, speaking in an undertone, "that region beyond the mountains is the coming country. Formerly my own opinion with regard to it, based more on ignorance of the facts than on any positive adverse testimony, was much like that which you have just expressed. But recently I have changed my view. You see, one of my best friends, a fellow I'd grown up with from childhood, and thought the world of, took a sudden notion to migrate westward about a year ago. I took his proposal as a joke at first, and hardly paid any attention to it, till suddenly one day he sent for me to come and see him. I found him in the midst of hurried preparations, and the next day he was gone. A short message came back from him, written just as he entered the new country and brought to me by the guide of the pack train with which he had traveled to that point, exclaiming upon the splendid prospect which opened before him

and urging me to believe that the change was for the best. He had never been anything of a letter writer, so that it did not altogether surprise me that from that day I heard nothing further from him, but it was a cause of disappointment and anxiety. It also aroused my curiosity. Why was it that he sent me no further messages, and, indeed, why was it that others who made the same journey were similarly silent? For I found, in mentioning my own experience, that it was far from being an uncommon one. I was astonished to find that many of my friends, and not a few of the chance acquaintances whom I met from time to time, related the identical thing as happening to themselves. Friends of some of them, relatives of others, had journeyed to that western country beyond the mountains, many of them suddenly as in the case of my own friend, some of them in fulfillment of an expectation of long standing, and not only had they not returned: they had sent back no word after their arrival there."

"You can add me to your list," interposed Mr. Reichenarr, "though in my case it was no one I specially cared about. It was the man I'd bought my boots of for years: all I had to do was to send him word that I wanted a new pair, and in a couple of weeks I'd have

them, just like the old ones. Well, one day, if you please, I hear that he's gone west. Not a word of warning, no arrangements to turn over his business to anybody else. Left a wife and three children too, and not a word from him from that day to this."

"Just so," said the agent. "And you'd be astonished if you made inquiry, as I have, to discover what a common occurrence that is. The truth is that people from all about us are flocking into that western country beyond the range every year. Why is it that so little information about their new life there comes back to us? And tell me this, did you ever know anyone who, after moving to that country, came back east again?"

"No," said Mr. Reichenarr, "I can't say that I have."

"Well," continued the agent, "all of this set me wondering and inquiring. I guess I have a naturally inquisitive mind anyway, and besides, I thought a whole lot of that friend of mine, as I've told you, and I couldn't get him out of my head. I started to make inquiries about that western country wherever I went—and my business, of course, takes me from place to place constantly. I found that almost everywhere—in almost every city and town up and down the land—there are a few people

who not only seem to know a good deal about the country beyond the divide and to be greatly interested in it, but are keen to interest other people and tell them all they know about it. I don't know how it was that I had never discovered this before; too busy hustling for my daily bread, I guess. At any rate, there's the fact, and during the past year I've talked to scores of these people. Some of them, to be sure, are mere enthusiasts, whose information seems to have no better basis than their own fancy, so that I reckon it at no more value than a punched railroad ticket. But others of them are of a different sort, and their stories hang together in a way that gives me a good deal of confidence that they know what they are talking about. The long and the short of it is that the more I hear about that western land the more I am amazed that I paid so little attention to it before. For one thing, from what I can make out it must be about as well governed as any country ever was: everybody who knows anything about it agrees on that, and makes a strong point of it. Another thing is that the most generous provision conceivable is made there for settlers of the right sort, while there is the most strict and sagacious method in vogue of dealing with people who belong to the class of the undesirable. In

other words, it's a place where merit is about as sure of achieving its just desert as can be well conceived. Is it any wonder, I ask you, that people, who perhaps grow discontented with the conditions of life which usually prevail among us here, or have even suffered from some special injustice, take a sudden notion now and then that they would be happier on the other side of the mountains?

"But this is a little aside from the main object of our conversation," said the agent, looking at his watch. And discovering thus how late the hour was, he hastened to take his departure, apologizing for having stayed so long. Mr. Reichenarr promised to give an answer to his business propositions in the course of a few days, and went so far as to say that he was a good deal interested.

Interested he was indeed, and late though the hour then was, he did not go to bed after the agent had left, but sat down to think further of the scheme that had already begun to take shape in his mind. Only half of the agent's proposal attracted him. He had no desire to invest money in this projected railroad; it was not in accord with his nature to trust other people to that extent. But the sale of his land to the railroad's promoters was another matter. Was not that the very chance

he had been vaguely feeling for, to get free from an enterprise that had reached the limit of progress, and apply the money now realized from it, and also the same ingenuity which in the past had so successfully developed it, to some new project with a larger future? Nor was this all. Even more important was the fact that that evening's conversation had even pointed out to him where that new project was to be found. The country west of the mountains! If half of what the agent had heard, and manifestly believed, were true, where could a man who was a born money-maker, as Mr. Reichenarr knew himself to be, look for a better opportunity? How fortunate too that his eyes had been opened in time! After the railroad had been put through it would be too late. Even as it was, he must proceed cautiously. He must be careful not to diminish his own advantage by letting other people suspect what he had in mind, and perhaps get ahead of him. There was another reason, moreover, for secrecy and prompt action. One feature of his plan which especially appealed to him was the fact that, shrewdly carried out, it would enable him to shake off whatever inconvenient relationships and responsibilities had accumulated about him with the years. It had been his consistent policy,

to be sure, to keep himself as free as possible in that respect, but naturally his success in this had not been complete. In particular, there were his brother's widow and her son, now nineteen years of age. In all the eight years since his brother's death those two had been an annoyance to him. She was a well-meaning woman, no doubt, but that did not prevent him from being irritated by the necessity of advising and helping her. The boy he had always disliked, and he had begrudged every dollar that he had felt forced to give in aid of his proper upbringing. To slip out from under this unwelcome yoke would be indeed a satisfaction.

Two days later, after a second conference with the railroad agent, Mr. Reichenarr had consented to sell his land, and a price satisfactory both to him and to the railroad had been agreed upon. The conditions which he imposed were peculiar, but they were of a sort that made no difficulty for the other parties to the transaction. Well satisfied with the price that had been fixed, they were perfectly willing to gratify any personal whims of Mr. Reichenarr. One of his stipulations was that for the present the most absolute secrecy should be observed with regard to the fact that his land was to change hands. The second was that

the price should be paid in cash in a certain specified form on a certain date at noon, and at a place which Mr. Reichenarr would designate as the time approached. The date set was far enough off to enable the necessary formalities to be transacted on both sides, and also to allow Mr. Reichenarr to realize on the small amount of other property which he owned in the city, and to put in order the rest of his personal affairs with a view to his contemplated change of residence.

So carefully did he carry out his plan that no one suspected it. His solitary habits, of course, aided the concealment, and also the fact that to very few other people did it make any particular difference what he did or where he went. The few whom, for business or personal reasons, his going would affect he took special pains to keep in the dark. On the very morning of the day on which this final transfer of the property was to be completed and the money paid, his brother's widow called to see him just as he finished his breakfast at the hotel where he lived. His heart sank when he heard her voice, inquiring for him from the desk clerk. "She has found it out," he exclaimed to himself. But no, as soon as he saw her he was reassured. It was only an accident that she had chosen this particular day for

seeking his help, as on so many other occasions. This time it was with regard to a new and better job which his nephew might get, if only his uncle would vouch for him; for a certain financial responsibility was involved. She knew it was not the sort of thing Mr. Reichenarr liked to do, but she was sure that Arthur was as honest as the daylight, and this new job would make such a big addition to their scanty income. Inasmuch as she had more than half expected a flat refusal, she was a good deal cheered when her brother-in-law answered her amicably that, though he was too busy that morning to reach an immediate decision in the matter, she might come to see him again early the next week. She went away buoyed up with hope, and Mr. Reichenarr too was pleased with the little joke in which he had indulged, the first tangible fruit of the plan he was about to launch.

At noon the papers were signed and the money paid in the form specified. It filled two substantial packets; and with such personal effects as he considered necessary and food for the journey, it made up a good load for the pack-horse which Mr. Reichenarr had provided for the purpose. At dusk, leading this loaded horse and riding another, he slipped out of the city without being recognized.

There was a small village four miles nearer the base of the mountain, where he was unknown; and there according to his plan he spent that night.

At daybreak the next morning he was on horseback, and an hour later had turned off from the wagon road to take the mountain trail. After a stretch of burned timber, lamentable sign of the encroachment of civilization on the wilderness, he passed into the living forest. The sun shining from behind him fell on the green moss, the red tree trunks, the gray rocks, the clear water of the streams that he crossed from time to time. He drew deep breaths of the cool morning air, and enjoyed the feeling of freedom and the sense of a safe escape. It seemed to him as though the new venture on which he was entering, with the excitement and the renewed interest in life which it promised, had rolled ten years from his back. He glanced over his shoulder at the led horse, thinking to himself, "In a few more years I shall have doubled the value of the load he carries."

He had learned, in response to cautious inquiries, that there was a deserted woodcutters' cabin a short day's journey from the beginning of the trail. When he arrived at it, wearied as he was by a ride much longer and harder than he was accustomed to, he was glad

enough to call it a full day, and put up there for the night.

At the end of the next day's travel he could see before him the indentation in the mountain wall where the narrow pass over the ridge must be. Tired as he was, he took heart at this, made himself a shelter of boughs, turned out his horses, belled and hobbled, to feed in a sloping meadow near at hand, and with considerable contentment composed himself to sleep. He lay awake for some time, reflecting on his good fortune thus far—for it had proved much more of an undertaking than he had anticipated, with corresponding risks of misadventure which he felt he was fortunate to have escaped. He looked forward with keen expectation to the new opportunity which would open up when this uncomfortable preliminary stage was completed. He went over in his mind the details of his plans, to make sure that he had forgotten nothing. One omission occurred to him. He had neglected to make his will, so that, if he should die, his nephew, his only blood relative, would become heir of all that he possessed, assuming, of course, that it were discovered in the new country westward that he had a nephew. At any rate, it would be well to guard against such an event, and one of the first things he

would do when settled in his new surroundings would be to make a will. As for the rest of his plan, the more he thought about it the more it pleased him.

Next morning, when he woke, he lay for a while, reluctant to get up. He did not feel as refreshed as one might expect after a full night's sleep. His head ached; he seemed to be stiff in every joint. However, he hoped that this would wear off, when he had moved about a little, and he was proceeding to light a fire and begin preparations for breakfast, when he suddenly noticed that there was no sound of the horses' bells. Mounting a little rise behind his camping-place, he scanned the meadow. The horses were nowhere to be seen. Here was a predicament. Had they gone by the trail, forward or backward, or had they wandered off through the other meadows which seemed to connect with this one in indefinite series? Fortunately, the trail was soft and moist enough to show foot prints plainly, and he soon assured himself that they had gone backward on the trail. But how far? That he must find out, and he hastened on foot down the trail, his headache not improved by lack of a breakfast, peering anxiously ahead of him for the missing horses. A weary hour of discouragement had passed in this way when

he heard the faint tinkle of a bell, and shortly after, emerging from the forest into an opening, he found the two runaways. Happily they had stopped here to feed. Not horseman enough to mount and ride an unsaddled horse, he perforce led them back by the bridle and halter which he had carried with him on his search—another hour of foot travel: two hours lost from the day's journey, when every hour was precious.

At length the start was made, and the ascent toward the pass begun. In spite of the bright sunshine, his spirits did not rise. He felt heavy and depressed. Before he had ridden three hours, he was tired enough to stop, but that was out of the question, for he was still a long distance from that final cleft of the mountains, which he must, if possible, reach and pass before nightfall; so he went forward. But his goal almost seemed to recede before him as he advanced. The shoulder of the mountain, which he had supposed hid the top of the pass, proved, when at length he turned it, to conceal still another shoulder which must be turned in like manner.

By this time the afternoon was well advanced. The sun had gone down behind the range two hours before. It was cold, and grew colder as the darkness approached. What was

he to do? What but press on? There was no place here where he could spend the night, no protection from the cold, not even a tree to tie the horses to; and he dared not turn them loose, after his experience of the night before. No, he must go forward, trusting that if night should overtake him before he had crossed the pass, as now seemed probable, he or his horses' instinct would be able to avoid whatever dangers might beset the trail. His hands and feet were numb with cold, and his brain too seemed numb from fatigue. It was all that he could do to sit in the saddle and let the horse carry him forward. His thoughts were a match for the weariness of his body and the gloomy surroundings. Worries and forebodings crept upon him. Mistakes he had made in his preparations, contingencies he had failed to foresee and provide for, precautions he had not taken plagued him.

Now the trail grew steeper. The walls on either side closed in, and seemed almost to meet over his head. And night had fallen: he could see nothing but blackness ahead of him, as though he were riding into a cavern. Behind him for a little while, he could still see a faint light, when he glanced over his shoulder, but soon even that disappeared. Occasionally his horse would stumble in the dark, whereupon

Mr. Reichenarr's heart would come up into his mouth at the thought of a fall into that blackness, and a sudden panic of fear would take possession of him. He realized that he was losing his nerve.

A wind began to blow somewhere up above him. He could hear it increasing and subsiding, and each time that it returned it seemed stronger than before; but no breath of it reached him where he was. At one side of him some stones rattled down from above. He reined in his horse and stopped irresolute, then urged him forward. Haste! Haste! To break through this horrible wall of darkness, and all the unseen perils which lurked within it.

A sound of cracking and rending above him! A rumble increasing into a roar! A crash so close at his back, that he was half stunned by the concussion from it! Dizzy and reeling, as his terrified horse started wildly forward, he still had wits enough to realize that the dragging from his hand of the halter rope meant that his pack-horse had either pulled backward and escaped him, or more probably been crushed by a fall of earth or rock. Barely had this thought formed itself in his mind, when he felt the frightened horse under him slip and fall; scramble to his feet; slip again; then down, down. . . .

Whether he had lost consciousness and lain there for a long time, or been stunned for a moment only, Mr. Reichenarr did not know. The night was still black as the pit about him. He rose to his knees, then to his feet, not painfully, as he had expected, but with an ease that was disconcerting. He had a peculiar feeling of lightness that made him giddy, as though, unless he moved carefully, he might not be able to keep his feet on the ground. When he stood erect, he moved forward in the darkness, scarcely feeling the earth beneath his feet. He reached out his hands before him and on either side, but could touch nothing. Was it his sense of touch that was failing him, or was the material world eluding him, withdrawing from him, leaving him alone? If he could feel nothing, see nothing, at least let him hear something. He stood still, drew a deep breath, and shouted, "Where am I?" His voice was like a faint echo from far away, or like sounds heard under water, if, indeed, he had not wholly imagined that he heard it. Perhaps there had been nothing but the thought of the words in his own mind; he could not be sure.

He went forward again, whether walking or floating in the air he hardly knew. Suddenly the terror of loneliness was replaced by an experience no less terrifying: he was sure that

someone was moving with him, so close that he could have touched him—though he was also sure that, should he indeed stretch out his hand, he would only prove that, as far as physical sensations were concerned, he was surrounded by emptiness.

The worst of it was that he knew this unseen companion. It was absurd, of course, and he refused to credit his own certainty, for his brother had been dead for years. Yet down beneath this refusal to admit it, he knew that it was his brother who moved beside him. And if it was indeed his brother, then he himself— He thrust the thought from him. No! Day would soon break! He should in time get down from the mountains to where he could secure help. He would come back and recover his money, temporarily separated from him, buried with the pack-horse under that avalanche or rock fall or whatever it was. For to think that it should lie there until some chance stranger found and took possession of it was absurd. No, life would return to its normal ways, the life he had planned, the only sort of life he was equipped for. And yet, this certainty that his dead brother was there beside him!

He became aware that it was growing light. It was but the faintest beginning, and as yet

the light revealed nothing but itself. "In a few moments I shall see," he thought. "In a few moments I shall know." He stood still. Yes, the light was increasing. He dared not face its revelation. He closed his eyes. Minute after minute passed, as he stood there with his eyes shut. What should he see when he had mustered courage to open them again? Just a mountain landscape on the other side of the great divide, of course. He opened his eyes, and saw—light. Light everywhere, light above him and around him, light beneath him where one would expect to see the solid earth, light where his own body should have been. Nothing but light.

"How long have I been dead, I wonder?" said Mr. Reichenarr.

DOORS

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.”

DOORS

IF a traveler, moving along a highway intersected by many crossroads, knew no more of his route than that he should somewhere make a turn to the right or to the left, he would be in considerable perplexity as to which of the many crossroads he should take. Tom Downer was similarly perplexed, as he walked along the street of the Middle Western city where he had spent three weeks in jail, on the evening of his first day of liberty. For him half the doorways along that street were crossroads, for were they not public thoroughfares, leading as they did into places of amusement of one sort or another? Amusement was what he was looking for, but he could not decide which door to try.

It was winter, and there had been a heavy snowstorm the day before. But he was glad of the snow, for it had made it easy for him to get a job without being asked embarrassing questions. He had worked all day with one of the gangs clearing the main streets of the city, and had been paid at the day's end. That had relieved his first anxiety. A bed for the night was insured and food for that night and the next morning. He had already eaten

his supper, and as a matter of precaution had paid in advance for his bed and breakfast. Otherwise he might have been tempted to spend the money for something else. With what remained in his pocket he proposed to amuse himself. In a sense he really needed amusement more than he needed food and lodging, something cheerful that would make a man forget unpleasant things.

Here, along the street, were dozens of doors leading into various places of entertainment—saloons, cheap restaurants, movies, a theater, poolrooms, and the like. Light shone out of all these doorways; music came from some of them—it sounded good; if you passed close enough, you could hear the voices of people inside of some, and laughter.

Which door to choose? It was merely a question as to which would lead him to the most fun for his money. No question of morals or respectability was involved in the choice. Nobody knew him in this town, except the policeman who had arrested him, the judge who had convicted him, the jailer whose involuntary guest he had been for the three dreary weeks; and to them it made no difference what he did, so long as it was within the law. Indeed, there was nobody anywhere, he reflected, who cared what he did. If his wife

and little daughter were still alive in the Californian city where he had deserted them (fool and coward that he had been), they certainly had ceased to care by this time. As for his lack of friends in the place where he now found himself, that was a lucky thing. The fewer to know about him just now the better. A jail record was not much of a recommendation, even if it was for a first offense. It had been the result of a fight, in which apparently he gave rather more than he got. He couldn't remember the precise cause and origin of it; his mind must have been befuddled; he'd been drinking, he knew. Well, what difference anyway? It was past, and he had been punished for it. The thing to do now was to forget it.

Which, then, of these lighted doorways would best serve that purpose? He walked several blocks, still undecided. This brought him into the thick of the early evening crowd, people in search of amusement, like himself. A continuous stream of them flowed each way, so that they filled the sidewalk, necessarily jostling one another to some extent; but most of them were in a good humor, and only a few of them were surly or appeared to be bent on making trouble. One of these, however, collided with Downer, and by the ugly look he gave him seemed inclined to hold him respon-

sible. Downer, too recently out of jail to wish to draw general attention to himself, took the slight in silence; and he grumbled out some sort of an apology to the man behind him, against whom he had fallen in recoiling from the other. But there was no trouble to be feared in that quarter, for his apology met with a polite response. "Lucky he was that sort of chap," thought Tom, for he had been fairly thrown into the man's arms.

At most of the corners were several news-boys, calling the evening edition of the local papers. Tom beckoned to one of them, and as he did so put his hand into his pocket for his purse. It was not in that pocket. That was queer: he always carried it in that pocket. Was it in the opposite one? No. Nor did a complete search of all his other pockets reveal it. It was gone. Stolen! That shove in front, and the polite individual behind—was that a pickpocket's trick? If so, it was amusing that they should choose a man just out of jail for their victim. At any rate, his money was lost; that was the main point. Nothing very funny about that.

Those lighted doorways now assumed a different aspect. They no longer represented cordial invitations to enter and have a good time. To a man with no money in his pocket they

were tantalizing reminders of what he wanted and couldn't have. The more attractive they were, the more bitter the sarcasm of their invitation. Downer walked on at a more listless gait. "What's the use?" he said to himself. Thus he passed the saloons, a bowling alley (reached by stairs to the basement, from which ascended at intervals the clinkety-click-click of the falling pins), a Chinese restaurant, a cheap hotel (its front window displaying chiefly a view of boot-soles and newspapers), a number of stores (closed now to purchasers, but with their show windows brilliantly illuminated), a moving-picture house, a dance hall. Then he came to a doorway, lighted like the others, but less easy to classify.

It belonged to a four-story building lighted from top to bottom. The sound of a piano, playing ragtime, came from the second story. A man came out from the doorway and two others entered during the first few moments that Downer stood in front of it. He was reading a large signboard beside the door. It was there announced that a minstrel show would be given on Thursday evening at 7:30, and that on Friday there would be an Athletic Meet in the gym. Lower down on the board a lecture on "Aerial Navigation" was advertised, and finally a Bible Class on "A Young Man's

Questions." "Oh, a religious joint," thought Downer, and was about to move on, when his eye caught the sign on the opposite side of the doorway: "FREE! TO-NIGHT, 8:30 to 10, MUSIC, HUMOROUS RECITATIONS, OPEN FORUM. COME IN." It was free: that was what arrested his attention. Not the sort of a show he would have selected half an hour earlier, to be sure; but now, with his pockets empty, he must take what offered or go without. So he turned in at that door.

After the entertainment, to which Downer listened in company with fifty or sixty other men, he noticed, as he was about to leave the building, a young man, standing near the doorway, who seemed to be at home in the place; he was, in fact, the manager, Mr. Fisher by name. Downer asked him how often such an entertainment as he had just attended was given. Three times a week, he was told. And always free? Yes, Mr. Fisher told him; but there were also bowling alleys, billiard tables, and a small gymnasium for which a fee was charged, and also a limited number of bedrooms that were rented by the week. The use of the lobby just inside the main entrance, where newspapers and magazines were available for readers, was free, however; and had Downer seen the game room in the rear? That

also was free. He took Downer across the lobby to look into it. At several of the tables games of checkers, cribbage, chess, dominoes were still in progress and around the chess players several interested spectators were silently watching the moves.

"Come in whenever you've a mind," said Mr. Fisher, as he bade Downer good-night at the door.

"And he didn't ask me a single question," thought Downer, approvingly; "not even my name."

When the next evening arrived, Downer returned, and read and smoked in the lobby for an hour. Mr. Fisher passed through while he sat there and nodded, but did not speak. "They know how to make you feel at home here by leaving you alone," thought Downer. At the same time he did not feel comfortable to give nothing in return for what he was getting, and as soon as he made enough money (at the odd jobs on which at first he was forced to depend) so that he had spare cash in his pocket again, he took to patronizing the bowling alley and billiard room, where he usually found others who wanted to play, and where he enjoyed the privileges on a paying basis. That made him more comfortable. At the end of a fortnight he put his name on the

waiting list for a bedroom. He might have to wait ten days for a vacancy, Mr. Fisher told him; but, as a matter of fact, at the end of a week his turn came, and he became a regular resident.

The only hesitation he had felt in making this move was related to the religious element of the institution. He had never asked any direct questions as to that feature, but there was enough evidence to show that religion was somehow involved in the plan and purpose of the place. Besides the Bible class, which he had seen announced at the time of his first visit, there were religious meetings on Sundays and occasionally at other times. He had never gone to any of these, and had no desire to do so. What was more, he had no intention of going to them for the special purpose of securing for himself the secular privileges which the place offered: if it were necessary to assume an interest in religion in order to be welcome, he would move on, that was all. But no one seemed to expect him to display the religious interest which he did not feel. There was no suggestion of anything like a bargain in admitting him to such privileges as he himself desired to share.

At the time when he put down his name for a bedroom, he said to Mr. Fisher, "I'm not sure that I'm eligible."

"How's that?" said Mr. Fisher.

"Are the rooms intended for just anyone who wants one?" asked Downer.

Mr. Fisher, instead of answering this question, asked one himself. "What is it that's worrying you?" he said, smiling, and at the same time squinting his eyes as one does when trying to fathom another's meaning behind his words.

"I don't attend any of the religious meetings," said Downer.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" Mr. Fisher said, and his eyes gave themselves up entirely to smiling now. "Don't let that worry you. If ever you want to come to any of the meetings, you'll be welcome, but that has nothing to do with renting a room." He already had open before him the book containing the list of room-applicants. Without more words on either side, he turned it around to face Downer, handing him a pen at the same time, and Downer wrote his name.

A week later, as has been said, he moved in, and from that time he spent practically every evening in the building, most often playing billiards or bowling, but occasionally attending one of the entertainments. In any case, however, he spent the first part of the evening, after he had finished his supper, sitting in the

lobby, smoking his pipe and reading the evening paper.

At one side of the lobby was a door with ground glass in the upper half, on which appeared the words, "Mr. Fisher. Office hour, 7 to 8 P. M." Downer usually did not reach the lobby till quarter past seven or so, and the light behind the glass door was always lighted by that time. He got into the habit of glancing in that direction as he came in and saying to himself, "Mr. Fisher is in his office." Nor was Downer the only man who took note of this. Indeed, the thing that first aroused Downer's own interest in Mr. Fisher's office door was his observing that as long as the light shone through it there were nearly always men waiting to go in. They entered one at a time, each waiting till the one before him had come out.

Downer watched them. Some of them were men who had some part in running the building. These usually stayed but four or five minutes. But most of Mr. Fisher's callers, Downer noticed, were, like himself, patrons of the place, and usually stayed longer than the others, though rarely more than a quarter of an hour. When they came out, Downer from behind his newspaper studied their faces, and he thought he could see in many of them evi-

dence that the short conference with Mr. Fisher had been worth while.

Downer was especially interested in the ones who hesitated about going in in the first place. He became rather expert in detecting the symptoms of a desire to go in, defeated temporarily by embarrassment. He understood that combination thoroughly, because he had a notion to go in himself some night and have a talk with Mr. Fisher, but hadn't yet screwed up his courage to make the move. He felt that it might help if he could talk things over with a man like that, a sensible, plain, friendly chap such as Mr. Fisher had shown himself to be. Downer was getting along fairly well in some ways to be sure. He had a tolerably good job now; had turned the corner financially, he hoped: for he made enough to house and feed and clothe him, with something over. But that hardly made up a life. And there was no outlook to it. What was worse, he had no confidence in himself. He felt still that exaggerated sensitiveness with regard to other people's opinion of him that he had felt when he came out of jail. He had the same morbid tendency to avoid observation. He had confided in no one, asked no one's advice, sought no one's friendship; and he felt the need of that sort of human backing. There was only

one person in sight to whom he felt inclined to go for help, and that was Mr. Fisher, whose friendliness seemed to be always ready but never aggressive, and to whom other people were evidently accustomed to go for conference and advice.

For several evenings Downer debated the question whether to take his turn among Mr. Fisher's callers or not. Suppose it was of no help after all: he would have told his story, uncovered his personal affairs, for nothing; and the facts once laid bare to another's view could not be hidden again. And then, even if Mr. Fisher could and would help him, what claim had he on Mr. Fisher's time and thought? Wouldn't it be an imposition on a busy man to go to him with one's personal problems, especially not knowing precisely what sort of help was needed—just to ask the privilege of talking things over, in the vague hope that two minds together might see light where one of them alone saw none? But, on the other hand, did he really believe in his own reasons for hesitation, or was it mere timidity—cowardice really—that held him back? He made up his mind suddenly one evening to risk it, and as a sort of sign to himself that his mind was made up, he moved from the chair he was sitting in, to the vacant one that stood nearest to the

door of Mr. Fisher's office, and said to himself, "When the man who is in there with him now comes out, I'll get up at once and go in." But when the moment came, he still hesitated a little, and another man, sitting near, who had evidently been planning the same thing, was more prompt, and got ahead of him. This caller, however, remained in the office but a few moments, and when he came out, Downer was on his feet at once. He knocked at the door. "Come in," said Mr. Fisher's voice from within; and Downer went through the doorway.

There was nothing very remarkable about that first personal conversation with Mr. Fisher. Downer did not tell him much about his private affairs after all: it did not seem to be necessary to make a sort of confession, as he had imagined in advance. And such facts as he did reveal, Mr. Fisher took no particular notice of, treated as though they were the ordinary commonplaces of conversation between friends. Nor did Mr. Fisher himself say anything very noteworthy. He didn't offer to advise; still less did he try to penetrate further into Downer's confidence than Downer himself of his own free choice admitted him. And yet, ordinary, to all appearances, as that first brief talk was, it did help.

Downer came out of the office not with his problems solved, to be sure, but saying to himself, "I'm glad I went." And he went again.

By degrees, however, he let Mr. Fisher into his secrets, and only felt as a result that the friendship between them was deepened by each new confidence. It seemed funny as he looked back, to think how he had dreaded this. Instead of its being hard and embarrassing, he found that the very telling of his story had taken a weight off his mind, even before Mr. Fisher had made any comments (when he did make any) or given any advice. The very sharing of his story with someone else, and the discovery that that other person seemed to regard it all as so much past history, not as a cloud overshadowing the present and threatening the future, began to change Downer's own attitude toward it.

He was telling this to Mr. Fisher one evening, and from that went on to speak more freely than before of his own inner state of mind. He did not realize at the moment that their intercourse was thus entering on a new phase, so gradual had the progress toward it and the preparation for it been; but afterward he realized that the half hour in Mr. Fisher's office that night had marked for him a turning point in life.

"I wish I could tell you, Mr. Fisher," he was saying, "what a lot of good it's done me to drop in for a talk with you from time to time. And for that matter, I could never express how the friendliness and good cheer of this whole building sets a man up, and keeps him going. I know it's done that for me. And yet." he went on, "there's something disappointing about it too. It works like a medicine that checks the disease without curing it, for when I'm outside, pegging away at the old problems and meeting the old discouragements, I often feel as blue and downhearted as ever. To be sure, it doesn't take long after I come in at the door of this building—home, I call it—before things look brighter again. But that isn't as it ought to be, is it? A man can't be forever escaping from real life into a sort of refuge: he ought to be able to keep right and happy as he goes along. Sometimes it's even worse than that. There are days when I can't escape my dreads and worries by coming into the building. I've got to come knocking at the door of your office here. It's true I always get straightened out, when I've been in here talking to you for a while, but, after all, this is only a still narrower refuge. It isn't right, is it?"

"I'll tell you what you need, Downer," Mr. Fisher said. "You've gotten a certain amount

of good, as you say, by going through two doors, first the door of our building and then the door of the office here. But what you need is to go through a third door."

Downer instinctively glanced about to see the door referred to. There was none except the door to a closet, which was wide enough open for him to see the shelves above and Mr. Fisher's hat and overcoat hanging on a hook below. Then he realized that it was not a literal door that was meant this time. "What sort of a door?" he asked.

"I haven't said much to you about the religion I try to live by," Mr. Fisher answered, "the same religion that put this building here, and gives it whatever special value it has."

"No," said Downer, "but I've realized for a long time that it meant a lot to you."

"Do you mind if I talk straight out about it?" said Mr. Fisher, and he drew his chair up closer to the table behind which he was sitting, and leaned a little forward over it.

"Go ahead," said Downer. "Anything that you want to say goes."

Fisher, with this permission, went straight to the heart of his subject. "Religion," he said, "is a thing that once you have it, inside you, goes with you wherever you go, through

troubles, discouragements, mistakes, loneliness, temptations, hardships—whatever comes. And when I say religion, I am thinking of the particular religion that I myself know about personally, the one that goes with me through every experience in the way I've just described; that is, Christianity, the religion that draws from the personality and inspiration of Jesus Christ power to help and guide and deliver men like you and me. You need that religion, Downer. It seems to me that that is the very thing you yourself are groping for, although you haven't realized it. It's what you have been steadily moving toward without knowing it. First, you came through the door from the street into this building, and then from the lobby through the door into this office. Now you stand in front of a third door, and it is only by going on through the third one that you will reach the help you need, the help which you have all this while been approaching through the other two. Listen." He opened a book that lay on his table. (It was a Bible, but not bound in the usual black leather. It looked more like an account book. It was one of the tools he did his work with.) He turned over the pages till he found a certain verse. "These are words of Jesus Christ," said he; "I am the door; by me if any man

enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.' ” He reached out his hand across the table. “Downer,” he said, “will you enter that door?”

Downer grasped the hand held out to him. “I’ll make a try at it, if you’ll help me,” he answered.

That was the real beginning. Up to that time, as it seemed, he had been only getting on his mark for the race. The results came only gradually and with many setbacks. There were still days when he felt that life was a losing battle, and at night, as he entered the outer door of his haven of refuge, felt that it was none too soon. But more and more he was conscious of a strength within that continued all day long. At length the time came when he could confidently feel that he was as strong in hope and purpose when he came home each night as he had been when he went out in the morning.

One evening a man, with whom Downer had often played billiards, knocked at the door of Mr. Fisher’s office. “Mr. Fisher,” he said, “there’s a fellow named Downer who used to be around the building all the time. I haven’t seen him now for nearly a week, and I wonder if anything has gone wrong with him. He never told me much about himself, but I got

the idea that he had had a pretty uphill time of it. I'm sort of afraid he may have slipped down again, the way a fellow does sometimes, you know; and I thought perhaps if you could get hold of him, you—"

"No need of anything like that, I'm glad to say," interrupted Fisher. "Downer had prospects of a better opening in another city, and decided to try it, that's all."

"It's funny," thought Fisher as the door of the office closed and left him alone again for a moment; "it's funny how ready people are to put the worst construction upon an unexplained event." He glanced up at a calendar on the wall. "Downer must have reached San Francisco yesterday. I wonder whether he has found his wife and little daughter yet, and whether—"

A knock at the door. "Come in," said Mr. Fisher; and another visitor entered to tell his troubles into a friendly ear.

THE GIFT

“Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

THE GIFT

At the base of the dam, as shelter for those who guarded it, a rough hut had been built. Five miles down the valley was the little French city which was dependent on the reservoir, and would suffer seriously from any attack upon it, not only through damage to the canal, which the reservoir maintained at the proper level, but also through the danger of an inundation, should the dam be destroyed.

Of the three who constituted the guard one was always away from the hut patrolling the top of the dam. Of the other two, one took his eight hours of sleep, while the other kept on the alert, watching to see that no suspicious person approached the base of the dam, the whole length of which could be seen from the hut door. Pierre had this duty at the time when the automobile, carrying three army officers, appeared on the highway two hundred yards away, and stopped there; hence it was he who had the peculiar joy and honor of the interview which followed. It was more appreciated by him afterward than while it was in progress, for to talk to generals was an em-

barrassing business. Moreover, not till the final moment of it did Pierre know to whom he was talking.

Pierre was not French, but Belgian, as were the other two of the little group which composed the guard. Two of them, including Pierre, were boys; the third was a man, but crippled: hence his employment in this civilian service at a time when Belgium needed in her army every able-bodied man. All three were exiles from their own land, having fled with a throng of others before the Germans in the first month of the war. They had been hospitably received by the people of the French city, where they found themselves when they dared to stop in their hurried and terrifying exodus. Like the other older boys of the community, still too young for enlistment, and the men who were too old or otherwise unfit for army service, they had been assigned to such duty as they were able to perform, in their case the guarding of the dam.

It was on an afternoon of the spring of 1915 that Pierre, standing in front of the hut, saw the automobile containing three Belgian officers stop on the highway a short distance down the valley. The three alighted and walked toward the hut, the tallest of the three ahead. Pierre saluted. The leader of the

three, when they had approached, spoke for them all. It appeared that they were visiting some of the localities in northern France where Belgian refugees were quartered, inquiring into their condition, their occupation, their needs. The tall officer questioned Pierre about his duties. Were all the three who shared them Belgian? Yes; and one of them was in the hut at this moment: should he not be wakened? No, not yet. Where were they quartered? Here in the hut. What food did they have? Pierre told him. What were their hours of duty, of sleep, of recreation? It was nearly all duty and sleep, it seemed; there was not much opportunity for recreation; once a week a few hours with their families in the town; fishing sometimes in the reservoir; talking together about the war; reading the few newspapers that found their way to them. But they did not mind the long hours, Pierre said, nor even the solitariness, not very much, so long as they could feel that they were of use.

“Yes,” said the tall officer, “that is the chief thought of all of us in these dark days—to be of use. How old are you?”

“Sixteen, sir,” answered Pierre; and then, emboldened by a strong desire, and encouraged by the kind manner of this officer—the

others, also, though silent, had friendly eyes—Pierre asked if he might be permitted to say something.

“What is it?” asked the tall officer.

“It is this, sir,” said Pierre, “that though I am only sixteen, I am, as you see, sir, tall and strong for my age. Must I wait until I am eighteen before I can serve my country? Is there no way of getting into the army sooner than that?”

“But, my boy,” said the tall officer, “you must not think that service in the army is the only way of serving your country. In this guard duty you are serving just as truly. It is real work, necessary work, and perhaps the work that you can do best at the present time.”

“But, sir,” pleaded the boy, “it is such a small service to give, when so much is needed. And other people are giving so much. Only this morning we were reading in a newspaper, which I brought back yesterday from the city, how even foreigners, people in other lands, are helping us Belgians with great gifts of food and money, especially the English and the Americans. Is it not hard for one who is himself a Belgian to be able to do almost nothing for Belgium? For we have no money to give, my mother and I,” he added. “We lost everything in the flight. The Germans have it all.

Why am I not allowed to give the only thing I have to give?"

"Your father is not living?" asked the tall officer.

"No, sir," replied Pierre. "He died soon after I was born."

"And you have no brothers, no sisters?"

"No, sir. There are just my mother and myself."

"Have you thought how hard it would be for your mother, if you were taken into the army now?"

"But she would be glad, sir. She feels as I do. It was only yesterday, the last time I was with her, that she said to me. 'Pierre, make haste to grow into a man. Thy country needs men, not boys, to-day.' So you see, sir, that she would be glad."

Pierre's comrade in the hut, awakened by the voices, came to the door. He was younger than Pierre, and still sleepy, but instantly, at sight of the officers, he straightened up and saluted. These boys were, at least in their own estimation, soldiers already. To him also the tall officer spoke for a little. Then, as they were leaving, he turned back to Pierre.

"Remember, my boy," he said, "that you are giving now what Belgium now asks of you. If you always do that, you will have done

your full duty. And it will be hard enough to do that sometimes. When such times come, remember that it was I who said this to you, and especially tell your mother to remember that I know well how hard the way of duty sometimes is. For"—he paused, and the smile in his eyes was kinder than ever—"I think I should tell you who I am. I am the King."

The King! Pierre, standing at salute, hardly knew whether he was waking or sleeping. His King had been there talking to him; and he answering and asking questions! And the King had not seemed displeased.

In a long letter to his mother, written that evening, he told her all about it, for he could not wait till he should see her at his next visit to the town. "And, mother," the letter said, "he bade me remember that to give what our country asks of us, whether it is much or little, is always our best service. It will not always be easy either, he said. And, mother, he told me to be sure to tell you—the King did—to remember that he knows it is not always easy. I don't know why he wanted me to tell that to you, but that was what he said; 'Be sure to tell your mother that I know.' Those were his very words."

It was almost exactly two years later, in June of 1917, that Pierre saw the King again.

He had passed his eighteenth birthday by that time, and the day had come at last when he was called to the colors, the day for which he had waited so impatiently. Even the well-remembered words of the King had not kept him from being impatient.

He and forty or fifty other boys, new recruits like himself, had just been called to quarters one evening at the training camp where they were being fitted for active warfare, when a sharp word of command brought them to attention, and from the door the word passed from man to man in an excited undertone, "The King."

There he was, entering the door at the far end of the barracks, that same tall officer to whom Pierre had talked with such astonishing freedom two years before, but manifestly older, far more than two years older, in spite of the record of the calendar.

The King passed down the line of recruits, saying a kindly and encouraging word to each. Pierre, as it happened, was the last.

"Where have I seen you before?" the King asked. Pierre told him; and the King, recalling the circumstances of the former meeting, smiled, and said, "The time of waiting was necessary to fit you for the hard duties of a soldier: you see it for yourself now, do you not?"

"Yes, sire," said Pierre.

"And now," said the King solemnly, "the time has come for the greater service. Are you ready?"

"I thank God for it," said Pierre.

"And your mother?" asked the King.

"She envies me," answered Pierre. "She wishes that she were a man, so that she too might enlist. As it is, with all our possessions stripped from us, she has nothing to give."

"Nothing to give?" said the King in a tone of surprise.

"Really nothing, sire. Even her food and clothes she owes to the generosity of the kind French people who took us in."

"But, you foolish boy," said the King, with that kindly smile of his, and laying his hand on Pierre's shoulder, "do you really mean to tell me that you think she is giving nothing to Belgium? What would be the gift of all your possessions, if you had them back again, and what are the greatest benefactions in food and money that the kindness of the world has poured out upon our suffering nation, compared with the gift that she is giving?"

"The gift that she is giving?" repeated Pierre, bewildered.

"My boy," said the King, "is she not giving you—all that she has—to Belgium?"

A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT

It was well known to everyone in the Negro quarter of the city that Uncle Ebenezer was very religious. He would spend hours reading his Bible of an evening. Searching the Scriptures he himself called it, and with accuracy, for his chief interest was in the prophecies and promises therein contained, and he was forever hunting for them. The book of Daniel, in the Old Testament, and Revelation, in the New, were his favorite hunting grounds, and many were the hours that he spent poring over the obscure pages, and fitting meanings to them. He was much dissatisfied with the new preacher at the African Zion Evangelical Church, the Rev. Mr. Lotus Green, a recent graduate of Atlanta University. Uncle Ebenezer had weighed him in the balances and found him wanting. He had urged the young man to preach a sermon, or, if he preferred, a series of sermons on the Number of the Beast, in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. Mr. Green had said that he was sorry, but he did not feel sure enough about the meaning of that Number to preach even one sermon on it, to say nothing of several. Uncle Ebenezer had

told him that the meaning was perfectly clear to those who had studied the subject, himself, for instance; and had proceeded to tell Mr. Green what the meaning was. But the next Sunday, instead of the expected sermon on the Number of the Beast, the Rev. Lotus Green had delivered a discourse on the dangers of superstition; and although Uncle Ebenezer's conscience was entirely clear on that score, he could not help feeling that somehow the sermon was intended to be directed toward himself, and he was, accordingly, one of those who expressed the belief that Mr. Green's pastorate would be brief.

Uncle Ebenezer was also dissatisfied with the attitude of his wife Mandy toward his biblical investigations. She was even less appreciative of them than was the Rev. Lotus Green, and it was the more annoying in her, because Uncle Ebenezer had to grin and bear it, or bear it without grinning. The only remedy, as far as he could see, was to convince her of the error of her ways. He took every available opportunity to read to her his favorite passages: from Daniel, the account of the little horn that had eyes like a man and a mouth speaking great things, also the prophecy of the war between the king of the south and the king of the north, referring, of course, to the Civil

War; from Revelation, the chapters about the great red dragon, and the seven vials of wrath, and the fall of Babylon. Mandy would never sit still to listen to him, however, but would continue to bustle about the kitchen, so that he could not be sure whether she paid attention to his reading or not. She certainly seemed to be paying much more attention to the bread she was kneading, or the dishes she was washing, or the soup she was making for poor sick Eliza, who lived around the corner on the next street. He made the experiment of arguing with her about the importance of these great biblical prophecies and promises, and in order to make his words more emphatic he followed her about the kitchen, getting more or less in her way, until she turned on him with, "Go 'long, niggah; kent yo' see ah's busy?" He desisted for the time, mourning her low spiritual state.

Several evenings later he thought he saw another and better opportunity. Mandy was sewing, and therefore was necessarily stationed in one place. She had announced that 'Liza's little girl needed a new dress, and as 'Liza's health was no better—worse if anything—some other folks had got to 'tend to it, and she guessed she was the one. When Uncle Ebenezer saw her settled down to this task, the cutting

and basting finished, the sewing begun, he drew up his chair beside her. She looked at him suspiciously, but went on with her sewing. As soon, however, as he said, "Mandy, ah's got here a most obscurious verse ah'd jes lak to 'lucinate fo' yo'," she laid down her work in her lap, and, with a decided gesture of her head toward the door, said, "Yo' go 'bout yo' own business, Ebenezer; and lebe me 'lone in peace."

Couldn't she listen and sew at the same time? he asked in an injured tone.

No, she couldn't and she wouldn't. It made the stitches go crooked, she said, to hear him talking "all dat high an' mighty foolishness."

Ebenezer, nettled by this direct reflection on his favorite pursuit, expressed his regret that she should display such dense ignorance, and his grief that a wife of his should be so indifferent to matters of religion.

"Ma religion's good 'nough fo' me," replied Mandy, "an' it ud be a pow'ful blessin' ef some folks ah know done got dere religion f'm de same place whar ah gets mine."

And where was that? Uncle Ebenezer would like to know. For a moment he wondered whether she had been guilty of secretly attending some other church besides the one in which he was a black marble pillar.

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"F'm de gospel," answered Mandy; and added, seeing that Ebenezer had not yet taken in her full meaning, "'Stead ob all dem Rebellations an' Lucinations."

This was too much for Uncle Ebenezer. He took his hat, and went next door to see his crony, Josiah Johnson. Josiah was a good listener, therefore a great comfort to Uncle Ebenezer, especially when Ebenezer felt that he was not appreciated at home. And though Josiah said little, the few remarks he did make were often quite to the point, not destructive and disconcerting like Mandy's.

Josiah listened with an air of sympathy to Uncle Ebenezer's complaints regarding his wife's lack of religion, evidenced by her disregard for the Scriptures, this in turn shown by her scorn for the promises and prophecies contained in them. When her remark about the gospel was quoted, and her annoying advice to Ebenezer to draw his religion from that source, Josiah, after reflecting for a moment, asked whether there were no promises and prophecies in the gospel. Ebenezer answered that, of course, there were, though, in fact, his certainty was due more to the need of an immediate answer to Josiah's question than to knowledge. Again Josiah reflected, pulling at his pipe. Then he made a practical suggestion:

let Ebenezer arm himself with some of those promises and prophecies from the gospel; to those Mandy would be forced to give respectful attention.

Of course she would. Uncle Ebenezer was much impressed by his friend's sagacity. "Dat's jus' w'at ah'll do," he declared, enthusiastically—and then remembered that the first step in putting the plan into execution consisted in producing from the gospel the passage by which Mandy was to be brought to terms: Ebenezer was not perfectly sure that he could lay his hand on one. But Josiah had already gone to get the Bible, and when he had found it, and placed it in Ebenezer's hand, Ebenezer, confronted by the alternative of either producing the passage or acknowledging himself as ignorant of the gospel as Mandy's criticism had implied, began to turn over the pages.

He was a long time at it, but the same qualities in Josiah which made him a good listener made him a good waiter also. The calmness with which he smoked his pipe expressed perfect confidence in his friend's ultimate success, however long the process by which it was achieved. All the same, Uncle Ebenezer became a little worried for fear he should have to confess defeat. One thing was

certain: the promises and prophecies in the gospel, assuming that they were there, were by no means as close-packed as in the books of the Bible to which he more commonly devoted his attention. The search seemed a little like hunting for a needle in a haystack, and as applied to literature that was an undertaking in which Uncle Ebenezer was at somewhat of a disadvantage. As he grew more nervous and fearful of failure, he found it more and more difficult to decide whether a given verse did contain a promise or a prophecy or not. He mopped his forehead, as though he had been engaged in violent exercise. He was finally on the point of laying down the book, and suggesting that to-morrow would be time enough, when he came on a verse that seemed to answer the conditions. Familiar enough too: it was a wonder he hadn't thought of it at once, without the bother of all that search.

“‘Pears like dis am de one ah’s lookin’ fo’,” he said, deliberately; and Josiah went on smoking, merely turning his eyes in his friend’s direction, conveying the impression that even a much longer search would have seemed but natural. Ebenezer’s self-confidence returned in full force.

The verse which he had found was that which says, “Where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." There you had a promise and a prophecy as plain as any one could ask, and right out of the middle of the gospel, if Mandy wanted to know. What did it mean? Yes, he was coming to that. It wasn't a verse that everybody would understand right off first clip. If Josiah would give close attention, he would explain it to him. In the first place, it was a promise and a prophecy. In the second place, it was a promise and a prophecy spoken by the Lord. In the third place, it was a promise and a prophecy of what would happen when two or three were gathered together in the Lord's name. And, finally, the thing that would then happen was that the Lord would come right down in the midst of them.

"Suddenly?" asked Josiah, a good deal impressed.

"Suddenly," replied Ebenezer, again forced to a quick decision.

And would it really happen? Josiah asked. He had taken his pipe from his lips, and sat open-mouthed.

Ebenezer looked at him with surprise and disgust. Of course it would really happen: hadn't it just been read out of the Bible?

But did Ebenezer mean to say that it would happen right now to them, if they tried it out?

Ebenezer had *not* meant to say that, but it was too late to back water. Besides, he reflected, of course it would happen, now or any other time, to them or to anybody. So he answered, "Yes"; though with a little less assurance than before: and added that, of course, to make it happen, you must do exactly what the prophecy said.

Josiah was for trying it out then and there, and asked Ebenezer to read again from the prophecy just what they were to do. "Where two or three are gathered together." Yes, it was true, there were only two of them, as Josiah said, but Ebenezer pointed out that the prophecy said two *or* three, so it was plain that two would do, though very likely three would be better: and they two were gathered together, so that was all right. "In his name." That was more difficult, Ebenezer admitted. Just how that might be carried out he was not prepared to say at the moment: he needed a little time to "inflect" upon that, he said. One thing was plain, however: they had not gathered together in the Lord's name on that occasion, and must therefore defer the actual proof of the prophecy to a later date. But the first time that either of them could offer a house free from feminine supervision, the great experiment should be made, and meantime

Ebenezer would decide in detail upon the ways and means.

The very next evening after supper Josiah heard a familiar whistle from next door, and, hurrying over, found that the coast was clear. Mandy had even left to Ebenezer the task of washing up the supper dishes in her eagerness to leave, for 'Liza had had a turn for the worse, and Mandy's help was needed. The dishes had been disposed of with all possible haste, for the more Ebenezer had "inflected" upon the testing of the prophecy the more excited he had become. He had read the words over and repeated them to himself a hundred times. They were now as clear as daylight to him. All that remained was to do exactly as the words of the prophecy said, and wait till the Lord appeared in the midst—then what would Mandy say?

He met Josiah at the door, but at first did not admit him, speaking to him through a narrow crack. "Josiah Johnson," he said in a tone of solemnity, "does yo' reconnize dat us two pussons is about to gather together?"

Yes, Josiah was perfectly clear on that point.

"Moreover an' furthermore," Ebenezer continued, "dat we is about to gather together in de name o' de Lohd?"

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Josiah agreed to that also.

But Ebenezer felt that here it was desirable to be very explicit. He therefore required Josiah, before he was allowed to enter the door, to state in measured tones, "I is about to gather together in de name o' de Lohd." Ebenezer himself then made the same formal statement, "I is about to gather together in de name o' de Lohd," after which he opened the door wide enough for Josiah to enter.

They sat down side by side in front of the stove and Ebenezer laid the open Bible upon his knee. The main difficulty, he explained, was to keep on doing all that the prophecy called for, until it was time for the Lord to appear. It was easy enough to begin right; they had done that. But to keep it up was another matter, especially the part about the Lord's name. "Put yo' whole min' on dat, Josiah," he said, "an' keep a-saying to yo'self over an' over, 'I'se gathered together in de Lohd's name, I'se gathered together in de Lohd's name.' Keep tight hold onto dat."

They began the experiment. For what seemed to them both a long time they sat in silence, but nothing happened.

Josiah began to grow nervous (his pipe had been denied him, as not appropriate to the matter in hand), and at length he broke in

with a question as to how long it would be before the prophecy might be expected to work. But Ebenezer pounced upon him with the accusation that his mind was plainly wandering from the essential matter. Josiah had to confess shamefacedly that this was indeed the case, and was warned that to be gathered together was of no use at all unless he was consciously and continuously gathered together in the Lord's name. Josiah was repentant, and promised to do better.

"Put yo' whole min' on it, Josiah," said his friend, at the same time gravely shaking his head, as though fearing that the strain might prove too great for Josiah's mental equipment.

Again they sat in silence.

Not five minutes had passed this time when steps were heard outside, and Mandy entered. She threw down the shawl which had covered her head and shoulders and went straight to the kitchen cupboard, where she appeared to be selecting several articles.

"Ef dat ain't jes' lak a woman," grumbled Ebenezer to Josiah, "comin' back jes' when she ain't wanted."

"Wat's dat you's makin' growls about?" asked Mandy in a tone that matched the vigorous movements of her hands.

"'Bout a mighty interestin' speriment what

you done gone spoiled, Mandy, comin' in sudin an' unexpected like you has."

"Humph!" said Mandy. "Speriment!"

"P'r'aps you is ignorant, Mandy, ob de fac' dat ef two or three"—and he explained the test of prophecy in which they were engaged, dwelling with what was intended to be deep irony on the prophecy's gospel origin. To none of this did Mandy deign to pay any attention, and Ebenezer, unwilling to concede the effectiveness of her silence, prolonged his explanation. He pointed out, as he had to Josiah, that the prophecy said two *or* three, and that therefore two would do, though three would be better. There he stopped, struck by a sudden idea. Mandy would make a third: perhaps her coming in was not so unfortunate, after all, if only she would fulfill the necessary conditions—there was the difficulty. Would she? "Mandy," he said, carried away by this new hope of hastening the success of the great experiment, "is you here in de name o' de Lohd?"

Mandy turned on him, her hands full of the articles she had been collecting from the cupboard. "Dat's jes' what I is," she declared, "an' ten times mo'n you two lazy niggahs is. Dat pore chil' 'Liza's lak to die 'fore mornin' light, an' nobody 'ceptin' me to do nothin' fo'

'er, an' nothin' in dat house to do nothin' with. Dat's wat *I's* here for, ef yo' wants to know; an' now yo' two good-fer-nothin' niggahs git away f'm de front ob dat stove—quick!"

Crestfallen, the two experimenters moved away, and remained in oppressed silence, till Mandy had heated over the fire the mixture which she had prepared, and, without giving them the notice of another word or glance, again took her departure.

Ebenezer, though his enthusiasm had been a good deal dampened by the interruption, could not afford to let it be supposed that he was cowed by his wife; so with an appropriate remark about the general uselessness of the female sex, he summoned Josiah to a renewal of the attempt, assuring him that this time success was certain to come quickly, if only Josiah would "put his whole min' on it."

But instead of the promised success came another interruption, and so soon that this time Josiah's mind had not yet shown any marked symptoms of wandering. It was Mandy again; and without waiting for any word from them, she opened fire upon them, before she was fairly inside the door.

"Now, don' you tell me nothin' 'bout your twos an' threes," she said, "but put on yo' hats—yes, you too, Josiah—an' come right 'roun' to

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'Liza's along o' me. Dat's where de need am o' gatherin' yer two or three together. De districk nu'se am jes' been an' gone, an' de orders am red hot cloths on 'Liza's chest every fifteen minutes f'm now ter mornin', ef 'Liza ain't gone 'fore de daylight 'rives. Dat shuah ain't no job for one pusson, so git a move on, an' come along."

Ebenezer grumbled: Josiah suggested that his wife could do it better than he could. Mandy stood surveying them, the picture of scorn, her hands on her hips. Then, ignoring Josiah, and addressing herself to her own personal property—"Ebenezer Jones," she said, "don' let me heah no mo' words f'm yo', 'cept de answer to dis yere one question, Is yo' a Christian, or ain't yo' a Christian?"

She waited ominously for his reply, and grudgingly he admitted that he was.

"Well, den, in de name o' Christ come an' help me sabe der life o' dat pore dyin' woman 'Liza." And she literally drove the two scared men before her through the door.

All that night, at fifteen-minute intervals, Ebenezer and Josiah prepared and applied the hot cloths, under Mandy's strenuous directions. At first Ebenezer worked mechanically and in a spirit of evident rebellion, but by degrees he became interested in spite of himself.

The sick woman, who at their arrival seemed to be beyond the hope of human remedies, showed some signs of responding to the treatment in which he was playing a necessary though minor part. He found himself watching for any improvement in her breathing, noting the lengthening intervals between the attacks of coughing, following the hands of the clock as it ticked away another period of fifteen minutes, and brought around the need of more hot cloths. Perhaps 'Liza could be brought out of it after all. By midnight his interest had increased to the pitch of excitement. Mandy's manner toward him had visibly softened, but he did not even notice this: his eyes were on 'Liza and on the progress of the battle between life and death of which she was the center.

At a little after two o'clock in the morning Uncle Ebenezer began to pray. But he watched the clock no less closely, and the cloths were as hot and appeared as promptly as before. He prayed aloud for the most part, and in ejaculations according to his custom, with many repetitions; but as his eagerness and his hope increased, the sentences came with greater and greater frequency, till his prayer was all but continuous. Several times Mandy responded, under her breath, with an "A—men," or

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“Yes, Lohd; oh, yes, Lohd.” It was a long time since she had followed thus wholeheartedly in the train of Ebenezer’s devotions, as he himself would have been the first to recognize; but now he did not even notice it.

At eight o’clock came the district nurse. She had expected to find that her patient was dead, and the surprise with which she said, “Why, she’s better,” as she glanced with a look of something like inquiry at the little circle of three, Mandy on the opposite side of the bed, the two men at the foot, was a sort of unconscious tribute to their night’s labors. But her listeners heeded only the fact which she had expressed.

“Bress de Lohd; bress de Lohd,” exclaimed Uncle Ebenezer.

And at the time the nurse smiled inwardly, saying to herself, “These dear old pious darkeys: aren’t they funny?” But later, when she had understood that they were only neighbors of the sick woman, and had responded to no other call than that of need—“After all,” she reflected, “the old man was on the right track when he blessed his Lord, for I guess it was something very like the real spirit of Christ that fought all that night for ’Liza’s life, and won.”

But it was the silent Josiah who brought to

Uncle Ebenezer the full meaning of that night's experience. In the weeks that followed it they often spoke of 'Liza's recovery and of their own part in it, but they had made no mention of the attempted test of prophecy which had preceded it. Ebenezer was secretly puzzled and sensitive on the subject, and Josiah, instinctively aware of this, was not likely to bring it forward without some special provocation. It was he, however, who did finally speak of it.

"Ebenezer," he said, one evening, taking his pipe from his mouth, "ah's been a-thinkin' an' a-thinkin' 'bout dat prophecy of two or three gathered together in de Lohd's name and de Lohd comin' in de midst, an' been a-wond'rin' why dat proph'cy didn' happen spite of all our gatherin' and puttin' our whol' min's on it; an' las' Sabbath-day I done speak 'bout it to de parson, an' Parson Green, he ast me mo'n two dozen questions 'bout de speriment an' 'bout quittin' it to go to 'Liza's, an' what yo' s'pose he says then?"

"I ain' got much use fer what dat young man says," Ebenezer answered. "De views ob de Rev. Lotus Green am such dat ah find ma-self fo'ced to disagree."

"Wait till I's tole you what he said," interposed Josiah with more energy than he usually

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displayed. "Arter he done ast all dem questions, fust he don' say nothin', but then he says, slow an' sort o' solemn, 'Mr. Johnson,' he says, 'dat prophecy *did* happen, 'cause it was de Lohd's bein' in de midst what saved 'Liza. De Lohd was dar, on'y you-all couldn't see he was dar.' An' shu 'nough, Ebenezer," Josiah continued, "de proph'cy don' say we's gwine to see de Lohd in de midst, but on'y he's gwine to be dar."

Uncle Ebenezer was silent for several minutes. Then he said, "Ah reckon ah's maybe misjudged de parson in some re-marks ah's sometimes giv' spression to." And after a further pause he added, "De promises an' de prophecies o' Scripture is shu' an' sartain, but it takes a heap o' learnin' an' a heap o' livin' to understan' jes' what dey means."

GOBLINS AND FAIRIES

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

GOBLINS AND FAIRIES

"ARE you going to be at home this afternoon? I want your advice about something." Mrs. Tryon was speaking over the telephone to her friend Susan Telfair.

Yes, Mrs. Telfair would be at home. What had happened?

"Oh, nothing very serious," Mrs. Tryon answered; "only something that is bothering me. I'll tell you, when I see you."

As they sat down together later in the day, "What is it that you want my advice about, Carrie?" asked Mrs. Telfair.

"I've been so upset"—and Mrs. Tryon's serious face showed that her concern was genuine—"Little Joe is getting into the most dreadful way of lying to me. That's a thing I simply can't stand, of course."

"What sort of lies?" asked her friend.

"Well, for instance. Last evening, when I was putting him to bed, he said to me that Grandmother Tryon was very sick. I knew she wasn't, for I'd seen her in the afternoon. I should have thought it was just something he'd heard wrong or misunderstood somehow; but when I asked him what made him think

she was sick, he said she had told him so herself, and that he had been to her house that afternoon, and had seen her in bed with a nightcap on like the wolf in Little Red Riding-Hood. Of course there wasn't a word of truth in it, but he insisted it was all so. Nothing I could say would make him weaken in his story."

"Um," said Mrs. Telfair, smiling a little. "Let me see. How old is Joe?"

"He'll be five next month," his mother answered.

"He's not really lying, Carrie," said Mrs. Telfair. "My children were like that too, all except Dora, who was the most absolutely matter-of-fact little piece I ever knew. But the others were all full of imaginations, that were just as real to them as real events and real people. Philip had an invisible playmate, called Soldier Jim, that he clung to for over a year; and Margaret, when she was little, had a perfect series of odd fancies. Joe is going through the same thing without a doubt. It's just a vivid imagination."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Tryon. "That wouldn't be so bad. But he is so circumstantial about it. Why, he said that his grandmother fed him on ice cream and crackers, and that the ice cream was on a blue plate, and the

crackers were animal crackers, only there wasn't any elephant. Do you really think he is just imagining all that, and not meaning it at all for deception?"

"I shouldn't try to analyze his motives too closely," Mrs. Telfair answered. "It doesn't give very satisfactory results somehow with a child of five. But that it's all just childish imagination, I've not the least doubt in the world."

"What am I to do about it, then?" asked Mrs. Tryon, relieved but still perplexed.

"I advise you to enter into it, and try to direct it in a quiet way," Mrs. Telfair counseled. "It can be directed and turned to good use, I've found; but you won't be able to accomplish much unless you do enter into it a bit yourself."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Mrs. Tryon, but with a sigh. (She herself was not naturally a very imaginative person, it would appear: Joe must have inherited that from his father.) Then, after a short pause, "Well," said she, "I'll do my best."

A good opportunity arose the very next day.

"Marna," said Joe to his mother, using his own special name for her, "what are goblins?"

"Where did you hear anything about goblins?" she asked him.

"Mary told me," he answered. "She said there were goblins in the cellar." Mary was the cook, and Mrs. Tryon, in her own mind, did not thank Mary for putting this new notion into Joe's head, quite well enough equipped already with notions of its own.

"What are they, Marna?" Joe persisted.

Mrs. Tryon thought of her friend's advice about entering into Joe's imaginary life, so she restrained her impulse to give an evasive answer, and explained to Joe that goblins are queer little creatures, like very little men, only they are oddly shaped; and that they are not pretty, like fairies, but very ugly to look at, and usually naughty too. "They're only make-believe, you know, Joe," she could not help saying at the end.

"Who make-believes them?" Joe asked.

"Anyone who wants to, I suppose," his mother answered.

"Then I think I will," Joe announced.

And that was the way it all started, though it was several days before Mrs. Tryon knew what she was in for. Joe's imaginations did not always mature in a moment.

One afternoon, while Joe was playing out in the yard, Mrs. Tryon happened to go into the nursery. She found all Joe's toys strewn about the floor in grand confusion, a state of things

which was contrary to all regulations. Accordingly, she went to the window, put her head out, and called, "Joe! Did you know you had forgotten to put away your toys before you went out to play? It's even more hig-gledy-piggledy than it was yesterday, and you know what I said then."

"It isn't my fault," answered Joe.

"Whose fault is it?"

"It's Hig-gledy-piggledy's."

"Hig-gledy-piggledy's?" queried his mother.

"What do you mean by that, Joe?" (Even then she did not see what was coming.) "Who is Hig-gledy-piggledy?"

"He must be a goblin, I guess," said Joe; "and he won't let me put my toys away. When I think I will, he won't let me; and so I have to leave them all in a mess."

Here was a problem for Mrs. Tryon. She told Joe to come up to the nursery, and while he was coming, she thought hard what to do. Her instinct prompted her to say, "Nonsense! You're just trying to get 'round me with your goblin story," but that wouldn't be entering into his imagination and turning it to good use. So she tried another tack.

"Where do you make out that Hig-gledy-piggledy hides himself?" she asked, when Joe reached the nursery.

Joe gave one sweeping glance about the room, and then answered, "In the window-box," that being the object on which his eye had lighted.

Mrs. Tryon, feeling foolish, but conscientiously trying to do her duty, looked into the window-box, and suggested that as Higgledy-piggledy evidently wasn't there now, he must be out; so this was a good time to plot how to get the best of him. It would require very quick and quiet work; but by good management they could perhaps get all those toys put away, before Higgledy-piggledy found out what they were at. And they did.

For several days Joe took great satisfaction in outwitting Higgledy-piggledy, and great credit to himself for doing so. But there then appeared a brand-new member of the goblin tribe. His name was Dawdle.

Joe was notoriously slow in dressing and undressing. He was expected to dress and undress himself, and it was hoped that in time he would learn to be quick about it; but at present it "took him forever," as his mother said.

One evening he seemed to Mrs. Tryon to be especially slow, because she was expecting company to dinner and was in a hurry to get downstairs. "Now don't dawdle, Joe," she

said. "Dawdling" in that family was the name for the very slowest kind of slowness. Her urging did not seem to have much effect upon Joe's speed; it only seemed to make him think about something, and it is well known that when people are thinking about something they are apt to be even slower than usual. The results of his thinking came out next morning, when he was again urged to speed, in putting on his shoes and stockings. He wanted to hurry, he said, but Dawdle wouldn't let him. Dawdle just held his hands. And besides, Dawdle had gone and hidden one of Joe's stockings somewhere: so how *could* Joe put it on?

Another task for Mrs. Tryon: the goblin Dawdle must now be gotten under control, a campaign against him organized. And by the time Dawdle was suppressed, Higgledy-piggledy was on the rampage again. Poor Mrs. Tryon!

Nor was this the worst. A few weeks later there appeared in the Tryon house—according to Joe's report—a new goblin nuisance, not just one goblin this time, but a whole family of goblins. Naturally, this new development was connected, as the others had been, with certain features of Joe's own behavior. Joe had at times a very horrid way of looking cross,

and pouting, and saying, "I won't," and sulking, and a few other unpleasant things; all of which together, when Joe had a bad attack of them, were known by Joe and his mother (and even by Joe's father, if he were at home) as "the grumps"—a terrible name for a terrible thing. To have the grumps, in that family, was to have the worst thing that a boy of five years old could possibly have.

Joe had the grumps one day, a rather bad case of them. They lasted most of the afternoon, but at bedtime he was feeling better and somewhat wish-I-hadn't. He undertook to excuse himself. His mother had taken him up into her lap, and had described to him in sad detail how he had looked, while the grumps were on, and what he had said, and what he had done—a very disagreeable picture.

"But, Marna," he said, "it wasn't just me that did those things, you know."

"No! Not goblins this time, Joe," said his mother rather sternly.

"Yes, Marna, really it was," he insisted. "It was a whole lot of them. There was Pout, and—and Sulk—and Won't, and there was—Slap. And the great big one was Grumps himself."

"Have I got to down this whole houseful of goblins?" thought poor Mrs. Tryon. But she

set bravely to work, as in the other cases. It was the hardest sort of task, for she never seemed to be able to drive them all away at once. If Joe acted at all grumpy, there was always at least one of those goblins to account for it. Slap had pushed his elbow. Or Pout had pinched him. Or Won't had actually gotten into his mouth, and made him say the forbidden word. Or Sulk had pulled his hair: was it any wonder he couldn't look pleasant? Or Grumps had sat on top of his head, like the elephant's keeper on the elephant's head in one of Joe's picture books, and had kicked his heels against Joe's forehead. Mrs. Tryon was in despair.

Feeling that she needed more advice, she went again to her friend, Mrs. Telfair. "Susan," she said, "Joe's imaginations are getting the better of me, in spite of all I can do." And then she told all that had been happening, the whole story of the goblins: about Higgledy-piggledy and Dawdle and Grumps and all the rest.

Mrs. Telfair thought about it, after she had laughed a little bit—"Because it *is* funny, you know," she said; and even Mrs. Tryon had to laugh a little. "Only it's no laughing matter, Susan," she declared, "when you have to live with it. So what shall I do?"

"I think that I see what the trouble is," said Mrs. Telfair. "It is only when those goblins are doing something to Joe, or when Joe is doing something to them that they are interesting. As long as they are making trouble, or when Joe is carrying on active warfare against them, they are good fun; but as soon as they are defeated and driven away, what fun are they? So, of course, Joe wants them to come back again as soon as possible. That's why they won't stay put. I'll tell you! You must set him to thinking about other goblins, who will make him do the things that you want him to do, and you must make him see that they can be just as active and do just as interesting things as the bad goblins can."

"But goblins are all bad," objected Mrs. Tryon. "At least that's the way we've understood it from the start, and it would be terribly upsetting to have good goblins all of a sudden."

"Then don't let them be goblins," said Mrs. Telfair. "And why should they be, in the name of all goodness," she added, "when there are fairies just waiting to be called on? Fairies, of course. Let's see. What shall we call the fairy who will get after that goblin Dawdle, and make him mind his p's and q's? We'll call him Gallop. That ought to do, don't you

think so? Gallop ought to be good fun too, and that's awfully important. I believe the fairy Gallop can supply Joe with satisfactory reasons for hustling with his shoes and stockings. Now, about a match for Higgledy-piggledy. Neat-and-tidy? No, that's too prosy-sounding. What are you apt to say to Joe, when you don't want him to leave the nursery in a mess?"

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Tryon doubtfully, "except perhaps that I want it to be left in apple-pie order."

"The very thing!" rejoined Mrs. Telfair. "Apple Pie—that's that fairy's name. As for the Grumps family, it will take some thinking to provide a whole fairy family to cope with them. Tickle might be one: you can't pout when you're being tickled. Jolly wouldn't be bad for another: he can take care of Sulk. As a match for Won't, what do you say to Watch-Me-Do-It? But about Grumps himself. There's a hard one."

They both thought for a moment. "I'll tell you," said Mrs. Tryon. "Every evening, if Joe has been pretty good—not too slow, not too untidy, and especially if there have been no grumps that day, he gets a treat. It's just a plain cookie, you know, but he loves it. Why doesn't that give us a good name for the

head of our anti-Grumps family? Treat, the fairy Treat." And so it was decided.

"Joe," exclaimed Mrs. Tryon, as she entered the nursery, after getting home from Mrs. Telfair's, "what *do* you suppose I saw on the street just now? I was never so astonished in my life."

"What?" asked Joe.

"That goblin Dawdle, running," answered Mrs. Tryon. "Yes, running just as fast as his legs would carry him. Think of Dawdle running! And what do you suppose was the reason?"

"What was it? Tell me."

"Gallop was chasing him."

"Gallop? Who's Gallop?"

"Don't you know about Gallop? Why, Gallop the fairy, of course."

Joe's eyes were big with interest. Naturally, he had to hear all about Gallop the fairy; and within a few days that mother of his (see how shrewd she was getting to be) had in the same sly way made him aware of the other fairies, and curious to know about them also.

They were very busy fairies, always up to something. No longer did life grow dull for Joe whenever the goblins had been banished or put to sleep. For then Gallop took the field,

and he could keep things humming if anybody could. Or if for a moment Gallop seemed to weary, there was Apple Pie; and Apple Pie had no end of plans and schemes for new ways of having a good time. He could get more real fun out of Joe's toys in one afternoon than Higgedy-piggledy had ever gotten out of them in a whole week. As for Tickle and Jolly and Watch-Me-Do-It, life was always worth living when they were around. And they certainly did make it hot for those goblins: the way they would go for them, if one of them so much as put his nose inside the nursery door, was a caution. Then there was Treat, not so boisterous as the others, but a mighty good fellow for all that—Treat, who was always bound that Joe should not lose the chance of a cookie at the end of the day; Treat, who always knew which of two paths was surer to have a fine, round cookie, brown and crisp, at the further end. He was a great favorite of Joe's.

"Susan," said Mrs. Tryon to her friend one day, reporting on all of this, "you saved my life with those fairies. A few more days without them, and the goblins would have gotten me, I know. How were you so clever as to think of it, and to know that it would work so well?"

“Don’t give me too much credit,” said Mrs. Telfair. “It’s an old, old scheme, in principle at least. I don’t know just how old, but it goes back to the time of the New Testament anyway. Wasn’t it Saint Paul who said, ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good?’”

THE WAITER

**“When he saw him, he had compassion on him,
and went to him, and bound up his wounds.”**

THE WAITER

LIKE all large cities, New York presents many ironical contrasts. That between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, for the mile or so of their course between Madison Square and Central Park, is one of them. Only one block apart, with names that to the uninstructed suggest a characterless similarity, and yet in point of fact what a world of difference between them, as to the traffic in the street (or over it), as to the clothes of the people on the sidewalks, as to the prices of the articles displayed in the shop windows! To go from Fifth Avenue to Sixth is to go in four minutes from the realm of privilege to the region of mediocrity.

In no detail is this contrast more evident than in the character of the restaurants which the two avenues present to a hungry population. With a few exceptions they are eloquent of their respective neighborhoods, and between the two types, in spite of their physical nearness, there is a great gulf fixed. The most casual observer can see that they belong to different strata of society.

It is easy, therefore, to understand the elation of John Harding, when, after being for a

year a waiter in a Sixth Avenue eating-house (though one of the best of its kind, to be sure), he had the luck to get a position in a well-known Fifth Avenue establishment. The wages were not so very much larger, but the tips were, enormously, for the place was in the neighborhood of exclusive clubs and fashionable bachelor apartments, and was frequented by men of large incomes who spent liberally for their pleasures and comforts. When they were pleased with the waiter's service, they tipped royally; and even if they were not pleased, they gave considerable as a matter of course.

Aside from the financial aspect of it, Harding did not like his new position as well as the old one. It was much more exacting, and was complicated by such a multitude of minor requirements in the way of manner and speech that he must constantly be on his guard lest he transgress some point of the prescribed behavior. Nor did he like his new patrons as well as the humbler ones whom he had been serving for the year past. He amused himself by laughing at them secretly, scorning them a good deal for their fopperies and their egotism. He made nicknames for a number of them, who were frequent customers, designating them by initials, by which he referred to them, when he wrote about their latest

exhibitions of absurdity, to his mother in the little Virginia town where he had been brought up. There was the T. M., meaning the Talking Machine, whose incessant chatter had been remarked by others also; for Harding often had opportunity to hear the comments upon him, after he was out of hearing, by those who had been politely submitting to his overabundant conversation. "Was there ever such a bore?" said one; and another, "I declare, I'll dine somewhere else, if he invites himself to sit with me again." There was also G. O. P., which did not refer to the gentleman's politics, but was intended to signify Gruff Old Party, an individual who seemed to have a grudge against the universe and each constituent element of it (especially waiters), but who, if he scolded or perchance cursed the waiter whose service did not satisfy him, paid for the privilege handsomely in tips. Then there were the F. F. and the G. S. The F. F. was the Funny Fellow, a perpetual joker, forever laughing at his own jokes; and the G. S. was the Great Swell, named from his marked attention to details of dress, and his rather affected manners and mode of speech. If anyone had prophesied that this last-named one, the G. S., was to have an important personal relation to John Harding, the waiter who

brought his orders and took away the soiled plates, and who at the outset saw only the ridiculous side of him; still more, if anyone had told Harding that within a few months he would come to think of the Great Swell as one of the best men that walked the earth, he would have classed it with one of the F. F.'s foolish jokes.

Mention has been made of Harding's letters to his mother, describing all these people, and giving his humorous observations upon them. Those letters were Harding's chief opportunity for telling what he saw and thought, for he was a man who did not make friends, being timid and retiring by nature, given to solitude and the company of his own thoughts. At one time he spent nearly two years without even the resource of the letters to his mother and her replies. That was not long after he first came to New York from his home in the South. He had come with high hopes, and no idea of failing in the modest degree of achievement which he had proposed to himself. His limited experience as clerk in a store at home had suggested the same line of work for his venture in the city, but he had not succeeded in finding the job he had so confidently expected. He had struck a hard year for his attempt, and his Southern nature, slow and

unused to Northern hustle, had proved a handicap at a time when there seemed to be four men waiting for each job that offered. Instead of attaining success, accordingly, he had fallen into difficulties. The small sum of money with which he had started dwindled away; some of the clothes which he had brought with him to the city began to look shabby; he moved to a poorer and again to a still poorer lodging-place, as a necessary measure of economy; and he took perforce work to which he was unaccustomed, and for which he was physically unfitted, odd jobs which lasted for a few days or weeks, as the case might be, and kept him from actual starvation. As it was, he barely managed to get along, and his sensitiveness drove him more and more into himself: he was constantly dreading that someone who knew him, especially someone from home, would see him, and discover to what straits John Harding had come.

There was, of course, no possibility, under those conditions, of sending money to his mother, as he had confidently expected to do; yet for a while he kept on writing to her, carefully concealing the true state of his affairs. Then—perhaps through cowardice—he stopped writing. His idea was that he was a failure, a disgrace to her. It was best for him to drop

out of sight. If the tide ever turned, and he succeeded in making good after all, then he could appear again. So, more alone than ever, after this tie with home had been cut, he struggled along.

After a period of discouragement he at length made a little progress. Changing from one sort of work to another, as circumstances rather than choice dictated, he happened on a job as "omnibus" or "bus-boy" in a Sixth Avenue restaurant. As he went his rounds among the tables, it occurred to him after a while that a waiter's position might be within his reach. He set himself to study the waiter's duties, with the result that in six months' time he had succeeded in his new ambition. Having made that start, he aspired still higher as he became more experienced and proficient at the waiter's trade; and at length, as has already been related, his good nature and pleasant appearance helping him, he had gotten the more profitable position in the restaurant on Fifth Avenue.

Then he wrote to his mother—and experienced a miserable siege of remorse, when he received the reply from her, and realized what depths of anxiety and sorrow his silence had caused her. Her letter contained no rebuke, but the almost incoherent expression of joy at

hearing from him again, and the blots where tears had evidently fallen, told the story. (It was as well that he could not see her with his own eyes, how she had aged and broken in the period of not quite two years during which no word had come from him.) He learned, as her letters continued, that she was in less vigorous health than of old; and when he sent her a substantial sum from his increased earnings—proof to her that he was indeed doing well, as he had told her—he learned for the first time how her financial resources had dwindled, and how much she was in need of her son's help. Not two months after this renewal of intercourse she fell seriously sick, and for many weeks he had no news from her except through brief reports written by one of her neighbors. His first impulse was to buy a ticket for Virginia and go to her, but, of course, he must rather keep on working, in order to pay the extra expense which this sickness would entail. So he contented himself with sending her every penny possible, buying no new clothes unless his proper appearance on his job demanded them, and returning to the cheap lodgings from which he had moved when prosperity began to smile upon him. He thanked God that he was able to do that much for her, now that a time of special need had arrived, and

he trembled at the thought of anything happening which might interfere with the weekly income on which so much depended. In his mind he was not only performing a present duty but making up in some measure for past failure and neglect.

Fancy his dismay, then, when he began to have a troublesome pain in his right leg, shooting up into his thigh. It was rheumatism, he feared. His grandfather and father had been martyrs to it, he remembered hearing. But he himself couldn't afford to be laid up with it. Not only had he no money for doctor's bills—enough of that down in Virginia; he had no time to be sick, for every day's pay was necessary. And to be laid up for a period, even a short one, might mean, besides the loss of that much pay, something far worse, the loss of his position.

As the trouble in his leg increased he was assailed by a new fear. Even if the pain did not force him to quit, even if he could still manage to keep about in spite of it, suppose he began to limp so badly that it should become noticeable. In a restaurant like the one he now worked in it would not do to have a lame waiter hobbling about: the patrons of the place would not be pleased to have a man in evident pain waiting on them. Like the music

which issued from the little gallery above the cashier's desk, the flowers, fresh every day, in the center of each table, the gilt of the decoration of the room and the red damask curtains and upholstery, so the human part of the equipment also must be cheerful. Waiters must not have cares and troubles and sicknesses; at least they must not show them.

So Harding made a heroic effort not to let his suffering show. If anyone seemed to look at him more intently than usual, he experienced a feeling almost like guilt. Did it mean that his secret was discovered? And sure enough, the G. S. did notice that something was the matter. There he sat in his accustomed place, his back to a marble pillar, faultlessly dressed as usual down to the smallest detail, like a man whose whole thought was concentrated on himself, and yet it was he who first saw what Harding was making such an effort to conceal.

Harding had brought him his bill, and stood by while he took his money from his pocket-book. As the G. S. laid the bills on the little tray, he looked at Harding over his eyeglasses (the eyeglasses which Harding, in writing his mother about the Great Swell, had described so graphically, on account of the absurdly broad, black ribbon to which they were at-

tached). Harding took the tray and money, and started for the cashier's desk, miserably conscious of being watched. But how can a man help limping, when his leg pains him as though little knives were piercing it at every step? When he returned with the change the G. S. was daintily dipping his fingers into the finger bowl, not watching; but as Harding laid the money before him he glanced up, and said in an unexpectedly human way, "You're in trouble."

Harding was too surprised to answer without stumbling. "Er—no, sir," said he, "that is, it's nothing, sir; nothing to speak of."

"Something the matter with your foot I'm afraid," said the G. S., ignoring Harding's denial.

"My leg, sir," answered Harding.

"Have you seen a doctor about it?"

"Not yet, sir." The G. S. had risen and Harding was helping him on with his coat.

"I would if I were you," said the G. S.

"Yes, sir," said Harding. Then after a slight pause, he added impulsively, "Thank you, sir." It was more than conventional gratitude, something quite different from the waiter's thank-you for a generous tip. And to think that the G. S. of all people had shown himself capable of human sympathy.

All the same it was an alarming circumstance that the pain and the lameness had proved to be noticeable. Harding was almost glad next day when the G. S. failed to appear, and the next day after that also. Sometimes he was absent for a week or more at a time—out of the city, Harding surmised.

Soon, however, there was no need of specially keen observation in order to see that Harding was walking lame. "What's the matter, Harding?" said the head waiter to him one night. "I see you've got a bad foot; what is it?"

"I must have twisted it, I guess," answered Harding.

"Well, hurry up and get over it. I can't have a man going around on half a leg like that."

Next day, though Harding declared it was better, the head waiter shook his head. "You know as well as I do that it's worse, if anything," he said.

Harding was given a day off, to see if that would cure him; and after twenty-four hours, during which he barely put his foot to the floor, giving his leg an absolute rest, it did seem a bit better—for an hour or two, then it pained as badly as ever. It was a busy season at the restaurant: no man's place could be held for him for any length of time. In short,

before the G. S. came back from his eight-day absence, Harding had been fired.

As he walked down the side street toward Sixth Avenue, he felt like a man who has heard the judge pronounce sentence upon him. He had his pay for the days on which he had worked during the past week. The first thing he did was to go to the substation of the post office, and send off all but a dollar of it to his mother. His usual remittance to her was overdue, and even now the amount was a little short. "And perhaps it's the last," he said to himself despairingly; "and what then?" He was, to be sure, a man who under even slight discouragement soon lost confidence in himself—he hadn't a very stiff backbone, as the saying is; but who could blame him for thinking now that things looked black?

Half an hour later, however, he was ashamed of his despair, for, applying at the eating-house where he had worked before his migration to Fifth Avenue, he found that they were needing a man, and was taken on at once.

"Hurt your leg?" asked the proprietor, but not as though he had discovered a fatal defect. They are less particular over on Sixth Avenue.

"Yes, a little," answered Harding. "Twisted it, I guess."

The tables to which he was assigned were

next to the window which looked out into the street, and when standing by, while his patrons were eating, he would lean against the wall, to rest his leg, occasionally glancing out through the window at the passers-by. His third night there, whom should he see coming toward him on the sidewalk, walking jauntily along, and no doubt on his way to dinner at his usual place, but the G. S. And as it happened the G. S. saw him, caught his eye, and nodded. That was surprising enough, but a much more astonishing thing happened next. The G. S., after he had passed, seemed to hesitate, stopped, turned back, came in, and took a seat at the empty table nearest to which Harding stood, one of those for which he was responsible. After nodding at Harding again, he began to study the bill of fare.

Harding felt perfectly certain that the G. S. would never for his own pleasure patronize a second-rate place of this sort. He knew how particular the G. S. was about his food and the way it was served, and that he had plenty of money to get it the way he liked it. The thought of setting before him such dishes as the Sixth Avenue place provided made Harding feel almost ashamed. He leaned toward him and said in a low voice, "I'm afraid you won't like the things they serve here, sir."

"Oh, I dare say I'll find something," the G. S. answered. But when the order was brought it was evident enough to Harding that the G. S. was only putting up a bluff at eating.

"He's going to get his real dinner at the usual place," said Harding to himself. "But what is he doing here, then? Is it possible that he has really come in here on my account?"

It didn't seem possible, and yet that was apparently the explanation; for after continuing awhile the pretense of eating, he began to talk to Harding. At first he merely asked brief questions, with intervals of silence between, beginning with inquiries about the painful leg. Gradually, however, something more like a conversation followed. Harding at first had been equally brief in his answers, obeying his natural instinct to be reticent about his own affairs, but little by little he grew more responsive. In fact, he was himself surprised to hear some of his own replies to the questions which the G. S. put to him, and he was even more surprised afterward when he recalled in full detail all that he had told, not only the circumstances of his leaving the other place, and all about the pain in his leg, but a good deal about his earlier troubles

and discouragements, at his first coming to the city, and queerest of all, about his mother and the little Virginia town she lived in. (But he didn't tell him that he had sent her all but a dollar of his earnings, when he had no prospect of making any more.)

As the G. S. paid his bill—it was a good-sized one, for he had ordered one of the more expensive items on the bill of fare—he came back to the subject of the leg. “Really, I'd look out for that, if I were you,” he said. “I don't want to scare you, but it might get to be a serious matter, if you don't take care of it.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Harding as on a previous occasion; and in truth the unmistakable sympathy and kindness seemed for the moment even more important to him than the problem of the leg itself.

“Do you mind telling me your name?” said the G. S., finally. And when Harding had told him, he said, “Perhaps you'd better know my name too,” and taking a visiting card out of a case that he carried in his pocket, he gave it to the astonished waiter. There was the neatly engraved “Mr. Herbert Wellington,” and down in the corner the name of the club where he lived. Harding recognized the name of it: he had passed its door daily, night and morning,

while working at the restaurant on Fifth Avenue.

As Mr. Wellington went out, the proprietor, who, of course, had noticed the unusual type of customer at Harding's table, was on hand to open the door for him, and to express his hope that everything had been satisfactory.

"Thank you, yes," answered Mr. Wellington. "I got exactly what I came for."

The proprietor dreamed at once of seeing his restaurant crowded with Fifth Avenue dandies, who ordered prodigious dinners, and paid without adding up the bill. The prolonged conversation between the G. S. and Harding had not escaped him. "What was he saying to you?" he asked Harding, walking over to him for that purpose, after the G. S. had departed.

"I used to wait on him in another place I worked at," Harding replied. Although it was not exactly an answer to the question that had been asked, it seemed to satisfy, and Harding fancied that his boss regarded him with a more favorable eye, perhaps as a sort of omen of improving business.

But, alas, however your employer may be willing to overlook the fact that you are getting lamer and lamer every day, there comes a time when your leg itself is likely to rebel. It

was so with poor Harding. One morning, waking in his hall bedroom in the East Side lodging-house where he was living, he found that he could barely turn over in bed from the pain in his hip, and when he did with a supreme effort struggle to his feet, he fell back onto the bed again with a groan. Standing was impossible, to say nothing of walking. The heavens had fallen at last!

What was he to do now? He lay there in the sheer horror of despair. : He had hardly any money—most of it, as usual, had gone to his mother. He had no friends; fool that he had been, thought he, to suppose that a man can live his life through without friends. Then his thoughts turned with a sort of sick longing toward the town where he did know folks, and where everybody knew him. He thought of some of the boys he had grown up with, and who were still living placid and uneventful comfortable lives down there in Virginia, as he might have done if he had only stayed there. He thought of his mother. “How I wish she were here!” flashed through his mind; but next moment, looking at it from another point of view, “No, thank God, she’s not here. She has troubles enough of her own without having to shoulder any of mine.” He thought of the Bible she had given him when he went away

from home. He didn't open it often; but once in a while, especially when in one of her letters she asked him if he remembered to read it, he did take it out and read a bit in it; and even without her prompting, when things were going ill with him, or when something made him homesick or set him wishing that he had someone near him to tell things to (as on that night when the G. S. had been so surprisingly kind in the Sixth Avenue eating-house)—under such conditions, he occasionally turned to the little morocco-bound volume of his own accord. He did that now. It lay on the bureau under the newspaper which he had laid down on it when he came home the night before. He reached for it, opened it, tried to read. But it did not hold his attention: his mind wandered off. Half mechanically he turned the pages.

As he did so he came on Mr. Wellington's card. He had placed it there the night he had brought it home. He took it in his hand and read it, the name and the address. Then he put the Bible down, and lay for a while turning the card in his hand, thinking of the G. S. He still thought of him by the old nickname, though no longer with any reference to the original meaning of the letters.

But this was getting him nowhere. He must get up. He must go to work. He made an-

other effort to get out of bed, but miseries of pain were the only result, and he was down on the bed again. If only there were someone to help him, tell him what to do, help him to do it. But there wasn't anybody. Unless . . . "Would I dare ask him?" he thought; and then, "Was this perhaps what the G. S. meant when he gave me his card? It would be like the G. S. to do that."

There on the card was the address where he could be reached, if Harding dared to send word to him. He would try it.

He heard the maid-of-all-work in the hall outside his door, on her way upstairs, and called to her. Did she know of any way to get a letter sent. She looked him over, her hands on her hips. "Sick?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered with a wry smile.

This laconic conversation seemed to decide her. Yes, she'd see that his letter was taken; would take it herself, if there were no other way; in the evening when her chores were done. He wrote the letter, and gave it to her: then waited. The day was long enough, when he had no expectation of relief, but the evening, when he did indulge in hope, seemed interminable. Hour passed after hour. "Probably he is out of town," he thought; and later, "I had no right to expect it."

At twenty minutes after eleven, the door-bell! He could hear it jangling on its wire in the hall of the top story of the house, one flight above him. Then after an interval, a second jangling of the bell. He began to be afraid that the person ringing the bell, whoever he might be, would go away discouraged. But at length the maid-of-all work could be heard coming downstairs, grumbling audibly as she came, at being dragged out of bed at this late hour. Another interval of silence. Then footsteps ascending, a knock at the door, and—sure enough, the G. S. How strange, yet comfortable, to see him sitting there on the one chair that the room possessed, his immaculate silk hat on the none-too-tidy bureau, his gloved left hand holding the right-hand glove and resting on his cane, his overcoat thrown back, showing his evening clothes beneath. All of this was but the outside casing, however, as Harding saw him now, and inside was a man, cheery and kind. Worth waiting for! The world was not such a bad place after all, seeing it had this sort of people in it. New York was not the big, empty, crowded wilderness that it had seemed fifteen minutes earlier and for the hours and hours before that.

“Leave it all to me. To the hospital you go

the first thing in the morning," said the G. S. "Can you stick it out till then?"

Harding could stick it out for any length of time now that the G. S. had appeared on the scene. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate this, Mr. Wellington," he said.

"Don't try to," was the answer.

Next morning came the ambulance, to the great delight of the children on the block, whose only disappointment was that the man it came for was merely sick, instead of being dead. Harding took with him three things, quite forgetting the articles which most people would describe as necessaries. The three things were the packet of his mother's letters, the Bible she had given him, and Mr. Wellington's card. He put them under his pillow when, after his ride uptown, he found himself in the bed in the ward; and in the days that followed, after the pain began to subside, he turned to them often for company, especially the letters, which he read through more than once, and the card, which he could hold hidden in his hand, looking at it from time to time as though the five words on it contained some message of peculiar and delightful interest, as indeed they did. The Bible did him good as a sort of token, a keepsake, chiefly, but he did read a few verses in it occasionally, "because

it would please her," making sure, however, that no one could see what book it was that he was reading from.

As a matter of fact, his stay in the hospital was not long. It was discovered that the whole trouble, which had seemed to be in his leg and thigh—sciatica had been his final guess—really proceeded from that troublesome arch of the foot, which causes sometimes such severe and disabling pain, but responds to proper treatment, as far as the acute symptoms are concerned. Complete and permanent cure was not so easy to promise, the doctor said, but they would try what a support in his shoe would do.

Harding was long enough in the hospital, however, to receive a visit there from Mr. Wellington. If there was anything of importance about himself that Harding had not already told him, he told it now. He even grew confidential enough to confess to him the nickname that he had called him by. But he refused to tell what the initials meant.

"No," he said; "please don't ask me that; but I wanted to tell you that I called you the G. S., because I've made a funny discovery about it. I've found out that you really are the G. S."

"How do you make that out?" asked Mr. Wellington, mildly interested.

"It's a fact," said Harding, "and where do you suppose I found out about it?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Where?"

"In the Bible. Isn't that funny? I have one here," he explained, running his hand under his pillow, and added apologetically, "It's one my mother gave me, when I came away from home."

"I understand," said the G. S., smiling.

"Well, I was looking at it yesterday," said Harding, "and I came on one of the places she marked in it, that story about the good Samaritan, where it says, 'When he came along and saw him, he was sorry for him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds'; and I said to myself, 'That's like him'—you, I meant. And then all of a sudden I realized that I'd been calling you that all along."

"Calling me what?" said Mr. Wellington, puzzled.

"The G. S.," said Harding, "the Good Samaritan. That's what the letters really mean, I guess."

"You're an odd chap," said the G. S., and laughed in an embarrassed way. But back of the laughter there was a genuine smile of pleasure, which answered the look of gratitude in Harding's eyes.

"Mr. Wellington," said Harding, "what was

it that made you treat me with all this kindness?"

"I'll tell you," he replied. "I too have an old mother who lives in a little country town—only New England is where my mother lives. And, like yours, she gave me a Bible when I left home; years ago it is now. I have it yet. I'm afraid I don't use it often; not often enough, I suppose. But I wouldn't part with it for any price that might be offered. It reminds me, just the sight of it, of things a man can't afford to forget, and especially of her. Not that I really need anything to keep her in my memory. I think of her and bless her many times every day I live. And that makes a difference."

HIS CONQUERORS

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

HIS CONQUERORS

THE last time the German Colonel passed Madame Brissot, sitting in front of her house, he did not stop nor speak, although it had grown to be an almost regular custom with him to do so during the many months while he had had his headquarters in the city in which she lived.

Madame Brissot, white-haired, small, stiff with rheumatism, had spent her life making lace; and the war had not changed her habits. At all seasons of the year, so long as it did not actually storm, she might be seen sitting outside the door of her little house, in cold weather keeping her feet warm over a few smoldering fragments of wood in a tiny box stove, and always either working busily at her lace or else reading her Testament: for she was one of the two score Protestants who had been living in that little community at the outbreak of the war, readers of the written Word. There she had sat from day to day throughout the whole war; first on the French side of the battle-line; then on the battle-line itself, when the town was bombarded, and almost all of its inhabitants had fled (but she had remained, and

her little house had come through untouched, by a miracle); finally on the German side. The enemy at his furthest advance had reached so short a distance beyond that point that she could still hear the sound of the guns. For her that dread sound, barely audible by day, louder at night, was the voice of her country, unconquered France.

The German Colonel, when he motored to or from the chateau in which his headquarters had been established, often crossed the farther end of the little square on which Madame Brissot's house fronted; but, passing rapidly in his car, he had not noticed her, any more than he had noticed particularly the fountain at the square's center. As time went on, however, there were occasions when he rode on horseback, and for one who could thus use the narrower and more poorly paved streets, there was a shorter route to the chateau, reached by crossing the square diagonally. One day he availed himself of this short cut, and was thus brought nearer to where Madame Brissot sat. He glanced in her direction the first time he passed, and, noticing that she was engaged in making lace, his attention was arrested by the oddity of pursuing such an essentially peaceful occupation as lace-making within the very shadow of the war.

“It could not be with any hope of selling her product,” he thought, as his horse at a walking pace brought him still nearer to her, “for who is there to buy?” Doubtless she but followed the rooted habit of a simple aged mind, incapable of change. Then, as he approached, she rose, slowly and with evident difficulty, to make the curtsy prescribed by the German military regulations, as applied to the native inhabitants of the town. The sight of her face, when he thus saw it clearly for the first time, gave him a sort of shock, for, strangely enough, it reminded him of his own old mother, as he remembered her: she had been dead for a good many years. Madame Brissot made her curtsy, quite unaware that the sight of her had quickened for an instant the heart of that enemy officer who sat so high above her on his horse. And he rode by. But he sent back his orderly, much to that individual’s astonishment, to tell Madame Brissot that thereafter, in view of her evident infirmity, it would be unnecessary for her to rise and curtsy: if she bowed sitting, it would be sufficient.

The next time that he passed that way on horseback, he stopped and spoke to her. It gave him a good chance to see her face: the likeness to his mother was certainly striking.

After that he always nodded to her as he passed. Or perhaps "nodded" is too strong a word: he inclined his head slightly, he recognized her, a thing so unusual in a German officer's treatment of any enemy civilian that in anyone else it would be the equivalent of a nod at least. Once he bought from her a piece of lace. And he paid for it in actual money, another mystery to his orderly, who had no clue to the accidental likeness which had touched the chord of sentiment in the Colonel, and which made Madame Brissot different from other old French women in his eyes. More and more, as time went by, the Colonel fell into the habit of checking his horse, if he were not too hurried or worried by the affairs in which he was engaged, and exchanging a few words with her. Otherwise she was apt to bow without lifting her head, and he wished to see her face. In any ordinary case there would, of course, have been no difficulty in making a woman show him her face: a curt order would have been sufficient. But a man does not gain a look at his mother's face in that way, nor even a look at a face that reminds him of her, and that carries him back for an instant to his boyhood home of long ago.

On one occasion when he stopped to speak

it happened that she had laid aside the piece of lace on which she had been working, and her Testament lay open on her knees.

“Your priest allows you to read that?” he asked.

She told him she was not a Catholic, but a Protestant, a member of the Evangelical Church.

“You understand what you read?” he queried further.

“Not all of it,” she answered, “but what I do understand is my comfort.”

This was an added touch to the portrait of the past which Madame Brissot unwittingly set before him: for the Christian Bible had been the constant companion of his own mother also. How well he could remember her reading from it, to herself and to him! He did not read it now. It had no special interest for him. The Christian gospel had long ago passed out of his thought and life. He did not know, nor care to know, the kind of God it described. The God he believed in was the God of War, the God of Germany; in that God he believed firmly. And yet he was not himself conscious how wide and deep a gulf lay between the thoughts and ideals which now ruled his life and his mother's faith. It pleased him when the open Testament on Madame

Brissot's knee reminded him of his mother's love for that same book.

Madame Brissot in these brief conversations with the German Colonel, she on her low chair, he on his horse, was very reticent. She volunteered nothing: only answered his questions, and briefly. He was the enemy of her country, against whom her son was fighting. She never mentioned to him her son, or her own life, or the affairs of her family or neighbors—until, one day, the Colonel himself did an extraordinary thing.

She had been reading her Testament when he rode up, and as she looked up at him to answer his customary word in passing, he saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"It makes you sad to read it?" he asked, pointing to the book.

"No," she answered, firmly.

"But there are tears in your eyes," he said.

"They would overflow and run down my cheeks if I did not go to my Master for comfort," said Madame Brissot.

The Colonel sat silent for a moment. His eyes had left her face: he had lifted his head, and was looking beyond her, seeing nothing, busy with his thoughts. "Is there any comfort?" he said.

Madame Brissot gave no answer, startled by

this sudden word from the real man within him.

It was then that the Colonel did the extraordinary thing, he who before his fellow officers had borne in stern silence the burden that the war had laid upon him.

He looked down again at Madame Brissot's upturned face. "I too need comfort," he said. "My son is dead, killed a month ago in Flanders."

And she, quickly, "Oh, it is hard, Monsieur le Colonel; it is hard. I know: my son is in the trenches."

For twenty minutes they talked together, he leaning forward with his hand on his horse's neck.

They talked of their sons.

She pointed to a heap of ruins a stone's throw down the street that led out of the square. That, she said, had been her son's home. There, when the first shells fell in the town, his wife and children had been killed, all of them. "If he himself is not killed, and lives to return," she said, "he will find only his old mother"—then a sudden gleam flashed in her eyes—"and this," she added, holding up her Testament.

"Does he also read and believe it?" asked the Colonel.

“Ah, monsieur, that is one of my sorrows,” she said. “No, he has taken up with the free-thinking of these modern times. For him heaven is empty. All that is real to him is on the earth. But now on earth, also, all that was most dear to him”—she pointed to the heap of ruins that had been his home—“that too is gone. For me there is still something to hope for, something to trust in, for do I not read here in God’s Word, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away’? But he has nothing.”

Never again after that one day was there such a long and intimate talk between Madame Brissot and the German Colonel; but as before, when he passed on horseback, almost always he stopped for a word or two.

Then came a period in late October when the Colonel was anxious and troubled. He only nodded as he passed. Once or twice he did not even see her. She looked at him with conflicting thoughts. She was sorry for the man who had been kind to her, but whatever it was that so much troubled him, her country’s enemy, must be good for France. And she was right. Terrible days those were for all the German leaders, and not least for those from whom the full facts of Germany’s disintegration had been concealed until the last moment.

No wonder that the Colonel, stunned by some new item of information, some new evidence of Germany's coming overthrow, went by sometimes with unseeing eyes. Yesterday, as it seemed, Germany had been about to reach out her hand and grasp the world: to-day, if the persistent rumors and the new note of apprehension which marked even the official orders and dispatches were to be credited, she faced defeat. It was as though the solid earth were crumbling under him. And not the earth only (he thought of Madame Brissot's word about her son): heaven, also, seemed to have been blotted out. For the God in whom they had so confidently trusted had fooled them, and left them in the lurch—if, indeed, he really existed.

Such were the Colonel's thoughts as he rode his horse into the little square for the last time. And there sat Madame Brissot, the same as ever, seated on her low chair, her feet on the tiny stove, the lace upon which she had been working laid down on the stool beside her, and her Testament open on her lap. He saw her this time, and not only with the outward eye: it was as though she had forced her way unbidden—and unwelcome—into his inmost thought. There rang in his ears the verse that she had quoted from the book there,

which she was reading now, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Her comfort, not his.

Even yet, as he rode toward her across the square, she had not seen him, deep in her reading. How quiet she seemed, as she sat there, just where she had sat the whole war through, where she would go on sitting doubtless when the war was over, and— He abruptly broke away from the thoughts which crowded upon him.

Madame Brissot had seen him approaching by this time. She looked up at him, seeming to search his face (doubtless even to her some rumors of the imminent change had come): then she made the customary bow. He inclined his head, but did not speak, and passed. But even after he had passed her he was keenly conscious of her behind him, the quiet, seated figure, the open Testament. That little old French woman and her book were his conquerors! As he turned the corner he could not resist giving a glance backward over his shoulder. Her head was bowed over the pages of the book again. She had forgotten him already.

The next day the first of the French troops reached the southern part of the city. They were billeted there, and toward evening those

of the soldiers to whom that liberty was granted came singly or in groups through the city streets. One among them, walking slowly, looked keenly at each object. He came to the heap of ruins that Madame Brissot had pointed out as the ruins of her son's home. He stood staring at it, stock still, as though dazed, stunned. But she from her customary place had seen him, her boy, and with a cry had risen. He turned and saw her. He staggered toward her. She read in his face all the agony of this home-coming, he in hers all the love that longed to comfort and protect him. Half timidly, she took a step in his direction. Then, obeying a sudden impulse, she turned, caught up the book which had lain beside her on the stool, and facing him, held it high till he had taken the last steps toward her. He gathered her and her Testament into the same embrace.

THE MANGER—A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

THE MANGER—A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

BENJAMIN lived on the edge of the town, and he had an olive orchard that extended away from his house toward the open country. Bethlehem is a small place anyway, so that a great many of the people in it can see from their windows the fields and orchards and terraced hillsides.

Benjamin had decided that he must build an addition to his workshop. He was a carpenter. He needed more room, and there was but one direction in which the workshop could be extended. That was on the side toward the orchard. Benjamin was sorry for one thing: it would be necessary to cut down an olive tree which stood on the ground that would be used. He was sorry to cut it down because it had been planted by his grandfather, and Benjamin had a sentiment about it. But then he really needed the extra space, and being a practical man as well as a man of sentiment, he took his ax in his hand one fall morning and went out to cut the tree down.

I can tell you the very day this happened. It was the day when the lad Joseph, Benjamin's apprentice, who had been learning from

him the carpenter's trade, was leaving Beth-lehem for good and all, and was going away to the north country to live with an uncle, somewhere up in Galilee, in a town called Nazareth. Joseph came to say good-by while Benjamin was in the midst of chopping down the olive tree.

Just as a token of good will, and in memory of the many months Joseph had worked for Benjamin, learning the carpenter's trade, he took the ax and gave half a dozen strong, straight blows with it, almost severing the trunk of the tree. Then he laid the ax down, and the time to say good-by had come. They embraced one another. Then Joseph knelt down, and Benjamin placed his hand on Joseph's head and gave him the beautiful old Jewish blessing, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." When Joseph rose up there were, I fancy, tears standing in the eyes of both of them; for, you see, they loved one another, the lad and the older man, and they were sorry to part.

Joseph was soon singing as he went on his way, for he was young, and all burdens felt light on his shoulders; but Benjamin was a

little sad all that morning; the sorrow of the parting lingered with him. (It grows harder to say good-by as we grow older.) By noon not only was the olive tree cut down, but the wood of it was cut up into lengths and stowed away in a shed back of the old workshop. There was, as you will see, a special reason why, even years afterward, Benjamin remembered with interest that the day he cut down that olive tree was the very one on which Joseph went away to live in Galilee.

That evening by the fire Benjamin had a pleasant thought. He had been reluctant to cut down the tree because it had been planted by his grandfather, and now the idea came to him that even yet he might honor his old grandfather's memory by means of it. The tree was down, to be sure; it would bear no more olives; no longer would it spread out its gnarled old branches against the sky; no longer would the pleasant sound be heard of the wind rustling its gray leaves. But there was still the wood of it, just rough pieces of trunk and branches at present, it was true, but Benjamin was a carpenter, and if he gave time and thought to it, he could surely fashion that wood into something fine and beautiful. And he knew just what he would do with it! He would make from it a chest such as he had seen

in the great temple at Jerusalem, used for holding the sacred temple vessels. On it he would carve his grandfather's name; and next spring, when he went up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover, he would take the chest (it could easily be carried those few miles on a donkey's back), and he would give it to the temple as a memorial of his grandfather. When the chest was used and the carved name was read, his good old grandfather would be remembered. Benjamin was so happy in thinking out this plan that he left the fire and went out into the shed to look at the pieces of olive wood, so as to decide just what size and shape of chest could best be made from them.

But that chest was never made; and this was the reason. That was a very hard winter in Bethlehem. It was much colder than usual. Many sheep belonging to the people of the town died. Work was hard to find and many people were in want. There were never any very rich people in Bethlehem in the best of times, but this year conditions were far harder than usual. Benjamin himself was as fortunate as any; he had enough to carry him through the winter in comfort, but that was all; he had nothing to spare. He had little or no work all winter long, and consequently no ready money. He even found it hard to pay

for the materials of his carpentry required for the few jobs that did come to him.

Others among his neighbors were much worse off. A good many times Benjamin would ask some of them to his house for a meal, shrewdly guessing that they had very little at home to eat; for though he had not a great deal himself, he wanted to share with others what he did have.

But one day there came to him an appeal for help that was hard to answer. A poor workman, of the same trade as himself, Jacob by name, came to ask for a loan of money. He had a chance to do a piece of work, he said, but no money at all with which to buy the necessary wood.

What was Benjamin to do? He had no money to lend. To gain time for thinking out some plan, he asked questions: Whom was the work for? It was for Nathaniel, the innkeeper, said Jacob, just a small job, but enough to keep his family from want. And about how much wood was needed? Benjamin asked. Jacob told him. It was but a small amount.

Then Benjamin thought of his pieces of olive wood stowed away in the shed, set aside for the memorial chest which he had looked forward to making. For a moment he tried *not* to think about that wood. Then he said to

himself: "That is mean. Jacob is in real want, and the chest is only a matter of sentiment. I must let it go and give Jacob the wood." He went to the shed and brought it out. Jacob said it would do very well. Olive wood was not the best sort for the purpose, to be sure, it was hard to work, but it certainly could be used, and he was very grateful to Benjamin for giving it to him. So he put the wood on his shoulder and went off with it.

Benjamin couldn't help smiling, somewhat ruefully, afterward. Instead of the memorial chest that the wood was to have made for the temple at Jerusalem—what? Nathaniel, the innkeeper, had ordered a manger for his stable, the stable of the inn beside the market place. And now can you guess how the story is coming out?

Ten years passed. Then one wintry morning Benjamin walked through the streets from his house to the market place. The town was very full of people; something to do with a tax had brought back many old residents of Bethlehem living now in other places. Benjamin, as he walked along, met several old friends and stopped to speak with them.

The largest crowd naturally was by the door of the inn. While Benjamin stood there talking, Nathaniel, the innkeeper, came out, and

he said to Benjamin, "I almost sent for you yesterday just at nightfall."

"Why was that?" asked Benjamin.

"A friend of yours came to the door," answered Nathaniel, "and the inn was full—not a corner left for man, woman, or child."

"A friend of mine?" said Benjamin. "Was it—?" and he mentioned several names of men he had just met and talked with.

"No, it was none of those," Nathaniel said. "But do you remember Joseph, the boy who used to work for you ten or a dozen years ago?"

Remember Joseph?—small doubt about that! "And why didn't you send for me?" said Benjamin. "Where else should Joseph go in Bethlehem but to his old friend's house?"

"I knew you would welcome him," answered Nathaniel, "but the truth was, his little wife looked so white and so tired, and he himself looked so anxious, that I felt I must find some nearer place; and where do you suppose I put them? In the stable!"

"They must come to my house at once," said Benjamin, starting toward the stable door.

"You will have to wait a while," said Nathaniel, smiling, "for there are three of them now; a little Baby came in the night—a boy."

"Born in a stable," exclaimed Benjamin,

“when it might have been under my roof!” And he hurried to the stable and went in.

How good to grasp Joseph’s hand again! He was ten years older, of course, a grown man now, but to Benjamin he was still the lad he had loved and taught. And then the little wife, Mary, lying so quiet and happy. Benjamin had never seen her before, but he loved her too, the very minute he saw her. And the Baby! Benjamin stooped down and looked at it as it lay asleep. As he did so he noticed something that made him smile in amusement. The Baby was lying in a manger! Who ever heard of such a thing as that? But how well it served this new purpose! The wooden manger, from which the cattle usually ate their food—what a good cradle it made!

Benjamin ran his hand over the surface of it. It was a carpenter’s hand, you see, and wooden things spoke to it in a way they might not to most of us. Suddenly a thought flashed into Benjamin’s mind. The manger in the stable of the inn! He felt it again, and stooped to look at the wood. Yes, it was made from an olive tree. It must be the very manger that had been made from Benjamin’s own wood by poor Jacob ten years back.

What a strange and pleasant discovery that was for Benjamin! It was too long a story to

be told just then to anybody else, but it warmed his own heart, and he said to himself, "How much better this is than the use I had planned—a cradle for this dear Baby, instead of just a box to keep dead metal things in! How much better, even if it does stand in a stable, instead of in the great temple at Jerusalem!"