

THE QUESTION

A NOVEL

BY

F. P. RAMSAY

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THE QUESTION

CHAPTER I

THE OAKS

AS Annie Vernor sat on the porch looking down the lane of oaks to the road, a girl turned into the lane with a quick step. She heard not the birds twittering in the grove, nor saw the sunlight as it shot through the trees and sparkled on the dew-drops and played in her hair. She had her bonnet in one hand, twirling it on her finger by the string, and in the other carried a package of letters and the morning paper. It would have been hard to say which was most impressive, her health, her beauty, or her gladness. Tall, symmetrical, slender, her figure and graceful movement caught the eye at a distance. As she came nearer, her luxuriant hair, now like gold and now like silver moving in the light, was noticeable; then her face and mouth, sweet and strong; and then her large and laughing eyes.

All this was forgotten in the music of the

voice with which she called out as she came, "I have your letter, Annie!"

The pale girl in the easy chair stretched out a thin hand to receive it, smiling her thanks. She read the letter while Cecilia ran on into the house to deliver the mail. When she returned, Annie had finished her letter, and anticipated Miss Dobbs by asking, "What makes you so merry this morning, Cecile?" "Am I not always merry?" she answered, but she would keep no secret from her friend, and sat down beside Annie to tell her whom she had seen on her way from the postoffice.

It was Philip Caldwell. He had just arrived in the village, and would call after breakfast. He had come out first-honor man at the College, and had run off to ask Cecilia to come to the commencement and wear his regalia (for he was one of the marshals, too), and hear his valedictory. Yes, she would go, if Annie got strong enough to be left.

Cecilia Dobbs herself had just graduated with distinction at the leading seminary in the State the week before, and had brought home with her her school friend, who was just able to leave the infirmary of the insti-

tution after a month's illness of fever; and her mother consented, knowing that in the wealthy country home of Miss Dobbs she would have every comfort and condition of recuperation.

Annie had known for a long while Cecilia's romance, who had even her father's consent to correspond with the brilliant senator's brilliant son. For young Caldwell gave promise of equalling or surpassing his father, who was a national leader in his party.

Annie, too, had her romance; but she had never told it to her friend or even to her own mother, and not even to herself. Back near the home lived a boy who had long been her schoolmate. She and Henry Gordon had been so much together, that it had hardly occurred to either of them that they were not brother and sister. And now she had just received her second letter from him.

It told how he had been over to her mother's to do some chores for her, and to eat some of her good things as he had so often done when a small boy. It told how for Annie's sake he was trying to break off the habit of profanity that he began to contract at the high school. And somehow it told something else without saying it.

Vaguely she felt rather than saw that new something; and the blush on her face might have betrayed her to Cecilia, had not this queen been so preoccupied in the realm of her own riches.

Annie read her the letter, and they were talking it over, when Cecilia suddenly remembered that she, too, had a letter. She had taken it from the rest soon after leaving the postoffice, and concealed it in her bosom. Now she drew it out, and in her present excess of confidence read it to Annie.

University of ———, May —, 18—.

MISS CECILIA DOBBS,

Dear Miss Cecilia:—I have had two experiences lately that will interest you.

One was a visit from the good Dr. Malcolm Woodbridge. I call him good; for, able as he is, his sympathy and his piety make one forget his ability. It was a rare treat to hear him preach in this university. He preached our Lord as the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself up for us, yet with such sweetness and power, that faculty and students were profoundly impressed. Yesterday he made me a visit in my room. He did not say much, and could not remain long; but somehow it was as if our Lord himself had been here.

This may be one reason why I was able to do to-day what I am now going to tell you of. I was

walking in the slums with a fellow student in sociology, making observations as directed by our professor. We passed a house into which I have gone several times lately. It was a cheap boarding and lodging house for men. I was struck by the absence of any signs of life about the place; for the woman who kept it has a shrill voice and a sharp tongue. The silence so impressed me that, on parting with my companion when our excursion was ended, I returned to this house. I found that really no one was within to answer my loud knocking. Inquiry among the neighbors discovered that she and her worthless husband and their daughter, who a few weeks ago gave birth to a child, had stealthily decamped the night before; that the occupants found no breakfast ready for them this morning before they scattered for their day's work; and that no one had entered the house since the lodgers went off.

The house was open. Impelled by curiosity and interested, I took one of the better class of the neighbors with me, and we went in to investigate. We found nothing to explain the sudden disappearance. Further inquiries at the grocery where the house had been buying its supplies showed that the accounts were settled in full yesterday; and I learned from the neighbors generally that nothing was known to the discredit of the family except the mere inefficiency of the father and the sharp tongue of the mother, until this recent disgrace of the daughter. I was about to leave the place, but

somehow could not take myself away, and went into the house again without definite purpose. Once inside, a faint sound arrested my attention. I listened, and it was repeated, a low cry. I went to it, and found, in a room, a second-hand baby carriage, and in it some coarse baby clothes, and a baby. The little fellow was very weak.

A kind woman in the neighborhood was called in, and she was horrified, exclaiming that the mother had forsaken her child. This woman had lent her kind offices to the mother before, and at once recognized the baby carriage and clothes. Knowing from my former acquaintance that she was a good and cleanly nurse, and a faithful woman, but too poor to extend charity to the castaway, I at once engaged her at so much a week to care for the infant, until I can determine further what to do.

This woman said its name was Willie Green.

You will count me foolish. But if you could see Willie's blue eyes out of which he looked up to me so helpless—but you could not understand me. I do not understand myself. I went back to-night to see what hope the foster mother has of saving the life of the child. She gave me great encouragement. Who would have thought, when I took up the study of sociology a few months ago, to round out my preparation for the ministry, that I would lose my heart to a waif?

Was it Dr. Woodbridge's visit? Or is it but an instance in another direction, how little a man

can determine his own love? Yet I know he can restrain it at the dictates of conscience.

I hear that Mr. Caldwell has won the honors of his class, and I congratulate you.

You will pardon this long letter; but somehow I wanted to tell somebody. You know that I am lonely in the world, having no mother or sister or sweetheart. So I turn to you, who are so true a friend. But farewell for this time.

If you find time to write at all to me, tell me about your friend Miss Vernor that you love and venerate so much. Who knows but that you might teach her to be interested in me?

Your true friend,

SAMUEL D. WRIGHT.

When Cecilia finished the reading, she exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Wright is just too pious for any use," and ran into the house.

CHAPTER II

THE THREADS

CECILIA went direct to her own room and shut the door. Then she sat down and was still. In a few minutes she was back in the porch. The struggle was fierce, but she had conquered her agitation.

It was the old struggle surging up, as it would sometimes do. She had been a playmate and schoolmate of Samuel Wright, until he went to the academy in town to prepare for college. In those years he had been her hero among the boys, and she had been his ideal among the girls. They were equally noted for their piety, and the profaner children called them *The Little Preacher and his Wife*. Nor could one have said that this childhood piety was either a show or a whim; for they both delighted in reading their Bibles, and they both had their little secret places of prayer.

But changes came. His father and mother died, and the estate was found not more than

would be required for his education. Her father was elected to the supreme bench of North Carolina, and also his investments rapidly appreciated. He had bought him a new country seat near the capital, as well as a residence in the city. The fond parents lavished every expense upon their only child. She had received the best culture to be had in the institutions and society of the State and was now to spend a year in foreign travel.

When they were separated and till now, they had kept up a correspondence, and had met in the vacations. He had never explicitly avowed his love, but she knew that he loved her. And she knew what restrained him: for a while, the change in their fortunes; then, her studied effort to prevent such avowal; and finally, his knowledge that she was encouraging the serious intentions of Philip Caldwell. She also knew that she loved him with a deep intensity, though she was trying to persuade herself to love Caldwell.

Two influences were operating upon her. In her new associations in school and society she had been led, largely by difficulties and doubts about the Bible, to modify her religious life, and the conviction grew in her that

she could not be the wife that he ought to have in his sacred calling. Side by side with this honest conviction, her fancy was caught by the handsome Caldwell and his brilliant talents and promise. Thus ambition and duty united in her against love, and love was being strangled.

With him it was different. His love for her grew in intensity as his power of restraining it increased. He suffered and grew strong. He meant his remark about restraining love at the dictates of conscience, in the connection in which it came, and in the light of what had passed between them, to veil and yet to declare his set purpose not to trouble her with any effort to intervene between her and Caldwell. Had he known the struggle in her, he would have seen his duty differently, and would have made every effort to win her for himself. She understood his letter. She had opened it, half afraid that he would speak out his love; she had finished it, blaming him for not doing so, and thus rescuing her from what she both disapproved and yet intended, betrothing herself to Caldwell. And if he had known, how different the story of her life might have been!

Annie Vernor knew this history in that

superficial way in which intimate friends know each other's inner life; and she was on the side of Samuel Wright. His letter throughout appealed to her. She did not know how mightily it appealed to Cecilia, and was shocked at the frivolous remark made by her about his piety. She reread her own letter from Harry. She saw a new meaning in it. It came to her that she was over sixteen, and he eighteen. She had not seen him for a year nearly, and now the boy and girl could never meet again; for when they met, it must be man and woman come to consciousness of love. When Cecilia returned, Annie was walking on the porch, forgetting that she was an invalid.

"Why, Annie, are you in the delirium of fever again?"

"No, Cecile, but I am going to let you go to the commencement."

"Sit down, girl. You must not overdo your strength, or you will keep me from wearing that regalia."

"Well, I will sit, if the queen commands it. But, dear Cecile, do you prefer the regalia to that letter?"

"Now, conscience, you are beautiful, but weak. You are sick, you know, an invalid

against a strong athlete. It is vain; for I have the letter, and I want the regalia."

"Then take care not to lose the letter while wearing the regalia."

"I will wear the regalia on the outside, and hide the letter in my bosom."

"Then the giver of the regalia will see that you wear it, but the writer of the letter will think that it has gone into the fire."

"Men who see into heaven ought to be able to see beneath the surface; and you know one cannot burn a letter without making ashes."

"You are an enigma, Cecile."

"And Annie understands enigmas, but an enigma never understands itself. If——"

A sound of wheels interrupted the play of repartee. The girls fled from the porch as they saw the buggy turn out of the road and toward the house. They both hoped that Mr. Caldwell had not seen them.

Nor had he; for it was not Caldwell in the buggy. It was Dr. Woodbridge and Mr. Wright.

A little later the four are sitting on the porch together. Cecilia had reasons for talking with her pastor; for she was afraid of Samuel Wright to-day. Thus it was that he

and Annie were conversing together. He went over with her the story of Willie Green, who, he said, was doing well. When she asked him, "But how did you come to leave him so suddenly, Mr. Wright?" the young man answered frankly: "Miss Vernor, I did not leave the child, I came to see Miss Dobbs. I wanted to see her."

"Did you think that she was ill, and are you a physician?"

"Now, Miss Vernor, to confess the truth, I was in hopes that she might be ill, but I am not skilled in medicine."

"Why, that is cruel, Mr. Wright; and I thought from your letter about the little Willie that you must be a kind-hearted man."

"Would that I had as much wisdom as will. But did you read my letter?"

"No, Mr. Wright, but Cecile read it to me."

"And what did she say of it, please?"

"That you must ask her."

"I am afraid to ask. I fear that she belongs to another man; and, if she does not, I do not know what she thinks of me. Moreover, I am poor."

"Now, Mr. Wright, I am too young to advise you. But she is not engaged, and she is

too noble to let considerations of poverty and wealth control her in such a matter. If you are in earnest, be in haste."

"But I do not like to be the rival of another."

"The man whom a girl loves is the only one to her. I do not know how it is with a woman, and Cecile is a woman. If I were a man in love with Cecile, I would not let her fall to another; for no other could love her so well. But I am talking too much. Excuse me."

And Annie withdrew; for she was really over-exerting herself, and needed rest. Wright sat alone awhile, wondering at this little girl and her wisdom, but more at himself for trusting her so fully on so short acquaintance. He did not yet know how utterly everyone trusted her who knew her.

Meanwhile the good Dr. Woodbridge was conversing with Miss Dobbs. He first explained that he was on his way afoot, when Mr. Wright overtook him and made a seat for him in the buggy.

"But what," said Cecilia, "has brought him so suddenly?"

"Did you not know that he was coming?" said he, with frank surprise.

"No, Dr. Woodbridge. Only this morning I had a letter from him, and he gave no hint of coming. I was astonished to see him."

"So was I, Cecilia, and delighted, too; no doubt, you were also?"

"Of course I am always delighted to see the best friend of my childhood, doctor."

"And the best friend of your womanhood. But, pardon me. I know not what has brought him, but I surmise. I feel as a father to both of you. Daughter, treat him kindly to-day."

"I will."

"It is not kind to let him sit alone."

And with a beaming face, he rose to go. Wright offered to drive him home; but he declined, saying playfully that the buggy was not broad enough for three. Thus he went away, never to see her again. As he went through the gate, she murmured:

"'Tis only noble to be good."

And Wright answered, "He is a good man."

When Judge Dobbs came out to talk with his young friend, he and Cecilia had already agreed on a drive together.

CHAPTER III

THE DRIVE

PAPA," she called as Wright turned his horse's head from the gate, "if Mr. Caldwell comes before we return, tell him that we shall be back in an hour." It was then 9 o'clock.

"I have two hours," he said to her, "before I must return this horse and buggy to the stable and take my train back to the University."

"Must you go so soon?"

"You might ask why I came at all, if I must go so soon. I will tell you."

They were in the road, and his horse was restive. They went for a mile at racing speed. On the right was the forest of oaks, shielding them from the sun. On the left was the river, now narrow and now broad, with the green grasses on its borders, and here and there rocks in the channel rising up to part the flowing waters. When the water was smooth and the trees open, the flying

image of the horse and the buggy, of the silent man and the firm-sitting girl, could be seen moving over the water swift as the light. Just beyond the river wound the track of the railway along the bank up to the bridge at the village; and a train of passenger coaches came moving down the track a little in their rear, and the whistle, shrill and defiant, seemed to challenge the horse to a race. He answered the challenge with a spurt of speed. Slowly the train was gaining, but only slowly. When the driveway turned from the river to the right at the end of the mile stretch, the rear of the train was just opposite on the other side, bending away to the left.

"I will tell you, Cecile," as he slowed down the horse and took their way to the east between two fields, "why I came. After posting you my letter three nights ago, I received another letter from an old chum of mine, now at the college, which told me of Mr. Caldwell's election as marshal. It went on to tell me that it was whispered among a few, and he had overheard it, that Caldwell was going to give his regalia to the beautiful daughter of Judge Dobbs, who would be the star of the commencement; that he hoped to win her hand, and even to announce the

engagement at the commencement ball; and that Caldwell was exceedingly popular, and his classmates wished him every success; but that his defeat in this point was hinted on the basis of a rumor that she was already engaged. The material point was that, in the midst of all the gossip, I saw strong evidence that you were not yet engaged to Mr. Caldwell. For nearly a year I have understood that you were engaged to Mr. Caldwell. I got that impression from one of your letters to me. Was I correct?"

"Why, Mr. Wright, since you are so much interested," she said, with no accent of criticism, "I must ask you to refresh your memory. What did my letter say?"

"It said, 'I have come to an understanding with Mr. Caldwell, and Papa has consented for us to carry on a correspondence.' And I took that to mean an engagement."

"But did it say engagement?"

"No."

"And it meant only what it said." She spoke merrily.

"Cecilia, how did you mean for me to understand it?"

"Guess."

"You wanted me to think the truth."

There fell a silence. They were now beyond the field, sometimes in the sunshine and sometimes in the shadows of the trees.

"Samuel, I am not as good a girl as I was." And her voice almost broke. "I am not altogether certain what I wanted you to understand."

He made no reply till they reached the top of the hill. Then they were in front of a cottage, inhabited by an old woman and her little granddaughter, who kept a famous orchard. She welcomed them and sent them into the orchard to fill their basket with the choicest fruit. When they had done this, they sat down under one of the trees to rest. Suddenly he began.

"Cecilia, are you still free?"

"Yes."

"In heart?"

"That question you must not require me to answer."

He was silent awhile. Then he told her how he had loved her always and how his love had grown in the last year; how he had felt himself in honor bound to silence, believing her engaged to another; and how he had resolved, if she were free, to come and lay his love at her feet. "I cannot lose you with-

out an effort, you whom my soul worships next to God. O, Cecilia," and his voice sank as he looked upon her, sprinkled with the falling apple blossoms, "do you not love me still? Will you not be mine?"

"Samuel, I will be fair with you. My confidence in you and admiration of you have not diminished. You were always my ideal as a boy, and you are my ideal as a man. And I know that, committed to you, my future would be safe and happy, to all the extent that one human being can help another. But I am not the girl you used to love. I do not read my Bible now. I do not pray now. I have lost my faith. I could not be the wife you want; for I should be a hindrance and not a help. It would be a life of misery for us both. Therefore, I must refuse you."

"But, do you love me, Cecilia?"

"After our past together, how could I say no? And how could I say yes, no longer believing in your religion? I cannot answer."

"What has destroyed your faith?"

"It is too painful and too long to tell it now. Let me write it to you."

When they were seated in the buggy again, the apple blossoms were still upon her. She

was too intent on the great question to take notice of them. The two went down the hill in silence. In the lane they came to an understanding. She was to write him in full the explanation of her change of mind; and he would not consider her refusal of him final until he received it in writing in answer to his reply.

They went up the river with great speed again; for he noticed that it was nearly time for his train. Seeing that he would miss it to take her home, she insisted that he should let her walk from the road to the house. As he checked the horse for her to get out, they heard his train blow two miles down the river. She seized the reins, drove him to the station, and saw him off. She herself returned the horse and buggy to the stable, and walked home alone.

She wrote that night as follows:

The Oaks, near Carboro, N. C.,
May —, 18—.

MR. SAMUEL WRIGHT,

Dear Friend:—I am hastening to fulfill my promise.

The loss of my religious faith is due to some inexplicable difficulties in the Bible and to my slight acquaintance with modern discoveries. The great-

est difficulty, and the only one that I need endeavor to set forth, is the doctrine of future punishment, especially when applied to all who die unbelievers, including the great majority, who do not know enough to believe. When I think of the countless myriads who died before Christ came, and of the other countless myriads who have died since he came, without having ever so much as heard of him; of the countless multitudes, even in a country like ours, who are, by their ignorance and toil and vicious surroundings, practically cut off from the churches and their teachings,—when I think that almost all the race have died unsaved, I am stupefied. I say almost all the race; for really I see no Bible ground on which to save the infants, although so many religious people try now to think so. When I think of all this endless stream of souls flowing on into the Bible's hell, I am overwhelmed with horror to think that I could ever have revered a book that teaches such terrible things, or worshipped a Being who does them! Well I know that the Bible is superior to all other Holy Books, and Christianity superior to all other religions; but this only intensifies the difficulty, showing me that there is either no good God or no revelation of him. This conclusion is confirmed by the Higher Criticism, which, so the scholars say, shows that the Bible is, like all other holy books, a natural evolution, and that Christianity, though the best religion till now appearing, must of course be followed, in the progress of evolution, by some-

thing better still. If I could see any way to believe that men do not become unsavable by dying, and yet to hold to the Bible as a trustworthy revelation from God, it might be different; but this seems to be impossible.

This is an unusual form of reply to a proposal for marriage; but, Samuel (if you will let me as a friend call you so, and not misunderstand me), you will agree that it would not be right for me, a wreck as to faith, to accept your proposal. I realize the honor that you do me; but my very esteem of you, and desire for your happiness, forbid my weighing you down by a union with one so utterly out of sympathy with the controlling faith of your life.

But believe me always

Sincerely your friend,

CECILIA DOBBS.

He sent an immediate reply which she never saw.

CHAPTER IV

WILLIE

JUST as Wright was finishing his letter to Cecilia, and was taking an envelope to address it, there was a knock at his door. He opened it, and a messenger boy handed him a piece of paper, on which was written with pencil:

MR. WRIGHT,

Willie is taken dreadful ill what shall I do
NANCY PARKS.

He finished addressing the letter, sealed it, put on his hat, wrote a note to Nancy Parks, gave it to the messenger boy, hurried to the nearest telephone, called up an eminent physician, gave him the street and number of Nancy Parks, with request to meet him there in all haste, called a cab, and drove at once to Willie's bedside.

The physician had just driven up as Wright's cab arrived, and a moment later

was bending over the child. Having finished the examination, he himself gave Willie a tincture, wrote a prescription and handed it to Wright, and was going out. To the woman's question, "Won't you come again, Doctor?" he answered, "If Mr. Wright so desires," and moved on. Wright detained him at the carriage.

"Is there hope, Doctor?"

"No."

"None?"

"Not in the surroundings."

"In what surroundings would there be hope?"

"In a good hospital, with a skilled nurse and constant watching by a competent physician, there would be a little hope, but no certainty; and it would be very expensive."

"How expensive?"

"Three hundred or five hundred dollars, if the child should pass the first crisis and live to be nursed through to recovery."

"Will you undertake the case and trust me?"

"No, I think not."

"But you can trust me?"

"Yes, but it will be useless."

"Then you will take the case?"

"Yes, for you. I will send a nurse and ambulance at once. Give me the prescription. I will do my best."

Wright pressed the physician's hand, and went into the house. The restless child was now quiet, lying on a pillow on the foster mother's arm. It was very pale. Wright sat down, and gazed at it in silence. When Mrs. Parks asked what the doctor said, he answered, "A little hope at his private hospital. His ambulance and a nurse will come soon." Then they were both silent, and the woman held back her grief. He looked at the child. It was so pale, but it breathed. Now it writhed, so little, so helpless, and then was quiet again. One ear bent to it and listening could hear it breathe. So Wright sat and looked at the child.

Presently the soft wheels of the horseless ambulance were heard outside. He let in a woman, simple in dress, quiet in manner, with a quick eye and a sweet face. She moved with grace and precision. She looked at the child a long, searching look. Then she spoke very softly, There is hope. She moistened a soft cloth in some liquid, and applied it to the child's lips, until presently it sucked in a few drops. Soon, one hardly noticed when, the

child was in her arms, and she was walking back and forth across the room, her eyes always on the child. After a time, as she was moving towards the door, she whispered, "I hope to bring it back," and was gone.

Nancy Parks sat alone, weeping. The ambulance rolled away. Samuel Wright walked along the street. He felt the letter still in his pocket, put it into the first mail box that he passed, and walked all the way back to his room. Two hours later he undressed for bed, and slept, praying in his dreams for Willie and Cecilia.

The first morning hour of admission found him at Willie's hospital, which was five miles from his own lodging; and every day for three weeks he came, and looked in silence on the little Willie, and went away. And ever that sweet face of the nurse was bending over the child. It fully recovered.

It was several weeks since he expected certainly to receive Cecilia's promised answer to his letter, and it had not come. Finally came a local paper from North Carolina, a marked copy. He turned to the mark and read the announcement of the engagement of Mr. Philip Caldwell and Miss Cecilia Dobbs. The notice went on to speak of the brilliant

engagement, etc., and to tell how Miss Dobbs would spend the next winter with her mother in European travel, and Mr. Caldwell would complete his law course at the State University. Later he learned of her sailing for Europe.

It added to the bitterness of his cup that he knew that Caldwell was once serious in religion. He himself had talked with him, and at his request had confidently advised him touching an evil habit. He had heard him confess his faith in Christ, and indicate his intention of studying for the ministry of the gospel. He knew also that, after a painful struggle, Caldwell had abandoned the ministry against his conscience, and that the evil habit had grown upon him. He had no confidence in the reality of Caldwell's piety at the first, though he doubted not the reality of the inner conflict; and he dreaded for Cecilia to come under the influence of a character that he expected would prove a wreck.

The evening of the day on which he learned that Cecilia had sailed for Europe, he went to Mrs. Parks', where Willie was now again cared for, and had his usual daily play with the child. He noted with great satisfaction its restored health and its manifest growth.

It was wonderful to see his love. Could Willie cure him of Cecilia?

Now he faced a serious financial problem. The expense of the child would itself have embarrassed him before his course of study was finished; but the added bill for its long illness, even if the physician cut it down to two thousand dollars, made it necessary for him to suspend his studies. The next day he would settle upon his course; for he had seen the doctor and constrained him to promise to send him a statement. With these thoughts he returned to his room, and sought repose.

In his dreams Cecilia would come back to him, and her face would come between him and Willie; but when he woke in the morning he would pass out of delight into the pain of the ever new discovery that he had lost her. Then he would dress the wound of his soul, as old and persistent sores need daily cleansing, and cover it up, and go forth as a whole man. It was Willie that lived in his waking hours.

At last this statement came:

———— Hospital, Sept., 18—.

MR. SAMUEL D. WRIGHT,

Dear Sir:—My bookkeeper found your bill to be smaller than I had told you it would be. Four

days ago some one, whose identity he promised not to reveal to any one, and has not revealed to me, called and paid the bill in full.

Yours truly,

_____, M. D.

With this a duplicate receipted bill was enclosed. The items footed up \$263.25.

His astonishment was great, and it was not till the next day that he was able to imagine an explanation, that through friends Cecilia had learned all the facts, including his financial necessity, and had herself paid the bill; and he recalled that she was in the city with Caldwell at the time that the bill was paid. Later, by careful inquiries, he found from Dr. Woodbridge, to whom he had communicated the impending necessity of suspending his studies, that Dr. Woodbridge had innocently mentioned the fact to Judge Dobbs. Wright was mortified at first, and studied how he could return the money; but finally he submitted to the inevitable. He could not exclude from his conviction the explanation, that she had done this out of a mixture of dead love and doubtful conscience, a vague feeling that this would be some sort of reparation for not an-

swering his letter. Her image in his dreams became less distinct.

He went on with his studies, and continued his daily visits to Willie.

On a certain evening in October, as he came to Nancy Parks' door, she met him, and spoke with agitation: Willie is took again the same way. Get the doctor quick! He hastened to obey. In a few minutes he returned. Willie was in a convulsion. The woman was using what remedies she could. The convulsion subsided and passed off. Wright took the child in his arms, and looked at the pale face, while Mrs. Parks was preparing, she said, for another spasm. After awhile she sat down. All was quiet inside. Among the noises outside they heard the soft whirr of an automobile, and the woman went to open the door. Wright was watching Willie, who opened his blue eyes and gazed up at him, and smiled. Then a most violent convulsion seized him. The physician glanced at the child, and hastily prepared a remedy. He administered it, prepared another, and sat down to watch the struggle. Presently the struggle ceased. The sufferer was still. They all sat breathless a little while. Then the

physician arose, pressed Wright by the hand and went away.

The next night Wright was sitting alone in his room. He had buried Willie. He sat with his back to the light, and gazed at the wall of his room. So he sat for an hour. Then he walked up and down. He sat and walked in turn. He turned off the light, and gazed out of his window at the lights of the city, at the far-off stars, at a passing pedestrian, at a street car in the distance, at a shooting star. "Mystery! Mystery!" He turned from the window, and knelt in a dark corner a long time. Without turning the light on again, he undressed and retired. He did not sleep, and yet he was awakened later than his usual hour. In the dreams of the night he had not seen Cecilia. Through the night, and through many days and nights of the strange world that he now found himself living in, there was with him the pale Willie, sometimes with the blue eyes and the baby smile.

CHAPTER V

THE LETTER

IN his mail was a returned letter this morning in November. The letter had been addressed by him to her, not to Carboro, N. C., but to Oxford, Va. He remembered in what haste he had addressed the letter the night of Willie's illness, and he could now understand how he had substituted Oxford, which was Judge Dobbs's former home in North Carolina, for Carboro; but by what fatal error had he substituted Va. for N. C.? But so it was. And here at last the postoffice department had returned him the letter. We will read it over with him.

University of ———, June 18—.

My Dear Cecilia,

Your letter does not put me in despair either of your faith in Christ or of your love for me. And certainly my love for you will not take this refusal; for you love me, that I see, and your real reason for rejecting me, if it came to that, would be that you had rejected him. Why not, then, come

at once to this clear understanding, Cecilia? Promise me this at least, that you will not finally decide against me until you have taken time to consider fully and have reached a final decision against him. With this promise I will, for the present, be content; but give me some plank to cling to, that I may not sink in despair.

Your difficulties really resolve themselves into two. The first concerns the acceptance of the Bible in general on account of the teachings of the so-called higher criticism. It is to study this that I am here after having finished at Union [Theological Seminary, Va.] the usual theological course; and I have found nothing to shake my faith in the Bible, or seriously to modify my views of it. If it were different, if the evidence required or justified any serious modification of my estimate of the Bible, I would simply take whatever new positions I found to be true. For why should we be unwilling to change our views? The truth is the great thing, not to keep old opinions or to take up new opinions, but the truth, to learn that, to keep that, to have that.

Even if such evidence should be presented as would convince me that my present views concerning the Bible are radically erroneous, I should not be disturbed; for Jesus Christ would remain to me. Largely as the Bible has been used to bring me to him, now that I have come to know him myself for myself, I have the witness in myself. I now know, in my own personal fellowship with

Christ and his revelation of himself to me, that he is a reality and essentially such as the Bible declares him to be; and this faith in him is now independent of the book. I can therefore pursue my inquiries in Bible criticism with serenity, knowing that my faith is in no peril thereby.

Have you lost this inner testimony, Cecilia? If so,—but it cannot be. He may be trying you, but he will not forsake you. Or is it possible, my love, that you are in some matter persisting in disobedience to him? This would surely bring you darkness and doubt of some sort. O, if this is the fact, let me implore you not to put upon weakness of evidence what is really due to rebellion of will. Pardon me for speaking plainly, but again I implore you to go back to where you and the Savior seemed to part, and see whether it was in some sin of yours. Undo that personal wrong to him, and you will know him again.

I come to your special difficulty, that so many die without knowing of Christ. It is a profound difficulty, and I am not able to solve it.

For the theory of some, that the unevangelized are judged without reference to Christ at all, and approved or condemned on the ground of their treatment of what light they have, may preserve the justice of God, but not his goodness; for it does not show how any of them can be saved. If some can be saved without Christ, why not all? Of what use is he?

Nor do I get relief in the theory that men can

be saved by Christ without knowing him, or can in some sense know him apart from the one historical revelation of God to man. If it be so, I find no evidence, but the opposite; for the very change we call regeneration is a change effected through known truth, a change to faith in Jesus Christ as presented in the one revelation.

And I do not find satisfaction in any form of denial of the final separation of all men into two classes, God's children in Christ and the unreconciled, the saved and the lost. The Scriptures seem to me to stress the endless difference, and the inconceivably important difference.

I have a question in my own mind, a question which I have not answered to myself. On the one side are the saved, the finally saved, who then stand united to Jesus Christ in life, knowing him and having personal faith in him, having accepted him. On the other side are the lost, the finally lost, who then stand severed from Jesus Christ in life, not having personal faith in him, having rejected him. On the one side are none but those who have accepted him; on the other side are none but those who have rejected him. Will a third class come to the final judgment and separation, having neither accepted nor rejected Christ? If so, will they be assigned to the right or to the left or some to each? Or—and this is my question—will every human being somehow, somewhere, somewhen, be brought to an intelligent and final decision of will, either accepting or rejecting Jesus

Christ, making that decision in such conditions as to be an object of mercy in having Christ thus offered to his acceptance, and an object of justice in being condemned in the final judgment, if he has rejected him? In some such direction I am feeling my way for relief; and until I have fully searched and known all that the Bible teaches or permits in this direction, I am not prepared to estimate how much of real difficulty there is in this subject of the future of men.

In any event, two considerations I cannot lay aside. The one is my ignorance of the Bible and liability to err in its interpretation. What I need to know for my own salvation is plain and easy; but what I need fully to understand for constructing the entirety of Biblical teachings into a complete system, or for deciding that this cannot be done, is not all simple and obvious. It becomes me therefore to be modest in claiming such comprehension of the Bible as one should have who would pronounce a verdict against it as a whole on the ground of its difficulties.

The other consideration is this: whether all our difficulties are solved in the Bible, or whether God does not therein raise some questions and leave them unanswered. Some questions of this sort there may be, necessarily raised in the course of revelation of truth, as all teaching raises new questions, and for the time unanswerable to those to whom the revelation is made. And some questions that could have been answered may be pur-

posely left unanswered, either to teach us the greater importance of the answered questions, or to train us in the exercise of trust in the Teacher. It would be a pity for me to give up my trust in God just because he asks me to trust him beyond the difficulties at present solvable by me.

Hence I am in an attitude of inquiry, but not of doubt. I do not understand the case of the heathen, nor do I understand the case of the infants. If Willie were now to die; I should have to stand over his grave perplexed. But I know some things, I know Christ; and I **WILL NOT** be pushed into false beliefs that are pleasant, nor into the surrender of true beliefs, by a rebellious impatience.

Cecilia, Cecilia, will you not pause, too? Will you not wait on God? Will you not come back to faith in Christ?

And I do implore you, my soul in longing for you, I do implore you, my Cecilia whom I love, not to dismiss me now. Wait till you have more time and know that you reject my Savior.

Your sincere friend and importunate lover,
SAMUEL DAVIDSON WRIGHT.

He laid the letter down, dazed with grief. He was crushed. And then his hot heart rose in rebellion. "If she had but gotten this, she would have been persuaded; at least, she would have waited. Now she is taken

from me forever! O God, it is too hard; I cannot bear it." He laid his face in his hand, and forced himself to be dumb, lest he should curse God for the accident. He was in agony.

The emotion exhausted itself. Before he slept that night, or rather the next day, two revelations came to him. The one was, that his love for Cecilia had not died or waned, but that he loved her, and would love her on. The other was, that he must press to the utmost the question raised in his mind. He saw that this question hung on all the horizon of his thought, and that he must penetrate through it. Love for Willie and love for Cecilia joined with love for truth to impel him. He came out of the storm of his suffering, humble and newly penitent, to lay his head in peace on the bosom of Jesus.

CHAPTER VI

A GLANCE AT THE OTHERS

THAT very night when Wright was thus wrestling with his bitter grief, Annie Vernor was sitting by the bedside of her mother, talking of to-morrow. The mother was already in bed, and the daughter was just ready to turn out the light and come to the bosom where she had slept since babyhood. Yet she lingered, prattling about Harry's room, whether everything had been done to make it beautiful; about the probable weather to-morrow; about whether his train was likely to be on time in the morning; about what they should have for dinner; about whether Joe, the negro driver, would know Harry when he met him at the depot; about her last dress, and whether she looked better with her hair done up this way or that; about the chickens, how many they had; about Cecilia, where she was; and many other things.

"But, Annie, what delays you? I thought that you were ready for bed some time ago."

"Yes, Mama, I will come soon."

But the chattering went on, and Annie was busy flitting about over the carpet in her bare feet, putting this article in a different place, and that in another position. Her mother was ceasing to answer her, and there fell a silence.

"Mama, are you asleep?" said Annie in a soft whisper. Receiving no answer, she turned the light out, her hand trembling, and crept quietly to bed, but she could not sleep for happiness and perplexity. At last she could bear it no longer, and half-waked her mother by embracing her.

"Mama, I am in bed."

"Yes, Annie, have you just come?"

"No, Mama."

"How long have you been in bed?"

"An hour or so."

"What is the matter, Annie?"

"Mama, is it right to marry an unbeliever?"

"Why, what unbeliever wants my little girl to marry him?"

"Nobody has asked me to marry him."

"You know, Annie, what I have always taught you; but what turns your mind to this question now? Tell me, daughter."

"You know, Mama, that Harry is coming to-morrow."

The girl hid her face in the bed covering. The mother sprang to an upright position, alarmed, saying, "That boy! It cannot be that these children are thinking of such a thing." Then she drew Annie to her bosom again, and stroked back her hair, and kissed her burning forehead. "My little daughter must forgive a mother. And yet some day I must give up my one little lamb." And the tears of the mother cooled the daughter's face. "But, Annie, you must in this matter decide for yourself. I tried to prepare you for such a question. Do the will of our Lord. Perhaps he will change the heart toward Christ which you think is tender toward you." And the mother and daughter talked long together, and at last went to sleep in each other's arms, perfectly understanding each other.

The same night Henry Gordon was packing his trunk for college. Circumstances had made him late to enter this fall, but he was going to delay one day more. He knew that Annie Vernor was at home with her mother, and would not return to the Seminary till New Year. For more than a year he had not seen her, and he felt that he could not

go so far away without seeing her. He would have to remain from train to train, which, on that branch road, would mean from morning to morning. He had boldly written that he would stop off the next morning.

The past year Harry Gordon had labored hard to break off his evil habit of profanity. He had not altogether succeeded or failed. He had no other habit of which he was specially ashamed. Sometimes he would lose temper, but seldom without provocation. Once during the past session he was in a fight at school, and was about to be expelled; but when the master learned the full explanation of how Harry had interfered to stop a shameful imposition on a small boy by several large boys, he pardoned him and thanked him. The fight made a hero of him in the school; for single-handed he grappled with three, put two of them out of the fight, and patiently bore a pounding from the third, a stronger boy, watching his chance, until he suddenly reversed their positions, and was on top when the master came upon them. He was a great athlete, and the champion swimmer. Strong, handsome, and big-hearted, no wonder the boys all admired Harry Gordon—and all the girls, too.

And he was going to see Annie's mother, and Annie, and he felt very awkward about it; but he kept up his courage, and laid out his best suit for morning.

He came to Annie and her mother the next day, and lodged with them the night following. The meeting between him and Annie was embarrassing and delightful. They were much alone while the mother was busy with the housework. Many times the big boy was on the point of making love to the slender girl; but somehow she overawed him. Without knowing just what they were doing, they spent the day in introducing their new selves to each other, in tracing out the threads of personal identity and assuring themselves that this was Annie, and this was Harry. It was to each a delicious experience. When they parted at night, he thought he certainly would be courageous, and speak out the next morning before he left. But in the morning she was lovelier than ever, yet more transcendent. And he went away, resolved to turn his attention more seriously to better things. Feeling that an impossible gulf separated him from Annie, yet charmed by the beauty of that life which she and her mother were living, he felt desire himself to come into that experience;

but of ever being worthy of Annie, or even of ever winning her, he was now almost in despair.

At this time Cecilia was in Italy with her mother. As they went from place to place, seldom a week passed that they did not receive two letters, one from Judge Dobbs for his wife, and one from Philip Caldwell for his betrothed. His letters were filled with the gay gossip of society, with matters personal to himself and his future, with brilliant epigram and satire, especially of religion, all intermingled with warm effusions of tender love.

For once his letter missed coming, and the father's letter was brief. The next week his letter came as usual, but was unusually satirical. Here are two paragraphs:

"One of our set was in —— recently, and saw the holy man that you were once accustomed to worship as your god. He has readily adapted himself to the ways of his new sheep with their richer fleece. He used to walk in the country, now he rides in a carriage in the city. Perhaps he has the gout." This was said of Dr. Woodbridge; and Cecilia enjoyed it, and yet somehow it displeased her. She did not read it to her mother.

Nor the following: "His young holiness has failed in his new enterprise of raising other people's (?) babies. Perhaps it was getting too expensive. Anyway, he returned his promising infant to that nurse in the slums, and she let it die. He shed some tears and paid her up. Now he is free." And much more. This was repulsive to Cecilia. There was something new in the coarseness of it that disgusted her, and she felt angered at its gratuitous injustice. She replied in a tone somewhat expressive of her feelings. Her next letter from him was in answer, and was curt. He excused his satire on the ground that the hypocrisy of the saints was too great a temptation to be resisted by one not dull enough to be a believer; but begged her pardon for any word of disrespect to the gods of her former worship, and especially to the man of her former fancy. Could it be that the superstition would still come back, as belief in ghosts when one was passing a graveyard at night? Or was the fancy itself returning?

She replied haughtily; thus his end was accomplished.

CHAPTER VII

FORSAKEN

CALDWELL suspected the wreck of the Dobbs fortune before the judge himself. In fact, finding out by accident that certain stocks of which Judge Dobbs had a large block, then selling at two hundred dollars, were likely to decline, he accepted a large commission from the other two main holders for finding them a purchaser, and induced the Judge to buy. This exhausted his cash and forced him to borrow. The unexpected collapse of another investment caused him disappointment in not getting the cash to make the first payment on his loan, and compelled him to pledge some of his other holdings. Soon after this he wrote the short letter to his wife in Europe. Two weeks later he wrote again, hinting that he almost regretted letting her go away from him. His next letter, three weeks later, made her restless and willing to return home. Cecilia was in the same mood. They were plan-

ning to sail some weeks later, when a cablegram from a friend announced the Judge's serious illness. When they landed in New York, they learned that the end had just come. They reached Raleigh in time for the funeral, and went thence to the Oaks in the deepest sadness.

Caldwell was not at the funeral. Cecilia had received no letter from him since her last haughty letter. The week after the funeral there came a formal note from him, regretting that he had lost her regard, saying that he was unwilling longer to burden her with the sense of obligation to him, especially when she had so great a grief to weigh her down. So he returned all her letters, and directed how to send his letters, and the ring, saying that he supposed she would not need it in her present magnificence of wealth. He intimated that she would be able to support a husband, and might therefore marry whom she would, poor or rich; and he hoped that she would be happy in finding some one more congenial to her fancy and faith than he was likely to be. At the same time, if she ever needed a friend, she might call on him, etc. This letter found her assiduously tending her sick mother. She returned the letters and

ring without reply. Her humiliation was complete.

All the time Caldwell had been keenly watching Judge Dobbs's change of fortune. He made something for himself out of the exigency. When he saw that all would be lost, he purposely so wrote to Cecilia as to provoke from her an excuse for ending the engagement; and he was proud of his success.

It was two weeks later that a letter came from her father's attorneys, conveying the startling intelligence that the debts exceeded the whole of her father's estate; but pointing out how certain properties could by law be secured to her mother, and what she could appropriate as her own personal belongings. She and her invalid mother counselled together, and determined to renounce every right in favor of the creditors, and to keep only certain jewels and clothing that in no sense belonged to the estate.

Executing a legal document to this effect, they went at once to the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore. There her mother's shattered health was somewhat improved. Cecilia found an opening as a teacher in a Western town, and took her mother there, and made her a home, supporting her and nurs-

ing her the rest of her life. But she was desolate, without faith and without a friend.

For two years her brave fight went on. She earned a modest living for herself and her mother by teaching; when out of the school-room she tended at her mother's bedside, an unwearied nurse. The mother was all the time sinking, becoming weaker in both body and mind. She was not a companion to Cecilia, who was utterly alone. No one knew her religious views; to have expressed them too loudly would have cost her her position, and she had no heart to speak of them. Not even to her mother did she ever mention them. Thus she suffered on. When her mother's condition would no longer permit her being left alone, Cecilia hired a poor woman to sit with her during school hours; but she did not have much communication with this woman, and never enquired her history. She only knew that her name was Mary Green, and that she was a washerwoman, who worked at the tub in the afternoons and at nights; but she did not know even whether she was a widow or not. Cecilia had no heart to care, except for her mother; to her she was tender and faithful.

The end came at last; it always comes at

last. It was no surprise. When she came in from her school one day, her mother was worse. Mary Green remained till bedtime, and Cecilia did not send her away. So it went on for some weeks. One night the invalid became still worse, and Mary Green remained all night. She did not leave the house any more, and Cecilia let her stay. She took up the cooking and the other housework, and shared in the nursing. Cecilia did not have strength as before.

And when her mother died, and the little funeral was over, she was too weak to go on with her teaching. She lay down in her mother's bed, and Mary Green remained to nurse her.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNANSWERED PRAYER

CECILIA was not the only one to whom a great sorrow came. Let us go back to the parting of Annie and Harry. She went alone to her room, and through the window watched the smoke of the train as it rounded the hills far away. And as she stood there she prayed for him whom her soul loved; and as she prayed, her agony became great. She sank upon a chair, then lay on the bed, she was prostrated with an intolerable burden; she was agonizing that Harry might be brought into the light. She forgot herself in the intensity of her supplication.

Her mother could not but hear her moans, and hastened to her door. Receiving no answer to her light knock, she quietly withdrew, divining what was going on; and in her room below, she, too, gave herself to supplication. Thus these two women wrestled with God in intercession for a human soul. At last a

sweet peace came into the mother's heart, and, starting to go to Annie and comfort her, she heard the girl singing a hymn of gladness. They met in a joyful embrace. "Mama, God will grant our prayer." "We will trust him, Annie." Locked in each other's arms, they went out on the porch again, where they had parted with Harry. It was a perfect day, and they stood in the sunshine in their peace.

The negro boy came running from the village. He could not at first speak from running, but finally he gasped, "He's dead!" A question or two from Mrs. Vernor brought from the boy the information that the corpse of Mr. Henry Gordon was at the station. Annie was on the way to the station, a mile distant, the mother with her, when a gentleman of their acquaintance met them, and constrained them to return home for the present. There had been an accident. The train had come back, bringing his body, and it was now in the hands of the undertaker.

The definite particulars he could not give. Toward noon they went to the village, expecting then to see the body, as the gentleman led them to think would be possible; but an hour before it had been shipped to his home.

The truth was, as some one confidentially told the mother, the body was too mangled for them to see. She learned also from a kind-hearted woman of the village something of the manner of his death. She took Annie home, and sent for one who was present, and got the full particulars.

This was the story: On the train that morning were two prisoners, two negroes, one accused of the rape of a girl, a school-mate of Harry and Annie; and the evidence seemed conclusive. The sheriff was removing this negro to another place, to escape a threatened lynching. He was sitting at the front end of the car beside the negro, whose hands and feet were shackled, and two deputies, one on the seat behind with the other negro, and one on the seat behind him. Across the aisle from the sheriff was sitting young Gordon. The sheriff and his deputies were heavily armed. In a deep cut the train slowed up, and stopped. Suddenly a hundred armed men surrounded the car, demanding the negro. The passengers were warned to leave the car.

The sheriff had been too quick for the mob. The instant that the train began to slacken speed, the sheriff and his nearest deputy and

the negro, whose feet the sheriff unshackled with a motion, sprang through the front door into the next coach, too soon for the mob to see. Scarcely had this been done, when the coach in the rear was uncoupled from the train, some one in the mob having caught sight of the negro in that coach, and shouting: "Here he is in the rear coach!" No further attention was given to the rest of the train; and it was moving away before the mob realized what was going on. The sheriff brought his prisoner to the rear platform, that the mob might see that he was escaping.

There was a momentary lull, during which all the passengers hurried out of the car except the deputy and his prisoner (who was really not a prisoner, but a brother of the real prisoner and had volunteered to play this part and thus save his brother in just such an attack), and Gordon, who had learned the facts and had agreed to help. He and the deputy were each provided with two pistols. They had closed the front door and the windows on either side of them. They were standing in the aisle, their faces toward the rear door; Gordon in front of the three, and the negro in their rear. The mob were at the

rear door, demanding that the negro be brought out.

Gordon, with drawn pistols, spoke, telling them briefly the facts, and calling on the passengers to confirm his statements, which many of them did. He went on to say, "This negro left here is not accused of crime. He is not shackled. The sheriff has entrusted him to us two deputies, and we are bound to defend him with our lives." "Bring him out, and let us see for ourselves. Some of us know the guilty brute. Bring him out!"

The mob were divided. Some were for hurrying after the escaping negro; some were for examining this negro to see whether he was not the accused; and some were for lynching this negro, anyway. The passengers generally were assuring the mob that the real culprit had escaped, but some were not sure. Gordon and the other deputy conferred. Finally they agreed with the mob on the following course: The mob were all to fall back fifty feet, and the negro was to show himself on the rear platform.

Gordon and the negro went out on the rear platform. The plan was successful, the mob was convinced; but just at the last moment one man in the mob shouted: "This is not the

brute, but his brother!" "His brother?" "His brother!" "Damn his brother! Let's wipe out the brood! Come on!" Such were the cries, and several men rushed forward. Gordon warned them not to cross the line agreed on, whispering to the negro to go. The deputy had come out, having closed all the windows. He told the mob that this negro was indeed a brother of the real criminal, but was not himself a prisoner at all, but had risked his life in this ruse to save his brother. The mob was infuriated that the brother was trying to save the rapist's life, and began to surge forward. Gordon called out, "We die for duty," and stepped into the car, saying to the deputy, "You guard that side, I this," taking the side on which there was really room for one to pass between the car and the dirt wall of the cut. Lifting the window, he put out a pistol. Shots were instantly fired at the window, shattering his arm. Shot rained against the window. Then he put out his left hand to fire, but the rain of bullets shattered it. Some of the mob rushed in and riddled him with balls. Meanwhile the negro had run out of the other door and through the other end of the cut and into a dense woods. When his

escape was discovered, some pursued, but after awhile came back, saying that it was useless. Those who rushed on Gordon in the car and shot him, had fled.

The deputy testified that his last words as he faced them, his hands hanging helpless, were, "You cowards, ——," a profane oath. But just before he had said, "If they kill me, tell Annie Vernor I did my duty."

Such was the story that Mrs. Vernor gathered, and told in pieces to Annie, as she watched on and into and through the night that followed. Annie lay prostrate. Yet she stood at the grave the next day; and when she laid the last wreath upon it, strong men were weeping. But all emotions gave place to astonishment, as she said, "He was—is more to me than to any one else in the world. Let not those who slew him be put to death. I forgive them." She spoke in a low voice, like a woman at prayer. Men went away, awed into silence, as if they had seen the Lord. And that night five mothers whose sons were under charge of murder prayed for her in their inmost souls.

CHAPTER IX

SOME LETTERS

MRS. VERNOR wrote to her former pastor, telling him of the tragedy. Then she added as follows:

“It is the greatest trial to our faith, or rather to mine. We had prayed for Harry’s salvation so earnestly, and we had what seemed to us so sweet an assurance of an answer; and even now we cannot but think we know that our prayer is answered. And yet he died without a sign of repentance, and with profanity on his lips. True, he was doing a noble deed; but we know that men are not saved for such deeds. Must we, then, conclude that we were deluded, and that our prayers never found acceptance with God?”

“And Annie, poor child, she only says, ‘I do not understand, but God is true.’ She visits the grave, which is in the village here, every day, and sits there alone. She will not let me go with her. My own heart is sore for myself; but when I look on my dear child,

so silent, it seems to me that the sight of her sufferings will kill me.

“Our dear pastor, you cannot come to see us, but will you not pray for us? And if you can write anything to comfort Annie, that will be the greatest solace to me.

“At such a time one is tempted to think that there may be something in ‘second probation,’ and I am afraid Annie may be led to look favorably upon this dangerous error.”

This last sentence, no less than the awful calamity, roused Dr. Woodbridge. He wrote a letter to Annie, from which the following are large extracts:

“My own child in the Spirit, I am in the deep sorrow with you. These seventeen years I have remembered you daily before God; and whatever touches my precious lamb touches me. And I, too, was carrying Harry as a burden on my soul. I loved the boy, and was expecting great things of him in the Lord; for long ago I recognized in him natural nobility and strength. I could not believe that he was dead, and I can hardly believe it now; I keep hoping or dreaming that there has been some mistake. I was not surprised at his behavior in the trying hour; for

I knew that he was unusually courageous and manly. I approve to the utmost what he did.

“Nor do I set it down, dear Annie, as a serious indication, that in that awful moment, when both his arms were hanging helpless, and his brave soul felt the cowardice of his assassins, his former habit of vehement utterance came back to him; for it would have been a miracle otherwise.

“Now I am far from thinking that any man is saved on account of his natural virtues, but I do get comfort concerning our beloved in these considerations: He knew the gospel; he was moving toward Christ; and in that last awful hour he behaved as a man would have behaved who had surrendered himself to Christ. *That he was moving toward Christ* is my great comfort; for I cannot believe that God would permit him to be cut off before he got to the Savior when he was going in that direction. While it is not given to us to know the secret things, yet it is not wrong for us to take comfort from those indications which he has permitted us to see.

“But our basis of peace is deeper than any convictions about the future of our loved ones, or even about our own future. Before

everything else is an appreciation of God. We believe him, and submit to him, and are reconciled to him. Nor do we hold him our enemy unless he saves us; rather because we discover in ourselves a mind reconciled to him, we thence infer our safety. We are taught to love God better than ourselves, and our neighbor as ourselves; and this we do spontaneously in the Spirit of Christ. Hence with us the first fountain of our peace is thus our inner reconciliation with God independently of particulars concerning us or ours. And this inner reconciliation I am persuaded that you have, Annie.

"Sometimes God gives us inexplicable trials, in order to reveal to our consciousness that we are thus reconciled to him, and to give us the unutterable peace of such conscious reconciliation. So may it be in your case.

"There is another thought which I cannot put aside. Since coming to this new field, I have had much to do with that new belief which we may call future probation. I have many men and many women in my congregation who are postponing their own reconciliation to God, or the conversion of their children, delivered from all urgency by this very

persuasion. I have by me a list of over four hundred persons who accept this doctrine of future probation, one hundred of them parents who are communicants in my church, the rest unconverted. I have another list of nearly four hundred persons, divided in like proportion, who do not thus believe. I made out these lists a year ago. Since that time, of the three hundred believers in future probation, two have come to Christ, one of these two after abandoning his belief in future probation; of the three hundred who do not believe in it, thirty have come to Christ. Of the one hundred children of parents who reject future probation, fifteen have been brought to Christ; of the eighty children of parents who accept it, not one. These facts account for my concern on this point.

“To guard you against the temptation to look with any favor on this dangerous error, a temptation that appeals to me in this case with tremendous force (for I cannot but believe that Harry is saved somehow), I send you herewith a little tract that I have recently had printed. Now is the time for us to show that we believe God, and that we form our beliefs upon his teachings, and not upon our own wishes.”

He ended in a strain of deep and tender sympathy, and commended her to God.

The tract set forth the following propositions, and elaborated them:

1. That the Scriptures so clearly imply generally, as well as affirm occasionally, that death ends probation, that they have been thus generally understood in all ages by all classes of minds.

2. That difficulties, even inexplicable difficulties, connected with this truth are not sufficient reason for rejecting it, especially as the theory of a future probation has its own inexplicable difficulties.

3. That the doctrine of a future probation promotes indifference to the immediate salvation of ourselves and others, and thus tends to paralyze evangelization and missions.

4. That the doctrine of a future probation is generally associated with the denial of the great evangelical doctrines of grace.

These four propositions were supported by quotations and references, and urged with all the fervor of conviction and of goodness, and with the strange power of a transparently consecrated spirit.

The letter and the tract made a profound

impression on her mind, by reason of their real strength and her devotion to her beloved pastor. And yet she did not need so much effort to be made; for she hardly asked herself the question whether Harry Gordon was brought into a state of salvation before death or after death. Or, as she herself put it, she had been led by the Spirit to intercede for his salvation, and had done so, believing that this request she obtained, and now it was in no wise necessary to her peace and confidence to determine whether the accomplishment of her prayer was a thing effected before or after some other event. Nothing had shaken her assurance concerning Harry. When some one said, "But suppose it were proved that he died impenitent and the Bible denies salvation to all who die impenitent, what would you then think? Would not that prove that he is finally lost?" she merely smiled and answered, "The untrue cannot be proved."

So she went on in her quiet goodness. Her system gradually recovered from the shock; and her old cheerfulness came back, only deeper and sweeter than before. Within three months she was the one friend on whom each of the five mothers leaned whose sons were charged with murder. She showed each

one of them how to cast all her anxiety on God. One by one these five men came back, surrendered to the authorities, and confessed fully what they had done. They were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; and in the course of a few years, in view of their good behavior and by the influence of Annie Vernor, they were pardoned. And they gave evidence of humbly endeavoring to live her sort of life.

But to go back. Samuel Wright learned of the tragedy, of course, and of Annie's behavior. At his Christmas vacation he came to the village near which Annie lived, and remained there a week. He spent the days with Annie.

They went over the story of Cecilia and her sorrow and humiliation, over the story of Willie Green, over the story of Annie's own awful experience. They talked very frankly to each other, she of her love for Harry, and he of his love for Cecilia. To this subject she led him again and again.

"Mr. Wright, you still love Cecilia; would you marry her now?"

"You startle me, Miss Vernor. Although she utterly cast me off, and raised an impassable barrier between herself and me, yet I

have used every means to trace her, in the blind hope that I might at least help her."

"You speak of an impassable barrier; what barrier is impassable to love?"

"She told me and wrote me that she had given up her religious faith, and had ceased to read the Bible or to pray."

"You astonish me, Mr. Wright. I did not know this."

"But is not that an impassable barrier?"

"As long as it lasts. Yes, I had fully decided never to give myself to Harry till he gave himself to God; because our Lord so teaches, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' But if Harry had lived, God would have removed that barrier. O that you could find her and win her yet—for Christ, for you she already loves."

"Loves me?"

"Yes. Now I understand. She sinned against her love of you and faith in Christ in giving herself to Mr. Caldwell. It is too sad. We must find her yet."

Another day he told her frankly of his question, and at different times they talked it over in connection with Willie and with Harry. The result was that he saw that belief in the possibility of salvation after death

is not necessary to the deepest faith and sweetest peace. This was her experience. She helped him to come into the really scientific attitude of mind: neither to lean to a belief because it relieves the mind's pain, nor to lean from a belief because it gives the mind pain. The relief from pain should come through direct faith in God, and not by syllogistic inference. Then, having the relief, being at peace, the mind is in the true scientific serenity. So he went away, divested of all fear that his investigations would lead to this result or that, having a conscious peace that no discovery would disturb.

And he went away more determined than ever to find Cecilia.

CHAPTER X

THE FINDING OF THE LOST

ANNIE was one day with one of the mothers of the young men who had shot Henry Gordon to death, and who had returned home. This lady said to Annie that her son had met some one in the far West who asked about Philip Caldwell. Annie waited an opportunity for a private conversation, and learned from the young man, that, in a town in New Mexico, he and his companion in flight were talking one day in their room, and in their talk mentioned the name of Philip Caldwell; that their washer-woman, who was present counting out the clothes, suddenly turned and asked what it was they had said of him, and then at once checked herself and would make no further inquiry; and that they were both convinced from her manner that she knew him and wished to conceal herself. Annie learned the name of this woman and of the town.

An hour later she mailed the following letter to Mr. Wright:

Dear Friend:—I have just learned that in the town of Loco, New Mexico, lives a washerwoman named Green, who disclosed an eagerness to learn about Mr. Philip Caldwell, and yet was unwilling to reveal herself to persons that knew him. It seems to me possible that she is both connected with Willie and knows something of Cecilia. The clue may seem to you unworthy of attention, but I thought that you might be able from where you are to make some inquiries in this direction.

The desire grows upon me to find Cecilia. I want your letter that never reached her delivered to her yet. I am constantly praying that we may find her.

ANNIE VERNOR.

As soon as he received this letter he looked up the University Directory to see whether there were any students from Loco, N. M., but found none. From census reports he learned that Loco had less than one thousand inhabitants. He went to his room, and wrote two letters, one to Miss Green, laundrywoman, and one to Miss Cecilia Dobbs, and directed each to Loco, N. M. He went out to mail them, but before reaching a letter-box thought that it might be a mistake to mail them. He reasoned that Cecilia and the mother of Willie, were each probably trying to conceal herself from former acquaintances,

and that therefore, even if one or the other of the letters should reach the person for whom it was intended, of which he felt that there was hardly any chance at all, she would not answer, but might even change her place of residence to escape detection, especially Miss Green. Her he wished to find, only that through her he might get some clue to Cecilia. He returned to his room, and destroyed the letters.

Two hours later he was on a train with a through ticket for Loco, N. M., where he arrived two days later. It was night, and he went at once to the only hotel. He strayed about the hotel for several days, reading the local paper for weeks back, and studying the characters he met. He had found no clue, but he did find in one of the waiters a man on whom he could rely.

This man he questioned, but learned nothing of a Miss Green, washerwoman, nor of a Miss Dobbs; but he took him into his confidence as far as necessary, and set him to work to find traces of the washerwoman and of the sojourn of the young men to whom she had shown her knowledge of Caldwell. After a day the man returned, having learned that three months ago a washerwoman named

Green was in the town, and had been for several years; but the lady for whom she washed was not now at home, and the servant from whom the waiter learned this, did not know more, having come into this lady's service just a little over three months ago. Wright sent the waiter back to make further inquiries, and learned this lady's name and present address.

She was in a neighboring town, and Wright went there at once, and called upon her. He sent in his card, and waited in the sitting-room some time. At last the lady came. Without sitting down, she said, "Was it me you wished to see?"

"Madam will pardon a stranger for this intrusion. My business does not concern you, but you happen to know a person whom I am anxious to find."

"What person, Sir?"

"A woman named Green, who was once your laundrywoman."

"And why do you wish to find her?"

"Not to her disadvantage in any way, I assure you, on the honor of a gentleman. I am not a detective or an officer of the law."

"But you have not told me your reason, Sir."

"Simply to learn from her certain information of much consequence to me, information which it will harm no one for me to know."

"Who are you?"

"I am a Presbyterian minister, pursuing a graduate course of study in the University of ——."

"You will pardon me, but we are strangers. Do you belong to the Northern or to the Southern Presbyterian Church?"

"To the Southern."

Thereupon she turned to a table, on which were lying some books and pamphlets, consulted first a register of the University and a copy of the Minutes of the General Assembly of his Church; then she approached him with extended hand, saying cordially, "Mr. Wright, you will pardon my caution, and accept my hospitality. I will aid you to the full extent of my power. For now I know you. I have often heard my husband speak of you."

"Your husband speak of me? I do not understand."

"My husband is Dr. Waite, who was your physician for Willie Green."

Wright's astonishment was great, for he had not thought of the identity in name; and

his admiration was as great; and finally his gratitude. For she returned with him to Loco, took him as a guest into her home, and sent for Miss Green.

When the three were together, Mrs. Waite said, "Bettie, you need not fear to talk freely to this gentleman; for he is the gentleman that took such care of Willie." But she said nothing. Then Mrs. Waite added, "I have told him nothing."

"You were good, Sir," the washerwoman said, "but Willie was not my child."

"Whose child was he?" Wright asked in astonishment.

She looked confused, and stammered out that he must ask someone else.

Then he said to her, "Do you know Miss Dobbs?"

"No," she answered, as puzzled at being asked such a question.

"Then," he said, "my trip has been in vain. But you do know Mr. Philip Caldwell?"

She trembled violently as she answered, "Too well."

"And," he said urgently, "you know nothing of Miss Dobbs?" spelling the name over for her.

"No, sir ; I never heard of her."

Thus the interview ended, and Wright was disappointed, although, as he afterwards told Mrs. Waite, he had no reason to expect that this woman would know anything of the Miss Dobbs about whom he inquired. And he indicated his purpose to leave on the first train, which would be early the next morning.

After tea Mrs. Waite said that she was going out to see a lady who was ill, and who had Bettie Green as a nurse. Bettie had just asked for some delicacies for her. If he would go with her, possibly he might minister consolation. He consented readily.

They went to a small but neat house; and to Mrs. Waite's low knock Bettie answered at the door. "I brought the minister with me, Bettie, if you will admit him." There was nothing to do but to let them both into the front room. There he was left, and Mrs. Waite went on into the sick room. When she returned she said that Miss Brown declined to see a minister, saying that she had lost all faith. She expected to die, but begged not to be tormented in her dying hours by the efforts of religious zeal.

When he had returned home with his hostess, he excused himself to go out and attend

to an item of business, and sent the following telegram to Annie Vernor: "Our friend is here, seriously ill. Come immediately. Wire me your train." He had heard the voice of the sick woman and recognized it as the voice of Cecilia Dobbs.

CHAPTER XI

THE BETRAYAL

SAMUEL WRIGHT was in perplexity. He was consumed with anxiety to see Cecilia and to talk with her; he saw no way to compass this without revealing that she was living under an assumed name; he felt that he would be wronging her to do this without her consent; he thought that Annie could help him to overcome the difficulty; he feared that Cecilia might be dead before Annie arrived.

Three things occurred the next day.

First of all, he got to hear her voice once more, though he was not permitted to see her.

Then he obtained the long interview with Bettie Green, and learned her story from her own lips. Three years ago she was a clerk in a large department store in the great city. A young gentleman, who said that he was sojourning in the city for a couple of months, met her in the store one day. He came then several days in succession to buy some trifle

from her. He obtained her consent to come to her home, after asking in vain to take her to a theater. He brought to her mother unmistakable proofs of his identity, and of his honorable standing and character. He paid her every attention for several weeks, visiting her in her home, and taking her to the theater, and sometimes also to church. Finally they were secretly married, her parents refusing to consent to her marriage on so short an acquaintance; and he said that he would take her to his home, starting the next day. But the next day he told her that money which he was expecting had not come, and that he would now have to wait some days till he could send and get it. Meanwhile she met him constantly where he appointed. Finally he disappeared, and she had never seen him since; but she learned that he was living in North Carolina with brilliant prospects. She learned also that he had a married sister in the city, a Mrs. Vanmeter. About the time that her baby was born, Mrs. Vanmeter gave birth to a son. "Meanwhile I had quit the store, and had gone into her house as a servant, in order by overhearing to learn of her brother's movements. When our babies were born, I was seized with a temptation sud-

denly. The opportunity was presented to exchange the babies, and I did so without the knowledge or suspicion of any one whatever. Several nights afterwards my parents and I left the city clandestinely, but on different trains. Their train left first, and so I was in the house alone with the baby and the lodgers for awhile. I put the baby, Mrs. Vanmeter's, in the front hall, where the lodgers next morning would be sure to see it and have it taken to an asylum; and I went my way." She went on to tell him that she did not go as planned by her parents, but returned and went to another place in the city, and obtained a situation as a servant with Mrs. Waite, who soon came here on her annual visit to New Mexico, and brought her along. And here she had since remained.

When asked if she had proofs of the marriage, she turned over to him the record with the signatures of the minister and two witnesses, and a certified copy of the license. The name of the man was Philip Caldwell. She showed him also a check on a Raleigh, N. C., bank, drawn in favor of Philip Caldwell or order, and endorsed by him to Mrs. Elizabeth Caldwell. It was for \$14.37, and had been drawn by Wesson & Wingate. This

she said she had taken from his pocket one night after their marriage, and she did not correct his supposition that he had lost it. The papers and check were given her at the marriage; but soon after they were one night burning up some old papers, sorting them out from others. When he saw the envelope in which these marriage papers had been given to her, he proposed to burn it also, and she assented; but already she, having suspicion of him, especially after he took back the check, had taken out the marriage papers and put other papers in the envelope.

Further inquiry elicited the information that both Mr. and Mrs. Vanmeter were now dead, and that the child, which was really Bettie Green's and Philip Caldwell's, was now in the home of Caldwell, who had married a wealthy woman and was the legal guardian of his supposed nephew.

That evening he left Loco, telling Mrs. Waite that he would be back in a few days. He went over the story of Bettie Green with Mrs. Waite (except the exchange of the children), and found that she had received this story from her, and fully believed it, especially as she knew that the bill for Willie was paid by a stranger, whom she and Wright

now identified with Caldwell. Moreover, she told him that the lady now known as Mrs. Caldwell was a good woman, and was trying to raise her husband's nephew to be a good man.

He met Annie several hundred miles before her arrival, put her in possession of all that he knew, and agreed with her on their course of action.

He came back to Loco on the next train after her arrival. After registering at the hotel, where she also was staying, and where he thenceforth insisted on remaining, he called on Mrs. Waite. He told her that, before he finally left New Mexico, he wanted another interview with Bettie Green in her presence. This was arranged for; but it took place in unexpected conditions.

CHAPTER XII

ANNIE'S LETTER

M*Y DEAR MOTHER:*—While resting in the kind home of Mrs. Waite, I will write you an account of all the sad events. I take up the story where I left off.

Immediately on my arrival, about sundown, I went to the hotel and took a room. Without waiting to eat, hungry as I was, I went for a walk. Following the directions that Mr. Wright had given me, I found myself in Cecilia's street, walking up and down in front of her house. After a little while a woman came to the door, looking up the street with evident anxiety. I spoke to her, and asked her the name of the street. When she told me, I remarked that I was a stranger, and was out walking in the delicious air. "But," I said, "you seem to be troubled. Pardon a stranger, but I could help you, possibly." She was beginning to answer me, when a cough within caused her to leave me, saying that she would be back. I took a seat in the front room, and heard the coughing. It died down, and there was quiet for awhile. When the woman returned, closing the door, between the two rooms softly, she said

that Miss Brown had fallen asleep. I remarked how tired she looked, told her my name, and learned that her's was Bettie Green. Presently I rose to go, and kissed the poor woman in my sympathy.

As soon as I could eat my supper I returned. On the way, there met and passed me a fine lady with so sweet a face, whom I took to be Mrs. Waite. As soon as I arrived, I told Bettie that I was going to stay a part of the night and let her get some rest, saying that I had had much experience in nursing and was fresh. I got her to lie down on a cot in the front room, and sat and talked with her till she fell asleep. While smoothing her forehead and temples with my hand, I felt the warm tears steal out, and I was sorry for this hungry heart.

When she was asleep I went quietly into the other room, and sat down by Cecilia's bed. She was still asleep. Even under the dim light I could see how pale and thin she was, and I felt sure that death was near. While sitting there I thought of so many things. After an hour she began to waken, but the touch of my hand would quiet her; and when I kissed her once and whispered "Cecile," she smiled faintly. Little by little she came to consciousness and to recognition of me, till finally, when she looked at me and called me Annie, we both felt that we had been together a long time.

I talked to her, asking her questions that she

could answer with a syllable or a motion of the head. After awhile she suddenly felt surprise and asked me how I came there. Then I told her the long story of our search, and was careful to dwell on Mr. Wright's anxiety and love, and to work in the explanation of how his letter did not reach her. As my story progressed she gave increasing attention. When I told of the letter, she murmured, "If I had but known!" And before I finished she was weeping; and she said "These are my first tears, Annie, since the night after the apple orchard when I wrote my last letter to Samuel." I was weeping, too.

Then she told me the story of herself: how Caldwell had cast her off; how, when she and her mother had lost all, they left their old surroundings; how she took the name of Brown to conceal herself; how she had taught, and nursed her mother, and fallen ill herself; how she had come to hate Caldwell for his baseness, and to feel humiliated that a married man had betrothed her; how she felt bitter that Samuel, as she thought, had forsaken her, and how her religious faith had utterly died. She said, when she learned that I knew Bettie's story, "The presence of that woman, since I learned some weeks ago that she is the wife of that man, is loathsome to me, but I have not had the heart to send her away. And Mrs. Waite I cannot bear, for I wanted to die alone and be forgotten. The only good left in me, Annie, is my love for you and Samuel. Send

for him." She had spoken with evident effort, pausing at times for weakness, but I saw that it was a relief to her to tell me.

Saying that I would send for Samuel, I went into the front room, and despatched Bettie to the hotel with a note for Mr. Wright.

While waiting, I spoke to Cecile of myself and my great sorrow. I did this to get opportunity of presenting Christ to her; and never, mother, has He seemed so precious to me as while I sat there in the dawn with the dying Cecile and told her of the presence and peace of Christ. She listened in silence.

As I was finishing my story, we heard a step. It was Samuel alone. He came in through the front room, knelt down by the low bed, and they were wrapped in each other's arms before I had time to withdraw.

The sun was up when, an hour later, he came out. I looked in with Bettie, who had returned, and Cecile's face showed new color and her eyes beamed. She said "Go back to the hotel, Annie, and rest. Bettie will take care of me. You have been so good."

On the way to the hotel Mr. Wright told me that Cecile had told him that she loved him, and always had, and begged his forgiveness, and seemed so happy when she realized that he held nothing in his heart toward her but love. He also told her how he had suffered, thinking that he had lost her, and how he had been overwhelmed with

intellectual difficulties, and that in all things the Presence was with him. To this she listened in silence. At the last she had said, "Samuel, my faith is utterly dead. I do not, and now cannot, believe in Christ any more. But I love you; and now I see that I can get well." And she fully expected her recovery, saying that she did not have consumption, and that her heart trouble was not organic. These were her last words to him.

Immediately after breakfast we went back. As we turned into the street four blocks away, we saw the house in flames; for, as was afterwards evident, the little oil stove, on which Bettie was cooking something in the front room, had exploded. As Mr. Wright ran and reached the house a block or more ahead of me, I saw Bettie run out from the rear door with Cecile in her arms. As she staggered to the ground, he caught Cecile from her. Cecile was dead.

Bettie died that day. All that she could tell us was, that, as she was herself in flames, Cecile ran in and wrapped her in bedclothes, saying, "'What a delusion is Christ!'" and fell lifeless to the floor."

A week later Samuel Wright was back in his room at the University, writing thus to Annie:

"I have not yet been able to realize what has taken place. I do know that my joy was un-

bounded after my talk with Cecilia. It is true that she told me frankly of her loss of faith, and her calm decision was something terrible. But I had then, as before and since, the invincible evidence of Christ in myself, and her blindness could not annul my vision. And I fully expected to win her back to Christ. It is true that she had sinned, and had thereby lost for the time the immediate evidence which is the atmosphere of faith, if she ever had the genuine faith. Consequently the trials had been severe, and she had suffered a wrench. I fully expected her to return to her old faith in Christ, or to come to a new faith in him. But death fell, so unexpected, so horrible. She would have recovered. The overwork had not mastered her physical resources, and even the heart trouble that killed her would gradually have passed away. This accident has changed everything, and awful is the darkness. Yet our Savior is with me. My pain is anguish insupportable, but never was He nearer or more satisfying. You understand it, Annie, and our fellowship in suffering with each other enables us better to realize our fellowship with Him.

"I am listening to be taught, and I can hear no voice saying that her eternal destiny is essentially different from what it would have been but for this accident."

And Annie Vernor was thus ending a long

conversation with her mother: "Well, mother, I am not appointed to solve such problems. I see no revelation from which we can certainly tell what will be the final state of our dear Cecile; but I have no difficulty in trusting God."

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW SITUATION

WE pass over an interval of five years. Wright has finished his university course, and has been nearly five years at work as pastor of a village church in Alabama. Malcolm Woodbridge has been remarkably blest in his pastorate in the great city; and he has figured in a delightful romance, marrying Annie's mother. Soon after this marriage he accepted the leading pastorate in Atlanta, glad to return to his congenial South; and it would be difficult to say which is now the most beloved in his congregation, himself or his wife, or his daughter Annie. Philip Caldwell has prospered. He is now serving his first term in Congress, and is making friends and reputation. His wife is a woman of deep piety, and devotes herself to the training of her beautiful daughter and the little Vanmeter boy.

The greatest change has been in Samuel Wright. After Cecilia's death he became

more than ever a student, and developed an unusual shyness and shrinking; but, above all else, he became calm and glad. To those who had known him and his variable temperament, and knew what he had passed through, the profound peace and even serenity of his life was wonderful. Annie, who kept up a correspondence with him, said that it was because he daily walked with his Lord. And slowly, but surely, he won the confidence and affection of his people of all classes, especially of all who had great sorrow, and of the children. His church grew, and his reputation for a certain sort of compelling persuasion in the pulpit was spreading among the churches.

At this time the second most important Presbyterian Church in Atlanta lost its pastor, and Annie determined to get him a call to this church.

It was now the end of May. They were one evening at the dinner-table, and a visitor. Their table as usually arranged held four persons; at one end Mrs. Woodbridge; at the other Dr. Woodbridge; on his right and her mother's left, Annie; and facing her a friend. Sometimes this would be a gentleman, old or young, often a special friend or

helper of the good doctor and often some other member of his church or congregation. Sometimes it would be a lady friend of Mrs. Woodbridge. And sometimes it would be a girl friend of Annie. So it happened this time, and, not a remarkably unusual thing, the beautiful Evangeline Williams, an intimate associate and fellow worker of Annie's, though a member of the Second Church.

"Evangeline," asks Annie, "where will you go this year for your summer outing?"

"If I get away at all," answered Miss Williams, pausing with her fork held gracefully over her plate, "I will go with Papa and Mama. They talk of spending a few weeks among the lakes of Minnesota."

"That would be delightful," answered Miss Vernor with her usual quiet enthusiasm.

"Mama thinks so," said Miss Williams, with a laugh, "because she happened to find out that Papa desired to go there; and Papa thinks that he would prefer that to a trip to Scotland, since he found out that Mama is now nervous about going on the ocean. They are such lovers still, and I wish to go with them wherever they go, that I may enjoy them; it makes me feel young myself."

"And twenty-two," put in the doctor, "so needs something to scatter the gathering clouds of age. And, Wife," looking at Mrs. Woodbridge with a smile, "I should like for us to go with them, that you might take lessons from Mrs. Williams."

"O, then, with two such couples, one would be tempted to doubt whether our Savior is correctly reported as saying that there is no marriage in heaven," answered Miss Williams, with a little ripple of laughter. "Do come."

Dr. Woodbridge inquired when they thought of going, and, after Miss Williams said that her father would have to take his recreation early and be back in his office by the first of August, said, seriously: "I fear that I cannot get away for July, as the understanding has been that I be absent during August, and we have secured no one yet to fill the pulpit even then."

For the first time Mrs. Woodbridge spoke, saying, "Then, doctor, may I make a suggestion to you?"

"Yes, indeed, Wife, and I know beforehand that it will be worth considering."

"I have been thinking lately of Mr. Wright. Annie showed me a letter from

him last night, and he said that he expected to stay with his people all summer."

"He ought to have a change. I will see if we cannot get him to fill my pulpit in July."

"Then I fear Annie would not go with me to study lovemaking in Minnesota," said Evangeline, quizzically.

She answered at once, "Yes, I will, if for nothing else, to have you away and thus avert danger."

Thus they went on merrily; but Mr. Wright was invited to preach for the First Church in July. It spread among the young people of the Second Church, and through them among the older members. Moreover, Annie led her mother to think of it, and she suggested it to her husband, and he proposed it to the Session of the First Church, and a formal invitation was extended to the Second Church to worship with the First Church, if, at any service, the Second Church should have no supply for its pulpit. When one of the young men of the Second Church, who liked to be in Miss Vernor's company, was teasing her about the young minister with whom she kept up a correspondence, she so used the opportunity as to create in his mind the thought

that it would be well if the Second Church failed to get a pulpit supply for July. It turned out so.

Annie and Miss Williams found reasons for remaining in Atlanta during July. Annie brought Mr. Wright and Miss Williams together, and watched the results with pleasure. There were two results. One was that they inevitably liked each other. The other was that somehow the idea got into the minds of the Second Church's young people that Mr. Wright would make them a suitable pastor. And in September he was given a unanimous call to the Second Church.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW EXPERIENCE

IT happened that his Presbytery, the body of ministers and elders (one from each church) to which Wright and his church belonged in Alabama, met in September, and the Atlanta Presbytery in October, in their semi-annual regular meetings. A special meeting of the Atlanta Presbytery was convened early in September and gave the Second Church permission to prosecute its call before Wright's Presbytery. After hearing the representatives from his church and from the Atlanta church, his Presbytery decided to let him go to the larger field of usefulness, much as his church and Presbytery regretted to part with him.

Between the regular meetings of the two Presbyteries, he removed to Atlanta and began his ministry in the new field; and the people were abundantly satisfied with their choice. But he was not yet officially the pastor of the church. Before he could be for-

mally installed in this office, the Presbytery of Atlanta must admit him as a member of itself after an examination as to his soundness in the faith. Usually this examination of a minister at his transfer from one Presbytery to another is a matter of form; but occasionally it becomes interesting. In this instance it was tragically so.

About thirty ministers and thirty elders were present as members of the Presbytery; and among the listeners were Annie and Evangeline and Mrs. Woodbridge and some members of the Second Church. It was in the house of worship of this church that the Presbytery was meeting. Dr. Woodbridge was asked to conduct the examination; but any member of the Presbytery was at liberty to put questions.

Dr. Woodbridge's questions were clear and pointed, and covered the main doctrines of grace as held by the Presbyterian Church, and Mr. Wright's answers were not only satisfactory as to his orthodoxy, but showed a remarkable mastery of theological science as well. The Presbytery and his friends were highly pleased. At this point the moderator, or president, inquired whether any member of the Presbytery wished to ask a question; and

a certain minister, sitting in one corner, near the front, said: "Mr. Moderator, in view of the fact that Mr. Wright studied several years in the University of —, I would like to ask him three questions."

All eyes were turned to the speaker, a Rev. Amos Dunn. He was tall and bony. His shoulders stooped and his nose was hooked, and his hair was red, and he spoke with a nasal twang. Most deliberative bodies have members who are given to objecting to propositions; and Rev. Amos Dunn was the well-known objector in this Presbytery. Among the earnest men of the gospel ministry some few are known as heresy-hunters; and Rev. Amos Dunn was notorious as the heresy-hunter of the Presbytery. And what he lacked in breadth of mind he made up in intensity of zeal.

The moderator said: "Mr. Dunn will proceed with his questions."

"Has your faith, Brother Wright, in the infallible authority of the Word of God been weakened at all by your studies and investigations?" asked Rev. Amos Dunn.

"By no means, but the contrary," answered Mr. Wright.

"Do you believe unequivocally in the divin-

ity and deity of Jesus Christ?" said the questioner, standing with his thumbs in the lapels of his coat.

Wright answered, "Certainly, if I understand you; but I am not clear what you mean by believing unequivocally."

"I mean whether you unequivocally assert this belief, Brother Wright."

"I aim to make all my assertions unequivocally."

"I did not mean to question your sincerity, Brother Wright. I only wanted to know for certain whether you believe fully in the deity as well as divinity of our Lord."

Wright was silent. "And I understand," proceeded Rev. Amos Dunn, "that your answer is in the affirmative?"

"You will pardon me for asking what distinction you mean to make between the divinity of our Lord and his deity."

Rev. Amos Dunn was confused, but answered: "Well, do you, like Thomas, believe in Christ as your God?"

"Yes."

"One more question will satisfy me. Do you believe in second probation?"

"If you mean to ask me concerning what may or may not take place in some cases af-

ter death, I should prefer not to try to answer."

"Why not answer so important a question, Brother Wright?" said Rev. Amos Dunn, with a show of new animation; for he shared in the general sensation.

"On account of my ignorance. I have not arrived at the positive rejection of any statement of our standards touching eschatology, nor have I arrived at the positive acceptance of them all. If my brethren are willing to let me go on preaching the truth which has been given to me, and not hurrying to a decision on certain questions in this sphere of the last things, questions to my mind obscure, I shall appreciate their confidence."

"I must insist upon my question."

"Very well, if the Presbytery desires an answer. But what, now, exactly is the question?"

"Do you believe in second probation?"

"To that question my categorical answer must be no; but——"

"Well, do you disbelieve in second probation?"

"To that question my categorical answer must be yes; but——"

"Mr. Moderator," said another member

of the Presbytery, "I move that the examination be considered satisfactory, and Mr. Wright's name be enrolled." Several seconds to this motion were heard. But another motion was made that the further consideration of the matter be postponed to the afternoon session, as it was then time for the public address set for 11 A. M. This motion was carried.

Between noon and 3 P. M., the recess of the Presbytery, there was much conferring together among the members, and many were in perplexity, none more so than Dr. Woodbridge. Wright's attitude of mind concerning the bearing of death on human destiny had not been mentioned to him, and he was astonished and pained at Wright's answers. At 2 o'clock Wright received a note from him requesting him to come to Dr. Woodbridge's house, which he hastened to do. Annie met him at the door. She said nothing, but there was something in her whole manner and the gentle clasp of her hand that made him understand her sympathy. He was directed at once to the doctor's study.

"Be seated, my brother," the good doctor said with a cordial pressure of the hand. "I have sent for you in the hope of saving you

and the Presbytery from a harmful agitation." The two men talked together, and prayed together; and when they emerged from the study nearly an hour later, they had agreed that Wright should submit the following statement to the Presbytery: "In nothing have I departed from the doctrines set forth in our standards of doctrine, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms; but touching the relation of the death of the body to a man's everlasting destiny, there are points not yet determined by me. In my present state of mind I should prefer to attempt no exposition of my views. If Presbytery can see its way clear to permit this silence, it may be assured that I will teach nothing contrary to our standards without first advising Presbytery of my intention to do so, should I ever reach a point where I could not otherwise be faithful to my own convictions. My desire now is not to be driven by any considerations to a precipitate and ill-formed conclusion, and not to have a useless and harmful agitation over my limitations of belief in this direction, but to preach the gospel. I therefore request the Presbytery not to demand of me any further effort to give answers on this subject. But I am in

the hands of Presbytery, and have no desire to hide my beliefs from it; and I will cheerfully abide by its decision."

When they walked in together, the Presbytery had already been in session a half hour, and the building was full of people. Rev. Amos Dunn was on the floor making an argument against admitting Mr. Wright without further examination. When he ended he had made the impression on many, who were not present at the morning session, that Mr. Wright held grave heresies, and was trying to conceal them.

Dr. Woodbridge arose and moved that the pending motion be divided, and that the vote be first taken on the proposition that the examination now close, and afterwards on the proposition to admit Mr. Wright; and this division of the motion was agreed to. On the first part of the motion Dr. Woodbridge spoke. As a part of his remarks he read the statement which Mr. Wright had agreed to make. His argument was that Mr. Wright had shown himself in general sound in faith, in his preaching and in his examination; that he confessed himself troubled on certain points of eschatology, but had reached no decision against the confessional dogmas; and

that he was modestly keeping even doubts to himself, and did not wish to disturb the church with them. To this the elder representing the First Church added his testimony, that Mr. Wright's preaching in July was eminently Biblical and orthodox, and warned the Presbytery against forcing harmful agitation.

At this point an influential member of the Presbytery, a Dr. Dick, a minister of unusual skill in debate and in parliamentary practice, moved as a substitute that a committee, of which Dr. Woodbridge should be chairman, be appointed to confer with Mr. Wright and report its recommendation whether there should be any further examination before Presbytery. The substitute was accepted. The moderator appointed Dr. Dick and an elder from outside the city, a Mr. Macdonald.

The committee met with Mr. Wright at once, and all agreed that he should make to this committee a full and frank statement of his mind, that the committee might decide whether further examination before the Presbytery was desirable. In the conference he stated informally what he afterwards formulated. Dr. Woodbridge was surprised and pained, and felt constrained to admit that the

Presbytery ought to know fully what the committee knew before the vote was taken on Mr. Wright's examination. This was Dr. Dick's position, who suggested that Mr. Wright reduce his statement to writing. Mr. Macdonald dissented, believing that Mr. Wright was a sound gospel preacher. So they made a majority and minority report. It was on Thursday morning and few visitors were present. After hearing Mr. Macdonald speak for his recommendation, the vote was taken and the result was a tie between the two reports. The moderator cast his vote for the majority report.

Thereupon Mr. Wright read the following statement:

"Moderator, Fathers, and Brethren: The question propounded to me was whether I believe in second probation. Understanding the meaning to be that there is a sense in which men to whom the gospel is made known are thereby put on probation whether they will accept or reject it, I would answer emphatically that, if men reject the gospel and thus end this one probation, there is no second probation. But, if it be asked whether men who are put on this probation in this life, and do not end it by either accepting or rejecting Christ before death, are continued on this probation after

death until they come to a definite decision for or against Christ; or if it be asked whether men who are not put on this probation by hearing the gospel in this life, are ever put on this probation after death by having the gospel then made known to them,—in both these cases I answer that I have not yet reached that point in my investigations where I can say either Yes or No. I am not yet sure whether the Bible answers these questions or not; and if it answers them, I am not sure whether the answer is affirmative or negative. Just here is my point of doubt, and not on the finality of destiny to all who are brought to a definite or fixed acceptance or rejection of Christ. It is whether the final limit of decision is the moment of physical death."

CHAPTER XV

A NEW RELATION

THE Presbytery spent the day in debate over the motion to admit Mr. Wright. Rev. Amos Dunn, Dr. Dick and a number of others spoke in opposition, Dr. Dick leading the debate. In favor of his admission spoke Mr. Macdonald, Judge Keene, who was the elder from the First Church, and Dr. Baxter, who was a physician and was the elder from the Second Church, and two or three of the younger ministers. Dr. Woodbridge sat all day in silence. In the afternoon the Presbytery adjourned to the next day, without coming to a vote.

That night a popular meeting was held in the interest of foreign missions. The speakers, by previous arrangement, were to be Dr. Dick and Mr. Wright. A great crowd was present. Dr. Dick was a noted orator among Presbyterians, and there was a great curiosity to hear Mr. Wright; the events of the

last two days had aroused a profound interest in these two men. To-day the utterances in public and private had revealed that a large majority of the Presbytery were disposed to vote against the admission of Mr. Wright; and the people of the Presbyterian churches, and even of other churches, in the city, were taking sides. So the predominant interest in the breasts in that crowded place of assembly was not fixed on the heathen, but on Mr. Wright. Both speakers realized that, in spite of themselves, their speeches would have an influence on the vote to-morrow.

It was 8:45 when Dr. Dick began to speak, three-quarters of an hour having been given to opening exercises and a routine report. He set himself to presenting the following appeal: '1st, that all men are lost eternally but for the atonement of Christ; 2nd, that all are thus lost who do not accept Him in a vital faith; 3rd, that all men are finally judged and sentenced according to what they are at death, and not according to what they become after death; 4th, that therefore the call to carry the gospel to the heathen immediately was urgent. He spent fifteen minutes on his introduction and on the elaboration of the first

two points, forty-five minutes on the elaboration of the third point, and fifteen on the fourth point. His conclusion was terrific, when he drew a picture of the unbroken stream of the myriad heathen flowing into hell at death without ever having heard of Christ, and deplored the apathy, and every theory or doubt that tended to augment the apathy, of Christendom. A profound impression was produced.

In the midst of the stillness, following this masterly effort, the moderator said: "It is now 10 o'clock. Will Mr. Wright undertake to add a few words at this late hour?"

"Yes, Mr. Moderator," said he, rising and coming forward to the speaker's stand. "I will speak to as many as choose to remain." He paused to permit any to retire who wished to do so, and then began.

He opened by making the importance of the subject justify the further discussion of it at this late hour, showing that, unless we have sufficient reasons for foreign missions, we have not sufficient reasons for the propagation of Christianity at all. He next classified the motives to foreign missions into two which were really one; those which arise from looking at the heathen, and those which

arise from looking at Christ. The former had already been presented, and he therefore turned attention to the second. He led his hearers to take five looks at Christ: First, at Christ in his pre-incarnation, showing that the whole Old Testament work was a preparation for evangelizing mankind; second, at Christ in His public ministry, His love for men in general, again and again exhibiting itself in His teaching, and breaking over the limitations of His special work; third, at Christ in His death, which had in view all human beings, and especially His elect in all nations, putting every human being into a relation of salvability, and securing the salvation of some out of every nation; fourth, at Christ preaching in spirit to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3, 18 f), the profoundest expression of His love in spite of ill treatment; and fifth, at Christ ascended, giving to His church in all these centuries the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of missions. He summed up by pointing out the profound desire of Christ for the salvation of all men, the patient continuance of His work and sufferings for the heathen, and the tremendous urgency of His command and spirit now. He ended by declaring that this urgency is grounded in immeasurably

deeper reasons than a necessity of reaching the heathen with the gospel before physical death overtook them, namely, in the nearing crisis of the great war between good and evil.

The address lasted an hour, increasing in power from the beginning to the end, and in its accumulated force at the end was overwhelming. If the vote could have been taken then he would have been admitted.

Before the Presbytery met the next morning the astute Dr. Dick saw Dr. Woodbridge, who was in profound distress, but convinced that it was his duty to vote against the admission of Mr. Wright. Dr. Dick saw two or three more. When the Presbytery had been opened, Dr. Dick proposed that the motion be to sustain the examination as satisfactory and to admit, that this motion be divided and that the vote on the first part of it be first taken. This order was agreed to. Then the roll was called, and a majority voted against declaring the examination satisfactory, among them Dr. Woodbridge with tears in his voice.

Thereupon, some one, by previous agreement with Dr. Dick, moved that action on the other part of the motion, the proposition to admit Mr. Wright into the Presbytery,

be postponed to the next regular meeting. He gave as reasons briefly, that they could not now consistently admit upon an examination which they had declared unsatisfactory; that they were not willing to decide definitely to exclude from the Presbytery a brother of such promise, if it could possibly be avoided; and that it was to be hoped that by next spring he would have worked his way out of his present uncertainty, so that they all could conscientiously give him a hearty endorsement for soundness in the faith, as well as a hearty personal welcome. No one opposed this motion, and it was carried.

Thereupon the elder representing the Second Church inquired whether that church could, with due loyalty to the Presbytery, employ Mr. Wright as stated supply till next spring. The moderator answered that that course was fully within the discretion of the elders of that church, and to the opinion no opposition was offered. Some one, to remove all grounds of doubt, moved that Mr. Wright have the permission of the Presbytery to labor in its bounds till its next regular meeting, and the motion was carried.

At this point Mr. Wright rose and said: "Mr. Moderator, I understand that, pending

the decision of this Presbytery on my admission, I remain a member of my Presbytery in Alabama, but that my letter of dismissal remains in the hands of this Presbytery. Am I correct?" The moderator answered affirmatively.

"Then, Mr. Moderator, if you will permit me to speak a few personal words, I wish to express my own conviction that the Presbytery has shown toward me all proper personal regard. I know that it has been hard for you, certainly for some of you, to cast a vote which calls in question my ministerial standing. You have done it out of a sense of loyalty to Christ. I want you to know that I understand this; and I want the public to understand this.

"Another thing, Mr. Moderator, is perfectly clear to me. It cannot be that this Presbytery has a majority who consider my examination unsatisfactory and all the members of the Second Church consider it satisfactory. That church could not now give me a unanimous call. Some of them, it may be, would be willing to call me still, as some of you would be willing to admit me now; but, deeply as I appreciate this mind in a minority of the Presbytery and in a part of the church,

I cannot ignore the mind of the other part. For this reason, and one other, I am fully determined not to continue to preach for the Second Church. The other reason is that, in endeavoring to reach definite conclusions by next spring, no consideration of position must be allowed to influence me. The Second Church must therefore be set free to call a pastor and, as it has an interest in me, must for my sake proceed at once to move in that direction.

"Next Sabbath I will preach my last sermons, do what I can to hold them united in giving me up and in looking out another for pastor, and remove myself from further consideration.

"I thank you, Mr. Moderator and brethren, for the opportunity of saying these necessary things."

When the Presbytery adjourned, many of the members crowded around him to express their appreciation of his manly and fraternal spirit. He and Dr. Woodbridge walked away arm in arm.

That evening several notes came to his room from members of the Second Church, expressing their continued confidence and begging him to continue as their minister. Among them was an earnest missive from

Miss Williams. Mrs. Woodbridge also wrote her sympathy. Annie sent no message. She had become conscious of something in her heart toward him like that which was there toward Harry; she had finally ceased to condemn this feeling, and now she reached the painful decision of secret renunciation in favor of Evangeline. The struggle was terrible.

CHAPTER XVI

EVANGELINE'S ROMANCE

PRESBYTERY adjourned on Friday. Till Monday afternoon Wright kept wholly to himself, except to fill his appointments in the pulpit of the Second Church. His sermon in the morning was a review of the history of the Southern Presbyterian Church as grounding an appeal for loyalty on the part of all its particular churches and members. At night the sermon was a setting forth of the outlook of the church for growth and expansion in its mission fields at home and abroad as grounding a like appeal. There was not in either sermon, or any part of either service, any allusion to himself, or the Presbytery's action, or even this being his last day with the church, except the reading of a simple notice to the effect that Mr. Wright, having definitely declined to continue longer to supply the pulpit, the authorities would provide from Sabbath to Sabbath for the supply of the pulpit until a

regular pastor should be settled. Great congregations were present at each service, and the feeling was tense; but the sermons restrained and directed it.

On Monday afternoon Wright sent a note to Annie, from whom he had received no message, saying that he would call in the evening, and asking for an interview. He was determined to find out why she had sent him no message; but the subject was not alluded to.

He found her calm and cheerful. She rose to meet him with her old sweet smile, saying, "Samuel, I am glad that you have come, for I have so much to tell you."

"Well, Annie, I am glad that you have something to tell me; for it does me good to hear you talk."

"Thank you, Samuel. There are some things that I need not tell you, you know them so well."

"But, tell me these things first; for nothing is sweeter than the old story of the love of our friends."

Thereupon she told him very simply her sympathy with him, and how she prayed for him through yesterday, and how she fully expected him to be guided aright. All her

words were the appropriate expression of a frank and pure friendship, with nothing uttered or withheld to betray any thought of other affection. And she deftly turned to the other topic, saying: "And now, Mr. Wright, I have something to tell you that you do not know."

"Does it concern me?"

"Doubtless it will interest you, for it concerns one in whom you have some interest."

"You?"

"No. I have talked enough about myself. Guess again."

"Your mother?"

"Ah, no, not Mama; nor Father either. Guess again. Are you not interested in any one else?"

"Not as in these three."

"It is a young lady. Now guess."

"Miss Williams."

"Why do you call her Miss Williams? She has an older sister."

"Miss Evangeline, then."

"Or Eva. For she was called Eva by her intimates before she came here."

"Where did she come from?"

"From Savannah."

"When?"

"Four years ago. But you do seem to be interested in her."

"I am," he said emphatically.

"So was some one else at one time," she answered gaily. Then she added in a different tone: "It is a sad story." She proceeded to tell the following story:

Six years ago Eva Williams was a happy girl, just out of school in beautiful Savannah. She had a handsome suitor, by name, Thornton Thayer, who found favor in her eyes. All went merrily between the two, moving smoothly toward an engagement, until Eva was converted, just before she was going to accept his proposal. Then her views changed. She postponed her final decision, telling him frankly that she was in doubt whether, having given herself to Christ, she was at liberty to marry an unconverted man. His pleadings could not move her to accept him at once; but she promised to give him a final answer at a date fixed about a month later. Soon after this understanding, Mr. Thayer's father failed in business and the young man left Savannah without coming to Eva for her final answer. From some point in California he wrote to her, saying that he would not offer her a poor man, and hinting that she probably

knew, through her father, of his impending impoverishment at the time, as their fathers were intimately connected in business. He excused her clever duplicity and promised not to trouble her further with his suit. He said that he was disappearing from his friends and it would be useless to try to find him with a letter. Afterwards, perhaps a year later, news came back of his death in Mexico, where he was engaged in mining. The experience was a hard one to Eva, but she had come out of it refined, a beautiful and strong character.

"But why, Annie, have you told this story to me as if I would be specially interested?"

"I hardly know how to justify myself in doing it. She and I have so much——"

An interruption by a message from her mother came just at this point. When she returned another caller had come in. There was no further opportunity given for question or explanation.

The next evening at 9 o'clock he alighted from a train in the town of his former charge in Alabama. The following morning he was shaking hands with his friends in the town, receiving their sympathy and incidentally learning the whereabouts of a life insurance

agent, William Thayer. He learned that Thayer was gone to an adjoining county, into which no railroad ran. The next morning he left in a livery buggy for the county-seat of that county, where he arrived at 2 P. M. Having dismissed the buggy, he mingled with the men about the hotel and the courthouse and on the sidewalks, until, in the midst of his inquiries about men and places in the county, he located Thayer as on a certain road five or six miles from the county-seat. He walked out into that neighborhood, following Thayer, until about dark he overtook him at a farmhouse, where he had put up for the night.

They were placed in the same room. When they had withdrawn to their room for the night, the following conversation was begun by Thayer :

"Well, Mr. Wright, I am delighted to see you; but why did you come?"

"Looking for you."

"Looking for me! Why are you looking for me?"

"Before I give the special reason let me ask how it is between you and our Lord."

"It is peace. I am tempted sometimes, sorely tempted, to take a drink, but I feel a

deep repugnance to drunkenness now; and my joy in fellowship with Him is almost constant. I can never be done thanking you, sir, for leading me to Christ."

"I am glad that He is still holding you. And now, Mr. Thayer, I have a proposition to make to you. Come to Atlanta and let us engage in the insurance business together."

"Why, Mr. Wright, you take my breath away. On what terms?"

"On equal terms."

"That is generous, Mr. Wright."

"I consider that we would be about equal. I am practically shut out from the ministry for the present, and this is a useful business. You can do better in a large city than out here. What do you say, Thayer?"

"I will tell you in the morning."

The next morning the two made their way back to the railroad. Friday they arrived in Atlanta. Saturday they opened an office as life-insurance agents.

It was late in December that Thayer came in one evening, full of suppressed excitement. When Wright asked him what was the matter, whether he had done a great business, he replied that he had seen Miss Eva.

"But why should that excite you? Did

you not tell me that you had lost all love for her, even all respect?"

"That was before my conversion. Ever since, I have been moving to the conclusion that I did her an injustice in believing her insincere. Certainly I myself would not now marry any one unable to enter into full sympathy with me in my religious life."

"Where did you see her?"

"On Peachtree Street. As I was coming out of No. —, she was entering the next house beyond."

"Are you sure that it was she?"

"I could not be mistaken, although I saw only a part of her side face."

"But why are you interested?"

"Well, Wright, I was mistaken when I thought that my love for her had ceased. I know my mistake now, when it is too late."

"Why too late?"

"She may be married, or at least engaged to another."

"Yes, and she may not be."

"Well, I wish I knew."

"Do not be impatient."

"If you were in love, Wright, you would not speak so."

"I am in love."

The next evening Wright called at the Williams residence and asked for Miss Evangeline. He talked freely to her of his business and of his partner. She seemed rather bored, until he was telling her of how, when he and Thayer were talking of having their letter-heads printed, and he suggested that they print the full name of each, Thayer had demurred, saying that *Wm. T. Thayer* was as long as *Samuel D. Wright*, and the names in this form would look more businesslike. He was watching her closely, and thought he saw a slight shade of interest, but was disappointed that she did not ask what the T stood for. "But I left the printing to him, and he had the names printed *Samuel Wright* and *William Thayer*. I noticed that he omitted the T from his name and the D from mine, but I did not ask him why." As Wright said this he kept his eyes innocently on her face, and noticed that it changed color almost imperceptibly.

Two weeks later he asked Thayer if he had yet learned whether his Miss Eva was either married or engaged. When he answered that he had learned that she was not married, Wright asked why, then, he did not

call on her and renew their acquaintance. "Ah," replied Thayer, "I am poor."

Again Wright called on Miss Evangeline. This time he told her the story of Thayer's conversion, of his religious life for the past two years since, and of his bringing him to Atlanta. He continued: "By the way, Miss Evangeline, he was formerly from your beautiful Savannah." Before he uttered this sentence, she had been all attention. Now she turned upon him an open face, and said: "Is he Thornton Thayer?" And Wright answered: "It is Thornton Thayer." When she said: "When you were telling me of your partner before, I suspected that it might be Thornton. Since then I have seen him. But why did he have the news come back to Savannah that he was dead?" "He did that before his conversion; he would not be false now."

"Bring Thornton to see me, Mr. Wright," said Evangeline, as he was leaving that evening. It was a week later before he could persuade Thayer to go with him. After the first visit Thayer went alone. By the end of January, society and Annie knew that Thornton Thayer was Miss Evangeline's accepted lover.

CHAPTER XVII

A DIFFERENCE

MEANWHILE Wright and Annie had not been deprived of each other's society. He was devoting his evenings, from 8 to 12 o'clock, to the study of the question raised before the Presbytery, and one evening a week, sometimes oftener, he went to Annie's and talked over with her the ground covered in his investigations. Their conversations were mostly confined to this matter, and to such practical religious work as one or both were interested in; but sometimes they conversed of their inner experiences past and present. As the winter wore away they drew closer to each other. Looking at them in the March evenings, their two heads close together as they bent over the same book or manuscript, or listening to them as they spoke low to each other of that inner life which they revealed to none other, one would have wondered whether they were lovers. From their words one would

have said no; but from the light in their eyes as they looked at each other, one would have said yes. They themselves could not have told either as to the other.

His investigations included a rereading of the whole Bible in the Hebrew and the Greek in approximately chronological order, with three aims. First, to follow the course of the teaching as a whole in its order of development; second, to comprehend the place of each writer and book in this development, and the dominant principles of the writer or book; and third, to note every passage that might have a bearing on this special inquiry. As far as library facilities permitted—and he had accumulated much himself on this subject, and now had access to Dr. Woodbridge's large library, and to other libraries—he read discussions of the question. He acquainted himself with the history of opinion on this question through all the ages of Christianity. Finally and chiefly he studied over and over the special passages of Scripture, and to the most important of them he came back again and again. He endeavored to listen to the voice of God.

At first he thought to exclude from his mind the bearing of this inquiry on the des-

tiny of certain individuals, but as his studies went on he found this not altogether possible. He could not but think of his little Willie. Neither parent was a believer, so as to make the child a covenant member of the church according to the Presbyterian theory. Willie was not visibly related to God otherwise than is every child dying in infancy. When Wright could find no answer in Scripture affirming or denying the salvation of any one dying in infancy, he could not but ask himself: How is it with Willie?

Through sympathy with Annie, he had become profoundly interested in Harry Gordon. The facts in his case seemed to shut out any theory of repentance and faith before death; and, on the other hand, there was no reason to believe that he had definitely rejected Christ. He was moving toward Christ, but had not come to Him—Did the accident of death cut him off from ever accepting Christ? He could not keep this question out of his mind.

And then Cecilia was with him always, asking: Is my return to Christ cut off by the accident of death? He could not decide whether she was what he would call a true child of God that had wandered into sin and

unbelief, or one who, having resisted the light, was at last on the point of beginning to yield; but he could not but fear the latter. And the question of her destiny held him fast.

At last he decided that it was not conducive to truth to thrust these questions aside. "These questions have been providentially pressed upon my attention: if none were ever brought into saving union with Christ after death, when or how is any one dying in infancy saved? or any dying while moving toward Christ but not yet come to Him? or any while resisting the truth but not yet hardened into eternal sin? Does the accident of death cut off any or all of these who might have been saved had they lived a little longer? These are the very questions," said he, "which I am called upon to answer, and I will not shrink from seeking to find whether the Scripture answers them." Hence he was confronting these questions with intellect and heart alert.

Annie, too, was drawn more and more into meditation on these questions, and on the great question lying back of them. But as they talked them over, she would ever press to the front this consideration: Concerning

Harry I am satisfied, and also concerning Willie and Cecilia in a sense; for they and he, as all, are in the hands of God, whom we know well enough to trust, but not well enough to judge. To this he would always assent. Thus they both came to be possessed with a union of special and intense interest in the question and the questions, and with a deep calm acquiescing beforehand in whatever they might find out to be true. And herein they were all the time drawing closer together.

But their judgments were not always identical. In some special passages they would altogether agree, but in others they sometimes inclined to opposite views. So also in the matter of general considerations. The points of disagreement gradually diminished in number, but increased in definiteness. As the winter advanced it became clearer and clearer to them both that there was a radical opposition of judgment. She understood every Scripture as its meaning would be if its author had in mind that every human being reaches his eternal classification as saved or lost, at the moment of death; he, as its meaning would be if its author did not have death in mind as in itself a critical point for the indi-

vidual's eternal destiny. So they came to fundamentally opposite conclusions. He arrived at the dogma that every human being at some time becomes acquainted with Jesus Christ, and, in intelligence and personal freedom, either accepts Him, in the evangelical sense, and thus passes into eternal union with Him, or rejects Him in a final refusal, and thus passes into eternal separateness from Him; that this final decision for or against Christ is one decision, toward which the individual is always moving in all his treatment of the gospel till he reaches it; and that physical death and this final decision may happen to coincide, or either may precede the other, the final decision preceding death only in the case of those who in this life become believers or become guilty of the unpardonable sin, which he made equivalent to final rejection of Christ. Thus the accident of physical death ceased to stand in his mind as an event of critical importance in relation to eternal destiny. On the other hand, she arrived at the conclusion that after death no one ever passes into saving union with Christ. She referred all unsolved difficulties about infants and others to the unrevealed wisdom of the divine counsels; and she

rested secure in the plain promises and warnings addressed to men in this present life.

The emergence of this fundamental difference was not sudden. It rose slowly, and slowly lifted itself like a growing mountain between them.

It was in April, just one week before the meeting of the Presbytery, that they had their last study and conversation together. They had reviewed the principal arguments *pro* and *con*, and there stood the difference between them.

"Annie," said he, after a long silence, and then he was silent again.

"Well, Samuel," she replied, and could say no more. After a pause she began again, "Samuel, I wish we could think alike."

"Yes, Annie, this is the hardest hour of all."

"Surely, Samuel, we have each tried to be true to the light."

"Yes, and we will be to the end."

"Yes, to the end."

Then there was a silence again. The clock was ticking on the mantel. They both looked at the clock, and then they both glanced up to the portrait of Dr. Woodbridge looking down upon them. Wright broke the silence

by saying: "He is a good man." She answered: "Yes, he is a good man." Then fell another pause.

After awhile he rose to go. He held out his hand, and she put her hand in his and looked up, the tears in her eyes. "Nothing will break our friendship, Samuel." "Yes, Annie, it shall be as you say. We will each be true to Him." "And therefore true to each other," she added. "Yes. Good-night, Annie." "Good-bye, Samuel."

Their hands pressed and he went out. Clouds had come over the sky. The stars were hid. In the darkness he looked up to Annie's window and saw that a light was in her room. When dawn broke he was standing there, and Annie's light was shining still.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALONE

THE week till Presbytery passed without his seeing Annie again, although he called at Dr. Woodbridge's daily; for her mother's failing health culminated in a spell of illness, and Annie had become her constant nurse, beginning the next day after his leaving the last time. So he called daily, and saw Dr. Woodbridge, and sat silent with him a little while, and went away. On Sunday he preached for Dr. Woodbridge. He led the public prayers for the beloved patient. It was Bochim.

His sermon in the morning was a message of comfort: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." At night it was a message of submission: "Not my will, but thine be done." He preached to himself, wrung with a Gethsemane anguish.

After the last sermon he walked out of the city. It was a warm, fair night in spring.

He was impatient to escape from the electric lights of the city. When at last he found himself in the country road, now under the trees, now in the open under the stars, he felt a new sense of freedom. He murmured to himself the words of Lanier:

“ Oh, if thy soul's at latter gasp for space,
With trying to breathe no bigger than thy race
Just to be fellowed, when that thou hast found
No man with room, or grace enough of bound
To entertain that New thou tell'st, thou art,—
'Tis here, 'tis here, thou canst unhand thy heart
And breathe it free, and breathe it free,
By rangy marsh, in lone sea-liberty.”

The great forest stretching from the foot of the hill for miles under the light of moon and stars was to him as the sea. He stood there and looked out upon the billows of green, and up at the lamps hanging from the blue floor of heaven, and said, “Every good gift, and every perfect giving, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Far off to the left he saw now and then the flash of the light of a trolley car. Away to the right he watched the descending moon as it grew large behind

a fringe of the forest, and sank out of view. The stars were shining still.

A great peace wrapped him about as he thought of the past and the future. He foresaw his exclusion from the Presbytery, as he thought, and how that would virtually exclude him from the Presbyterian ministry. For while, if refused admission into the Atlanta Presbytery, he would remain a member of his Alabama Presbytery, and technically a minister in good standing, he realized that, even if nothing were done to exclude him from the ministry formally, this blot upon his orthodoxy would mark him, and would bar him always from the pastorate and other ministerial positions.

He thought of Annie Vernor, and the insuperable difference that had arisen between him and her. Then his anguish surged over him, and his soul fainted.

Somehow his mind turned to the two children growing up now in Caldwell's home, and the strange history of the boy, and the tragedy hanging over his life. Perhaps this was because he saw him and his sister sitting beside her mother in church that day. They were full of perfect health, but she was pale. As he preached he could not but watch that

sad face. He knew not what had brought her to Atlanta at that time, but he knew that sorrow had entered into her soul, the sorrow that brings the weakness of fatal disease. And now under the stars her unknown sorrow came to him, and he prayed for her and the boy and the girl, and with that prayer he came back out of the swoon of mental pain.

Calmly he thought of Cecilia lying lone in the stranger's west; of Harry, and the grave to which even yet Annie was accustomed to make her annual journey; and of little Willie beneath the white stone, which he had never had the heart to visit once since he saw it put in place seven years ago. He saw these graves lying under the starlight, and he said to himself, "The accident of death has not cut them off from Christ. It is between each of them and Him as between every human soul and Him, whether that soul will accept Him or reject Him. This truth I have seen, and this truth I will assert, though it cost me all—and Annie."

And he walked back to the city, and to his room, exalted, calm, determined. He passed two policemen on the streets. As he came to the last corner he recognized a drunken negro. When he turned the night key, and

opened the door into the entrance hall, he saw the pet dog of the family lying on a rug in a corner of the hall. As he walked up the stairway he heard the clock in the living-room strike one; and he said to himself that he would look at his watch and see whether it was 12:30 or 1, or 1:30. In his room he could not find a match, and could not see the time. In the dark he undressed and knelt by his bed to pray. He slept in peace.

At the time he fell asleep, Annie was watching beside her mother, and Dr. Woodbridge and the physician. The sufferer opened her eyes and said, "Doctor, it is coming again. It will be the last time. I thank you, doctor, for your faithful efforts." Then she reached out for Annie, and drew her down, and whispered a word into her ear alone, and kissed her.

That whispered word would have roused that peaceful sleeper in the dark room, could he have heard it then.

The sufferer relaxed her embrace, the paroxysm already on her. She reached out a trembling hand, and the great and good man took it, and knelt down by her bed, and, leaning back, laid her against his breast. Holding her face against his own, he felt

the shocks of pain with her, until the writhing ceased. Then he laid her down. He and Annie together closed her eyes. The three looked on the now peaceful face with wonder. The physician quietly withdrew.

Then the good man drew Annie Vernor to himself, and said, "My daughter"; and she said, "Father."

CHAPTER XIX

THE DECISION

ON Wednesday, the second day, the Presbytery took up again the question of Wright's admission. The day was spent in discussing whether to vote without further examination. Two arguments were advanced for this course. One was the technical reason, that, the vote having been already taken as to the examination, only the question of admission was postponed from the previous meeting. The other was the practical reason, that, if Mr. Wright had reached a conclusion contrary to the generally approved view, it would be harmful to make him declare that which otherwise he might keep silent concerning. On the contrary, it was urged that, the question being already presented, neither he nor the Presbytery should seek to conceal his position. At last a general desire was expressed to hear whatever he might wish to say, and he took the floor.

Personally he was ready to answer fully and exactly all questions as to his present beliefs, but had no desire to thrust forward his own doubts or conclusions; that he was able in all good conscience to subscribe to the common declaration, accepting the doctrinal standards of the Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures; that if admitted without further examination, he would seek in every way to build up in others this system of doctrine, without putting undue emphasis upon any minor point of belief; but that he did not deem himself at liberty to indicate any personal preference, if he had any, for or against further examination.

The vote was taken, and the motion to re-examine was carried by a bare majority. He then thought he clearly foresaw the end.

Thursday morning the re-examination began. Dr. Dick acted as examiner.

"Brother Wright, have you arrived at a decided position on the question of second probation?"

"I have never had any doubt on that question."

"What has always been your position on that question?"

"That there is only one probation of a man whether he will accept or reject Christ."

"Then you have arrived at a decided position whether death ends this probation?"

"Yes."

"What is your present position?"

"That death does not itself cause this probation to end."

"Does death mark the end of this probation?"

"Not in all cases."

"In what cases does death not mark the end of this probation?"

"In three sorts of cases."

"Name one of these three."

"The cases in which this probation has not begun before death."

"In whose case has this probation not begun before death?"

"In the case of those who die without coming to individual responsibility."

"Name another sort of cases."

"The cases in which this probation has terminated before death."

"In whose case has this probation terminated before death?"

"In the case of those who before death

have either accepted Christ or committed the unpardonable sin."

"Name the third sort."

"Those in whose case this probation has begun and has not been terminated before death either by the acceptance of Christ or the commission of the unpardonable sin."

"What is the unpardonable sin?"

"The final rejection of Christ as he is pressed upon the sinner's acceptance by the Holy Spirit."

"Is it proper to pray for the conversion of living men?"

"That depends on two considerations."

"Name one of these considerations."

"That the person prayed for has not committed the unpardonable sin."

"Name the other consideration."

"That we are led by the Holy Spirit to pray for such person or persons."

"May the Holy Spirit lead us to pray for the dead?"

"He does not."

"Why do you say that he does not?"

"Because he gives no encouragement thereto in the Scriptures."

"How long have you been studying this question?"

"Six years or more."

"Have you kept up the study ever since?"

"Yes."

"What has caused you to be specially interested in this question?"

"Three events in my life."

"Name the first event."

"A forsaken infant fell into my care; and after I had had it nursed and cared for for some months, and had come to love it as I suppose a father loves his own child, my little Willie fell ill and died. I could not but ask whether my child could after death be brought into vital union with Christ."

"But did you not believe that all infants are thus united to Christ?"

"No; for some infants grow up and show that they are not thus united to Christ, and are finally lost."

"But did you not believe that all infants dying in infancy are thus united to Christ?"

"Before they die?"

"Yes."

"I could find no reason in Scripture to believe so."

"Well, do you believe that any infants dying in infancy are finally lost?"

"That depends on whether any of them

reject Christ when they do come after death to decide for or against him."

"Do any of them then decide against Christ?"

"I do not know."

"So you do not know but that some infants dying in infancy are lost?"

"By no means. Some infants that become adults in this life, reject Christ and are lost finally, not for becoming adults, but for rejecting Christ. So, if any who die in infancy, do afterwards, when they become responsible, reject Christ, they are lost finally, not for dying in infancy, but for rejecting Christ. For no human being is lost finally except by rejecting Christ, or saved finally except by accepting Him."

"But why might not an infant in this life become vitally united to Christ?"

"Because such union is by faith, and the infant is incapable of faith as of unbelief."

"So an infant is neither saved nor lost?"

"An infant while remaining an infant neither accepts nor rejects Christ, and therefore neither passes into the status of eternal condemnation nor into the status of eternal salvation."

"So the fact that a person has died in in-

fancy is not proof to you that the person will have eternal salvation?"

"Not proof, though it may be that God will lead all who die in infancy to accept Christ."

"What was the next event that stimulated your interest?"

"It was the death of an unconverted young man in whom I was greatly interested, who lost his life in bravely doing his duty while seeking to save another's life. The young man was unconverted, but was becoming more inclined to consider serious things. And I could not but ask whether the accident of death cut him off from the possibility of salvation."

"But had he not rejected Christ?"

"Not in the sense of a final rejection. He had not committed the unpardonable sin. Rather he was moving toward Christ when death overtook him. If he had lived, I should fully have expected his conversion to Christ; and my question was whether his death cut off that possibility."

"And now you have reached the conclusion that it did not?"

"Yes; I have reached the conclusion that the accident of physical death has no deter-

mining importance on a man's eternal destiny, but only his treatment of Christ."

"So you still hope for the salvation of this young man, although you believe that he died unconverted?"

"Yes, I expect his salvation."

"Why?"

"For reasons like those for which you expect the salvation of certain living persons who are not yet converted, but for whom you have been led especially to intercede."

"I see. Name the third event that increased your interest."

"I cannot permit myself to go into details and expose matters of sacred privacy. Suffice it to say, one who was dearer to me than my life, who seemed to be a true disciple, seemed afterwards the contrary, explicitly renouncing belief in Christianity. Yet at last this one was brought to a willingness to reconsider the claims of Christ, and just then was cut off by a horrible accident. I could not see comforting evidence that my friend was ever really in union with Christ, nor could I help asking whether here again the accident of death cut off all possibility of the backslider's return."

There was a pause at this point. Dr. Dick

did not seem disposed to ask further questions. Finally Wright exclaimed, "Was it wrong, Dr. Dick, for me to ask such questions?" "No," answered Dr. Dick gently. "We cannot blame you for asking such questions. We respect the affections that enlisted your interest. We only wonder that you held these questions so long undecided. How was this?" "I was afraid that I might be in error, if I should adopt a view contrary to that which most of God's people hold; and I was unwilling to settle upon any position until I could see it in all its bearings. Moreover, I was determined to believe only so far as God has revealed. While I was directly busy trying to bring men to Christ and to build up believers, I felt that it would be safer just to go on listening to God's teaching without haste to decide." "That was well," ended Dr. Dick in a quiet tone.

Then he moved that in the afternoon the Presbytery hear from Mr. Wright whatever he might wish to say, and afterward consider and decide, all these proceedings to be in private session of Presbytery. This last was opposed and voted down, and the rest was agreed to.

In the afternoon Wright spoke. He occu-

pied three hours, from 2:30 to 5:30, and confined himself almost wholly to the Biblical grounds for his belief. He examined all passages supposed to favor the other view, and endeavored to show that they did not teach it. Then he examined a number of passages which he claimed asserted or implied his view. Finally he discussed the relation of his view to the different important doctrines in the system of doctrine, the aim being to show that his view was not contrary to the system, but in fullest harmony with it. His manner was subdued, usually quiet, but now and then breaking into passionate eloquence. The Presbytery and the crowded audience heard him with growing surprise, until at the end all were carried away by the accumulated force of the argument and the manly plea for his ministerial life. The climax came in the closing paragraph, when, casting aside his own case, he warned against a decision which meant the denial of the offer of the saving grace of Christ to the great majority of the human race.

Presbytery immediately adjourned till the next day. In the morning Dr. Dick made a thorough and masterly reply. He went over Wright's argument point by point, exposing

every seeming weakness. He dwelt especially upon the newness and unusualness of Wright's interpretations. He pushed to their extremest applications the new views. And he elaborated the dangerous influence of these views in many directions. Throughout he was considerate, respected the ability and sincerity of the young man, and acknowledged the charm of his spirit and the power of his appeal. He concluded by pointing out how the affections had impelled and guided Mr. Wright, and warned against accepting or allowing this theology of the heart. Those who knew Dr. Dick and expected a strong argument, were nevertheless surprised at the convincingness of his defense of the old view; and when at the end he exclaimed with tears, "Would that I could believe with my brother, but I bow to truth," none could wish for further argument.

Immediately after his address the vote was taken, each being allowed to explain his vote. Here are specimens of the votes and explanations, the elders dividing in about the same proportion as the ministers.

Rev. James Gray said: "I vote to admit Mr. Wright, because I am convinced of the truth of his views. I know not how much

this statement will cost me, but it is my duty to acknowledge that he has convinced me, and to vote accordingly."

Rev. Thomas Way said: "While I do not approve Mr. Wright's views, yet I vote to admit him, believing that this whole agitation has been unnecessary and harmful. If brethren will let him alone, and he will devote himself to the work of the gospel ministry, it will be much better than to disturb the whole church over a good man's peculiar difficulties."

Rev. Richard Rhodes said: "We cannot stop the agitation now by refusing to admit him while allowing Mr. Gray to remain. The best way is to admit him, and then enjoin upon him and all others to abstain from teaching these new and dangerous doctrines."

Rev. Malcolm Woodbridge said: "I stand in the light of the eternal world. There is no one in this world now whom it would be more painful to me to injure than this young man, whom I love as a son. But he and you will understand that I vote against his admission in spite of my esteem and affection for him. To admit him is to say that his departure from our standards, which I believe accord with the Word of God, is not so serious

as to be inconsistent with his remaining in the Presbyterian ministry. This I cannot persuade myself to say, though I know that it seems otherwise to him."

Rev. Theodore Dick said: "My judgment accords with that of Dr. Woodbridge. The greater the ability and personal attractiveness of one who holds an error, the more dangerous he becomes. It will be impossible for Mr. Wright to leave his peculiar views to one side; they must affect all his thinking and teaching. Therefore, I vote against his admission."

Rev. Amos Dunn said: "My own judgment coincides with that of our two great theologians. Some have blamed me for raising this question at all; but I did not raise it. It is in the air, and especially in the air to the north of us. There Mr. Wright went eight or nine years ago, and put himself under the influence of the heresies there spread abroad. It is no wonder that he has so deeply imbibed them. While regretting that he has been deceived, we must be faithful as watchmen on the walls of our Southern Zion, and oppose the beginnings of this flood. We cannot follow him, and let sentiment take the place of reason, and philosophy be our

guide instead of Scripture. Nor can I think a man so able who so utterly misunderstands the plain meaning of the word. I cannot believe that any man should remain among us who has gone so far astray."

When the voting was finished there was found to be a tie. The moderator then said: "I am in doubt how to vote. But it does seem a pity to exclude a man who is personally so acceptable by a bare majority. I give him the benefit of the doubt, and vote to admit him."

He at once rose and said: "Moderator and Brethren, it shall be in spite of my efforts, if there grows a controversy out of this action. I realize that most fields in our Church are now closed against me; but I am willing to work in any humble and obscure field. And I thank you for admitting me at all."

CHAPTER XX

BAFFLED

REV. AMOS DUNN presented charges of heresy against both Wright and Gray, and thought to figure as a public prosecutor; but the Presbytery refused to hear the charges and institute a trial, on the ground that, in Wright's case, the action of Presbytery admitting him precluded Presbytery from condemning him, and in Gray's case, one should not be put on trial for his vote. Then Dr. Dick gave notice of complaint to Synod, a higher court, against the Presbytery for admitting Wright. It was now April, and the Synod did not meet till November. Rev. Amos Dunn also gave notice of complaint to Synod against the Presbytery's refusal to put Mr. Gray or Mr. Wright on trial. When Synod met the leaders conferred together, and, in order to end agitation, agreed on the following action touching Dr. Dick's complaint, with his approval: "Synod sustains the complaint. At the same

time, believing that the peace of the Church need not be further disturbed, Synod declines to reverse the action of Presbytery, especially as this would raise the difficult technical question, which Presbytery would then have jurisdiction over the minister.

Concerning the complaint of Rev. Amos Dunn the Synod took the following action: "Synod declines to sustain the complaint, on the broad ground that Presbytery has large discretion in receiving accusations, and the Synod is not prepared to say that the Presbytery has in this case misused its discretion." Against this action of Synod, Rev. Amos Dunn gave notice of complaint to the General Assembly, the highest court of the Church. The Assembly did not meet till the following May.

Meanwhile Wright ceased to be a member of Atlanta Presbytery. For at its regular meeting in April he applied for a certificate of dismission to a Presbytery in Texas, in whose bounds a church had given him a call to become its pastor, through the united influence of Drs. Dick and Woodbridge; and the certificate was granted over the protest of Rev. Amos Dunn and a few others. At once Wright presented this certificate to the

Texas Presbytery, was admitted (no questions in eschatology being asked), and order was taken for his installation, which occurred three days after the Assembly convened. In view of these facts, Rev. Amos Dunn was prevailed upon to withdraw his complaint, which he did in a long letter to the Assembly explaining his reasons. Thus ended the case.

A year after Wright's installation as pastor over the Texas church, he received an invitation to visit a larger field in Tennessee with a view to a call, and was induced to do so. But a zealous elder of his church, whose brother was a deacon in the Tennessee church, wrote to the deacon, deploring the suspicion against Mr. Wright's soundness in doctrine as the only ground of complaint against him. Also a letter from the bounds of the Atlanta Presbytery came into the bounds of the Tennessee church, warning against Mr. Wright, and giving a prejudicial account of his case in the Presbytery. Two results followed. He did not get the call to the Tennessee church, and he became unsettled in his Texas pastorate. In one more year he had resigned.

At the end of two more years he was still without regular work as a minister.

These five years of question and suspicion and baffled effort wore upon him worse than imprisonment. Yet he bore it with meek patience. The consciousness that he was shut out from position and influence to which he was entitled was a small matter. The serious burden through all these years was that hardest trial to a noble spirit, exclusion from usefulness. Especially during the last two years did it grind him to be shut up to enforced idleness. For secular work, even teaching, he felt to be idleness from the work to which he was called. It wrung his soul with anguish and at times the temptation to bitterness was overwhelming; yet he restrained himself, and let no human ear be offended with his complaints. But he who is under the unbearable must sooner or later succumb, or else shake off his burden; and in the case of Samuel Wright the end came at last.

It is necessary to go back, that we may understand what was passing in another soul. This we may do by reading extracts from some of her letters to him. We begin with a note that she sent him immediately after his admission into the Presbytery of Atlanta.

*“ Dear Friend:—*The sorrow which has come to

me has not made me indifferent to your sorrow. Through my tears I have been watching yours, and I cannot restrain myself from assuring you of my sympathy. I do trust that now you will be permitted to work and to study in peace.

"Your sister in Christ,

"ANNIE VERNOR."

From another that came to him in May: "Since you left us three days ago father and I have had a long talk over you. He is greatly troubled. It went sore against his heart to vote as he did; and his suffering over it seems to be increased by the meekness of your behavior and your affection for him. He is tender-hearted, and cannot bear to hurt any one; and his pain at having had to vote against you is poignant in the extreme. I suggested that, as you certainly hold to all the essentials of our system of doctrine, it was something for him to be comforted over, that you were not rejected. Instantly his face brightened, and he said that really he was glad of your admission. . . . You will do a great work for God."

Later she wrote: "Father was much comforted by your letter. . . . He seems to be growing feebler. . . ." This was just before Synod met in November.

Her next letter contained the following: "I was glad to read in your last letter that you are having the inner peace. This is the great thing. Well may we rejoice in afflictions for just this reason, that in them our Savior reveals himself to us and in us . . ."

The following is from a letter written just as he received his call to the Texas church: "I want to tell you, my friend, that I rejoice over your call to a church; and father also rejoices. Unlike him I never believed that your view should exclude from the Presbyterian ministry. I have forced myself to say this much, fearing that you have counted our difference greater than it really is.

"Father grows feebler. He could preach only once yesterday. His text was, 'It is better to depart and to be with Christ.' The occasion was his usual annual memorial of departed members of his church. As I sat there in the hush, and thought of mother in glory with Christ, and heard the low, sweet music of father's voice, the reality of the unseen was more certain than vision, and the joy of it was unspeakable and full of glory. And now two days after, I still hear that quiet music of the seer speaking in vision, and all the ineffable reality abides."

This letter wrought far beyond the writer's expectation. Wright had indeed settled down to the conviction that Annie fully and exactly agreed with Dr. Woodbridge, since he knew that she did not agree with him. So disappointed was he that she could not see with him that his mind went to the other extreme of failing to see that she took a position of thorough sympathy with him in the willingness to listen and learn all that God revealed, and of full admission of different views on this subject among members and church officers. Exaggerating the difference between himself and her, he had despaired of her ever coming to care for him as now he longed for her to do. And the very fact of his call to a church so far away and so small, only made him realize more keenly his loss and isolation.

Before his answer reached her she had put a wreath on the grave of the good man who had been her spiritual father and who, having married her mother, had been as a father to her in all respects. On the next day his letter came, and two days later came another letter from him, in which he wrote fully of Dr. Woodbridge. His letter became a spontaneous eulogy, a prose poem, that

flowed and surged in rhythms of love and sorrow. No man on earth he loved as he loved the good Dr. Woodbridge. It was an added bitterness through these years, that the voice of this man whom he revered and loved spoke firm, though trembling, against him; but in neither did love lose any of its strength or tenderness.

Some time after she wrote as follows: "To-day I have been rereading old letters, and yours, written just before father's translation. That you may be sure that you understand me, I will carefully answer your questions. To the first question (Is there in the Scriptures sufficient ground for believing that those human beings who die without either accepting Christ or committing the unpardonable sin do after death come to a final decision for or against Him?), I am still constrained to answer no. To the second question (Is there in the Scriptures sufficient ground for disbelieving this?), I am still constrained to answer yes. To the third question (Should one who definitely answers the first question in the affirmative be therefore excluded from the Presbyterian ministry?), I answer without hesitation, no. The essential thing is that the sin and danger of

not accepting Christ should be affirmed and have needful emphasis; and this essential you preserve. At the same time I see how hard it is for many who cannot accept your view to keep a place for you in our ministry, and we must be patient with them."

Referring to this letter, he quoted the last sentence, and added, "I have never seen any written word so beautiful as this word 'we' instead of 'you'; for you are with me in 'we,' and I should have been alone in 'you.'" And she blushed when she read it.

When the invitation came to visit the Tennessee church, he was in great hope, and wrote Annie, asking permission to visit her in Atlanta before returning from Tennessee to Texas. Her letter of consent reached him in Tennessee.

It was on the Monday morning after he had preached. A number of members had called to express their desire that he should become their pastor; but last had come a committee of the Session to say, in substance, that his preaching and personality had proved universally acceptable, but that one of the elders and some of the other members were opposed to calling him because of the question raised in Atlanta about his orthodoxy. This

committee had just gone out, with his refusal to let his name be considered at all, lest it occasion division in the church, when Annie's letter was handed to him. All the bitterness that he had tasted surged up at once. Not only was he shut out from this desirable field, but he felt himself prohibited from speaking to Annie as he had thought to do. For how could he ask her, disagreeing with him, to share with him the poverty of his little pastorate in Texas, when he foresaw also that he would probably soon lose even that, and be practically driven from the ministry.

He arrived in Atlanta the next morning. He went to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Thornton Thayer, and sent in his card for Miss Vernor. When she came in, he rose and met her in the middle of the floor. As they stood there, their right hands clasped, this was their conversation:

"What is it troubles you, Samuel?"

"It is that I must tell you of disappointment."

"Is it, then, hard to tell me?"

"Yes, Annie, it is hard to tell you this instead of telling you a different thing."

"I see it is serious. Sit down and tell me all."

She led him to a sofa, and he said: "I will tell you the disappointment." Then he told her all the facts concerning the Tennessee invitation and failure. She heard him in silence all the way through, including his forebodings that now he could never get a call again. Then she said, with a forced calmness, "Now tell me the other thing." "What other thing?" "That other thing which you would have told me had this disappointment not come."

He could not but start at this question; but, suppressing his agitation, he said, looking down, "Annie does not know what she asks."

She answered, looking straight before her and not at him, "Annie knows that it is not friendship that conceals."

Embarrassed, he continued in his posture, and said, "I conceal nothing from Annie that I have a right to tell her."

She touched his arm with her left hand, and said, "Samuel, Annie accepts that assurance. Look up and be your old self."

At this point Mrs. Thayer came in to greet him, and ask him out to lunch.

CHAPTER XXI

AT LAST

THE year went round, and ended with the dissolution of the pastorate in Texas. And two more years went by, spent by him in vain efforts to get some work as a minister of the gospel in the Presbyterian Church. At last he had settled down in charge of a school in Alabama. He was broken, yet in his despair there was hopefulness.

All the while he and Annie were in correspondence. It had come to him in her letters, by imperceptible degrees like the rising dawn, that in her sympathy there was something besides friendship, something having a color and glow of its own. On the other side, she had felt it in his letters, a strong passion threatening again and again to burst forth through the prison of words.

It was the Christmas vacation beginning on the 23d of December. Returning from breakfast and entering his room, he saw on

his study table a letter from Atlanta, Ga. It was addressed in a lady's hand, but not Annie's. He at once divined that it was from Mrs. Thayer, and almost fainted from fear. He took it up and laid it down. Then he took it up again, and opened the envelope, and took out the letter, and saw Mrs. Thayer's name at the end. He laid it down again. He walked back and forth several times pale and praying. Finally he took up the letter and read it through. It was brief, conveying a cordial invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Thayer to spend the holidays with them.

The next day Thornton Thayer and his wife welcomed him to their home. It was 9 o'clock. After a brief space Mr. Thayer excused himself to attend to urgent business, and Annie came in. It was not a great while before Mrs. Thayer had to go out to look after domestic duties. Meanwhile little Willie Thayer had come in. He was not yet three years of age. His mother left him sitting on Wright's knee, prattling of his Tan Tannie and his playthings, and examining Wright's buttons and watch and nose.

As soon as Evangeline was well gone, Wright rose and, with Willie in his arms, walked over to Annie and sat down by her.

Willie insisted on sitting between them, and held a hand of each.

"Annie," said Wright firmly, "I have decided to send this letter, if you approve it."

She took the letter and read it. It was a letter to Philip Caldwell. It told him of the death of Cecilia Dobbs, of Mary Green and her story, of her exchange of her own child for that of Mrs. Vanmeter, and of her committing to him (Wright) the full evidence that the supposed nephew of Caldwell was none other than the child of him and Mary Green, born in lawful wedlock, involving the fact that his second marriage was invalid, and his daughter an illegitimate child. The letter continued:

"Now, Mr. Caldwell, you will see my reason for making this revelation to you. Your innocent daughter and her now sainted mother have passed beyond hurt or injury. The mother of your son laid on me the sacred obligation of asserting, if necessary, his rights to property and to religious training. These seemed to me safe until the recent sad changes; for his foster mother was giving him a right religious training, and you have all along acknowledged his title to your sis-

ter's estate. Technically this estate, the facts being known, would go to you, and then, were your daughter living, this and your own estate would rightly be divided between her and your son. For him to get all of your sister's estate and none of yours would have been substantially the same financially to him. Hence I persuaded myself that his financial rights were so far safe. I learned long ago that you were intending to marry him and your daughter to each other, and was waiting to see whether, as the children grew up, it would be necessary for me to reveal their kinship as brother and sister before movement toward their marriage went too far; but her death set me free from that obligation.

"But now I learn that you intend to put the boy under the private tuition of —, who rejects and scoffs his mother's religion, as you do, but as you did not do before you deserted your wife, his mother. I also know you too well not to fear that you will make away with what you conceive to be his property, now that you cannot marry it into your family. I therefore, lay this information before you. If you follow the right course of action, and give to your son his full property rights, and do

not wrong his mother by having him taught to despise her faith, I will be quiet; otherwise I will expose your misdoing.

"Believe me, sincerely wishing the best for you, I am

"SAMUEL D. WRIGHT."

She handed it back (Willie trying to snatch it from her), saying, "Your duty is clear, but it is hard; I approve your decision."

"A second decision, Annie, you may not approve. All these years I have been silent, both while searching to learn the truth concerning the relation of physical death to salvation, and also since reaching my conclusion, endeavoring not to agitate the church. I wanted to preach the gospel rather than divert attention to a minor point. But now I am practically shut out from this course by the conscience and timidity of my brethren. Therefore, I have determined to speak out in advocacy of what seems to me the truth on this subject. I am going to prepare a book, examining this question thoroughly, endeavoring to convince our ministry and people that every human being comes to a final decision either accepting or rejecting Christ, which one decision may be arrived at before

or after death, and asserting the right to discuss such a question under my covenant obligations as a Presbyterian minister. This course will bring blame upon me that will be painful to bear, but I am resolved."

Willie had become quiet. Now he spoke out, saying, "Is he dood, Tan Tannie?" drawing away from him and close to her.

"Yes, Willie, he is good. And you are right," turning her clear eyes to the other, "to follow this course. Our Church will be better for the agitation, if agitation comes. Neither fear to discuss nor fear of discussion should have place among us."

"Do 'oo 'ove 'im, Tan Tannie?"

"Yes, Willie, he is my best friend."

So her lips framed the words, but she was unable to hide the blushes.

"That, Annie, is my third resolution, to ask you to share with me the life of sorrow and isolation which I am living, and henceforth am to live. Will you?"

"I will."

When Evangeline returned, Willie was lying with his head in Wright's lap and his feet in Annie's. He turned to his mother and exclaimed, "Dey tised, Mama, dey tised!"

Two weeks later the same morning paper announced the marriage of Rev. Samuel Davidson Wright, of Alabama, and Miss Annie Vernor, of Atlanta, and the suicide of Hon. Philip Caldwell.

THE END.



