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A forecast and a story

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NINETEEN HUNDRED?
A FORECAST AND A STORY.

BY

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This little dream, of what, I hope, may be in the near future, was dreamed several years ago, and much of it written on paper, the rest having to wait for strength and opportunity. But, meanwhile, the spirit of progressive love has not had to wait, and already part of my dream has come true, for the genius of “applied Christianity” is at work, doing what I only saw in a vision. I take this fact as an earnest that the other good things will follow. But they will not unless it is realised that the hope of England is in her young. And I affectionately dedicate this forecast-story to all father-hearted men and mother-hearted women who see in every child a treasure of priceless value, a force of mightiest possibilities, to be redeemed for Christ _at any cost_.

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NINETEEN HUNDRED?

A FORECAST AND A STORY.

CHAPTER I.
OLD ENGLAND FOR EVER.

The good ship _Kenwick Castle_ lay off Madeira. Few of her passengers cared to land, for they were homeward bound, and desired nothing so much as to get away speedily. Neither were they as much impressed as on the outward journey, by the soft brilliancy of the atmosphere and the picturesque loveliness of the crimped coast of the island. The towering peaks, the rainbow-spanned gorges and ravines, the dense foliage of the forests, the vineyards and the plantations—made up a picture worthy of admiration; but the eyes that looked across the waters to the white houses of Funchal were wearying for the quiet beauty of English meadows.

The scene between the ship and the shore was a lively one. Boats flashed in the sun, and a clamorous company of Portuguese, Moorish, and negro salesmen offered fruits, baskets, chairs, and ornaments of all sorts, so that those who had forgotten to bring presents for their friends might easily purchase them now. Swimming boys—black-skinned and coffee-coloured—were shouting for money to be thrown into the sea to test their diving powers, and boatmen were eager for customers. But the

captain and the crew looked only for fresh passengers, and did but wait with dogged patience until they should arrive.

Two young men were leaning over the side of the vessel, and watching the boats and the shore.

“There are passengers coming,” said one. “It would indeed be strange if Miss Wentworth were among them.”

“Too strange to be true, I imagine. She is probably in England.”

“Yes. But she usually leaves Madeira about this time. I wish she might happen to be going with us.”

“So do I, heartily. And, look—look at the lady in the second boat. She is very like her.”

“How curious. It is really she. Let us see if we can help her.”

They hurried to the gangway and welcomed with great cordiality a lady whom everybody seemed glad to see, not a young lady, however, but a placid, kindly-looking woman, tall and matronly, who was between fifty and sixty years of age. She thanked the young men who had eagerly offered their services, but she evidently did not recognise them nor quite understand their manifest pleasure.

“How are you, Miss Wentworth? It is good to meet you again. You have forgotten us, I see. We came out with you six years ago in the _Drummond Castle_. My friend is John Dallington, and I am Arthur Knight.”

“Oh, yes, I remember! You were both sent from England to be out of the way; because your presence at home was embarrassing.”

“Exactly; and we have been together ever since. We have travelled nearly all over the world; but they cannot do without us any longer in England, so we are homeward bound, as you are. Don’t you want to know how we have been getting along since we parted from you at the hotel yonder?”

“I shall like to hear anything you have to tell me. You are both so altered that I should not have known you. You have grown, I think, and passed from youth into manhood. Six years make a great difference when you are young. What has become of the gentleman who went to take care of you? Is he with you still?”

“No, he is not. We must tell you of him presently.”

They made a pleasant-looking trio, frequently, during the three days that sufficed to carry them to England, as, with chairs drawn together on the deck, they talked of the past and the future. Miss Wentworth was an interested listener. Her fifty years had made her very kindly and sympathetic, and the motherliness of her nature rendered her the friend of every one who came within her reach, and especially of the young. She had been kind to the two youths, when, a little sore-hearted and rebellious, they were outward bound, and among the things which she had said to “hearten them up” had been one which they had not forgotten. They were therefore the more glad to see her now that their banishment was ended, and they were about to begin life in earnest.

Of the two young men, though Dallington was the more handsome, Knight was by far the more attractive. Rather taller than the average Englishman, strong and graceful in figure, with a broad forehead, masculine nose, firm lips, and wide chin, he was the personification of strength and manliness; but there was something about him which told also of great tenderness, refinement, and self-mastery. There was not a particle of self-assertion in him, and yet he was one who would never be overlooked, even in a crowd. When he entered a room people naturally observed him, when he spoke everybody listened; for he had the rare gift of magnetic influence, which seems to be possessed by only a few in a century.

Miss Wentworth had recognised this on her first meeting with him. She felt sure that if he lived the world would hear of Arthur Knight, and she was full of desire that the life so vigorous and forceful might be altogether on the side of righteousness and truth. So wistful was she that she could not let him go without one or two earnest words. She believed that “the Christian is the highest type of man,” and her faith in the power of the living Christ to draw and train disciples was great. She had doubts of the presumption which talks to people about “their souls,” yet she did summon courage to say to those young men, who glibly informed her that they did not believe in the Founder of the Christian religion, “No, for you do not need Him now; but when you do, you will find that He is both able and willing to help you.”

These words neither of the three had forgotten; and Knight referred to them in one of their conversations.

“I proved the truth of what you said, Miss Wentworth, in a very extraordinary manner. I had not the slightest sympathy with religion in any form. My mother died when I was about three, I can scarcely remember her; but my father, who was a Dissenter, took me to chapel with him always; though I never really entered into the service. I did not join in the prayer, for I did not want the things for which the minister asked, and the sermons never concerned me. They were for the most part disquisitions on texts, for which I did not care, and they seemed to me to have nothing whatever to do with the ordinary lives of the people. I cannot remember ever hearing anything to make a false or selfish man uncomfortable, and I could not see that those who were church members were at all better than those who were not. And I really believed that the whole thing was a farce.”

“I never went as far as that,” said Dallington. “But I did not have as much of it as my friend. We were Church people; and we had no prayer-meetings in the vestry, nor psalm-singing at home.”

“I had enough of it, and it was really irksome; and when I began to read books that were opposed to Christianity I agreed with every word that was said, and decided that as for religion there was absolutely nothing in it.”

“Yes?”

“But I know now that there is. You were asking me about my old tutor. He is dead; and it was at his death that I put your words to the test. It was very painful. We were alone, with none but Arabs near us. He was awfully ill; and when the thought came to him that he would probably die, he was altogether unnerved. The fact is that he was really afraid of what might be after death. He said to me, ‘Arthur, if there is a hereafter I am not prepared for it.’ Then I told him what you had said.”

At this point of the conversation John Dallington arose and walked to the side of the vessel.

“Mr. Knight, if you would rather not talk about it, do not tell me,” said Miss Wentworth, in a low voice.

“But I want you to know,” said Knight. “One cannot talk much about it; but I ought to tell you, and I will. I had never prayed before, but then with all my heart I called upon Jesus Christ. I asked Him, if it were true, as so many people believed, that He was really the living Saviour, to reveal Himself now. And He did.”

“But your friend did not live.”

“No; we did not ask for that. That was not what we most wanted. What we needed was the assurance that there is SOME ONE who sees us in our weakness and cares for our pain, and hears us when we cry. The assurance came so certainly that I have never doubted since. Hutton grew first calm, and then radiantly happy—as I had never seen him before. He looked

up with a wonderful light upon his face, as if he could really see what is beyond, and he died with the name of Jesus upon his lips."

"I am very glad. And what of yourself?"

"Of course, I cannot explain things. Dallington and I have received pretty regularly from England all the books and journals which we could get; and I know that this is a time of great doubt. I cannot answer the questions that are asked. But"—and the young man bowed his head reverently—"I believe in the Son of God, and I rest in His salvation."

Such a conversation could not be a protracted one. Miss Wentworth could only look the sympathy and joy which she felt; and Arthur Knight walked the length of the deck twice, and then joined his friend. When the three met again on the following day the talk was of a less serious character.

"I wonder," said Miss Wentworth, "if you are going to rave against everything English, as so many of our countrymen do?"

"No, indeed," replied Dallington; "I think we shall be more likely to err in the opposite direction. I, for one, am proud of my country. I suppose we might learn a few things from other nations, but I am very well satisfied to be an Englishman."

"What are you going to do?"

"I have an estate to look after," said Dallington. "I am going to take care of my mother, and find out the best way of growing fruit and corn."

"And I am going to help my father," said Knight. "He is a manufacturer."

"But his son does not wish to be a manufacturer," said Dallington, significantly. "He hopes to talk the people of England round to his ideas."

Knight's face flushed almost painfully. "We cannot always alter circumstances," he said; "but I confess that there is to me a marvellous fascination in a listening crowd. There is, however, no lack of orators in England."

"A new man who has something to say, and knows how to say it, has always his chance, though," said Miss Wentworth.

What his dreams had been by night and day the young man did not tell. He said, "My father's business is a large one. I have some ideas on the subject of heads and hands, or masters and men; and hope I may have the opportunity of putting them into practice."

"Oh! surely you have not been abroad to learn Socialism. We English people are afraid of that," said Miss Wentworth.

"And yet many are dissatisfied with things as they are."

"Certainly, and they have need to be. Side by side with all the good there are evils of which every decent person is utterly ashamed."

"Then why do the decent people allow them to exist?"

"I suppose they cannot help it."

"But they could if they would. They have the power and the influence, if they only had the will. Very much of the wealth, too, is in the hands of religious people, and if only they cared, as I think they ought, the great evils which are a disgrace to England might be stamped out in a year."

"Do you really think so?"

"I feel sure of it. Englishmen do but need to know God's greatness and

their own, and then they could lift our country up to its name as a Christian land."

Miss Wentworth laughed a little. "That would bring the Millennium much sooner than it is expected," she said.

"Another Wesley is wanted, or even a non-political Gladstone, that is all. The people are ready for the man who has an understanding of the times."

It was early in the morning, just after daybreak, that the long-looked-for homeland appeared in sight. Nobody had slept much that night, for the thoughts of the passengers had gone on before their eyes to the green heights of Plymouth Hoe. Yet it was not so much because of its historical associations that it so haunted them, but because it would give them the first glimpse of the old country. A cheer arose from the throats of the watchers as soon as it first came in sight, and preparations for disembarking were so rapidly completed that every one was ready long before the land was reached.

Arthur Knight stood with folded arms and glowing eyes looking at the land. How he had dreamed of that moment, and prayed, "Here am I, send me." It was strange for a modern young man to be thinking of St. Paul and of Peter the Hermit, but he was. He believed, as they did, that he had received a God-inspired impulse, and that he had a message to deliver for which there were hundreds of thousands of people waiting in this dear native land of his. He was in a state of exaltation, tempered, however, with deep humility. "I am not worthy, yet send me," he said. "Let me go to the crowded towns and the lonely villages, and tell the people what Thou hast told me."

He uttered the words aloud, for no one was quite close, and the next moment he stepped ashore, and a man came forward to greet him. "Welcome home, Mr. Arthur. I am very glad to see you."

"How do you do, Hancourt? How is my father?"

"Mr. Knight is well, sir; so am I, only I am much worried. As you said you wished to talk to me I have taken the liberty to engage a private compartment for the journey to London," said the man.

"Very good. When does the train start?"

"Almost immediately. Can I look after your luggage?"

Knight at once took leave of his travelling companions. "My father's chief business manager has come to meet me at my request," he said, "and we travel together. Good-bye, Dallington, and thank you for everything, old fellow. Hope you will find your Margaret unchanged. I should be sorry to think we had come to the end of the story. Remember, we are but beginning it."

"I will not forget," answered Dallington.

"Good-bye, Miss Wentworth. I am glad to have your address. You will be sure to hear from me."

When they were in the carriage, Knight and Hancourt looked steadfastly at each other before either spoke, and each noted the changes which the years had made.

"How is Mrs. Hancourt? And how are your children?" asked Knight.

"They are very well, thank you. Mr. Arthur, I am not sure that I ought to have met you, for there have been many changes in the last few months, and I am no longer in your father's employment."

"How is that? I thought my father could not do without you."

“You are wanted at home, sir. Mr. Knight has become a universal manufacturer, and has an enormous business, or a dozen businesses, and employs thousands of hands. He has been for the last few years making money fast; but as fast as he has got rich his workpeople have got poor, and that is not right, Mr. Arthur.”

“You must take care what you say of my father, Hancourt.”

“Very good, sir. I am out of the concern, so it is nothing to me; but I hope you will let me tell you what is in my heart.”

“Go on, then.”

“Lately, indeed almost ever since you went away, the master has been cutting things very close and underselling everybody, and to do that he has used the commonest material, and has frequently lowered the wages of his hands. Many things which go across the sea are not worth the cost of carriage; they are just put together to look well and that is all. I think it is a great pity, and I ventured to say so to Mr. Knight, because he will lose his customers, and the business will go down as quickly as it went up if he does not change his method. But Mr. Knight told me he did not care for that. He thinks it is no business of his that other English manufacturers will be suspected because he has got England a bad name, but I think it ought to be, and that such conduct is unpatriotic. But excuse me, Mr. Arthur, I can’t help getting warm over it. I want to ask you, however, if you will not try and bring about a better state of things?”

Arthur felt as if a stone had been given him when he asked for bread. Could it be that this and not that was his duty? How should he give up his cherished ideas, and the work to which he honestly believed himself called, and come down to business?

Hancourt broke in upon his musings. “You see, sir, I am one of the people, and know what it is to work for starvation wages, and so I thought I would try and enlist your sympathy.”

“What are you doing yourself?”

“Nothing, sir, and I have a wife and two children. But I am afraid I have spoiled your home-coming.”

Indeed, he had.

CHAPTER II.
A SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

The door of the manor house was open, and the owner stood on the step looking across green fields and sloping hills. Both the man and the house were worthy of attention. The man was a strong, straight young Englishman of twenty-three years, a little above the average height, with a face full of health and intelligence, a mouth and chin that showed strength and firmness, grey eyes full of kindliness, and a well-shaped head covered with crisp, brown hair. The house was an old-fashioned English homestead, unpretentious, but substantial, and with an air about it of comfort and plenty. It was the sort of house always associated in our minds with the pictures of rural life which emigrants keep in their hearts, and painters put on the canvas.

The young man standing in the doorway was thinking not of the house, but of the view that was visible from it; and, in truth, it was a very pleasant one. The garden at his feet was ample and well kept, and already the spring flowers were making it beautiful. Around the outside there were shrubs of many kinds, and beyond them the home close looked green and sunny, while further still a little stream rippled and sang,

and woods and fields made the landscape fair. John Dallington was by no means an emotional man, but his heart beat quickly as he looked across the fertile English lands that had been his father's, and were now his own. He had never experienced the land-hunger that some people know; but if he had he could scarcely have felt a greater sense of satisfaction than that which filled him now.

"To think that so fair a piece of this wonderful little England is really mine, to have and hold, and do as I please with!" he thought. "I have seen nothing so peaceful and picturesque in all my wanderings. It is indeed good to be at home."

And he felt this all the more because his absence had been a long one. More than six years had passed since on a cold, wet morning he had parted from his mother, and turned his back upon his home. It was better so he thought then, and it was his conviction still. But the memory was rather a painful one, though it came to him on a Sunday morning, when everything seemed glad, and the contrast between the present and the past was most striking.

John Dallington lost his father when he was between sixteen and seventeen years old. He had only just left school, and was beginning to learn the best way to farm land when his father died unexpectedly and suddenly. In his will he left everything to his wife, constituting her sole executrix, with power to make any arrangements or alterations she pleased until their child was of an age to assume the control of the estate. The lad loved his mother, and proudly endeavoured to take his place as her natural companion and protector. But when, less than a year after his father's death, she married Mr. Daniel Hunter, everything became changed. John and his step-father disliked each other from the first, and the youth felt as an interloper in his home. There were a few stormy scenes between the two, the mother always taking sides with her husband; and then John made his mother so angry, by some hot words, which he uttered respecting a young lady in Darentdale whom she disliked, that she decided to send him away from home forthwith, and from that time until the previous evening the heir had not seen his home. But he never forgot what his future position was to be, and had spent considerable time in study, and in examination of agricultural plans as followed in the different countries which he visited. He was, therefore, not altogether unready for his new duties. But he had been in no hurry to return and take them upon himself. Even when his lawyer's letter reminded him that he had attained his majority, and requested him to come home and claim his rights, he did not do so; and it was not until his mother wrote informing him that she was a second time a widow, and needed him, that he started on his journey.

While waiting for his mother on this, his first Sunday in England, his thoughts were full of kindliness toward her—"Poor little mother, it must be hard for her to be twice a widow. I wonder if Hunter really made her happy, and if she cared very much for him. I shall never be able to understand how it was that she married him—a man not fit to hold a candle to my father, and with scarcely a particle of his high principle and goodness! How could she do it? But it is strange to me if she has not had to suffer for it, and she certainly looks ill and miserable. It cannot be because she loved him. I hope he was good to her. In any case I will be. No woman can help liking to have her son with her, and I will try to make up to her for the trouble she has had."

At that moment the sound of the bells came across the field, and John remembered that there was a mile to walk to church.

"Mother, it is time to start. Are you ready?" he cried, and she came immediately—a small figure, short and slight, but very dignified, and covered from head to foot in crape.

"What a shrouded up little mother it is!" he said tenderly, "and how uncomfortable you must be. Can you breathe at all under that thick thing?"

“Oh, yes. It is not so thick as it looks.”

“I am glad to hear it. I don’t like the crape fashion in the very least. It is a shame to cover up your face when it looks so pretty with the grey hair above it.”

“Ah, you must see a great change in me, John. My hair has got very grey during the last two years, and my sight is failing me too. I am quite the old woman already.”

“Not at all! Besides, you will be getting young again presently. You must wear glasses; they are an improvement to most people. And as for grey hair, what does that matter? Everybody knows that it means many things besides old age.”

“I am old, though, older than my years.”

“Poor little mother; you have had plenty to make you so; but you will soon feel better. Is not this a beautiful morning! And you cannot guess how glad I am to be at home with you. I used to read some poetry when I was away about ‘England’s primrose meadow paths,’ and try to remember what they looked like. It is a very agreeable change to see them. This is a cosy little wood.”

They were wending their way through the spinney, and the scent of the spring flowers was very sweet. The air, too, was full of music, for the birds were singing, and the chiming of the bells came nearer with every step they took. Now and then a thrush or blackbird sang to them as they passed, a squirrel sprang among the trees, and the rabbits scuttled across the path. The whole scene was so peaceful and lovely that John Dallington felt like taking his hat off in instinctive reverence for the beauty by which he was surrounded. He did not want to talk, and his mother seemed equally willing to be silent. Indeed, the finest sermon that could have been preached to the young man was finding its way into his heart as he walked toward the church that morning.

But when they emerged from the wood, and after crossing a meadow reached the high road, his thoughts were at once interrupted. The village of Darentdale was only a small one, and every individual in it knew that the young squire had come home to claim his own. There had been much talking of neighbours about him, and the liveliest interest was excited by his appearance. As he and his mother passed the scattered houses, faces peeped from the windows, and doors were softly opened to enable the occupants of the cottages to have a longer look at Mrs. Hunter and her son. Every one who passed glanced at the young man’s face, with an expression first of curiosity, and then of confidence and pleasure. In these days the villagers are not too much given to the “old-fashioned practice of saluting their betters”: they do not think that they have any; but on this Sunday morning all the women seemed inclined to remember their manners of the old style, and there was not a man who did not touch or raise his hat as they passed. It was all very agreeable to John Dallington, and the genial, hearty way in which he returned each salutation had the effect of at once favourably impressing his neighbours.

“He’ll do, won’t he? Eh!” said a man who was leaning over his garden gate.

“Oh, ah! he’ll do fine,” replied another, taking his pipe from his mouth for a moment. “He’s growed into a very likely lad, has he, and we shall do better with him nor we did with t’other.”

“That’s my ’pinion also. He looks like a fine young Englishman, though he have been a-living in foreign parts.”

“He’ll do, and that’s my verdict.”

John Dallington was looking at the villagers with an interest scarcely less keen than that with which they regarded him. He knew more about

them than might be imagined. Newspapers, magazines, reviews, and other floating literature dealing with the questions of the day had been regularly transmitted to him during his absence, and he was, therefore, well acquainted with things as they were. He had read of bad harvests in England while lingering among the cornfields of America; and “the bitter cry” of London had reached him in New Zealand. Perhaps, as he looked at these subjects from a distance, and studied them very impartially by the aid of both Liberal and Conservative journals, he was as able to decide concerning them as those who had remained upon the scene. In any case, with the usual sanguine confidence of youth, he quite believed he was; and had already fully made up his mind in regard to his course of action. One of the first things he meant to do next morning was to go over the estate and “see to things,” especially keeping his eyes open to the needs of the cottage tenants on the farm.

“John, this is rather a trying ordeal,” said Mrs. Hunter, as they entered the churchyard. “Everybody seems to be looking at us.”

“Never mind, mother; they are looking very kindly. And here is Emerson, appearing not a day older than when I went away. I suppose he is as good as ever. He used to work as hard and live on as little as if he were the curate instead of the vicar. How strange it will feel to be in the old pew once more.”

The next minute they had taken their places; and as the last strokes of the bells died away the sounds of the organ were heard; and John knelt as he used to kneel when a little boy at his mother’s side, to join in the General Confession, and listen to the Absolution.

John Dallington had frequently availed himself of the opportunities afforded him in distant lands of attending religious services, but he never joined more heartily in the prayers than he did on this occasion. They expressed exactly what he felt, and the grand old Psalms and the _Te Deum_ filled the little old Darentdale church with strains that were sweeter to his ears than any that he had heard in the grand cathedrals of the Continent. But now his heart was full of peace and goodwill, and he was in the mood to enjoy anything. How could he help wishing to be good when he had so much for which to be thankful? We hear plenty of talk about the salutary effects of sorrow, but is not joy salutary too? It is the miserable who are the most tempted to wickedness. If there were only more happiness in the world, it is almost certain that there would be more goodness also.

The services at Darentdale church were never unnecessarily lengthened, and before long the congregation was filing out. Most people waited to give some sort of respectful greeting to Mrs. Hunter and her son. Considerable sympathy was felt for the widow, though very little affection had been manifested toward her late husband, and the villagers managed to let the lady feel this.

“Things are looking very much the same, mother. I miss one or two of the older people, and some of the boys and girls have grown up like myself; but, on the whole, there is little change. How are the Dissenters getting on? Are there any more chapels built?”

“Oh, yes; one or two Methodists, besides the old Baptist and the Salvation Army.”

“I must turn into one of them this evening, and see how things look there!”

“I hope you will not take to chapel going!”

“Why not, mother?” laughed John. “It is a rule of mine to go everywhere, and see everything that I can. And it has answered very well, too. I assure you that one sometimes gets splendidly entertained in most unlikely places.”

“I hope you will not seek entertainment there, at all events; though, of

course, you must do as you like now.” Mrs. Hunter accompanied the last clause with a significant sigh of resignation.

“That is a privilege you have always given me,” he answered, gently, “and I hope it has done me no harm. But here we are in the wood again. Mother, haven’t you heard people say that they love the very ground they tread on? That is how I feel to-day. I wonder how it is that we all have such a regard for land.”

“Because of what it brings forth, I suppose.”

“I scarcely think that accounts for it altogether. Of course, as the land is such a marvellous producer of wealth, it is only right and natural that it should be respected and well-treated. But it is no thought of crops that makes me like to look at it to-day.”

“That is as well, perhaps,” said Mrs. Hunter, grimly, “for he who sets his heart upon crops in these days is likely to become heart-broken.”

“I know they have been very poor for several seasons.”

“They have been utterly and wholly disappointing failures. I can tell you, John, that you have been spared an immense amount of worry by your residence abroad. Rain has come when we wanted it dry, and drought when we needed rain. Summers have had no sunshine, and winters no snow. This last winter, indeed, has been more like the old-fashioned kind; so, perhaps, the tide of misfortune is turning, and we may hope for better things. I should like one change which I suppose I shall not live to see, and that is the reduction of the present high rate of wages paid to agricultural labourers.”

“High wages do you call them? What do you think you could do with an income of sixteen shillings a week, mother?”

“Now, John, you need not speak so indignantly. I trust you have not imbibed any of those socialistic notions that seem to be prevalent. It will be so much the worse for you if you have, for you will find that the wages are higher than you can afford to pay; and besides, the men are neither better nor happier for receiving them.”

“I am not a Socialist,” said John, and then a diversion occurred.

“Why, who is this? Old Benham, isn’t it? Then he is still at work about the place. How are you, George?”

“I’m hearty, thank you, Master John, sir, and how’s yourself? How you have altered to be sure; but I knowed it was you when I seed you going down the lane this morning. And how did you like them furrin parts, sir?”

“Oh, I liked them very much; but there’s no place like home.”

“Werry true, sir, and I’m glad you think so, and it’s a beautiful morning to welcome you back. We’re a going to have a better season this year, Mr. John, you take my word for it. When that ’ere tree in the holler is covered in leaves by the fifteenth of April we allus gets a good summer. I’ve noticed it, bless yer heart, hundreds of times.”

“Have you though?” said John, laughingly. “I should not have thought it. You really look young for your years.”

Benham did not understand where the joke was, but he saw that he must have said a good thing, and laughed too. “And I hope it _will_ be a good season,” he added, “since it’s the first in your home, and we be all glad, every man and boy on the estate, as you’ve come into your own, and long may you enjoy it.”

It was all very pleasant to John Dallington, who would not soon forget the first Sunday spent in his own place. In the afternoon he walked

across the fields where the young corn was springing, and into the woods where bursting buds and merry songs were eloquent of spring. The delight of possession was very keen within him, and it, perhaps, more than anything else, made this sunny Sunday in the country to be for ever a delightful memory with him.

In the evening he did as he had said he would, and attended the service at one of the Darentdale chapels. There, as at the church, he was recognised, and cordially welcomed. There was something in the young man’s appearance that bespoke for him the universal favour of his kind. His eyes were so frank and clear, the smile upon his lips was so cheery and real, the tones of his voice were so hearty, that people trusted him and liked him at once. His presence at the chapel doors excited the liveliest approbation. Was the young squire a Dissenter? If so, then good times were coming for the little “cause” at Darentdale.

“Very glad to see you, sir,” was the welcome given to him by one of the principal men in the place, whose duty it was to conduct strangers to their seats. He had not very much of this work to do, for few strangers came to Darentdale, and fewer still to the chapel; and so he was fain to open the pew doors for the regular attendants, and, with a bow and a smile, fasten them in their own rented domicile of the Sabbath. But now there was a chance to distinguish himself, and the air with which John Dallington was marshalled up the aisle and into the best square pew at the top was exceedingly impressive.

John looked about him for a moment with a little curiosity. He had never been into the place before, and he was surprised to see the numbers crowding the body of the chapel and pressing forward in the gallery. The fact of their presence was in itself sufficient to cause him to feel respect for the service, for John Dallington had not yet grown to think that he was right and everybody else wrong, and he entertained a profound reverence for anything that could influence numbers of people. He saw a plain-looking building, with uncomfortable pews, each securely buttoned, and each filled with persons. He saw a pulpit, rather more uncomfortable-looking than the pews, which a man with benevolent face and white hair presently entered, and was also shut in. And he saw, immediately under the pulpit, a large pool of water. He did not, as probably many young men would have done, promise himself some fun out of the entertainment. He had too much veneration in his composition for that. He had felt no inclination to laugh at the use made of water in the churches of the Continental cities which he had visited, and it must be confessed that he had seen nothing to sigh over either. It was evident that the people were sincere and attached some significance to the act, and that was enough for him. It was with precisely the same placid toleration that he looked at the baptistery in Darentdale Chapel. And, although he wondered how any one could prefer it to that which he attended in the morning, it was not with a feeling of indifference that the young man regarded the service. His whole being was susceptible to all the influences of that day, and he felt some stirring of heart when the people sang together their hymn of praise. The sermon was not a bad piece of oratory; the speaker knew his subject and handled it courageously, and as it proceeded John began to understand that the pool of water was not an ordinary adjunct to the service, but that he was about to witness the rite peculiar to the Baptist denomination.

His attention was held throughout; but when the minister had descended from the pulpit and was standing by the water, his heart gave a great bound. A girl who had been sitting in one of the pews, and whose face had been hidden from him by other people, quietly went to the side of the pool. “Margaret does look lovely to-night,” whispered some one behind him; and the next moment the girl lifted her eyes, luminous with some mysterious exultation, and they met his own. What happened after that he scarcely knew. As soon as he could he left the place and started across the fields to his home.

“It was no use sending me away,” he said. “The boy’s love is living yet. Margaret, Margaret, have you forgotten? I never shall forget, and you are all the world to me still.”

But he looked and felt much more troubled than glad as he thus uttered his thought.

CHAPTER III.
A SUNDAY IN LONDON.

To be in London at any time is an experience that is worth having; for all good things seem to tend to this wonderful city, which is the very heart of the world! What might of power and influence it possesses! What vivid life of all kinds exists in it! Some people say it is not beautiful as Paris, Brussels, and other cities are; but they are surely mistaken. It has a beauty and a homeliness that is all its own. No parks are more green; no streets are more interesting. To Arthur Knight, as he drove from West to East on his arrival, it seemed to him the fairest, as it was certainly the dearest, of all the world. The trouble that had been put into his mind by Hancourt, though a very personal one, could not absorb his thoughts as he looked upon his fellow-countrymen in the crowded thoroughfares. “If London were Christian, there would be hope of the whole world,” he said; and his was the dream of how many devout souls beside! With his strong heart full of the enthusiasm of youth, he did not for a moment consider the dream to be impossible of realisation. And with the same buoyant hopefulness he thought that something which he had to say would hasten that consummation. He passed by the dwellings of the rich, and, measuring others by himself, he peopled them with young men who were ready to live or die in the true service of their country. He believed that the time had come for the new aristocracy to assert itself—the aristocracy of character and helpfulness—the nobility of the future, whose destiny it is to rule the world with righteousness. “This little island ought to be full of friends,” he said, echoing the thought of one of England’s greatest teachers. But when he reached the East-end the awful contrasts of the metropolis impressed and saddened him.

It was in this part of London that Arthur Knight’s home was. Mr. Knight, senior, had not followed the fashion, and sought out a suburban residence. He preferred to live near his works, and could not bring himself to believe that a railway ride every morning and evening would be a saving of time, or strength, or money. He lived in an old house, surrounded by a moderately large garden, in which, however, few things flourished but shrubs. All around the garden was a high wall, which completely shut the place out of sight; so that, but for the noise, one might have fancied himself miles away from the great city. Not only was the house an ancient one, but the furniture in it was sombre and old-fashioned. It was not a home-like house, for no woman presided over it; only a couple of servants kept it in something like order, and carried out the wishes of the master. A child’s voice was never heard making music in it, and few guests ever entered it. If people wanted to see the owner, they generally sought him at his office, because there they were the most likely to find him; and no one had come to the house by invitation for several years. There were rooms enough in it to accommodate a large family, but Mr. Knight had lived in it, after his son went away, in complete solitude. He had often felt sorry that he had sent the lad from him in anger, and had not more patiently tried to bend the young will to his own; but the anger had died away now, and he had begun to acknowledge that he felt lonely.

It was on Saturday evening that Arthur passed through the well-remembered gateway. His heart beat rapidly as he entered the house, and when he took his father’s hand in his a great wave of tender feeling swept over him. His father was all that he had in the world. Mother, brothers, sister-all were gone, and he had not yet found any one on whom he could set his heart. But he owed everything to his father, and he resolved that it should go hardly with him indeed but that he would prove a loyal and helpful son now that he had at last recalled him. The old man trembled as he met him. He was as much altered as Arthur

himself, and he looked as if the years had dealt far less kindly with him than they had with his son. Arthur could see that the meeting was trying his father exceedingly, and during the evening he did his best to keep the conversation on commonplace topics.

But after breakfast the next morning he could feel that something was coming. The church bells were chiming in all directions, and the young man's heart was drawn towards the quiet and restfulness which he knew might be reached in a few minutes. But his father wanted him, and he thought his duty was with him.

"We may as well have a talk about things, Arthur," he said. "I suppose you don't care about going out? I have given up my sittings in Queen-street. I used to do a great deal for the place, as you know; but latterly they had a man whom I could not get on with. He insulted me, and I don't take an insult twice from the same person. He told me that I did not subscribe enough money, and I was not going to stand such impertinence from anybody. I always thought the Nonconformist places of worship were maintained on the voluntary principle, but I don't call it voluntary when a man tries to bully you out of your money."

"No, indeed. I wish the question of money had not to come so much to the front."

"I have saved the money that religion used to cost me, that is all."

"Could you not have gone to some other church?" asked Arthur, gravely. He could not answer his father's chuckle with a laugh.

"Of course I could! There were enough to choose from; but I know they are all alike in one respect—they are all greedy and grasping for money."

"It seems that nothing can be carried on without it."

"Then let those who like such things pay for them."

Arthur was amazed. His father was indeed changed since those old Sundays which he remembered so well, when he had been taken to prayer-meeting, Sunday-school, and service from early morning until late at night. He wondered curiously how many orthodox sermons his father must have heard, and what had been the good of them all to him.

"Trade is bad," said the old man, after a pause.

"Is it? I am sorry to hear that."

"I hope it will not give out just yet, because I have not done all upon which I have set my heart. I have had some heavy losses, too, and these are the things that eat into a man's life. But, still, I have not done badly after all, and I may as well tell you at once."

Here he stopped, as if he would arouse his son's curiosity; but Arthur only waited in courteous deference until his father chose to say the next thing. And it was rather long in coming.

"Arthur!"

"Yes, father?"

"I am almost a millionaire!"

"Father!"

"Really and truly, if I am spared a few years longer, and a kind Providence smiles on me still, I should not wonder if you prove to be the heir to a million of money."

Arthur stared at his father, who had spoken the last words, as indeed

they deserved to be spoken, in tones that were as solemn as they were triumphant.

“A million?” he echoed.

“That is between ourselves, of course. Nobody else knows exactly, and most people would scarcely believe me if I were to tell them.” And Mr. Knight leaned back in his chair, and laughed softly.

Arthur did not laugh; and presently his father glanced keenly at him.

“Well, my son, what do you think of that?”

“I think it is an enormous fortune, and that great responsibility attaches to it.”

In fact, his thoughts were so busy that he scarcely knew what to say. It seemed to him that many of his dreams might almost at once become accomplished facts. More than enough money would be his to set in action the beneficent schemes which, night and day, had haunted him during the last two years. And what was there to prevent him from spending his life in his own chosen way? The business indeed? Surely the right thing would be to retire from it altogether. And yet,—_would_ that be right or best? Arthur Knight hungered for people; and here in his father’s employ were several thousands of them. Nay, he would not send all these adrift, since, in a sense, he would inherit them as well as his father’s fortune.

He arose from his seat in excitement, and paced the room, his father, in the meantime, scrutinising him closely.

“Arthur, I wonder if you have much business capacity?” he said, presently. “It is harder than ever now to make money. Competition is so keen and the price of labour is so great that one must be clever to make headway now.”

“But you have made your headway, father.”

“Oh! I have not done nearly all that I want to do. Arthur,” said the old man, suddenly, “if you had your own way, and were perfectly free to choose, what would you like to do?”

“I am going to try to help you.”

“Please to answer my question, sir.”

“A young man has his dreams generally, I suppose. I should like to talk to the people.”

A very impatient grunt met this assertion.

“Do you mean that you would like to be a parson?”

“Not exactly; but don’t you think it would be a good plan if men of means gave themselves to the work of the Church, so that all the money raised could go to beneficent purposes, instead of the people having to consider the minister’s salary? However, I do not feel that I ought to be a minister.”

“A Member of Parliament, Arthur? That you might very well be. There’s a wretched set of muffs in Parliament now. They ought to interfere in some matters more than they do.”

“It is a good thing that the markets of the world are open to us,” said Arthur. “I wish, though, that some of our merchants were a little more patriotic. They are sending out such worthless goods that they are getting a bad name for England.”

“That is not their fault, but the fault of the foreign dealers who are

crying out for cheap things, and will always buy at the least price. A man must in self-defence put inferior articles in circulation if people will not give the good price for the good thing."

"But he might meet the difficulty by taking less profit for himself."

"Why in the world should he? He has himself to look after. He offers the articles that are asked for at a price which the people are willing to give. What more can be expected of him?"

Arthur resolved to use caution in the disclosure of his thoughts on the subject. For the next hour he kept his father amused with tales of his adventures.

Later, Mr. Knight again brought business forward; and the day of rest was to Arthur a very different one from that for which he longed.

They were still talking together when an unexpected diversion arose.

The gate which formed the only entrance to the grounds of Brent House was always kept locked, and could only be opened from the inside. There was a ring at the bell, and when the boy unlocked it three men immediately stepped inside. While the porter was asking their business, one of them again opened the gate, and a dozen other men pressed in. Mr. Knight and Arthur were endeavouring to discover what it all meant, and they saw that a great crowd was in the street. The frightened porter came breathlessly into the room.

"If you please, sir, here are men who say they are a deputation, and they come on very particular business."

"Tell them to take their particular business away, then, as fast as they can."

The boy went out with the message, and soon came again.

"They say they are your workmen, sir, and what they have to say concerns you very much. And they say they are not going until they have had their talk with you."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Set the dog on them."

Arthur rose hastily.

"May I see them, father? They seem respectful and quiet enough. Let me hear what they have to say."

"No, Arthur; I would rather you keep out of it. Would you let them tell you what they want if you were me?"

"Yes, I certainly would."

Mr. Knight threw up the window.

"Now, then, you fellows, what is the meaning of this?"

A man who was in the front touched his cap and cleared his throat, and began a short speech.

"Beg pardon sir, but we are come to lay our case before you, man to man. We have been given to understand that the factory in Chislehurst-street belongs to you, though it is carried on in the name of Woolton and Company. We are all employed at that factory; and we are not satisfied with the wages. We want a rise, sir, begging your pardon."

"And so do we," said another man, in tones that were far less respectful. "We find that a good many of them works at the back of Stepton belong to you; and it is impossible for a man to keep his family respectable on the wages you give. We're going to strike and demand

better pay, and we have come here to-day to give you notice to that effect."

"Yes, we have," began another, but Mr. Knight angrily stopped him.

"If you don't clear out of this directly I will have you all arrested for trespass," he said. "And you are very much mistaken if you think this is the way to get what you want. If you have a case, lay it before the man from whose hands you take your money, and approach me through him."

A scornful laugh broke in here, and several voices said, "A lot of good that would do!"

"But I may as well tell you now you are here," continued Mr. Knight, "that this is no time to ask for higher wages. Trade is bad, and the manufacturers are not getting the money they ought. If you don't like to take the wages you can leave them. I could get your places filled to-morrow, and with better men than you. So go about your business. And remember, you are marked men. I shall know your faces again, and you needn't be surprised if you get notice to quit."

"Please to understand, sir," said the first speaker, "that we come as a deputation. Pretty well all your men are at the back of us. And we was to tell you that we would give you a week to consider it. We shall be glad to state our grievances to you, and also to mention the terms we think fair, if you will appoint an interview. Our Union will back us, and we don't mean to go on in the old way, and so we give you notice."

Mr. Knight closed his window, and again ordered his servant to set the dog loose; but the men quietly withdrew, pulling the gate to behind them, not, however, before the owner of the house and his son had another glimpse of the waiting crowd outside.

Mr. Knight was in a rage. "What do you think of that for a piece of impertinence?" he asked.

"How much can the men earn, father?"

"Oh, different sums. Nobody has less than fifteen shillings a week."

"I should hope not. That is very little for a man who has a family."

"Well, the family is no business of mine. I don't employ more men than I can help. I like women and boys better. A woman is well off if she gets ten shillings a week, and she does as much work as a man will do for a pound."

"Have you ever thought what a fair and right thing it would be to give your workpeople a share in your profits? You know that both individuals and companies have tried the plan, and found it answer. A man who has a stake in the concern will be more likely to do his best, and to work economically and diligently, than one who has no share in it."

"What nonsense, Arthur! They do have a share in the profits when they get their wages, don't they?"

It was inevitable that Arthur, being a young man, should look at things differently from the old one—young men always do. But he was sensible enough to be held in check by the reflection that his father had—what he certainly had not—experience. This made him resolve to be careful of his words, and only to speak when an opportunity had been given him to prove things. He knew, however, that sooner or later he would have to tell his father what his own views were, which he would certainly put into force if he had the opportunity, because he thought it quite possible that when his father was informed he would take care that his business should be put in other hands. Arthur believed that wealth, whether inherited or won, was a trust to be used for others.

"It seems to me," he said, "that their share is often not a fair one. For instance, if I have invented an article which meets the needs or tastes of my customers, I have the right to what of financial good it brings if I can make the article with my own hands; but if I have to employ other hands they ought to have a much larger share than usually they do. And if I am getting rich, I ought not to lay more and more by, unless I give those who help me to get rich more and more. The fact is, father, that a Christian man may not do what others may. He cannot be selfish, and keep all the good things that come in his way; he must help others, and try to find his joy in that. You know money is no real good to a man. He can only eat as much, and drink as much, and wear as many clothes as others. But if he scatter his wealth, and make a hundred or a thousand families better off because he is rich, that seems to me splendid, and the lot of that man must be the best in the world."

Arthur glanced at his father as he finished. His words had a curious effect upon the old man. He was bitterly disappointed, and yet, as he listened to his son, he was conscious of a feeling that was more like pride and gratification than anger.

"So those are your views, are they?" he said. "I am very glad you have told me what I have to expect. But I am not going to quarrel with you to-day. I will think what is the next best thing to do. Would you not like a walk? I am going to be busy for an hour or two."

Arthur gladly went forth to mingle for a little in the life of the metropolis. It was not much like Sunday down in the East-end of the great city, where the stalls were in the streets, and the shops were open, and there was a great tumult among the people who were buying and selling, arguing and quarrelling, and, above all, drinking and smoking. Places of worship enough there were to contain them all, but few appeared to recognise the Father's house, or to care to enter it. The noise of London seemed to surge round the churches and chapels, which are like harbours of refuge in the stormy sea—only, most of the people preferred to be out on the waters rather than within the calm. Centres of influence and helpful service were these, every one of them. If the ministers and the members did not work together with those of other churches, they had each their own set of workers, all honestly endeavouring to meet, in the way they thought best, the needs of the neighbourhood. Many stories of heroism and self-denial could be told of those who were consecrating their life to this East-end work, and labouring on, through good report and evil report, often with scant success to encourage them. A few of the people were lifted up and out of the mass of wickedness; but so few that they seemed to make little difference, for the streets were as terrible as ever. Still bad language shocked the ears of those who did not live amongst it; still drunkenness and cruelty appeared to flourish more than anything beside. And on this day the men and women who talked together in angry voices in some of the most densely-populated places were more fierce than usual because one of their favourite public-houses had lately been closed. Arthur Knight was shocked and pained with what he saw and heard, but he was not rendered hopeless and despairing. "They ought never to have been suffered to get into this state," he thought. "Nearly all these men and women were once in the Sunday-school. How is it that they were let to slip away from those who were their best friends? But the hope of the future is with the young. The present generation of the young must be secured somehow." And as he half-uttered aloud these words he passed a large hall filled with boys and girls listening delightedly to a man whom he half-envied, such power had his eloquence over them. Then he thought of the latest developments of Christian endeavour, and his heart leaped with joy as he remembered that he could now become associated in these and other services to humanity, so well and wisely rendered in modern times; and it was with a happy assurance that he went home, for the words that were upon his lips was a prophecy in process of fulfilment: "The kingdoms of this world _shall become_ the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

CHAPTER IV.
COUSIN TOM.

“Mother, how is Cousin Tom?”

John Dallington had been enjoying a ride over his farm before breakfast, and had returned, as he said, with an enormous appetite. The morning was delightful, and the sweet scent of the early spring flowers came in at the open window as he spoke. Mrs. Hunter assumed a listening attitude, and then replied, “If I am not mistaken, Tom is coming to answer for herself.”

The next moment John was at the door, and in time to assist his cousin to alight from her horse; but she was by his side before he could quite reach her. This lady with the incongruous name, “Tom Whitwell,” was the youngest daughter of Henry Whitwell, Esq., of Hornby Hall, the father of eleven daughters and no son. Mr. Whitwell had waited very anxiously for the son who did not come; and when the eleventh daughter was announced, he declared that he did not wish to look at her. But meeting the disappointed gaze of his wife he relented.

“Never mind, wife,” he said, “we will make the best of the bad bargain. This last comer shall have a boy’s name, and a boy’s education, and, as far as possible, a boy’s portion. She shall be called Tom, after my father.”

Mrs. Whitwell suggested a compromise, and the baby was eventually named Thomasine Grace Whitwell. But she had always been called Tom, and to please her father she had endeavoured to live up to her name. She early learned to ride and row and play cricket. Her brown hair was cut short and parted on one side, and she wore the most gentlemanly hats, jackets, collars, boots, and gloves that could be bought. She cultivated the lower notes of her voice, and when asked to sing professed herself “only able to do bass.” She was fond of mathematics and science, and considered herself a very logical reasoner. She was a doughty defender of women, but a merciless critic of their weaknesses. She tried to look at things from a man’s standpoint, and laughed at the pleasures and pursuits of her own sex. But she did not do this when one of her friends, Margaret Miller, was near, for Margaret had a way of smiling quietly, and saying, “There is no more womanly woman living, really, at heart, you know, than little Tom Whitwell.”

John Dallington thought that she looked as fresh as the morning; her clear grey eyes were bright with pleasure; and as she glanced into her cousin’s face her cheeks glowed, and she was a vision of health and happiness that quite delighted him. Tom had always been a favourite with John, and he was unfeignedly glad to see her now.

“You have really got back, John! And how well you look!”

“So do you, Tom; and not a day older than when I went away.”

“Oh, thank you! You have grown polite, I find. I cannot return the compliment, for you look about ten years older.”

“Do I indeed? I am glad of that. I want to be old, to inspire you all with respect. Will you have some breakfast, Tom?”

“If I do, it will be the third this morning. The air makes one hungry. How do you like England, John?”

“I like it very much. I have been long enough away to make me think the old country charming.”

“‘No place like home,’ and all that sort of thing, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes! And ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder,’ and all that sort of thing. You look splendid, Tom; and I do believe you have grown. Would

not you like to see the places I have seen?”

“I would, indeed. You have been everywhere, haven’t you? And I have been staying in England all the time. It is well to be you, John.”

“That is precisely my opinion. But I have seen nothing more beautiful than the view from this window.”

“Really?”

“And truly. Of course I have seen many places a thousand times more magnificent, but none more lovely and picturesque. The world altogether is very beautiful, Tom. You come upon proofs of it in unexpected places. There are countries that everybody visits for the sake of their mountains or their rivers, or some special features of interest; but those less known are not the least lovely, and I have frequently enjoyed most when I have expected nothing.”

“It is not a very happy world, though, John.”

“I think it is! What has given you that idea?”

“Oh, everything! I have seen two persons this morning, one a woman and one a child, both poor and both suffering. And the doctors are of no use. John, do you know I mean to be a doctor myself?”

“Indeed?” laughed John. “Well, it may be desirable. The human race is increasing at too rapid a rate. Some parts of England are inconveniently crowded, and even the colonies are getting overstocked; so that anything which helps to thin the population will not be an unmixed evil. Taking all things into consideration, I do not know a less objectionable method of augmenting the death-rate than appointing a considerable number of lady-doctors. And there is no reason in the world why you should not be one of them.”

“You know nothing about the matter, or you would not talk so flippantly. When are you coming to Hornby? Father would like to see you soon, and so would my sisters.”

“Perhaps I can ride back with you. You will not return yet, I suppose?”

Before Tom could answer a dog-cart drove up to the door, and the faces of both ladies flushed and looked confused.

“Whom have we here?” asked John with interest.

“That is my stepson,” replied his mother shortly.

The visitor entered, and was introduced as Mr. William Hunter. John Dallington was kindly disposed, but he did not like his mother’s stepson, who came in with a very free-and-easy air, only removing a big cigar from his mouth to enable him to speak.

“How do, Dallington? Congratulate you, I’m sure. Good morning, mother. How are you, Miss Whitwell? Feel myself fortunate in meeting you.”

The new-comer threw himself into a chair and continued to smoke his cigar. This irritated Dallington, who was not a smoker, and disliked the habit in others. The coolness of the man who could behave so rudely in the presence of ladies annoyed him. “Do you dislike the smoke?” he asked of his cousin.

Mr. Hunter laughed. “Miss Whitwell is probably herself a smoker,” he said. “She is too sensible a lady to set herself against smoking, for that would be to set men against her.”

Tom flushed violently. “It is scarcely worth while to contradict you,” she said.

Mrs. Hunter interposed with some remarks upon the weather; she was extremely anxious that the two young men should be friends, but she had some misgivings, for she could not but know that her son and son-in-law were of very opposite natures, and that their tastes, therefore, were not likely to be the same. John Dallington, however, was too much interested in his cousin to give a second thought to William Hunter. “Will you come into the garden, Tom?” he said. “I have forgotten the names of some of the English flowers, and you must remind me of them.”

“I do so dislike that man,” she said, as soon as they were on the outside of the house. “He is a most unpleasant person, and not good either. Do not have much to do with him, John; and you must remember that you are master, and assert yourself accordingly.”

“I hope he will behave himself.”

“I do not think he knows how.”

“We must give him a few lessons. But never mind him now, Tom. Tell me about yourself and everybody. What have you been doing all this long time? Have you got yourself engaged yet?”

“Not I, indeed. There has been far too much to do. I have been making myself a practical farmer, and I am great on lands and soils and crops; so if you are at a loss, consult your cousin.”

“Thank you; I will with pleasure, for I am sure that I have very much to learn.”

“And I am sure that farming was never so difficult as now. Father often looks worried, though he keeps wonderfully well, on the whole.”

“I am glad of that. I want to see him. I shall have plenty to do, I find. I have actually already had an invitation to a wedding.”

“Mary Wythburn’s, I suppose? You must accept it, John. I am to be one of the bridesmaids, and many of your old friends will be there.”

“Give me a few names. First, the bridegroom: who is he?”

“Alfred Greenholme is the bridegroom, Dr. Stapleton the groomsman, and the vicar, Mr. Sherborne, will also be present as a friend. The other bridesmaids are Hilda Copeland and Margaret Miller.”

Tom glanced at her cousin as she uttered the last name, and saw that his countenance brightened.

“How is Miss Miller, Tom? Are you as good friends as ever?”

“Yes, we are good friends, and Margaret is very well. Which are the flowers whose names you have forgotten?”

“I am afraid we have passed them. Let us go back and look for them. I hope Alfred Greenholme is not as a man what he was as a boy, or Miss Wythburn is little to be congratulated.”

“She does not congratulate herself. In fact, I know that she is wretched. There is nothing very tangible against Mr. Greenholme. He is a lazy, self-pleasing, good-natured man; but girls of these days—some of them, at all events—want more than that. Mary Wythburn is a very clever girl, and far-seeing, too. She denounces such people as Mr. Greenholme. Like Mrs. Booth, she gets into a furious mood when she sees hosts of poor wretches starving, because they cannot get remunerative work to do, while men and women in good circumstances—professing Christianity, too—seem to have not a thought in life excepting that which touches their own pleasure. She thinks that if we are real Christians we cannot, and ought not, to be happy while so many are miserable, and I agree with her.”

"I often think the same. But she ought not to marry Greenholme if she feels like that. And the invitations are out?"

"Yes; so I suppose the wedding will take place. But I shall not quite believe it until I see her married. John, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of the best people in England who are absolutely weary of things as they are; and they are growing determined to change them, too. You have come home in time to help. We only want one or two men of genius and grace to show us the way. I believe the way is not through the giving of alms, for the money given to the poor every winter is enormous—besides special magnificent gifts for special purposes—and yet things are little better for it all."

"Tom, have you been surreptitiously in correspondence with my old comrade, Arthur Knight?"

"Who and what is Arthur Knight? He has a good name."

"Has he not? And he is a true knight, too—a splendid fellow, and great on this subject. He says things need not be another year as they are; and declares that it only requires a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether to accomplish such a revolution as shall crown England with truer glory than she has ever known before."

"I expect it is a revolution that we want. There has been a great deal of pottering, but the right thing has yet to be done. John, I must be going. Will you order my horse?"

"Yes, and ride with you. It will be like old times."

They had a delightful ride, and almost forgot that they were not boy and girl together. They went the longest way round, and yet reached their destination sooner than they wished.

Hornby Hall was an old-fashioned manor house—large, substantial, and comfortable—standing in its own grounds, and itself covering considerable space. It was built in the Gothic style, and had any number of large, low rooms, with thick walls, and ample chimney-corners and enticing window seats.

The master, "a fine old English gentleman," came forward to greet his nephew with much cordiality, and John Dallington felt proud of his uncle, as well he might, for he was an upright man, who could not do a mean thing, stately in form and spotless in character, a magistrate, a member of the County Council, a man whose name was respected through the whole province, whose keen grey eyes seemed to see everything, whose courteous bearing delighted everybody, who was beloved and honoured by the poor and admired and trusted by the rich; a man without reproach, whose glory was not in what he had, but in what he was. It was a privilege to be related to him, as Dallington felt.

"Welcome home, my boy," he said, kindly. "I am glad you have come into your own, and that we shall see something of you again. I wish you health and happiness for your new life. Come in, and be made much of by your aunt and cousins; they are not all such forward things as Tom, but they will be just as glad to see you."

And indeed they appeared to be, and seemed bent on spoiling the returned wanderer, who might have been a veritable prodigal son, so eager were they to lavish the best of everything upon him.

John spent some very pleasant hours that day at Hornby Hall, hearing the news and telling stories of his own experiences. His cousins were merry girls, quick at repartee, and full of good-humoured fun. Some of them were married, but there were quite enough of them at home to fill the old house with pleasant sights and sounds.

In the afternoon Mr. Whitwell took his nephew over the farm and showed him the improvements he had made during his absence. "You must see my

model cottages, John," he said. "The old places were falling into dis-repair, and were not very comfortable to live in; but you will be pleased with these, I think."

"These are scarcely like the old style of agricultural cottages."

"No; are they? But the old style of thing will not do in these days. You see they have large gardens. I am not a Radical, you know, John, but a steady-going Conservative; and that is how it is that I have come to see what a shame it is for a man to work on a farm, and have spacious fields and meadows all around him, and yet not have a patch of ground large enough to grow a bed of cabbages or a few potatoes to call his own. Monstrous, when you come to think of it!"

"Yes, so it is," assented Dallington; "but I should not have thought that such ideas on your part were the outcome of Conservatism."

"Would you not? I am happy to say that most of the old Tories of my acquaintance have come to have the same opinion as I."

"I am glad to hear it. I shall have to do something to my own cottages, I expect. Why, you have actually planted these gardens with fruit trees."

"Oh, yes! It does not do to expect too much from my tenants. If they take care of the trees, and train them and eat the fruit, it is as much as one has a right to look for."

"They are very pretty cottages."

"I am glad you like them. And they are convenient. They have rooms enough, and they are not too small. At one time a man was satisfied with a four-roomed cottage, no matter how many sons and daughters he had; but all that has passed away before a better education, thank God!"

"The gardens look well kept."

"They are; and they provide vegetables enough to last the whole year. The people are all right, you know, if they have fruit and vegetables, corn and milk."

"Have you raised the rents?"

"No; nor yet the wages. The men are quite alive to the value of the house and garden. But come and look at the crops."

The estate was, as John knew, strictly entailed. At Mr. Whitwell's death it would pass away from his family of girls to the next heir, who was his brother's son. But all the same for that, indeed, partly because of it, the squire of Hornby was scrupulously anxious to do the very best he could for the property. The farm buildings were either new or kept in perfect repair. He was careful not to impoverish any of the land, but by all the means which modern science had made possible he nursed it for the heir as carefully as if he had been his son. The said heir was a young man of whom his uncle did not approve, and, vain as it was, he could not keep the wish from his mind that, since he had no sons of his own, John Dallington had been the next in succession.

It was late in the day when John left to go home, accompanied part of the way by three of his cousins. Tom did not go, but she stood at the window watching until they were out of sight. Then her father called her into the library, where the two were often together hard at work for many hours.

"It is too late for those accounts, Tom, I'm afraid."

"I think it is, father. They can wait until to-morrow, cannot they?"

"Oh, yes! Very well. John has become a fine young fellow, hasn't he?"

“Yes; I think he is very much improved. I wonder if he has seen his lawyer?”

“Ah, poor fellow! No; he has not seen him yet. If he had he would not be as light-hearted as he is. I think his father did not treat him quite fairly. The lad ought to have been told how things were. And then it was too hard for Dallington to leave so much power in his wife’s hands. She has made things a good deal worse for John. He will find it as much as he can do to hold his own.”

“I suppose he can sell part of his land?”

“Yes, if he can get anybody to buy it. But land does not now fetch the price it ought, and farming is not what it used to be.”

Tom was silent for some minutes, and her face became first red and then pale.

She wanted to say something to her father. Generally she thought aloud in his presence, such good friends were they; but she needed more courage than she had now.

At last she rose and stood beside him, putting her hand on his shoulder, and turning her face so that he could not see it.

“Father,” she said, trying to steady her voice and speak in her ordinary tones, “do you remember promising me that I should have that mortgage, or whatever it is, for my portion?”

“Of course I do.”

“May I have the papers and keep them in my possession now?”

“Why, what do you want them for, Tom? What possible good could they do you?”

“No good at all, only I should like them.”

Mr. Whitwell hesitated.

“Do you think you are quite capable of taking care of them? They are worth three thousand pounds, you know.”

“Yes; I do not forget their value. You are not afraid to trust me, father, are you?”

“I trust you with everything, Tom, as you know.”

But Mr. Whitwell said no more; and Tom waited.

Presently she sighed, and pressed her lips to her father’s cheek. “Never mind,” she said, “if you would rather not. I am sure you know best what is right and wise.”

Mr. Whitwell arose, unlocked a safe, and took from it a parchment.

“Here it is,” he said. “Take care of it, and I think it will be prudent of you to give it back into my charge when you have looked it through.”

Tom took the paper without a word, and her father did not notice how pale she was. She kissed him, and, going swiftly to her own room, locked the parchment in a drawer.

But that night she took it out and read it through, every word. Then a strange expression came over her face, and she folded up the parchment, muttering, “If only I dared! If only I dared!” and held it above the flame of the candle, so near that it began to be scorched. And then she opened it, and spread it on the bed, and fell on her knees to pray, but

burst instead into a flood of tears.

CHAPTER V.
THE DUTY THAT IS NEAREST.

Arthur Knight scarcely knew whether pleasure or pain predominated in his mind during the first days which he spent at home. London interested him intensely. The vivid life, the untiring resolution, the concentrated energy of the people amazed and delighted him. And when he saw all that was being done to further the cause of righteousness, he was as proud of his country as an Englishman ought to be. But that which had presented itself to his mind as the blot upon the picture, when he contemplated it from a distance, filled him with as much wonder and sadness when he was on the spot. Since his people could do so much, why did they not do more? They had conquered so many worlds; why did they not conquer their own? Were they as great as they used to be? Were they not rather afraid of being great? What was it that dominated most of the individuals that made up a London crowd? It needed very little discernment to discover that the one great desire of the people was _to get on_—not to get _up_, or to rise higher in intelligence or character, but to be able to pay a pound or two more of rent, and a longer bill at the tailor’s, or grocer’s, or milliner’s. Certainly there was nothing great, but everything that was infinitesimally little, in such an ambition as that! But he knew—a traveller in all lands must always know—that simple living brings as much happiness as luxurious fare, and he believed that if the spell could be broken, and the people who were so eager to get on that they had not time to think of other things could once get the fashion changed, they would rise to their own capabilities, and, completely changing their standpoint, would become really great in character and achievement. And he believed that the time for this was coming.

The first ten days of Arthur’s return were very memorable ones.

One of the incidents that ever afterward remained in his memory was that of his first attempt to speak to English people of that which was in his heart. He was passing down the City-road when he noticed that men were rapidly entering the historical Wesley Chapel. He went into the building, and found that a Conference of Christian men had been called to consider whether means could not be taken beforehand to prevent the misery which every recurring winter brought to the East-end of London. It was felt by the conveners of the meeting that it would be a wise step to prepare for the inevitable, and that the appalling distress might be to a great extent prevented if good arrangements were made in time.

Arthur Knight knew that the Wesleyans had been moving forward for a considerable period. He knew, too, that the last few years had seen the Salvation Army and other organisations making extraordinary endeavours to stem the tide of misery and sin, and that, indeed, every department of the Christian Church was working for this end, with much personal effort, and by means of enormous sums of money both specially and annually contributed. But the disappointing thing was that so little difference seemed to have been made by it all. The world of London was scarcely better. Still men cursed God and died. Still there were cases of death from starvation and cold; even in the last winter thousands of men were unemployed, while drunkenness, cruelty and sin seemed as strong as ever.

The speakers at the meeting referred to this in tones of disappointment and sorrow. They could not but thank God for what had been done; but they felt that the work was piecemeal and inefficient. A paper was read suggesting some new methods of raising money, and indicating some fresh methods of service, and then the meeting was thrown open, and any one who had anything to say which could be said in five minutes was invited to say it.

This was Arthur Knight’s opportunity. He waited until several persons had spoken, and then he sent up his name, and made his five minutes’ speech.

“Much that we wish for could be accomplished in a single year, in one way,” he said. “Christian brothers, let us be heroic for Christ’s sake! Let us join our forces and work together. We have our differences and divisions, and these are the things that weaken us. How long shall we ourselves hinder the fulfilment of our Lord’s prayer, ‘That they all may be one, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ If we were to lift up the white flag of truce and fight under it, every Christian man, shoulder to shoulder, the battle of peace and righteousness could be won. These things that you deplore need not exist another year. England is so small, and, therefore, so manageable. It is mapped out into parishes and into Parliamentary divisions. You have no difficulty in getting into contact with every man when you want his vote. Your School Board officers know the number and age of every child in the kingdom. It will be easy, therefore, for a committee of church members to ascertain the circumstances of every individual around the centre of a church or chapel. Gentlemen, nearly two-thirds of the entire population of England are members of some Christian church; the money, the intelligence, the influence, the character, the ability of the nation are mostly among these two-thirds. What of the other third? Do you believe that we are powerless to deal with it—two to one, and more? Why, we are strong enough to see that every man has work to do, and every man does it, that the idle shall be forced to labour, that the inefficient shall be taught, that the sick shall be nursed and the children fed, that our ships shall be laden with good things only, that our people shall not be drunken, that another language than that of swearing and blasphemy shall be heard in our streets, that cruelty and vice shall hide their heads. Sirs, we are the masters in England; why, then, do we allow the things which shame us to exist? Only because we are craven and selfish, and small when we ought to be great; only because we care more for our denominations, and our party, and our own personal ease than for Christ and righteousness. Shall we change all this? You are able. Are you willing and ready? Will you, sons of Wesley, who occupy the middle position between the Church of England and Nonconformity, lead the way?”

Cries of “Yes, yes!” greeted this appeal, and when Knight sat down many rose to their feet to echo his words. Later they called for him to speak again; but it was found that he had left, and he did not know till afterwards what was the result of his first speech.

His heart was beating rapidly as he went forth into the London streets. He had only uttered a part of his convictions, but he was thankful to have had the opportunity to do that. He crossed over, and stood for a few minutes among the graves of Bunhill Fields, and saw the names of the brave men who had done the work which God gave them to do; and he vowed that he would lose no chance of using his voice, whenever and wherever he could, for he longed to see the Church united in the work which was so evidently waiting to be done.

But he had much to engross him in his own and his father’s affairs. He spent some hours of every day in the office, endeavouring to grasp the real state of things there, and finding much to make him sad. His father was very disinclined to give way to the men; and one of those much-to-be-regretted labour disputes seemed inevitable. The men appeared to have very little power, really, to secure that which they wanted. Crowds of unemployed were always ready to step into vacant places. For one situation there would be fifty applicants, and this made it possible for masters to be to some extent independent of the men, notwithstanding the trades unions. And there had arisen an antiunionist association composed of men who helped each other and fought for each other, and who were now numerically strong enough to resist the trades union men who in a strike tried to keep them out of wharves, docks, and factories. Mr. Knight, finding that women and boys could do his work as well as men, and for less wages, had in his employ many thousands of these, and this was a grievance of which the men bitterly complained. It happened in an

enormous number of cases that men were idling about, and drinking, while their wives were employed at factories, in consequence of which the homes were wretched, and the children sorely neglected. There were, indeed, a hundred wrongs that called for reform, and a crying need of some one with a clear head and a kindly Christian heart to put matters straight.

Arthur Knight knew from the first day that he spent in his father's office that under existing conditions it was no place for him. He would not, he simply could not, for the sake of all the wealth of the world, so do violence to his conscience, and slay all that was best in him, as to continue to sell goods that were next to worthless, and keep thousands of families on the verge of starvation, while he was getting richer every year. So much he settled with himself once for all, although he equally resolved to have no rupture with his father.

He was troubled at the signs of seething discontent and unrest which were visible; and he succeeded in winning a promise from his father that he would consider one or two suggestions that he made. He had mentioned Hancourt, and although Mr. Knight would not promise to reinstate him, he commissioned his son to visit him for the purpose of discovering whether he would return if an offer were made him, and, accordingly, on Saturday afternoon, Arthur made his way to Hancourt's residence. He was not at home, but as his wife expected him shortly, he waited.

Mrs. Hancourt was a good-looking woman, with a pleasant face, and with lady-like manners. The home was the picture of neatness and comfort, and it was evident that its mistress was a person of refined tastes and habits. The arrangements of the house were artistic even, and there was a warmth and homeliness about them which were to Arthur very attractive. And Mrs. Hancourt could talk well. She had read books, and thought about them. She had ideas of her own, and a happy way of expressing them. She was a good listener, too, and anxious to learn; and a very delightful half-hour was passed by Arthur, who felt as if he had found a little haven of refuge after a sea of trouble. Mrs. Hancourt had two beautiful children—the one, a boy between seven and eight; the other, a girl between five and six. A lovely picture they made, standing together and looking through their blue eyes into Arthur's face with the frank fearlessness which characterises English children. They came very demurely to shake hands with Arthur, and the little girl, whom they called Sissie, lifted her pretty face to be kissed, and was perfectly willing to sit upon his knee, and to be told about little girls whose faces were black. But after a time, when the conversation became uninteresting, she said, "I like you, Mr. Arthur—you are a nice man; but I like my brother best. Please set me down." And the children were soon happily at play together by the window. After a time Mrs. Hancourt was called away, and Arthur took a book, and appeared to be engrossed by it. In reality, he was being greatly entertained by the little ones.

"Now, Sissie, you are a prisoner, you know; the giant has locked you up, but I am a knight coming to deliver you. Look at me through the back of the chair—that is a strong iron gate, a fortress. I shall climb over the bars of the gate, and mount the tower, and pick you up, and carry you off, and make you my wife."

"And then shall I crown you with flowers?"

"Oh, yes, of course! Knights are always crowned with flowers."

"Are they the crowns they wear in heaven, Geoff? Jane told me we should all be crowned in heaven."

"I don't think they are flowers—they are gold crowns they have there."

"Are the gold crowns heavy?"

"I suppose so; gold is the heaviest metal, I know, for I learnt that in my lesson book."

“Oh, then, how their heads must ache! But perhaps they haven’t any heads in heaven.”

“Sissie, how foolish! Of course they have heads, or how could they be crowned?”

The girl was silent a little after that, but presently she said, musingly, “I’m so afraid I shall forget—and I don’t want to forget—but I can’t quite remember what heaven was like.”

“Sissie, what do you mean? Why, you never were in heaven!”

“Oh, yes, Geoff! I was in heaven before I came here.”

“What nonsense! I’m sure you have never been in heaven, at all.”

“Haven’t I? Then where was I?”

Geoff was thoughtful for a few minutes, and then he said, “I think it was like this: God thought He would like to have a little Sissie, so He said, ‘Let there be Sissie!’ and there was Sissie.”

“Yes; I suppose that was it. Geoffrey, say a little bit of the ‘Fairy Queen.’”

Geoff repeated a few lines which he had been taught, but his sister interrupted him.

“Geoff, where is the Fairy Queen now?”

“In heaven, I expect,” was the answer.

“How long has she been there?”

“Most all the time, I should think. You know, Sissie, our Lord was in the grave three days; but common people like the Fairy Queen have to stay longer—I should think about a fortnight or three weeks.”

Here the conversation abruptly terminated, for Arthur Knight burst into a laugh so loud and startling that the children were quite disconcerted.

“I am so sorry, but I really could not help it,” he said. And then the door opened, and Mr. Hancourt entered, looking very pale and anxious.

“Oh, Mr. Arthur,” he said, “I am sorry to see you here. I hoped you were at home. I am afraid there will be a riot this evening. The men who are disappointed are swearing that they will seek your father and compel him to listen to them. Indeed, they are talking very foolishly and wildly about revenge, and all that sort of thing.”

“Your money or your life, I suppose?”

“Exactly. It is a great pity that Mr. Knight lives so near the works. Most people reside a long way from their places of business, somewhere in the country, where their men cannot find them; but Mr. Knight has not chosen to do this, and as the men know where to find him they are going to march to his house. And they talk about having a band, and I am afraid they have a great many sympathisers and friends.”

“I came to ask you if you could give me any advice, or say what can be done.”

“I am afraid it is too late to do anything.”

“In any case I must hasten home and stand by my father. Will you come with me?”

As soon as a cab could be procured they drove away, telling the driver to make all possible speed.

But the crowd reached Brent House before them, and it was a more ugly crowd than that of the week before. As Hancourt and Arthur entered the gate, Mr. Knight showed himself at the window, and this was a signal for all sorts of cries and execrations.

“Give us our rights!” “Hypocrite!” “Robber!” “Tyrant!” “Live and let live, can’t you?” “Do as you’d be done by, or it will be the worse for you!” “What did you turn Hancourt away for?” “And Hamilton?” “And Allen?” “Better men than you are!” These and worse things were shouted by the crowd, which presented a very threatening aspect.

“Come into the house,” said Arthur to Hancourt. “We can get in by the side door.”

“No; I will not come in. I will be among the men, and see if they will hear reason, while you go to your father.”

Arthur found Mr. Knight greatly excited.

“I wanted you to go for the police,” he said. “But I have sent for them, and they will be here soon. The wretches! I did not expect them to-day. I meant to have had the place guarded to-morrow, but they have stolen a march upon me. And yet I cannot think how they got in. Those stupid servants must have undone the gate for them. What a horrible noise they are making! But they are only bringing worse things upon themselves.”

“Father,” said Arthur, “it is a pity to have all this fuss if we can help it. You are going to let me have a voice in the business, are you not? And I will tell them so, and that there will be two of us to consider their claims and grievances.”

Before Mr. Knight could answer he threw open the window, and his clear voice rang through the crowd. “Men,” he said, “I want you to give us a little time——” A stone was thrown at him, which struck his head and knocked him down.

It was not the first time that a messenger of peace had been misunderstood and ill-treated. Arthur thought at the moment of other peacemakers, and he kept his temper.

He rose to his feet, and, with the blood streaming from his head, he again faced the people. “The man who threw that stone does not know me,” he said, “or he would not have thrown it. I am Arthur Knight——”

“Oh, yes! the man who threw the stone knew that,” shouted a voice.

“I am going to help my father in his business, and I promise you that I will try to see that justice is done, both to him and to you. If your grievances are real they shall be removed, as far as I am able to arrange things; and if your claims are reasonable and just they shall be met—if possible. I cannot tell how far you are right. I know you are not at all right in coming here to make a commotion, and calling names and throwing stones—all this is unmanly and unworthy of you—but you may think that you have some excuse, and I will hear all you have to say about it if you choose three men, and let them meet me on Monday evening at eight o’clock in the office. Will you?”

“Yes, sir!” The words came in a great shout. The effect of Arthur’s little speech had been marvellous. Where was its power? In the words or in the man? These questions were to be often asked in the future.

“And what are we to do on Monday morning?” some one asked.

“What are you to do? Why, go to work, to be sure, if you want your wages. Don’t strike, don’t lose time. You cannot afford that as well as we can, you know. Be in your places on Monday morning, and do your best for us, and I promise you that I will do my best for you.”

How was it that they all believed him? They certainly did. There was not a man who doubted.

“Three cheers for the young governor!” said one, and a hearty hurrah was raised.

“Thank you,” said Arthur, when the noise ceased, “I shall be glad now to see how much or how little I am hurt.”

“Sorry you are hurt at all, sir,” said one. “Now then, mates, clear out! The youngster looks faintish like.”

They vanished speedily, and then as Arthur turned from the window he wondered where his father was, and what he would say to him. He was not in the room, but Hancourt was there, holding by the collar a pale, unkempt youth, who looked considerably crestfallen and frightened.

“This is the fellow who threw a stone at you, Mr. Arthur. His name is Jones. As there was no policeman near I arrested him myself. I suppose now that there is little need of their services the police will soon be coming, and I will keep this fellow until I can give him into custody.”

“Bring him into my room, and turn the key upon us both.”

Tea had been set on the table, some cold chicken, pie, cake, and toast.

“Come and have some,” said Arthur to his prisoner. “You look hungry, and it is tea-time.”

The lad could not keep his eyes from wandering to that well-spread table. He was hungry, certainly, for he had scarcely tasted food that day; but he did not think he was so far gone as to eat the food of the man whom he had struck with a stone.

“Now then,” said Arthur, “why don’t you begin? You know it will be some time before they give you anything to eat at the police-station. You had better get a meal while you have the chance.” As he spoke he was tying a handkerchief around his head.

“I wish that stone hadn’t hit you,” said the youth.

“Oh, yes! I am sure you do, because it was a cowardly thing to throw it, and no man likes to be a coward. I will cut you some chicken.”

A well-filled plate was put before the young man, who really could not resist it; and if he could have got rid of the lump in his throat he would have greatly enjoyed it, for such bread, such ham, and such chicken he had never tasted before.

“Will you have a glass of milk?” said Arthur, pouring it out. “I am not going to give you into custody, though a whole army of police should come to take you, because, as you say, you did not mean to hurt me.”

“Thank you, kindly, sir, I’m sure.”

Arthur Knight let the young man go on with his meal in comfort, and then he began to question him.

“Now, which workshop are you in?”

“I ain’t in no workshop at all, sir.”

“What do you do then?”

“Oh! I do odd jobs, and earn a sixpence here and there.”

“I suppose you work for my father?”

“What say, sir?”

“You work for Mr. Knight, don’t you?”

“No, sir.”

“Then what in the world are you here for if the quarrel is none of yours?”

“I seed the men coming, and as there was a row on I thought I’d come too.”

“Ah! there are plenty of lads about like you, I suppose? I have heard of you. Such as you do most of the mischief that is done, don’t you?”

“That’s about it, sir,” said the lad, grinning as if he thought it was a very fine thing, though that expression changed to one of shame when Arthur looked at him steadily.

“There is not much gain to be got out of such a life as that, you know,” said Arthur, gravely. “It is not anything to be proud of really, is it? I think it is a pity for a strong, likely lad such as you are to take up with that sort of thing. I wouldn’t if I were you. I call it a waste of good power, because you are sharp enough to make your way in the world if you will only set about it in the right fashion.”

“I ain’t got nobody to show me the way, nor I ain’t got nobody to help me.”

“Oh, yes, you have! You’ve got me, and I shall be very glad to help you. I will find some work for you, and if you don’t know how to do it, you shall be taught, and put in the way of earning an honest living. Will you do your best?”

The lad hesitated. He really felt that he was giving up a great deal. The prospect which Arthur held out was not very alluring. He and his companions considered that “earning an honest living” was far too slow a thing for them. But somewhere under his ragged waistcoat the lad had a heart, and Arthur had found his way to it, as to so many more of the same kind.

“Yes, I will, sir!”—the words were spoken quite solemnly—“I will, indeed, sir, to make up for hurting of ye.”

“Very good! Shake hands upon it.”

The steady tramp of the policemen’s feet was heard in the grounds, and Arthur opened the door. Hancourt came forward.

“Where is the boy?” he asked.

“Oh, the boy is all right! I am not going to give him into custody; and, Hancourt, will you tell those fellows that things are quiet, and send them about their business? If they see me with my head bandaged, I suppose they will think they ought to do something, and there is nothing for them to do.”

Arthur was getting anxious. He had no doubt that his father would be angry with him; but he had done what he felt sure was the only right thing to do, and he was not without hope that he would bring his father to his way of thinking. But he was desirous of getting it over as soon as possible, and he rang the bell and inquired of the servant if she knew where Mr. Knight was. She replied that she had heard him go into the library and shut the door some time ago.

Arthur went at once to the room and knocked. There was no response. He opened the door, and found the room empty. Then he went to his father’s bedroom, and found it locked. “Father!” he called, but there was no answer. He listened a moment, and then, with all the force of his strong young frame, he burst open the door, and saw what he feared to see—his

father lying on the floor in a state of unconsciousness!

No time was lost, and two doctors were speedily on the spot; but they were able to do very little for the stricken man. They did not pronounce the case hopeless; they said it was possible that there might be partial recovery, but even that was improbable. They feared it was the beginning of the end, and the end might be not far off.

Arthur Knight was profoundly grieved. The love for his father—which had always been in his heart, though for years it had been restrained—was warm and strong now, as he sat by the bedside of the unconscious man, and he forgot everything but that he was his father, and had always been generous and kind to him. How he wished he had come home before! A flood of compassion filled his heart as he pictured the lonely man in the solitary house, melancholy and bitter. How joyless his life must have been! He seemed to have had little to comfort him but the one fact of his commercial success; and there must have been many times when that failed, and he was altogether comfortless. So far as the world judged him he was an honourable man. His life had been pure from many of the vices of the age, and as Arthur thought over these things he wished with all his heart that he might recover, if only to find comfort in his son. But there seemed little hope of that. The doctors looked more grave at each visit, and made no secret of their conviction that the days of Mr. Knight were numbered.

So Arthur had a son’s sacred duty to perform in nursing and watching his father, his heart full of sorrow that he could not do more for him. He was very tender and affectionate; and half hoping that some of his words might pierce through the cloud over him, he told him of his love, and uttered slowly and impressively those good words of the wonderful Book which tell of a Father’s love and a Saviour’s power. Arthur could not feel afraid to trust the dying man to the compassionate Christ. He did not doubt that the Great Father, who had loved and cared for this neglectful child of His for so many years, would pity him because he had lived out his life to such unworthy issues, and found it so disappointing, and had made so many mistakes, and suffered for them, as was inevitable, and that He would have mercy upon him, whether at the last he was able to ask for it or not. Arthur’s hope was not in his father, but in his God; and there was no fear, but much faith in his prayers.

Illness and death are great softeners of human hearts. It was wonderful how tender the people who knew Mr. Knight became towards him when they heard that he was dying. All thought the best and none the worst of him then. And when they looked through the eyes of love and pity, instead of those of censure, they were not long in finding his good traits. Even his workpeople altered their tones. “After all,” they said, “he had been no worse a master than other men. Of course, he had tried to get all he could out of them; it was only natural—other people did the same. And it was not altogether his fault, perhaps, that he had not used better materials; people would have nasty cheap things nowadays, and they could not expect them to be cheap and good too.” So they talked, the people whose hearts are mostly kind at the bottom, not because they quite believed what they said, nor because they did not understand the meaning of justice, truth, and honesty, but because in the presence of death even the hardest becomes pitiful.

It was a great comfort to Arthur Knight to know that many kind inquiries were being made and much sympathy shown for his father, and these things helped him through the time of waiting.

It was not a very long time either.

“He has not the strength to rally,” said the doctors. “He may have a gleam of consciousness towards the last, but it is scarcely likely, and the end may come at any time.”

The end came suddenly. Mr. Knight opened his eyes and fixed them upon his son. “Arthur,” he said.

“Yes, father; I am here. I love you. What can I do for you?”

The eyes closed wearily again for some minutes. Then they were once more lifted to the sorrowful and sympathetic face bending over him, and the dying man made an effort to speak. “Arthur—undo it all—if you can—and pray for me. God be merciful—to me—a sinner.”

Then, after a few minutes of struggle, his eyes closed, and his face grew calm.

CHAPTER VI.
ARTHUR KNIGHT’S INHERITANCE.

The stateliness of death was upon the still face of his father when the son gazed upon it for the last time. A wonderful peace and beauty, which had never been seen before, was there; and as Arthur looked through his tears he saw that all the wrinkles which care had made were smoothed away, and something of the youthfulness which he remembered had returned. Did it mean anything or nothing, he wondered, this calm which is always so comforting to those who look upon their dead? Love made him tender; but neither it nor sorrow could make him unmindful of facts. His father had not really been an irreligious man. He had known his Lord’s will; but in many things he had not done it. He had gone home to God with the cry of mercy on his lips and in his heart; and his son believed in nothing so entirely as in the compassion of the Father, as Christ represented Him. Arthur was not afraid; but he wondered where the dead man was now, and how it fared with him. His father had appeared to be entirely engrossed with the world of money-making and business; and what sort of preparation was that for the hereafter which was before him? Had the habit of worldliness so hardened his heart that it had kept the weary wanderer from going back to the Father? Arthur was thankful that he had heard the dying lips pray, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” What issues might have hung upon the prayer for the man who was passing away he could not tell, but there was infinite comfort in it for the one who remained. Yet he mourned for what might have been. He knew enough of his own heart, with its weaknesses and sins, to understand how a man’s prayer has at the last to take the deprecating tones of humility and confession. In the silent hours of his life he had dared to pray with Moses, “Show me Thy glory,” and he to whom that is an answered prayer must needs abhor himself in dust and ashes. He understood how natural it was that a good and great man should have asked that the only epitaph upon his tomb should be—

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
  On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
  My Saviour, and my all.

Arthur Knight had uttered these words for himself many a time. But still he knew, and never failed to realise, that there is another side to it all. He delighted to dwell on the heroic side of Christ’s men. He believed that what St. Paul said every disciple of Jesus might say, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me,” and that the inspiring song of victory which the Apostle raised might be echoed by every one whom faith made strong: that the Christian indeed should live so grand a life that he also might declare at the last, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

As he thought of all the possibilities which his father had had, of the life which he had lived and the life that he might have lived, he was filled with sorrow—just such sorrow as many of us are preparing for those who know and love us best. But Arthur had a child’s faith as well as a man’s loyalty; and he did what we all have to do—and what, indeed, we are all glad to do—he left his dead with God. He knew every saving

clause in the history of the life that had ended—what relentings and repentances and upward wistful glances there had been, and how fierce was the struggle between the better and the worse nature of the man! God knew it all, and that was enough. “I know not where he is; but, O my Father! he is in Thy hands, commended to Thy love, and I am not afraid to leave him with Thee,” he said; and with these words he was comforted.

The great manufacturer of the East-end had left a fortune considerably in excess of the amount which he had mentioned to his heir; and the young man was too sensible to feel other than glad when he had the facts of his inheritance placed before him in figures which told their own story. With the exception of a few legacies to old servants, among whom Arthur was gratified to see Hancourt’s name, everything was left to him absolutely. Houses and lands, shares and investments were all at his disposal, together with the business by which they had been won. But to the new master these were chiefly valuable as means to an end. That which thrilled his soul, and caused his eyes to flash and his heart to glow, was the fact that nearly three thousand persons, men and women, youths and girls, looked to him for work and wages. He needed no one to remind him that whatever of other thoughts and plans were in his mind, the duty that lay the nearest to him was the care of these people—their bodies and their souls. And he never thought of this without a thrill of joy. “They are MY PEOPLE, and, God helping me, I will do my duty by them,” he said, and he meant much more than most men when he said it.

It was with considerable emotion that Arthur Knight went through the factories and saw his people at work. They were all English, like himself, and he felt drawn towards them for this reason, if for no other—for he was a true-hearted patriot. Many of them, too, were nearer him because they were sharers in his faith, served the same Master, and hoped for the same heaven. He thought he could tell which these were by the look upon their faces, by their demeanour, and even their dress: for his religion was very simple and sincere; and he had not a doubt but that godliness exalts a man in every respect, and is profitable altogether, for the present as well as the future life. These men and women, who were members of Christian churches, and, therefore, must be living their daily life on a higher level than the rest, having nobler motives to guide them, would, he hoped, be very much his friends and helpers in his future efforts to benefit the others. Knight looked upon them all, indeed, as his friends; a great change and deterioration would have to be wrought in him before he could regard them as “_hands_” merely; to him they were men and women, boys and girls; they were heads and hearts, much more than hands, and were to be his companions as well as his servants in the future. To him “the fatherhood of God” and “the brotherhood of man” were not well-sounding phrases only, but very significant realities; but he knew that he would have to prove this to his people before they would believe it. So he was busy with plans, which he confided to his friend John Dallington, who came to spend a few days with him. He would at once provide a reading-room for the men, and he would get Miss Wentworth and her band of helpers to look after the women. For the boys—great, rough, uncouth fellows as some of them were—he had a warm heart, a resourceful brain, and a patient, tolerant temper; and the first thing he did was to turn the top floor of his house, which had hitherto been unoccupied, into class rooms of different kinds for their especial comfort and benefit.

One morning he told Dallington that he was going to see a former _employé_ of his father’s, and invited him to accompany him. “I must try to master the broad facts and general principles of the business myself,” he said, “and I have a hard spell of work before me. But Hancourt can help me. I should like your opinion of him. Come with me and see him. It is a pleasant errand. My father has left him a hundred pounds, and I will give him the cheque with the news. And Hancourt has two children well worth knowing.”

When they reached the house the children were as usual very much in evidence. “How do you do, Mr. Arthur?” said the girl, and when he lifted her she put her arms around his neck and kissed him. “Mother said I was to kiss you as soon as ever I saw you, because your father is dead.”

“Oh, Sissie!” said Geoff, reprovingly. “You should not talk about Mr. Knight to Mr. Arthur, now, you know.”

“Yes, she should,” said Arthur. “Are you sorry for me, Sissie?”

“Yes, I am very sorry. Were you a good boy to your father, Mr. Arthur?”

“Not always, Sissie; and I am sorry for it now. You will always be good to your father and mother, won’t you?”

“I don’t know. Mother says I’m very bad. Did you ever have a mother?”

“Yes; but that was a long, long time ago. She died when I was such a little boy that I cannot even remember her.”

“But what will you do now, when you have not either a father or a mother?”

“I don’t know, Sissie. I shall be very lonely. I think you must come and see me.”

“I’m much obliged to you. Thanks very much.”

This was said in such a droll way that Dallington laughed.

“You shouldn’t laugh; it’s rude,” said the child. But her brother rebuked her.

“It is you who are rude, Sissie; isn’t she, mother?”

“I am afraid she is, Geoff.”

“She is very entertaining,” said Dallington. “Sissie, will you not be gracious, and give me a kiss, too?”

“Have you got any little girls at home?”

“No; I am sorry to say I have not. Will you come home with me?”

“No; I could not leave Geoff. He would be always in trouble without me.”

“Then come to me for a little time now; for if you do not I shall be jealous.”

“What is ‘jealous’?”

“I am afraid you know the thing if you do not know the word,” said Mrs. Hancourt.

“Is it to be naughty, mother?”

“Yes, Sissie; and that is what you have been to-day. And you must go to bed early. Indeed, you had better say ‘Good-night,’ and go now.”

“But let me say my prayers down here, mother, because I always do, you know.” And without more ado the child knelt down, and, folding her hands together, she said: “Oh, God, please make Sissie a good girl!” and demurely added, “And if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

Sounds that were not devotional were heard from the other parts of the room, and Mrs. Hancourt lifted the little one in her arms. “I think, darling,” she said, “you had better finish your prayers upstairs.”

When Mrs. Hancourt and the children had left, Arthur told his news. “I have the pleasure to inform you, Mr. Hancourt, that my father proved the respect which he had for you by leaving you a small legacy.”

“A legacy, sir?” exclaimed the man, in amazement. “A legacy for me? Left

me by Mr. Knight? Do let me call my wife. Kate, come here! This is news, indeed. Mr. Knight really had not any ill-feeling toward me, after all."

"Oh! I am very glad," said Mrs. Hancourt. "Mr. Arthur, my husband, ever since Mr. Knight's illness, has been wondering if he had not been harsh and wrong."

"But, Kate, you would never guess the rest. Mr. Knight has left us a legacy."

"It is nothing to make a fuss about," said Knight. "It is only a hundred pounds. Here is a cheque for the amount."

"A hundred pounds?" It was all that Hancourt could say. He changed colour, and struggled for composure.

His wife had tears in her eyes. "You must please excuse him," she said to Arthur. "You do not know, you cannot guess, what this money is to us, nor what we have gone through lately."

Knight's heart beat quickly. He had not felt so glad before as he did now that he was rich. How possible it would be for him to increase the happiness of other people if only he used his inheritance wisely!

"Mr. Hancourt," he said, "you were for a long time my father's right-hand man. Will you be mine? My father's most solemn legacy to me was his command to undo anything which is wrong in the business. Justice shall be done, as far as it is possible; but wisdom is a part of righteousness, and I need to be much wiser than I am to do perfectly the part that is allotted to me. It is my firm conviction that it is as possible to-day as ever to carry on a business upon Christian principles, and I am going to try. Will you help me?"

"With all my heart, sir," said Hancourt, fervently. "And I will try to deserve your confidence."

"The first thing I wish you to do is to furnish me with all the particulars of my constituency of labour. I want to know my people. Make me out a list of their names, and write beside each the sex, age, residence, religious denomination, what work he does, what wages he gets, and anything and everything there is to say about him. I hope in time to make the personal acquaintance of every individual who works for me. First, I must know the boys; and before another week is gone I shall get them together in some suitable place, that we may have a talk, and understand each other. I hope you agree with me, Mr. Hancourt, that the hope of the future is in the young. If we can secure them on the right side everything is gained."

Hancourt was delighted. He had found a master after his own heart. Hope had come back to him, and there was great gladness in the little home in which he lived.

"I wish, Dallington, you could give me a year," said Knight, as they drove back together. "It is not in my inheritance of money, but in my inheritance of men that I rejoice. These claim my first attention. I mean to make my _employés_ my friends."

"I hope you are not attempting the impossible. Many masters before you have tried, and failed," replied Dallington. "Human nature is a very difficult thing to manage. Still, I wish you success. You will do it if it can be done, because you recognise the rights of brotherhood. But I am sorry that before you have everywhere delivered that speech which is in your mind you have all these new duties thrust upon you."

"I am not sorry. I have the chance to test my theories upon my own people; could anything be better? And, besides, it is the busy people who will do this work that has to be done. I am not going to delay my part, John. You and I and many others will proclaim the fact that the Church must not be afraid to take the greatness which the Master is

thrusting upon her, and that for His sake, and her own sake, and the world's sake, she must be an united and not a split-up Church."

"But people—even good people—love to fight."

"Very well; and there is still the world, the flesh, and the devil for them to attack. That they should waste their strength in fighting one another after all these centuries of Christian teaching seems to me wonderful. But I am sure the Christian world is ready for a change. Already there are dozens, soon there will be thousands, of preachers proclaiming a truce, while the Church puts right the wrongs of the poor and degraded in England."

But Knight found that his hands were full when he went to look at the properties that had come into his possession. Among the rest was an immense number of courts and alleys near the places of business; and the heart of the young owner of them grew very sad as he examined them. They were most of them miserably old and dirty, and the women and children whom he saw lounging about the doorways looked sickly and filthy, too. He remembered what he had once read—that men and animals were greatly influenced by the character of the places in which they ate and slept; and he ceased to wonder that some of the men of whom he had heard were lazy, drunken, and blasphemous. The places were not homes—they did not deserve the name. And to think that his brother-men had to pass their hours of leisure there or in a public-house!

He continued his researches, however, for some hours, after which he felt utterly miserable and ashamed that such places should form part of his inheritance.

He was turning to go home when a lady accosted him. "Excuse me," she said, "people are telling me that you are the owner of these houses. Will you be good enough to come and look at one of them?"

She spoke in a low voice, which thrilled with indignation, and her eyes were blazing with a passion of anger.

"I have only been the owner for a few days," said Arthur. "I am not proud of them, I assure you, but very much ashamed of them. I will do what I can as speedily as I can; they cannot be changed by a miracle. I wish they could."

The girl did not reply; and Arthur followed her into the most wretched house that he had ever seen, and into a room where there was a hole in the roof and another in the floor, and in the corner of which lay a woman suffering horribly from rheumatic fever, while two wretched, half-clothed children sat by her side, munching a piece of bread.

"This woman, a deserted wife," said the young lady, "sews packing-bags for the factory near. By working fourteen hours a day she can earn eight shillings a week; and the man who pays the wages has five shillings back for rent. It is iniquitous, all of it! It is a shame to pay so little for so much work; and it is even worse robbery to take more than a nominal rent for such a disgraceful place. Robbery! It is murder! And the man who has committed it would have to take his trial for it if there were any justice in England."

Arthur looked into the flushed face lifted so accusingly to his own with mixed feelings. He felt almost like a schoolboy being scolded, or like the prisoner she had spoken of arraigned before a judge who would have very little mercy; and he was almost amused at her vehemence, too.

"Really—yes," he stammered. "It is, as you say, iniquitous, all of it. Believe me, so far as I am responsible, it shall be changed. In the meantime, let me do what I can for this woman. Cannot she be removed to the hospital? Allow me——"

He took some money from his purse and held it towards her, but she refused it. "I have taken this case in hand," she said. "You will find

plenty of others quite near if you are really in earnest; but what all these people want is not charity, but justice."

"It is good of you to visit and help them," began Knight; but the young lady smiled a peculiar smile that made him feel uncomfortable.

"Good?" she said. "If any of us were good, we would surely be able to prevent such things as these."

Knight much wished to know something of the young lecturer who had so taken him to task; but she dismissed him with a stately bow, and there was nothing for him but to leave, more resolute than ever to at once begin what really appeared a hopeless task. But early the next morning he had an inspiration.

It was possible for him, with the money which he had and could make, to take his business and his people out of this terrible city altogether, and he would do it! What a chance he had! He could plan a model town; and there set his people to work under far different conditions. He felt that the thought was a call from God, and he had some minutes of such joyous thankfulness as come to few men in a lifetime. Here was a bit of work that suited him exactly; and with all the energy he had, he at once set about making the thought an accomplished fact. He had an inheritance, indeed, of duty and of joy.

CHAPTER VII.
MARY WYTHBURN'S WEDDING.

John Dallington had his own troubles to bear, although they were of a different character from those of Arthur Knight. For a few weeks he rejoiced greatly in his heritage, while the land of his fathers grew dearer to him day by day; and then he learnt that only a part of it was really his own, and that some of it had been mortgaged. That there could be a debt upon his inheritance was a possibility that had never once occurred to him; and the fact was an exceedingly bitter one—indeed, he had not known how to bear it. Years afterward he remembered the lawyer's office in which the unwelcome news was told him so distinctly that he knew the pattern of the paper on the wall and the number of panes in the window.

"I will redeem it," he said; "I could not bear to let even a bit of the land go. It will take me years to do it, no doubt, but if I live it shall be accomplished."

"A very worthy ambition," replied the solicitor, who was sorry for the young man, and sympathised with him. "It is a good thing to have an object in life—keeps a man out of mischief, you know, and helps him to put forth his best powers. I assure you, Mr. Dallington, that there is nothing like trouble of this sort for making a man of you."

But it was with a sore heart and rueful countenance that Dallington betook himself to his farm. He had been so sure that it was his, to do as he liked with, and his fancy had painted glowing pictures of what he would do for his mother, and his cottage tenants afterwards. And now he must economise, and deny himself the pleasure of making improvements, and must be careful of his own personal expenses. The thought made him sigh; not that he had extravagant habits, but because he had already hoped to persuade the lady of his heart to begin with him the new life which was before him. That was out of the question now, and he must not seek her, nor even think of her.

So he said to himself as he was moodily making his way home, and he had no sooner said it than his heart gave a leap of joy, for, there before him, in the little woodland path, coming towards him with a flush upon her beautiful face, and her eyes shining like stars, was Margaret

Miller. She was used to these woods and loved them; but she would not have been there that day had she expected to meet him there. She steadied herself to speak to him with quiet friendliness, but he took both her hands, and gazed in her face, with his heart in his eyes, and could only say, “Margaret, Margaret!”

So they stood for a few moments, and a year of happiness was in them; and then John remembered! If it had happened yesterday he would have poured forth his love in a torrent of words, and asked her at once to be his wife; but now he must not, for stern duty forbade. As for Margaret, she had not forgotten; and though, for an instant, her heart sank with dismay lest he had read the truth, she soon recovered herself, and helped him to do the same. But all the pain went from him, and when he turned and walked back with her, and the sweet summer sun kissed them both, while the birds sang as if in sympathy with their joy, he felt strong enough and brave enough to do everything. And he took her at once into his confidence. Every one else did the same; it was wonderful how many secrets of sorrow had been given to Margaret to keep, young as she was; but it was no wonder that Dallington felt the comfort and strength of her sympathy. It was not news to Margaret that John Dallington was not a rich man, for in a little place like Darentdale few things are altogether hidden, and she could not feel as sorry for his pain as she was glad to learn in what the chief pain consisted.

“I was hoping,” he said, “that there might not be a really poor person on my estate. I meant every man to have a chance—and every woman, too. The cottages need rebuilding badly, and the labourers ought to have some share in the land; but what am I to do now?”

“It would not make much difference to your income,” said Margaret, gently, “if you gave them half of one of your meadows as allotments or gardens; and that would probably furnish each of your labourers with a strip of ground. Even if they had it rent free you would not lose very much; but if you let them have it for the value of the grass it would not cost them much either. It is too bad of those farmers who charge the men higher rents for small pieces than they would get for the larger ones.”

John Dallington saw his way at once. “To be sure, I can do that,” he said. “I intended to put a garden to each cottage; but it does not matter where it is, and I have a field that will do for that purpose exactly.”

“And you have a stone quarry. Why not allow your men to use your stone, and enlarge or rebuild their own cottages? Labour is even more costly than materials, and you might save that if you could induce the men to do the work themselves. But I expect you would have to grant them leases, unless they trust you more than they do most masters, so that they could have no fear or possibility of being turned out of the places they had renovated.”

John thought it was beautiful of her to be so much interested; and was she not as sensible as she was good? Then they talked together of old times, and every care vanished from them both.

“I shall see you to-morrow,” he said, as they parted. “I am going to Miss Wythburn’s wedding.”

The next day dawned auspiciously in Scourby, a manufacturing town at the head of Darentdale, where the wedding was to take place.

Mrs. Wythburn’s face was a little tearful on that morning, for Mary was her only child, and the mother’s heart was full of solicitude. But with the self-repression characteristic of mothers she was prepared to put her own feelings on one side, and meet her friends with smiles as bright as she could make them.

The father of the bride did not pretend to smile at all, and made no secret of his sentiments in regard to weddings. He had been in a chronic

state of grumblement since the day was fixed. “They say that a man’s house is his castle; mine is much more like a fancy fair,” he said. “People have been coming in at all my doors as if they had a right; the only person who has seemed to have no right to be upon the premises is myself. I shall be glad when the fuss is over.”

His wife was not disconcerted by this pretence at ill-temper, for she knew how much—or, rather, how little—it meant; and was assured that her husband would be genial enough when the time arrived for his after-breakfast speech. For she knew that Mr. Wythburn would not on any account have had things other than they were, since he had long wished to see his daughter married to his oldest neighbour.

Some of Mary’s friends thought it a pity. The two were so entirely different that it was doubtful if they had any tastes or feelings in common. Alfred Greenholme was inactive, self-indulgent, unambitious. Everything was too great an exertion for him. He never wanted even to play at tennis, nor to dance at an evening party. “There was no harm in him,” people said. “He was a good-natured sort of fellow enough;” but he positively seemed to care for nothing but lounging about and smoking cigars. But Mary Wythburn was full of intense, vivid life. She had an enormous capacity for work, and she used this capacity to the utmost. Quiet, and even timid, in manner, she had such perfect control over herself that few guessed how keen was her desire to know and to do. She was an exceedingly clever girl, and had availed herself to the utmost of all the educational advantages which the modern spirit of fairness has granted to women, and at school, college, and university she had gained distinctions and carried off prizes. Her father and mother had not hindered her; but she knew that though they could not help feeling a little proud of her successes, they did not altogether approve of her. They had her portrait taken in the college cap and gown which became her so well; and they said that, since the letters which she had the right to put after her name meant something, she ought to use them; but they both considered it a little unwomanly to be too clever, and wished that she would settle down and be married.

In another respect they scarcely understood their daughter. Her nature was intensely sensitive and sympathetic. She knew what it was to weep over sorrows that were none of hers, and to be punished for sins which she had not committed. Pain, want, wickedness, and woe were spectres that haunted the girl, and would not let her forget them. Moreover, Mary was grievously beset by doubt, which she endured in loneliness because the least expression of it so shocked those whom she loved that she had not the courage to say all that was in her mind. She had once declared, with flushed face and dilated eyes, on returning from visiting a woman who was dying of cancer, that she did not, could not, would not believe that the poor creatures who were so badly off in this world would be also punished in the next, even for their sins. Her father and mother, secure and comfortable in their church-going consummateness, believing all that they ought to believe, and never troubling themselves further, asked her sternly if she read her Bible now. Truth to tell, she read it very little. She tried to reconcile that which she knew was in it with that which she saw in the world, and finding the two apparently irreconcilable she yielded to unbelief; and because she could not herself believe, began to doubt the honesty of those who did. Poor Mary had lost her child’s faith in the Fatherhood of God, and had failed to apprehend the meaning of the sacrifice of His Son.

She sorely needed some one to help her. She was not in the least brave, though she was clever, and had simply drifted into an engagement with Mr. Greenholme.

But when the wedding was drawing near she filled her mother with consternation.

“Mother,” she said, “I am really not sure that I can marry Alfred after all.”

“Oh, my dear child! how you frighten me! What do you mean?”

“I don’t believe I care for him as people generally do care when they are going to be married.”

“Is there any one else for whom you care, Mary?”

“Oh, no, mother! There is not any one whom I like better than Alfred; and he is very kind to me; but I do not want to be married at all.”

“That will come right, my dear. I am sure you would not like to be an old maid; no woman does. Oh, yes, you may think now you would not mind, because you are young; but you would be very miserable afterward, and as Alfred’s wife you will have every comfort. You must not think of anything now but your promise.”

So the preparations went on, and every one was pleased with Mary.

It was to be a quiet wedding. The three bridesmaids—Mary’s girl-friends, the Misses Copeland, Miller, and Whitwell—had arrived on the previous evening, since they all lived some distance from Scourby. Miss Copeland was a tall and graceful young lady who, for some reason or other, appeared ill-tempered and irritable; Miss Miller was quiet and happy; and Miss Whitwell as merry as a cricket.

Dr. Stapleton, a friend of the family, called early, and asked after the health of the bride. “I am now going to see her,” said Mrs. Wythburn; and she went away wearing the bright look of love which makes mothers’ faces so beautiful.

But in a few minutes she came back, looking quite changed. Her face had lost its colour, and she trembled so that she could scarcely walk. She seemed to have become suddenly blind, for although the drawing-room door stood open she appeared to be feeling for the handle.

The only person who observed her was Margaret Miller, who saw at a glance that either Mrs. Wythburn had been taken suddenly ill, or something dreadful had happened. Swiftly and silently Margaret went to her side, and, closing the door behind them, led the shaking women into the dining-room.

“What is the matter, Mrs. Wythburn? I hope nothing is wrong. Where is Mary?”

Mrs. Wythburn tried to speak, but at first no words could be uttered. Margaret was as tender as a daughter. “Don’t be frightened, my dear, whatever it is,” she said. “There is a little mistake, somehow, perhaps. Or a little sudden faintness, which will pass off presently.”

After a time Mrs. Wythburn managed to gasp out a few words. “Margaret, there is great trouble. I do not know what it is. Fetch my husband.”

They had been married many years, but they were a very kindly Darby and Joan, and the wife felt as if she could not break to her husband the news that she had to tell.

“Why, Martha, what is the matter?”

“Oh, John, God help us, for something terrible has happened!”

“Don’t give way, dearie; we have borne some troubles together, and we will meet this. Tell me what it is. Is it anything about Mary?”

“Yes, it is. Mary—Mary is gone!”

“Gone where?”

“Ah, that is it! Mary has not slept in her room, and she is not in the house. No one has seen her this morning, and she is not to be found anywhere. I have questioned the servants; I have searched every room.”

Here the poor woman’s feeling quite overcame her, and Mr. Wythburn placed her on the couch and went straight to his daughter’s apartment.

It was true. The dainty little room was in perfect order, save for the wedding finery that overflowed the wardrobe and occupied some of the chairs. The bed was not disturbed, and the gas was burning as it was last night. There was not a scrap of paper anywhere to explain the strange absence of the bride; only one thing was certain—that she was gone! Vague fears took possession of the father’s mind: there must have been foul play, for surely no girl in her senses would run away from her own wedding! But what was to be done? Of course there could be no marriage without a bride, and the bridegroom must be warned. Mr. Wythburn tried to control himself, but his face was ghastly and his hands were shaking. His thoughts turned to Margaret Miller: he knew that she would keep her senses and prove reliable, and at that moment she appeared.

“What is it, Mr. Wythburn? Mary is not here. Ah! do not be unnecessarily alarmed; Mary will explain it. Nothing has happened to her.”

“But, Margaret, where can my child be, and what is to be done? Alfred Greenholme——”

“Yes; I will ask Dr. Stapleton to fetch him, and to see that the church remains closed. I will manage it. We will not have more talk than we can help. And, Mr. Wythburn, do not give way to grief. Be sure that it will all come right in the end. Oh, be sure that Mary is to be trusted! She will, perhaps, be here presently, and laugh at all our fears.”

Margaret went at once to the room where Dr. Stapleton still waited. He was standing and looking eagerly toward the door when it was opened. He seemed to have a prevision of some catastrophe.

“What is it?” he said. “Something wrong with Mary, isn’t it? Tell me what it is. Is she ill?”

Margaret noticed that he looked white, as if with fear, and that he used her Christian name when speaking of Miss Wythburn.

“Yes; I think there is no doubt that she is ill. I had better tell you all the truth, Dr. Stapleton, for we are both Mary’s friends and the friends of the family. Mary, for some reason, left her home last night. Her room was not disturbed, and no one has seen her this morning, or has the slightest idea where she can be.”

Dr. Stapleton said nothing. He caught Margaret’s hands and held them forcibly, looking in her face with staring eyes.

“Dr. Stapleton, please, I want you to help us. Some one must go to Mr. Greenholme’s house. Will you go and ask Alfred to come here at once? And will you tell the sexton not to open the church until he hears from us? But it will be better to say nothing of what has happened.”

Still Stapleton did not speak or move.

“I think Mary will be here directly, do not you? I cannot imagine her doing anything unusual. Please go directly, and tell Mr. Greenholme.”

Margaret gave him a little push and put his hat in his hand and opened the door. Even then he seemed scarcely to understand, but he passed out mechanically, and Margaret saw that he went in the direction of Mr. Greenholme’s house.

She herself turned to meet the dismayed faces of the other two bridesmaids.

“Margaret, what is it?” asked Miss Whitwell. “Mr. Wythburn has just rushed through the room saying that he was going to search the garden

for Mary. Is not Mary in the house?”

“No; she must have left the house last night, for she has not slept in her bed. Hilda, your room was next Mary’s; did you hear her in the night?”

“No. But Mary is a little peculiar. Perhaps she went for a walk, and sprained her ankle or something. We had better go through the grounds. I should not be surprised if she went over the hill to Rayford. It was a magnificent night, and the moon made it almost like day; but if she attempted to go across the rocks she might well meet with an accident.”

“Oh, but she never would! What is the use of saying such things?” exclaimed Miss Whitwell, and immediately added, “Perhaps she is somewhere near, and we shall find her.”

But Margaret felt sure that she would not be found, and, instead of joining the others, she went to Mrs. Wythburn, who was still going into one room after another, and peering into all sorts of unlikely places, searching for her missing daughter and sobbing as if her heart would break.

Presently in came Alfred Greenholme and his father, the former feeling more disturbed than he had ever felt in his life before.

“What in the world is the matter?” he said. “Stapleton seems to have taken leave of his senses. He was as incoherent as if he had been drinking; but I understand him to say that Mary is missing.”

“Yes; he said what is true. Mary cannot be found.”

“Then there must have been foul play. Where were her jewels kept? Have they been stolen?”

“No,” replied Margaret; “nothing seems to have been touched. All her wedding presents are exactly as they were, and her jewels are in the drawer in which they were always kept.”

“What am I to do?” asked Alfred. “Surely Mary will be here presently. She will not get late for the wedding? She fixed the time herself.”

“I am so sorry for you,” said Hilda Copeland. “Mary must have been out of her senses.”

“Did she seem so? Was she ill last night?” demanded Greenholme.

“She did not say so. She was very quiet, though.”

“Quiet!” repeated Alfred, forgetting to be courteous. “She was never other than quiet. But such conduct is perfectly inexplicable. Are you sure Mary is not in the house, Miss Miller?”

“Quite sure. We have looked everywhere.”

“Where is Stapleton? He might go and prevent the carriages from coming. We do not want a row of them standing in front of the house for an hour.”

“The servants will attend to that. There will be no wedding to-day,” said Margaret.

“Do not say so. Mary may yet be in time. Is there no letter, or something to explain where she is or what she has done?” demanded the disappointed bridegroom.

“No; we can find nothing.”

“Then she will be forthcoming presently.”

But she was not; the searchers returned and looked at each other in dismay.

The hours wore on. Mr. Greenholme thought the police should be communicated with, but Mr. Wythburn was not willing.

“I cannot have detectives trying to track my daughter,” he said. “Mary is not a child unable to take care of herself. We shall have a telegram presently, or a letter from her in the morning.”

Alfred Greenholme said very little. But when Mrs. Wythburn came tremblingly towards him, and kissed him, he said, “Do not be more anxious than you can help. We both know Mary. Nothing dreadful can have happened. We must wait. And let us keep our own counsel as much as we can, and not set the whole town gossiping.”

But many friends of the family called during the day, and of course the news spread rapidly. The vicar came, and his presence proved a great comfort, for he said what commended itself to all. “Be sure that Mary is in God’s keeping. No harm has come to her. For some reason or other Mary has absented herself rather than be married. It is a very strange thing; but we must not be too swift to blame her. She has really lived a very independent life, you know, and she has simply acted for herself now. Do you not think that is the explanation, Miss Miller?” And Margaret had little doubt that it was.

The Greenholmes remained all day, for the trouble was one to be shared between them. Alfred behaved very well; but he seemed to suffer more annoyance than grief, and that is decidedly the more easy to bear.

And late in the afternoon a telegram came for Mr. Greenholme. It contained only these words: “Do not be anxious. All is well. Mary.”

It wrought instantly a change in the feelings of the household; for anger and vexation took the place of grief and anxiety. “It is too bad of Mary,” everybody said; and hot words of blame were spoken freely. Nobody took her part very courageously. Even Margaret admitted that her friend had been, at the very least, guilty of great cowardice, while Miss Copeland abused her in unmeasured terms; and only Tom Whitwell pleaded that they would give her time to explain before they judged and condemned her.

It had been arranged that Mr. Dallington should drive his cousin home. He had come, as he thought, to the wedding, and seeing that there was to be none, he thought they should leave early. Dr. Stapleton was to have taken Miss Miller to Darentdale, but as he had not returned she accepted Dallington’s invitation, and accompanied him and Miss Whitwell.

“I told you that I believed the wedding would not take place, did I not, John?” asked the latter, as soon as they had started.

“Yes, you did, Tom; but I consider that your friend has disgraced her womanhood in acting as she has done. If I were Greenholme I would never forgive her.”

“I am sure she will never ask him,” said Tom. “But she has been a great coward through it all.”

“She ought never to have allowed herself to be engaged to him,” said Margaret; “but having done so she ought to have gone through with it.”

“And been miserable for ever after,” added Tom.

And then the clouds cleared away; for why should three healthy happy young people be sad because one had been stupid?

Late in the evening Dr. Stapleton called at Mr. Wythburn’s to make inquiries. He only stayed a few minutes; and when he left the vicar went with him. They parted after ten minutes’ walk, and as they did so Mr.

Sherborne looked straight into the doctor’s eyes, and suddenly asked him a question. “Stapleton, do you know where Miss Wythburn is?”

The doctor started violently, and the colour first came into his face, and then left him pale.

“I? No, indeed!” he exclaimed. “I wish to God I did!”

“If you know anything at all you ought to tell her father.”

“What can I know?” stammered Stapleton.

But the vicar lifted his hat and walked away without another word.

CHAPTER VIII.
SOME SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

Mary Wythburn’s disappearance was one of the signs of the times. And, excepting to the parties most nearly concerned, it was scarcely a nine days’ wonder. To a great extent even their minds were speedily set at rest, for a few days after the wedding was to have taken place a letter reached her friend, Margaret Miller, which explained in part the occurrence, though unquestionably the real reason was that Mary’s heart was playing truant.

“Dear Margaret,” it said, “I am so frightened at what I have done that I do not know how to bear it; but you know I am such a coward that I could not bravely face it all out as I ought to have done. I simply dare not marry Alfred Greenholme, and I dare not say so. Do go to my mother and comfort her, and tell her that I am safe and well; but I cannot let any one know where I am, for, of course, if I did I should be fetched home; and I would rather die than go. Margaret, I am doing what I have always known I ought to do. I am at work on my own plans in this terrible London, and, God helping me, I will make a few of my own sex better and happier before I die. It makes me sick to see how wretched and wicked they are. Please be my friend, and do not let my dear father and mother, whom I love with all my heart, be more miserable than they need be. Of course, I know they are angry with me, and I deserve that they should be; it is very hard for them that they could not have a daughter like other people’s girls. I can bear their anger, but they must not be anxious or sorrowful about me. I have my cheque-book, and I can take care of myself for a little while; but, oh, Madge! what would I not give to put my head on your shoulder and have a good cry, and hear you scold me (as I know you would). I am very thankful to sign myself, still ever yours,

MARY WYTHBURN.”

In point of fact Mary Wythburn had not done an unheard-of thing in preferring to work among the poor rather than be married. Many girls had made the same choice; and many men too. The world of the great East of London was the scene of more heroic labours for the wretched than had ever been known before. Methodism had its centre there, from which radiated all sorts of beneficent lights that flashed across the darkness. The Congregationalists had a home where good women who had given up their wealth for Christ’s sake, and that of humanity, lived together in a little community, and laboured in every conceivable way among the poor. The Baptists had long led the Forward Movement, which was another name for the “applied Christianity” in which the Church had now come to believe. The Episcopal Church had brought wealth, culture, and influence to bear upon the problem of the outcasts. University men had chosen this work instead of Parliamentary honours, or the accumulation of money. And many a young lady had quietly disappeared from society, and, receiving a pound or two a week from her father for her personal needs, had gone to dwell among the poor, as poor, in order

to live a consecrated life of Christian helpfulness. Mary Wythburn had but added one to the already swelling multitude who had yielded to the fascination of the modern ministry of love and service. The old things repeated themselves—with a difference. The piety which had moved men and women to withdraw from the world and give themselves entirely to a religious life was equally strong and impassioned in many of the young men and women who were sworn disciples of Jesus now; but they served Him by withdrawing from luxuries only, and not from men. They took no vows upon them excepting the usual ones which characterise the entrance into the Church, but they put a different meaning into them. They heard a call summoning them into the thick of the crowd, there to do the works of their Master—to feed the five thousand, to heal the sick, to open the eyes of the blind, to deliver the captives; aye, to take the little children into their arms and bless them.

For thoughtful people were most of all concerned about the young. The State had given them enough schooling to render them precocious, for it was compulsory and free; but it had not educated them, for the conscience and the character were very much untouched by the schools, since the children left far too early to have had a chance to gain anything more than the mere rudiments of elementary training. The years at which they might begin to labour were put back a little, but now there were thousands, where fifty years before there had been dozens, earning their own livelihood in factories and works of various kinds. This massing of young people together, with little control over their tongues or conduct, was having a terrible effect upon the men and women of the next generation. Their conversation was frequently of the most filthy kind, and juvenile immorality was frightfully on the increase.

Arthur Knight had a shock as, sitting in his office one day with the windows open, he overheard some of the girls in his employ talking together, and he lost no time in providing a place where Miss Wentworth and her helpers might begin a beneficial work among these young people, many of whom, though at present between fourteen and sixteen, would soon be the mothers of children, and who for that, if no other reason, needed greatly the womanly ministrations of Christian love.

But it happened that at the first of the girls' meetings in the temporary evening homes prepared for their reception Miss Wentworth could not be present, and, indeed, for several weeks the young ladies who were to help her had about fifty factory girls to themselves. Neither of them would ever forget their experience. Provision had been made for the girls to wash at the rooms, and take tea there, so that they might be as long as possible under the influence of their friends, who earnestly desired to render them real service, but who were at their wit's end to know how to accomplish it. The girls brought curling-tongs, and spent most of their time in "frizzing" their "fringes." They were urged to join a savings' club, but said they were already in a "feather club," to which they paid, out of their earnings of seven or eight shillings, a shilling a week for "fashion and finery," and they could not afford to save anything else. For some time it seemed impossible to reduce them to any sort of order. They at once gave nicknames to the ladies; and began by mimicking their manner of speaking. One of the girls went to a timid, nervous young lady, and, looking her full in the face, said, "Blush! blush!" an order which was, of course, instantly obeyed, to the great glee of those who stood around, and who laughed uproariously. One impudent-looking girl had a dreadful black eye, and in reply to a lady who kindly inquired if she had met with an accident, said, "Mother did that. She throwed a tater at me, and it hit my eye. My mother can't do nothing with me, and it makes her mad." The words were immediately sung in a sort of chorus: "_My_ mother can't do nothing with _me_, and it makes her mad." A lady offered to give a little talk on the body, having made physiology her favourite study; the girls sat and giggled the whole time, at the end of which they dubbed their teacher, "Bones." The young ladies were very much troubled by the boys outside, who waited about for the girls, and amused themselves by knocking at the doors and climbing up to the windows, and who became at last so troublesome that a policeman was asked to take up his station near and keep order. The next day many of the girls brought the policeman

offerings of flowers, and nearly all surrounded him, and began talking and joking with him.

"It is of no use to try. We shall never do them any good. We must give it up and leave them to their fate." But this was not what those educated, Christ-obeying girls said. Some whom they knew had gone away to work among the dwarfs of the Congo, the fever-stricken men and women of the jungle, and the lepers of Siberia; should these be less heroic than they? They kept steadily on, and, after a time, a few of the girls for whose salvation they agonised grew more quiet than the rest, and these would distribute themselves among the others and try to keep order during the prayer-time; and, at last, now and then the young hearts of these home missionaries were thrilled with such whispers as this: "I do want to be better, please tell me how?" So they worked faithfully.

But many signs of the times were less hopeful than this. It was known in England, and especially in London, that few financial ventures were so absolutely safe as those connected with journalism, provided the popular taste was met. Those who won the greatest popularity were those who wrote down to the masses, and went even a little lower than they. The sale of such journals was largely helped by religious people, not that they approved the morality of the journals, but because they were amusing, the gossip being of a spicy nature, and the tales sensational and enthralling. For several years almost all papers had become increasingly personal in their character, and editors were willing to pay large sums for little bits of news touching persons who were in the least distinguished for position, possession, or power. The society journals had always a large sale, especially those that were the most unscrupulous in hunting for skeletons in cupboards, and exhibiting them to the public at the rate of a penny a week.

But lately there had been commenced a new journal, which was giving intense pain, and covering with shame a large section of the British people. Its registered title was _Saints' Society_, and the motto under the title, chosen in confessed irony, was, "See how these Christians love one another." It existed for the express purpose of blackening the character and showing up the weaknesses of all sections of the Church, and was full of personalities of the vilest kinds. It would have done less harm if it had been boycotted by respectable or even Christian people, but too many women and some men bought the paper, and gloated over it in semi-secret circles, because of what it told of individuals whom they knew. The adults who did this could not perhaps be greatly harmed by it, since, already, the process of deterioration must have gone so far with their own characters that a little more made almost no perceptible difference; but it was the young people in their families who suffered most, and who, by hundreds throughout the land, were declaring gleefully or angrily, according to their temperament, that religion was a sham and a fraud, which they declined altogether to uphold by any adhesion of theirs.

But the paper was chiefly supported by those who openly hated anything bearing the Christian name. Certain individuals in some sections of the Church had roused considerable antagonism by harassing, with piecemeal legislation, the supporters of existing evils. They had not the energy and perseverance, perhaps they had not the power, to destroy the wrongs of which they complained—that would require a revolution—but they had made it disagreeable for a good many people who coined money by, and were otherwise interested in, the perpetuation of these wrongs, and this had created a great amount of angry feeling. _The Saints' Society Journal_ was the outcome of revenge.

But in one respect the journal was serviceable. It threw a vivid light upon the standard of excellence which the world expects in Christian people, and many readers turned away from its columns with uneasy consciences. Even _The Saints' Society_ had a generous word for real goodness, but for those who professed to be religious and yet were not good it had no mercy. It devoted a whole page to paragraphs referring to incidents in which professors fell below their ideal. The following are illustrations from a single number of the paper:—

“ART AND ARTFUL.—One day last week a young lady brought a painting to a fine art depository in the West-end, and asked the proprietor to buy it for two pounds. He looked at it, and declared the price ridiculously high, inquiring, with a sneer, where she got such a lofty estimate of her own talents. She replied that she was in most urgent need of two pounds, and felt sure that the picture was worth the money. He told her to take her picture and clear out if she had no more sense than that. Then she asked him what he would give her for it; and he replied that he would pay her eighteen shillings. With trembling lips she said eighteen shillings would not be enough, she must have more; would he not make it twenty-five? No, he replied, not a penny more than eighteen shillings. Eventually, she left it on sale or return, and was to call again in two or three days. It was an exquisite little gem, and before the day was ended it was sold. A gentleman bought it for ten guineas. Two days later, the artist called again and saw the proprietor. Was her picture sold? Oh yes, it was sold, and there was the money for it—eighteen shillings. The poor girl began hysterically to beg for more, and to ask in agony, what should she do? The dealer in art ordered her to leave his premises, and not make a scene, or it would become unpleasant for her; and after vainly trying to melt the heart of stone of the art man, she went away cursing him. But he is a much respected churchwarden of St. Ronald’s. Could a wronged girl’s curse touch _him?_”

“GOING SHARES.—A gentleman had in his employment a skilled workman to whom he paid thirty-five shillings a week, which is about the usual wages for the sort of work he did. Ten years ago the workman saw how, by a slight alteration in a machine, the work might be done much more advantageously, and he told his master. ‘A very good idea, Smith,’ he said; ‘can you manage to set it down in writing and make a drawing of it?’ Smith did so, and the master had it patented. He has just died, leaving a fortune of sixty thousand pounds, made chiefly, as all the world knows, by that improved machine. Did he go shares with Smith? Oh, yes! This is how he went shares: he gave him a pound for his idea; and before he died Mr. Jones made things still more right by leaving two hundred pounds to the hospital in which Smith is ending his days!”

“A CASE OF STARVATION has just been brought to light in King Court. A screaming child attracted the notice of the police, who broke into the room from which the sounds issued. A dead woman lay on the bare floor, and by her side a naked female child was endeavouring to awaken the mother. There was not a scrap of food in the place, and the only furniture was a wooden stool, a table, a ginger-beer bottle, and an old blanket, which partly covered the body of the corpse. The room was a very small one; the floor was broken in several places; there were three broken panes of glass in the window; the walls were damp and dirty, and the ceiling far from waterproof. An inquest will be held to-morrow. It has been ascertained by our detective that the woman paid four shillings a week for this room. We had some difficulty in finding the real owner of the house; but we have discovered him to be Mr. John Smith, of Albert Buildings. Mr. Smith is a deacon of the Duke Street Church. The woman made sacks. By working thirteen hours a day she could earn tenpence. She was employed by Mr. Samuel Sneed, of Thames Place. Mr. Sneed attends the church of Mole Street. He is the respected leader of the Band of Hope.”

“A SHOCKING ACCIDENT has occurred in Westleigh, a London suburb, to John Lane, the driver of a grocer’s van. His horse stumbled, and he was thrown from his seat; the horse lost its footing and fell on the unfortunate man. The vehicle was overturned, and it was with difficulty the horse was removed; but when this had been accomplished it was discovered that the man was dead. Two of his brothers subsequently demanded his watch, each declaring himself to be the elder, and the policeman gave it to the one whose appearance pointed him out as the senior. A disgraceful fight ensued, during which the watch got injured. The man has left a wife and three children; but as the widow was too much overcome with grief to demand the watch for her deceased husband’s eldest son, and no one spoke for her (_although two

parsons were in the crowd_), she has lost the watch as well as her husband."

"MODERN GIRLS.—On Sunday evening, at seven o'clock, the servant left in charge of No. 1. Freeman Street, was summoned to the door by a loud peal of the bell. As soon as she opened it, a company of rough girls rushed in, pushing the servant violently into a back room and locking her in. They then proceeded to ransack the house, and appropriated all the money, jewellery, plate, and other moveable articles they could find, after which they took what food there was, and departed. It is satisfactory to be able to state that these girls—fifteen in number—were found spending the stolen money in the Half Moon public-house, in Bull Street—satisfactory, because so many of these things have occurred lately, and the police have not been able to detect the offenders. Unfortunately, however, thirteen of the girls managed to escape after the policemen who endeavoured to arrest them had been severely beaten, and the house in which they were found almost wrecked by them. They were angry because the landlord did not bar his doors against the upholders of the law, and declared that they, who had hitherto been his best customers, would ruin him. Our detective has interviewed two of the girls who escaped, and they have informed him that every one of the fifteen had at some time or other been scholars in a Sunday-school."

"LAST NIGHT a band of boys and girls assembled in Oxford Street, and for an hour held revelry there before the police succeeded in dispersing them. Several persons were robbed, and an old lady was so much hurt that she had to be taken to the hospital. The leader of the gang was the son of the Rev. J. B. Yellowstone; and his seconder was the son of Mr. Waller, an active Christian man and churchwarden."

"A SAILOR'S FREAK.—A young man, who was under orders to sail and return in the steamship _Smart_, has been summoned for neglect of duty. He was one of Miss King's saints, and having been converted and signed the pledge, announced his intention of never sailing under a flag which waved above a cargo of alcohol going to foreign shores. But the young prig reckoned without his host. He was compelled to keep his engagement, although he made the discovery that the _Smart_ carried both London gin and Scotch and Irish whisky. Somewhere out at sea the ship fell in with a fleet of fishing-boats. It was found that the _Smart_ was licensed, and the captain ordered the lad to serve the customers who floated round the ship. This he refused to do. He was put in chains, and kept on a diet of bread and water. But his insubordination was repeated on several occasions, both while the ship was on the sea and when she was in port. His defence was that he did not engage to be a barman in a floating grog-shop, but that his work was to help sail the ship. The magistrate, however, informed him that he was to do as his captain bade him, and in order to enforce the lesson he gave him six months' hard labour. Our grandmotherly legislators will, no doubt, ask a question to-night in the House."

But there were happier signs than these, which told that a new revival was silently spreading among the churches. In confirmation of this, we will give one more illustration from _Saints' Society_.

"QUIXOTIC SAINTS.—We are informed that a very lively scene took place at Green Place Chapel, at a church meeting. The subject under consideration was the debt on the chapel. The building is one of the most ornate in the neighbourhood, and has a pretty spire and stained-glass windows. The seats are lined and cushioned throughout. The pulpit is of marble—the gift of Mr. Golden, the well-known distiller. Upon the chapel there is a debt of nearly four thousand pounds. The minister feels the pressure of this debt, and besought his people to do their utmost to lessen it. Mr. Smith, one of the leading men, made the following remarks:—'Our minister is not the only one who would be glad to see this debt removed, and I for one am prepared to do what I can. I have the pleasure to hand over to the treasurer, on my own behalf, a second donation of thirty pounds. And I am happy to say that my daughters have, during the past month, been working for

the cause. They have written seven hundred letters to well-known persons in all parts of the country, begging for help; and though I grieve that, so strong is the spirit of worldliness in the land, more than two-thirds of the persons addressed have not even had the courtesy to respond, they have yet received cheques and postal orders to the amount of twenty-seven pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence.'

"A working man in the meeting said, 'Sir, it is our chapel and we ought to pay for it ourselves. It is well known that our brother whose daughters have been flooding the land with begging letters could, if he would, write a cheque for the whole amount of the debt. The place has been built in accordance with his wish, and I for one hope he will see his way to give instead of beg.'

"Mr. Shelve, a gentleman in the middle of the room, next arose with a beaming smile upon his countenance. 'I, sir,' he said, 'am the bearer of good news. Like our friend Mr. Smith, I have written a few letters, and in response to one of these I have received this cheque for one hundred pounds, which I have much pleasure in presenting in the name of the giver.'

"Very loud applause followed this announcement, and then a man asked, in a quiet voice, 'Will Mr. Shelve kindly give us the name of the generous friend?'

"'Certainly,' was the reply. 'The munificent gift is from Mr. William Quellset.'

"'Then,' said the questioner, who was still on his feet, 'I beg to propose that we respectfully return this cheque to the sender. Mr. William Quellset can well afford to give a hundred pounds to this chapel, and he is anxious to stand well with the people of this neighbourhood, whom he intends, if possible, to represent in Parliament. But no blessing could go with any amount of money from such a man.'

"There was some interruption, and the speaker corrected himself. 'I beg pardon; I know nothing of the personal character of Mr. Quellset. I will therefore change the form of my words and say, No blessing could go with money made as he makes his. I suppose everybody knows that he is the patentee of those lozenges which are so attractive that probably the wives and daughters of nine-tenths of the men present are eating them every day—the lozenges to which he has not given the name of opium, but which have done more than anything else to make opium-eating universal amongst us. As our Government grows opium, and is anxious to sell it, it has contented itself, as you know, with imposing a duty on Mr. Quellset's articles, and many a statesman quiets his conscience in regard to this growing evil by telling himself that the country is enriched by this increase to its revenue. Sir, the country is being ruined by it. The drink has slain its thousands and opium is slaying its tens of thousands. Mr. Quellset has found out how to make it palatable, and he has grown enormously rich; but surely, sir, we do not now live in days when men think they can purchase pardon and heaven by presenting to the Church a small part of their ill-gotten gains. I hope there may be found some one to second my proposition.'

"'I will do so,' said a blunt, uneducated man, 'and I cry shame on any church which, for the sake of adorning its building, will in such a way as Mr. Shelve proposes thus make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.'

"'Sir,' said another, 'I move that the grateful thanks of this church be presented to Mr. Quellset for his munificent gift. We have been patiently listening to a lot of arrant nonsense. We have nothing to do with the way in which a man chooses to make his money. If we had, I should say that Mr. Quellset has done the country more good than harm. He has found a new employment for men, women, and children. He pays better wages for box-making and all the other branches of his

> industries than they could earn in many ways. It is not yet proved that opium does more harm than alcohol; and, for my own part, I believe that all these good gifts of God, taken in moderation, are useful. And, besides, beggars must not be choosers, and it would be an insane thing to return a man's money when we need it so much.'
>
> "Nevertheless" [added the journal], "this Quixotic company of saints decided by a majority to return the cash, and pay its debts by the practice of its own self-denial and generosity."

There were many quiet souls filled with piety and patriotism who thanked God and took courage when they heard this, for there was a leaven working in the real Christian society of the day which was destined eventually to bring about a marvellous change.

And this change, like almost everything else in England, had to do with politics.

CHAPTER IX.
IN THE AUTUMN.

Little Darentdale led the way.

The summer had not yet died into winter, nor had the leisure which comes into a country parish with the short days and long evenings left the thoughts of the people free. Nevertheless, some time and thought were given to an experiment which John Dallington, urged by Arthur Knight, had proposed should be tested in the village. The village was a small one, and it was almost wholly agricultural. There were about thirty persons who were employers of labour, and the rest were employed by them. Thirteen were looked up to as belonging to the moneyed classes, and of these, Mr. Whitwell—who lived out of the village, but had property in it—and John Dallington were the principal individuals. They employed on their farms the largest number of labourers, but besides these there were two smaller farmers, and several other persons who owned or rented a few acres of land, a gentleman who had retired from his business in London and had bought a good-sized house and garden, a lady of limited income, who kept one servant, and the general shopkeeper, who combined the businesses of chemist and druggist, draper, grocer, and coal dealer, all in one. There were, besides, two bakers, a blacksmith, a butcher, four publicans, and Henry Harris.

"We have everything in our own hands," said John Dallington, "and it ought to be possible for us to have each man, woman, and child in our care, if not under our control. We may not be able to make the villagers religious; but surely it is possible so to govern our little world that there shall be no poverty in it, but every one have a share in the comforts and refinements which the richest enjoy. I find that we have some poor to be relieved, and some evilly-disposed persons—the most poor and the most miserable of all—who must be helped out of themselves."

There were eight persons in conference—the Vicar, the Rev. George Emerson, the Baptist minister, the Rev. Henry Marshall, and the chief supporter of the Methodists—Mr. Rouse, who was also the principal tradesman in the place—Mr. Whitwell, and Dallington. There was here, happily, no bitterness between the Clergyman and the Dissenting ministers. The men knew each other so well that they had lost the disposition for fighting. In theory, of course, Mr. Marshall thought the Church should be disestablished, and when the time came he would do his duty, and vote to that effect; in theory, too, Mr. Emerson thought the Dissenters were schismatics, and ought to be repressed; but in practice the men were brothers, who respected the good which they saw in each other, and carried together the burden of the souls of the people. Neither begrudged the other the success which came to him, both mourned because they, though helped by the Salvationists and Methodists, failed

between them to bring to the house of God as many as two-thirds of the people of Darentdale. But for this sympathy which existed between the Christian workers of the denominations, Dallington would have had no hope whatever for the success of his plan.

They had before them a list of the inhabitants, the joint work of Margaret Miller and Tom Whitwell, which gave all necessary particulars of the family and circumstances of each householder, together with certain facts touching their character, religion, and occupation—a list quite easily drawn up, since every individual was well known.

“Our parochial system has already parcelled out the country,” began Mr. Emerson.

“And placed a gentleman in every parish,” quoted Mr. Marshall, with a significant smile.

“Exactly; and to help him teach the people the Free Churches have been established, so that it is certainly not an impossible thing for us together to provide religious instruction on the Sunday, and visitation during the week. I do not quite know how it is that we have failed to get hold of so many of the people.”

“For part of the trouble our collections are responsible,” said Mr. Marshall. “The working classes do not care to be asked continually for money.”

“I do not think they mind paying for what they have,” said the Methodist. “The penny a week from our people comes in readily enough, and the Salvation Army procures immense sums from the working-classes. The real difficulty is that men do not consider religion a thing worth paying for. They judge it by its professors, and pronounce it a fraud or a failure, because so many of us are not what we declare religion makes people to be. There is not enough difference between those who are naturally good and those who profess to have been made good by grace.”

“Exactly,” said the clergyman. “Among the poor and irreligious of this village there is no man so highly respected as Mr. Harris, who never darkens the doors of church or chapel.”

“Yes; the carnal mind is still at enmity against God,” remarked the Baptist minister. “But is not even that, to a great extent, because the representatives of Christ have failed to prove that they are the bringers of good tidings? What is your gospel of help to the people, Mr. Dallington?”

“Better wages, better homes, more leisure, better amusements, better education,” he replied, promptly; “every Christian employer the friend and brother of his own people; every church the centre of a religious activity which leaves none near it untouched by brotherly love. And charity begins at home, and everybody is to look after his own neighbour.”

The little company knew that he was himself doing that which he urged them to do, and this gave him the greater power and influence.

The meeting was a very practical one. The farmers declared that they would slightly increase the wages of their men, and follow Dallington’s plan. Each cottager should have a strip of land for a garden, and every one who was willing to repair his own house during the winter should have the materials given him. They knew that Dallington had set before him the task of winning back the whole of his inheritance, but he would not do it at the expense of the comfort and well-being of his men. Mr. Whitwell was not so rich as he was thought to be, but a few pounds could be spared which, paid in shillings, would make all the difference to the families of some of his men. The only thing which had hitherto prevented him from paying more in some cases was his desire not to appear more generous than his neighbours.

It was agreed at the meeting that there should be an invitation sent to all the better-class people in the village to come to the vicarage for consultation. After that, “all who professed and called themselves Christians” were invited to the same place, the vicarage being selected instead of the schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel, out of deference to the bigotry of a few Church people.

And so it was decided that when November came a wonderful thing should happen. But in the meantime the summer lingered, and John Dallington was in love with it. One fine morning he said, “I am amazed at the manner in which English people libel their own climate. Never were such perfect summer days as these; nor is there, in any part of the world, grander harvest scenery.” As he spoke his eyes looked lovingly over the prospect before him, which was, indeed, a pleasant one. The remark was made to two of his cousins, Edith and Tom, who had ridden over to Darentdale with a message from their father, and having delivered it to the young farmer, whom they found where he ought to have been, among his fields, were lingering by his side. John’s hand was on the neck of the horse on which his youngest cousin sat, and she glanced at him with a smile half merry and half sad as he spoke.

“Yes, I am glad that for once the season is behaving properly,” she said. “It does not often, and it is well that you should not find everything disappointing. All your hay is safely in, I see; so is ours, and father is better tempered than ever in consequence. But don’t be too sanguine. Remember the proverb, ‘Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.’ I should be sorry to suggest evil; but there are such things, even in this magnificent English climate, as storms of wind and rain, and even hail, that spoil the crops of the most hopeful men.”

“But they will surely respect John’s crops,” said Edith, “especially after he has so complimented the weather. I am glad you are courageous enough to grow corn at all, for it will scarcely pay you to compete with the foreign wheat in the market. England will soon cease to be a corn-growing country.”

“Never mind; let England grow men,” said Dallington, “and all the other lands grow corn for them to eat. You know the English-speaking race is destined to dominate the world.”

“Say the worlds, while you are about it, John. You are a true Englishman in conceit of your country. I think the dominant race might be improved,” remarked Tom.

“So do I; but we are getting on all the same. The real aristocracy—that of character—is realising its power a little, and before you are many years older, Tom, you will see a change.”

“Yes? Then I promise that when it comes I will remember the words of the prophet John.”

“You are winning golden opinions from your labourers,” said Edith. “You have followed father’s example, I hear, and given them pieces of ground for their own use. Now that so much of the land produces nothing but grass it will not mean as great a loss to you as gain to them. Old Benham said to me, ‘Lor’, miss, our young master be a brick, and no mistake;’ and, you know, to be called a brick is the highest praise any one can hope for.”

“I suppose that is because I have told him he shall have as many bricks as he likes with which to build a wing to his house.”

“I am afraid your men will not take the trouble to do the work, even though you give the time and material.”

“I think they will,” said John, quietly. “Indeed, I am sure of it; and this is another prophecy for you to remember, Tom. Are you not coming into the house? How tired you look!”

Tom answered hastily: “No, we cannot call; we saw Mr. Hunter as we passed, and father will be expecting us.”

“Tom is not well,” said Edith; “she is always tired now; she has lost her appetite, and she does not sleep. I want father to let us go away for a change——”

“Do not be stupid, Edith,” interrupted Tom, irritably; “I am all right, and where could we find purer air and more bracing breezes than on our own farm? The sea? Oh, it is not half as good as this! Besides, think of the poor wretches in London being baked and boiled in stifling streets and rooms! Good-bye, John, and a good harvest to you.”

“Tom,” he said, “the poor people in London will not be any cooler because you deny yourself sea-breezes.” But Tom only lifted her hat in her most gentlemanly fashion, and rode away with a smile on her lips that quivered with pain the next moment.

John was very fond of his cousin, and was really troubled at the change which he saw in her appearance, and which he felt also, though he could not define it. He would probably have ridden after her, but that his mind was turning in another direction than that of Hornby Hall, for he knew that Margaret Miller was at Scourby, and, guessing that she would walk home in the evening, he was resolved at all hazards to meet her.

Margaret’s home was in the centre of the pretty Darentdale Village, and the name of it was “The Old House”—a name which was appropriate since it was the oldest dwelling in the place. The other inhabitants were a man whom she called grandfather, whose name was Henry Harris, and his housekeeper, Ann Johnson. The Old House had originally belonged to John Dallington’s uncle, Captain Frank Dallington, and it was he who brought Harris to Darentdale. Margaret came with them, and since she was but a child they at once made inquiries for a suitable person to act as foster-mother to her as well as housekeeper to Harris. Ann Johnson presented herself, and was accepted; nor had there been reason to regret the appointment, for she had proved herself warm-hearted, if somewhat rough, and entirely trustworthy, though peculiar. The Old House had previously been empty for some time, for Captain Dallington would neither let it nor live in it; but he had it furbished up and comfortably furnished, and then he spent some months in it with Harris. There were plenty of rooms in the house, and one of them which faced the front was turned into a bookseller’s shop. But Darentdale folk were not great readers, and the trade was so small that the people became rather suspicious about the shop, and often wondered where Harris got the money to enable him to live comfortably. He, however, vouchsafed no information, and when Ann Johnson was questioned, she always began telling a tale about somebody or other, instead of giving a definite answer, so the Darentdalers had nothing left but to exercise their imagination. Mr. Harris was for some time no favourite in the place. Some said he was an atheist, though he was pronounced generally to be neither one thing nor the other. He did not go to either of the inns to spend his evenings sociably with his neighbours; but neither when a Temperance Mission was held did he don the Blue Ribbon. As to politics, he acknowledged that he was neither a Tory nor a Radical, but voted for the best man—as if the man had anything to do with it when there was the party to support! The villagers did not know what to make of a man who never called others names, and had no principles at all. But he had now been at Darentdale fifteen years, and it was strange how few people there were in the parish who, at some time or other, had not been helped by Henry Harris. There was nobody like him for getting another out of a difficulty, and almost every one had been glad to avail himself of the unostentatious assistance that was always ready. But some people liked Harris less on that account, and a few whom he had served the most were the most sure that they owed him a grudge. It is only noble people who know how to accept help gracefully.

Nobody disliked him more than John Dallington’s mother. But she had more reason than others for her disaffection, because she had a settled

conviction that Harris and his granddaughter had money which she ought to have. Captain Dallington, who was always a wanderer, did not return to Darentdale after he had installed Harris and the child in the Old House. He had now been dead some years, and when his will was read his brother and his wife were astonished to find how little he had to leave. What he had was bequeathed to his relatives, excepting “the Old House, and all that was in it,” which was left to Henry Harris and Margaret Miller after him. The phrase—“and all that is in it”—had given John Dallington’s mother many an unhappy hour.

But what it was that was in it nobody outside the house knew, excepting that for the last few years there was in that Old House the most beautiful and interesting girl that Darentdale ever owned. It was not her beauty alone, nor her tall, graceful figure, nor her musical voice, nor her sweet, brown eyes that were the attraction; but there was a charm about her that could not be named, and generally could not be resisted. Most people loved Margaret, even those who did not want to.

Margaret, visiting Mrs. Wythburn, found her preparing for her departure. “We have made up our minds,” she said, “to go to London. Mary is there, and my husband believes that we shall be able to find her if we watch there. So we have taken rooms as near as possible to the Bank; and we quite hope to be successful in our search. We are willing that she should remain at the work she has chosen to do; and we shall no doubt eventually live in London altogether.”

“But it is a pity to leave the country for London now, when the weather is so unusually hot.”

“Our child is enduring the heat somewhere, and so can we. Besides, we cannot stay at Scourby. Do you know that Alfred Greenholme is already engaged to Hilda Copeland?”

“No; but I am not surprised. She is far more suitable for him than our splendid Mary, who never could have been happy as his wife. I hope you are not letting that trouble you, Mrs. Wythburn?”

“Perhaps it is annoyance rather than trouble. Mrs. Greenholme herself told me, and naturally, I had an unpleasant ordeal to go through. But the worst of it is, Margaret, that the people are setting very disagreeable stories afloat. Mrs. Greenholme said it was reported in the town that Mary and Dr. Stapleton had gone off together.”

“Oh, the slanderous tongues! How dare they give utterance to such abominable falsehoods! I should feel disposed to try to trace the lie to its source, though really it would be waste of time, for no one who knows Mary could believe it.”

“But I am sure that something is wrong with Dr. Stapleton. He is not in the least like himself. He looks ten years older since Mary’s disappearance. And his charges are almost double what they were. He is making the poor pay now, which, you know, he never did before, for he has always been most attentive and kind to those who could not pay him. He is often away, and cannot be found; and when he is summoned he is absent-minded and disagreeable. And people say all this looks suspicious, especially as he and Mary were known to be great friends.”

“Oh, my dear Mrs. Wythburn, every one will know that it is only a coincidence! Dr. Stapleton must have some trouble which he does not care to publish; but, of course, it has nothing to do with Mary. I am very sorry for him; he has always been so kind and good. But I hope for every reason that Mary will soon let you know where she is, and then all this will be made right.”

Mr. Wythburn entered the house while they were talking, and he was in excellent spirits.

“We shall be happy to see you in London, Margaret. We have not yet selected our town house, but when we have there will be a room for you

in it. And we are going to catch Mary and chastise her. We have spoiled the child by sparing the rod. Now we shall alter all that!”

“It is rather late to begin, is it not?”

“Better late than never. But do you know, Margaret, I am coming to think that Mary is right. Some of us do not deserve to be called Christians, or to have any comfort, because we spend our lives on such a low level. Mary shall train up her parents in the way they should go.”

“That will suit Mary very well, no doubt; for that is what all young people feel called upon to do in these days.”

“And I think we needn’t be very unhappy about her. I am thankful that on her birthday I made over that money to her and gave her the cheque-book. She will not want for anything that money can buy, and that is a great comfort.”

“Let me help you to get ready,” suggested Margaret; and before she left the boxes were packed, the carriage was ordered, and Mr. and Mrs. Wythburn were almost as jubilant as if they were going to London on their honeymoon.

The hot afternoon was wearing towards evening when Margaret started on her homeward journey. She elected to walk, for it was delightful to be out of doors, and having nothing to cause her to hasten her steps, she might linger in the green lanes and sunny fields as long as she pleased, and so the burden of care was rolled away.

How blue the skies were and how fresh was the air! Margaret felt that everything was friendly towards her. The flowers seemed to look into her eyes as she touched them with caressing fingers. She had always a feeling that they knew who loved them, and could be happy or sad as other and bigger things were. She never gathered them to die in hot rooms, or faint their lives away, plucked and then neglected. She loved and cared for them, and thought they knew it. The birds were growing silent, but a few even now sang to her, and she answered them.

Yes, my Father cares for you,
Little birds amid the blue;
Praise Him, and I praise Him, too.

You know little of His care;
I, who feel Him everywhere,
Voice my love in praise and prayer.

You a little while may sing:
I will love and praise my King,
Yonder, in unending spring.

There was no one in sight, and Margaret’s sweet, clear voice rose and fell as she pleased. Presently she was too happy even to sing, for God seemed so near to her, and all things so glad that her eyes grew dim for very sympathy with the world. A little aside from the path, and near a gate, was a beautiful ash-tree, whose roots provided a comfortable seat, and she sat down to rest, and was presently lost in thought. Some one was approaching, but she did not see or hear him until he was almost close to her. Then she arose and turned, her face lighted with the thought that had been last in her mind, and confronted John Dallington.

He came eagerly forward, a great gladness in his heart.

Margaret was glad, too, as the rose colour in her face might have told him, and she lifted her eyes a moment to his with all the pleasure in them; but they fell before his gaze, for it told her almost too much.

“Which way are you going? Home? So am I. Let us go together—_together_.” He lingered on the word, for it was sweet to him—he would that they should always go together! “Margaret, say you are glad to see me, if you

honestly can."

"I am unfeignedly glad," said Margaret in a low voice, and she asked herself how she could possibly be other than glad? But she was almost frightened to find how great the joy was, and how necessary it became that she should keep her feelings under control.

Ah! what a walk that was! They were both so young and so noble—so loving, too,—and all Nature was in sympathy with them. They had plenty to say—at least Dallington had; but the moments when they said nothing, and a soft silence fell upon them, were the sweetest, for they were side by side, and could glance into each other's eyes when they did not hear the voice which was to the other the best-loved music of the world.

Time passes swiftly under such conditions, and the distance across the fields appeared as nothing. Quite before they expected it the spire of Darentdale Church became visible, and then Dallington turned from the path.

"Let us go this way," he said. "We do not want to get home just yet, do we?" Margaret hesitated. He asked, "Are you too tired to go farther?"

"No; I am certainly not too tired," she said. "But I have been away all day, and my grandfather may have wanted me. I must return soon."

"Very well; we will not go far. But tell me about yourself," he said. "Do you know that I went to the chapel on my first Sunday evening at home, and saw you?"

"Yes, I know."

"I wondered very much what made you do that thing? It could not have been pleasant; was it?"

"Indeed, it was not." Margaret was silent for a few minutes; and then she continued, in the low tones which she always used when she was deeply moved, "The fact is, that a change has come over me lately. I was always helped to form habits which were of the better sort, and I thought myself a very good Christian until a little while ago, when, after I had read a book opposed to Christianity, I began to really study the New Testament."

"And what did you find?"

"I found Christ."

"Of course!"

"No; it was not 'of course' at all. I had read it many times, and found a great deal about Him that was interesting and beautiful. But I had not found _Him_, which is quite a different thing. It is as if I had been in the dark, and a sudden flash had lighted up everything."

"I wish the flash would come to me! I am anxious to see that Sermon on the Mount put into living form."

"But it can never be while it is considered to be merely an exquisite literary production, to be praised and patronised. It has to be acknowledged as a code of laws absolutely binding on those who profess to be the disciples of Him who proclaimed it. But it is impossible for these laws to be entirely obeyed except by those who have found in Christ the Regenerator of themselves. Don't you think so? I used to admire Him and venerate Him, and perhaps fear Him a little; but now it is all so different; I know Him, a living, reliable, present Friend and Companion. And I love Him because He first loved me."

Dallington looked into the beautiful eyes, alive with feeling, and said, "And He is really _real_ to you?"

“Real to me?” she cried. “I am not more real to myself. And it is all so wonderful!”

“And that ceremony in the chapel was the outcome of all this? And, I suppose, you mean to live up to it?”

“I am certainly going to try.”

“Margaret let us try together. I cannot let you go without telling you that which is my heart. Do you remember what the last words were which I said to you before I went away?”

Margaret had grown pale, and was trembling. “You must not say them again,” she said.

“But, indeed, I have been saying them ever since, and I shall say them as long as we both live. I chose you for my own dear love when I was a boy, and now that I see you as you are—oh, Margaret, surely you must love me a little, because you see how dear you have been to me all these years!”

“But you know,” said Margaret, very gently, “that I must not let myself care for you. The old reasons remain still.”

“I know of no reason in the world that should keep us apart. When I spoke to you before I was not my own master; but now I am free to decide for myself. Oh, my darling, if you love me we shall be so happy.”

Margaret turned from his pleading eyes as she answered, “You have the duties and responsibilities of your position. You must not be unfaithful to them. And you must not marry one who is beneath you; and——”

“Beneath me! Oh, Margaret, do not talk nonsense! I cannot bear it. The only inequality there is between you and me is that I am not half worthy of you, not half good enough for you. And you know already that I have my troubles—money troubles, and others—so that life is going to be a fight for me, as it is for most men. I am very much worried already. No man needs a good wife to help him more than I.”

“I hope you will find one, my friend,” said Margaret, bravely. “No one would rejoice more heartily than I to see you happy and prosperous. You must look for some one who can help you financially as well as in every other way.”

Dallington laughed a little bitterly. “My mother has been telling me to marry money. I scarcely expected Margaret Miller to give me the same advice. You are like the rest of the world after all, I suppose. Do you mean to marry money too, Margaret?”

“Are you going to be cruel to me?”

“No, dear; but neither must you be to me. Margaret, listen to me. I will not persecute you with unwelcome attentions; but I will not give you up until I discover that you are promised to another. You have grown so lovely and so sweet that, of course, you may have already learnt to care for some one else”—Margaret smiled—“but I do not think you have; and if you say No to-day, I shall ask you again. I have thought of you in every land to which I have gone. I have compared, or rather, contrasted—all women with you. Once, when I was ill, a strange feeling came over me that you were praying for me. It was my greatest hope when I returned to England that at last you would accept me. I have been very faithful to you, Margaret, because I love you—I love you! Darling, give me my answer now.”

They were standing under the shade of a tree in the lane behind Margaret’s home, and none saw or heard but the birds. The girl hesitated for a few seconds. It was no use to try to persuade herself that she did not care for him, for she knew better. He was searching her face with eager eyes, and she dared not meet his passionate gaze. She had given

him love for love all along, and it was this that made it impossible for her to care for those who in his absence had sought her hand. Ah! yes, she loved him, and because she did his happiness should be dearer to her than her own. Oh! if she could believe that it would be really best for him, so that she might give him the answer he wanted, and which was throbbing in her heart and trembling on her lips! Might she? Dare she? True love is always humble, and there were strong reasons why Margaret's should be especially so; and yet——

"Margaret, my darling, you do care for me!" he said, and he drew her gently toward him.

"Care for you? Oh, John, John!" It was no use; love is stronger than anything. She yielded herself for a moment to his arms, and he took his first sweet kiss of love.

CHAPTER X.
IN PARADISE.

Who is responsible for the naming of places?

Paradises and Edens are plentiful in London, if there is anything in names: but some of them have surely received their cognomens in bitter irony. Near Mr. Knight's premises was a court which was called Nightingale Lane, and another known as Wild Rose Court, the houses in which were, most of them, a disgrace to civilisation. But there was another, containing about seventy dwellings, which rejoiced in the name of Paradise Grove. Away at the church, the sound of whose bells came in a sort of muffled music, they used sometimes to sing about Paradise in the anthem—

> O Paradise! O Paradise!
> Who doth not crave for rest?
> Who would not seek the happy land
> Where they that love are blest?

But this Paradise was hot and close and dreadfully dirty. At the open windows of the little houses men sat in ragged shirts and trousers, and worked off and on every day but Monday. There was a smell of dirt everywhere, and the children, escaping from the vigilance of the School Board officer, lay about in the dusty road until they looked like heaps of dust themselves. As for the language heard in Paradise, it was astonishingly bad. The men could scarcely utter a sentence without bringing in some oaths. The children, even when they meant to say good-natured things to each other, used the foulest of our language; and, worst of all, the girls raised yells of laughter by their filthy conversation. There was not a tree in Paradise Grove, nor a flower of any kind, but weeds grew there, and ill thoughts and utter misery.

Were there no churches or chapels or missions near?

Oh, yes! But the Grove people did not believe in Christianity, and declared themselves against humbugs. They were fond of that word, and applied it to every one who was in any way better than themselves.

No one had succeeded in effecting an entrance into the hearts of the inhabitants of Paradise Grove until a young woman, plainly dressed in grey cloak and hat, and having a sweet, sad face, had called at the doors with a basket of articles which she was anxious to sell. The people looked at her a little suspiciously at first. If she had brought tracts and magazines, she might go where she came from; they had had such visitors before. But she assured them, with a smile, that tracts and magazines were not in her line. She had large pieces of beautiful soap, exceedingly cheap, and would sell for a halfpenny a piece big enough for the whole family. And she had good scrubbing-brushes and

hairbrushes, for which she would take a few pence only; and little white table cloths; no one knew what a difference it made to a room if a white cloth were put on a table before the loaf was placed upon it. The Grove men and women thought it perfect nonsense. Where was the good of wasting money over such extravagances as table-cloths? There was some sense in getting more to eat. When the people had their way, and right was done, chickens and hares and pheasants would be within the reach of the poor. If one of them could be placed beside the loaf, _that_ would be something worth talking about. But in the meantime the woman's things were certainly cheap, and she appeared very anxious to sell them; so now and then a purchase was made—especially when the women found that they could pawn the articles for as much as, or more than, they had given for them.

By degrees the woman and her basket had come to be familiar objects in Paradise Grove, and the people had grown to like her a little. She never attempted to meddle with them or lecture them. They tried once or twice to shock and frighten her; but she did not seem afraid; only, at first, it was noticed that if two men or women happened to be quarrelling and fighting when she came, she turned faint, and had to leave the neighbourhood. She never could be got to take sides in a quarrel; and now and then, very gently and unassumingly, she tried to put in a peacemaking or quieting word, but generally she was content to sell the articles she had brought, and explain their use.

The best of all was that the woman seemed to know about ailments, and what could cure them. There was always some one ill in Paradise Grove, and "the Basket Woman," as they called her, carried medicine which generally did the sick ones good. Also, she made a very pleasant drink. It was not ale, for you could drink a gallon of it, and it would not get into your head; but it tasted something like ale, and was almost as nice.

But whether it was crockery, or medicine, or drink, the woman never would give it away or sell it on trust. Her wares were both cheap and good, but she would be paid for them; and so when she came they had to find their money. And this very fact caused them to respect her and themselves. Some of the women got quite an air of independence as they talked to her, and some of the men, respectable in whole shirts which she had sold them, held up their heads with an expression of superiority which was altogether new.

Certainly the most popular person in Paradise was the "Basket Woman." But one day a Paradise girl, who rejoiced in the name of Fan Burton, spread through the Grove the news that their "Basket Woman" was not a basket woman at all, but a lady, who only pretended to sell things that she might "get round them." Fanny had seen her dressed and talking to a gentleman. Why this should make any difference it would be difficult to tell; but after Fan had cleverly and maliciously circulated this news, the women chose to feel themselves "sold," and a strange reaction set in. "She has had us nicely!" said Fan. "Let's pay her out for it. I shouldn't wonder if she turns out one of them female detectives, or, perhaps, she's worse; how do we know as that drink and medicine ain't poison? I don't trust her one bit. Well, I ain't had none of her rubbish, except a scrubbing-brush, and that can't hurt me much."

Then other women took the same tone; one especially told how she had been impudent enough to interfere when Mrs. Broggins beat her Sammy, as if a woman mightn't do what she liked with her own brat. And what business was it of that Basket Woman's, so long as Sammy wasn't killed? She talked about fetching the police, she did—ah! she forgot herself then; she was mostly a meek-faced thing enough, but everybody had seen how she flared up about that boy—"a himperant, hinterferen 'ussy" as she was!

Things looked rather black for the Basket Woman; and it would have been well if some one could have warned her. But there was no one to do it, and she came into the Grove as usual, with a smile upon her face.

“I beg your pardon,” she said, pleasantly, “I dare say you know as well as anybody how to knit?”

“It ain’t no business of yours whether I do or not,” said the woman, in tones that became louder with every word. Then a shout came down the road. “Basket Woman! come here! I want a talk with you.”

A loud guffaw from all the women at all the doors showed that something had happened to make the dwellers in the Grove angry. The Basket Woman was not very courageous, and her first impulse was to fly; but she went toward the person who had called her.

“Will you have some wool?” she asked. But the person addressed turned angrily upon her.

“Wool, indeed? No; nor anything else that you have. I’ll tell you what you are! You are a sneaking hypocrite.”

A flush shot over the refined face, the basket was put down, and she faced the woman and the group that had gathered curiously around her. “Now, what is the matter? And what does all this mean?”

A torrent of abuse was poured upon her. She stood perfectly still, and her face was now white but firm. Presently, when there was a lull, she said, in a quiet, penetrating voice, “How hard and unkind you women can be!”

“Clear out! We don’t want none of your tongue!”

“I shall not go until you have let me say one thing,” she said, becoming suddenly brave. “I have as much right as anybody to come here and try to sell things. Why are you angry with me? Have I ever done you any harm?”

There were more shouts of scorn and anger, and nobody was courageous enough to say a word in favour of the stranger. In the crowd was a woman whose child she had nursed through two nights of croup, and another whose house she had cleaned because the mistress’s hand had been hurt. The Basket Woman looked into the faces of these women with pathetic wonder and disappointment, while all sorts of things were shouted at her and of her. Then she turned sorrowfully, and, taking up her basket, walked slowly out of the court.

“I hope you will let me come again, when you are not quite so angry with me, because I like you, and I thought some of you were my friends.”

As she said the words her eyes fell on the face of Fanny Burton, who looked sorry for her part in the matter, and who felt more than a little doubtful as to whether she had not made a mistake. But the woman herself was so sorely disappointed that the tears sprang to her eyes, and her lips quivered, as she slowly, and with gentle dignity, made her way along the court to the street at the end of it.

“Drive her out!” somebody hissed presently, and then there was sound of hurrying feet behind her. She quickened her steps a little, but before she reached the entrance to the court a big boy of eighteen came hastily behind her and gave her a push of so violent a character that she was propelled suddenly into the street and fell. With a wild yell the women took to their heels, and, running up Paradise Grove, disappeared in their houses.

The Basket Woman lay stunned in the street, her head having come in contact with the kerb-stone, and she remained for several moments insensible.

A lady who was passing in her carriage had seen the sudden rush in the street, and immediately went to the aid of the prostrate woman. Some water was brought, and presently the white eyelids opened.

“My carriage is here,” said the lady, who had been intently regarding

her. “Let me take you home with me for some tea.”

“Oh, no, thank you! My home is quite near. I can reach it, I am all right now.”

“You belong to the Helpful Ministry, I can see,” said the lady, “by whatever name you may call yourself; and you have received quite the customary thanks and pay. My name is Wentworth, and I love girls, and am glad to find any who need mothering; and just now you need not only a mother’s love, but a mother’s skill also. Come with me.”

The Basket Woman sighed, and glanced at the kind face beside her. But the next moment she grew frightened, and answered hastily, “Oh, no, I cannot do that. Thank you so much, but I would rather go to my lodging.”

“Very well, I will help you,” said Miss Wentworth, for it was she. “No? I must not do that? Ah! I quite understand. But you may trust me. Here is my card. Will you promise to come and see me? If not, I shall not leave until I know where to find you.”

It was very tiresome, the Basket Woman thought; but she took the card, and gave the promise, and then crept back to her lodging, and went at once to her bed, where she remained for some days, with ample time and opportunity for testing the efficacy of her own medicines. Truth to tell, while enduring considerable pain and weakness, she much wished that she could have accepted the kind invitation of Miss Wentworth; but afterwards she was glad she had not. As soon as she was able she called on that lady, but was relieved to find that she was out. And then she gave herself afresh to her work. Paradise Grove was her own “happy hunting-ground,” and, therefore, she had taken two rooms, and thoroughly whitewashed and cleaned them, and lived among the people. She was glad to find that the ill-feeling which had been roused against her seemed all to have died out, and, as there never had been any in her heart, she went on with her work as if nothing had happened. She was needed just then for a bad case of sickness, and before that duty was through an incident occurred in connection with Fanny Burton that gave the Basket Woman great joy.

It was Sunday, and Paradise Grove was less savoury than usual. It was also more active, for most of the cleaning and washing were done on that day. Sunday, too, was the grand cooking-day of the week; everybody in the Grove tried to get a little hot meat on the Sunday. Often it was not possible, for in the Grove were many of the victims of London’s cruel sweating system, and many a woman worked fourteen hours a day for less than a shilling. Considering this terrible fight for life, and the environments of these people, the wonder was that they were not worse than they were. Happily, however, the system was doomed, for England was determined not to endure it, and public opinion was so severe on the sweaters themselves that their number became less every month. There was in process of formation a new Volunteer Corps, which already numbered thousands of employers of labour, who were sworn to abolish slavery in London, and set every man, woman, and child free. The Basket Woman, like many others, was preparing the way for this consummation.

Fanny Burton was busy on Sunday morning. First she helped her mother scrub the floor of the living room, and then she washed and ironed a pair of cuffs and a pocket handkerchief; next she brushed her Sunday dress, putting a stitch here and there to make it tidy. The fact was that Fanny was going out. George Green had invited her, and she had consented, to take a walk to Harleigh Furze; and, as she herself would have said, she was “counting on it,” not altogether for George’s sake, but still more for the sake of the flowers and the ferns; for this poor, uneducated girl, who spent the greater part of her life in a close factory, had the love of flowers born with her.

“Hurry on the dinner, mother,” she said; “I want to go out.”

“Very well; you must get it ready yourself, then,” was the curt reply. “Nobody else can please you.”

After dinner Fanny hastened from the Grove to the appointed rendezvous to meet George. He was not there, and the girl waited nearly half an hour before he appeared. When he came there was a sheepish look on his face. “How are you, Fan? You won’t mind, will you, if Drom Jones goes with us? She asked me to take her, and I couldn’t say we wouldn’t have her. And we won’t go to the Furze. Drom wants to go to Addington Park instead, because it’s nearer.”

A look of scorn came into Fanny’s eyes. Andromeda Jones (the Paradise Grove people were fond of fine names) was no favourite of hers, and George knew that.

“I have been counting on Harleigh Furze all the week,” she said, “and I shall go there. You can take Drom Jones to the Park if you like. It will not be the first shabby trick you have played me, George Green, but it will be the last.”

“Don’t be stupid, Fan. What is a fellow to do?”

“What he likes.”

At this moment Andromeda herself appeared on the scene, and, without another word, Fanny walked away.

But it was not until she had quite got away from the houses, and had walked some distance from the tram terminus, that she succeeded in overcoming the ill-humour that possessed her; and when she entered a field where no one was in sight, the first thing she did was to sit down upon a green bank and shed a few hot tears—not many, for Fanny was a girl of spirit, and did not indulge in such weaknesses as a rule. It was not jealousy in regard to George Green that troubled her, for after the first feeling of annoyance had passed away she did not give him a thought, but a restlessness that had taken possession of her, and that caused her to feel her own life to be altogether unsatisfactory. Not that it had ever occurred to her to think about her life until lately; but a subtle change had been going on within the girl which could scarcely be explained or accounted for. Fanny was active and curious, and had the desire to know which characterises some young folk. She had been sent to school long enough to learn to read, and she devoured everything that came in her way. Her knowledge, therefore, was of a very miscellaneous kind. Such periodicals as Paradise Grove affected were always read by her, for she borrowed every scrap that she saw, and until lately no girl more loved to shock the sensibilities of the Christian girls working beside her with impudent and blasphemous assertions than Fanny Burton. But, thanks to the Basket Woman, Fanny had certainly been growing more quiet and less confident lately. Instead of glorying in her surroundings she was sickened by them, and there had sprung up within her a great scorn of herself and her own people, and an awakening desire after better things.

And here was the girl on a beautiful Sunday afternoon away from the dirt and the heat of Paradise Grove, and face to face with Nature. Every step that she took drew her farther from the town and closer to the heart of the green forest. The flowers grew in the hedge, the daisies kissed her feet, the soft air fanned her face, and the tall grasses thrust themselves caressingly into her ungloved hands. It seemed that a great hush settled down upon her, and a new refinement of feeling, and then a strange hunger after God. The unbelievers’ words and works, the clamour of the court where she lived, the riotous behaviour and noisy talk of companions, seemed to be like things she had known in a bad dream; and now she was living in a new life. Was it earth or heaven? And would the great God—in whom, after all, she did hope—take notice of poor Fan Burton? I do not think that the feelings which so moved this girl would have been called into existence had she gone to the woods in company with her associates, or had the occasion been the annual picnic of the factory where she worked, or even a Sunday-school treat, where she was one of several hundreds. But she was alone with Nature and with God; and perhaps if we could make this possible to those for whom we build

mission-halls, and provide crowded meetings, others would be similarly affected.

The girl walked or rested, with some new beauty to arrest her at every step, and with peaceful, purifying thoughts floating in her mind, until presently there came through the trees the sweet sound of church bells chiming their invitation to prayer. For a few moments, with clasped hands, and eyes that dared to look earnestly up to the blue skies, she stood and listened; and then, impelled by she knew not what, she knelt on the grass and offered her first prayer—a prayer odd enough to raise a smile if there had been any one to hear it, but sincere enough to win its way to heaven.

“Our Father which art in heaven, if You can hear me, and if You can help me, please do. I am so hard and so wrong, and such a fool, that I don’t know nothing, but I want to know, and I want to be better; please make me want it more. If You will help me I’ll try to be good, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen. There, now, I’ve prayed; I really have prayed; and if there is Anything to hear, something will come of it. Anyway, it has done me good to pray, and I will go back home and see what is to be done next.”

Sweeter than ever seemed the flowers, and greener the trees, as the girl walked quietly and reluctantly away from the wood, feeling almost as if something new was going to happen. Nothing did happen until she had nearly reached Paradise Grove, and then she saw a crowd.

“What is it, Bet?” she asked of one of the girls who was standing near.

“Only the Salvation Army, as usual, come to convert us all,” was the reply.

Fanny did not laugh, as her custom was, but she went toward the crowd, and pushed her way in and listened. A man was talking of the love of God and somehow Fanny understood it, for her mind was full of the beautiful sights and sounds of the wood, which seemed to make the fact of God’s love not only possible, but most likely to her. She had heard it all before, but did not understand the whole of the address. The words which the speaker, in common with all evangelists, used bewildered her. “Come to Jesus! Will you not come now and be saved?”

After the address a hymn was sung, “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds!” and then there was a prayer, and the meeting was over.

Fanny had been watching her opportunity, and as the speaker moved away she laid a hand on his arm. “Tell me,” she said, “tell me quietly what you mean. How am I to come to Jesus?”

“In prayer,” said the man. “Jesus can hear every word you say just as well as when He was on earth; and He says, ‘Come unto Me.’ You ask Him to save and forgive you, and He will.”

A girl with a Salvation Army bonnet on came up, and was about to take possession of Fanny, but she, looking up, saw the Basket Woman, who had no basket, as it was Sunday, and who was regarding the scene with interest. She saw something in Fanny’s eyes as they met hers; and this friend of the people understood, and was at the girl’s side in a moment.

“What is it?” she asked, gently. “Can I do anything for you? Your name is Fanny Burton, isn’t it? Will you come into my room, and have a talk with me?”

Fanny looked rather frightened, but she turned her face toward the home of the Basket Woman, who shook hands with the Salvation Army girl as if she were her friend.

“I know Miss Burton—she lives near me, and I should like to help her if I may,” she said courteously; and the other, with equal good feeling, quitted the court and joined her friends.

“You have never been to my home, have you, Fanny? I am glad you are coming now.”

The room into which Fanny went was plainly furnished and was scrupulously clean. On the table were a snowy cloth and shining glasses, and two or three knives and forks, which Fanny thought looked like silver. There was a delicious scent of coffee, too, in the place, and, as the girl looked around, she thought, “This is too good for me.”

“I will not stay now, thank you,” she said aloud. “Perhaps I will come again another time, when you have had your supper, or whatever it is.”

“Oh, don’t say so. I do not like to eat alone. You do not know how dull it is to be quite lonely, especially on Sunday,” said the Basket Woman, and Fanny saw that there were tears in her eyes. Fanny yielded instantly; and while they had the simple meal together the Basket Woman talked to her on all sorts of things. When the meal was over, and the coffee drunk, they sat together in the pleasant room, and Fanny told her friend where she had been, and some of the things she had seen.

“Oh, Fanny, I wish I had been with you! I love the country so much. You went by tram, I suppose?”

“Yes; and then I walked a long way. I think it was the beautiful fields that made me feel queer.”

“Queer? How do you mean, Fanny?”

“They made me sorry I am so bad, and they made me feel as if I want to be better.”

“Yes; that is just how they make me feel. Some day, Fanny, not on Sunday though—perhaps next Saturday afternoon, if you can spare the time—I should like so much to go into the country with you. Would you be willing?”

“Yes; I should like it ever so much.”

“Then we will go together, if nothing happens to prevent. I was glad to see you listening to the Salvation Army. Did you ever go to Sunday-school?”

“Yes; when I was a little thing I used to go sometimes. There is a Mission-school, you know, just round the corner, where me and the others went.”

“And why did you leave?”

“Oh, we didn’t like the teacher for one thing; and, for another, it was hot and close; and I like to walk about the streets much better. I wish I hadn’t left, though, now.”

“You can go back again; I am sure they would be glad to see you. Why do you wish you had not left?”

“Because, perhaps, if I had stayed I should have known more. I want to know things. I know nothing. I could not even understand what the Salvation man said.” She paused a moment, and then her eyes suddenly flashed into the grave, kind face before her, and she said impetuously, “Oh, do tell me if it is all real—religion, I mean, and God, and Jesus Christ, and heaven, and all that they talk so much about!”

“Oh, yes, Fanny! It is quite real. I am more sure of that than ever.”

“Then please will you tell me all about it?”

The lady thus appealed to had surprised herself by the dogmatic manner in which she had asserted the reality of the Christian faith. The truth

was that she had often doubted, and sometimes been inclined to believe nothing; yet now that a soul looked to her for light all the doubts seemed strangely to vanish, and all the old lessons came back to her, as she told the story of the Christ, and His beautiful life, and the great kingdom which He came to set up. It was longer than a sermon, but Fanny listened, with her eyes on the face that kindled with joyous earnestness, and it never occurred to her to yawn or feel tired.

“And I am sure,” she said at last, “that if only we do what He wants us to do, and are not selfish and wicked, but are true and kind, that is the best way to be happy. And He will show us all the rest.”

And then a warm impulse moved her, and she put her arm suddenly around Fan’s waist and drew her to her knees, and spoke softly to the Father in heaven for both of them, and asked the living, loving Saviour to reveal His grace to the girl by her side. It was done in the most natural manner, and only occupied one or two minutes; but when they arose, Fan was secured as a loyal disciple for ever.

“And I will never forget it,” she said, through her tears. “I love you; I know you are a lady, and not used to this sort of thing, and only come to do us good; and it was my fault that you were set on that time; but you don’t know how I will love you!”

“And you will really be my friend, Fanny, and help me? Ah, then we will make our Grove more like Paradise than it has ever been before! Do you think you could persuade the boys of the Grove to come and spend their evenings with me, and will you help me entertain them, and see that they have a real good time? I want to get them out of the streets, and teach them how to enjoy better things than pitch-and-toss, and swearing and cheating. But, of course, they will not come if my evenings are dull. I mean them to be very lively; and as you know what sort of things they like, your aid will be invaluable.”

“Yes, I will come with pleasure. I know all the boys in the court, and believe I could persuade them, one and all, to spend their evenings with us; that is, if we make it worth their while. I won’t quite exactly promise every evening until I have talked it over with my mother. I didn’t use to think so much of my mother as I do now; but I’ve thought a deal about her lately, and I’m going to make things better for mother. There ain’t no sense in trying to do other people good, and neglecting your own mother, is there?”

What made the Basket Woman blush and look conscience-smitten and uncomfortable? She did not speak for a moment or two, and then, in a faltering voice, she said: “You are quite right, Fanny; ask your mother, and I will ask mine.”

CHAPTER XI.
OUR PARISH.

The harvest was over, and it had been a good one. The usual festivities were held, and were more really joyous than such occasions frequently are. Already in many parts of the country the true leaders of the people were looking forward to the winter, not only in preparation, but with resolution, and were manfully determined that, if they could not prevent the usual sin, they would prevent some of the attendant misery of the days of cold and gloom. Arthur Knight was doing the work of two or three men. His brain was busy in regard to his own people; but whenever and wherever it was possible he was preaching his Gospel of Christian unity for the world’s good. By the seaside, in the mission hall, in drawing-rooms, in chapels by the dozen he was entreating, in words made eloquent by feeling, that the Church would no longer mourn over the evils of the world, but would set itself by one great united effort to remedy them. And, happily, Knight was only one; there were a dozen other

men saying and writing the same thing.

And it was little Darentdale that led the way. By the aid of quiet visits and persuasive talk a number of persons had been led to acquiesce in the plan of making this special harvest festival the occasion for a new start, which made almost every heart in the village glad, for most working men and women had the surprise of a rise of wages—"for no earthly reason," the people said, but for a very heavenly reason, as all knew who were in the secret. This was what everybody could appreciate, and did. The additional money was no great sum; in many cases it was only a shilling a week, and with it was expressed, as delicately as possible, a hope that it would not find its way into the publican's hands; nor did it, for the event made the men desire their families to share it. The beauty of the increase lay in the fact that it had been voluntarily and freely given, without any threat of a strike, and even without the asking. That was the wonder of it!

Nor was this all. There were a few loafers in the parish, and every one of these received on the same day an offer of regular work at good wages. There were several who had lost their characters, and each of these had another chance given him. The lads and girls who had left the Sunday-school received an invitation to tea at some ladies' or gentlemen's home the next Sunday. Work was found for all who could work, and even for poor old people who could do very little, so that they might still feel themselves independent, and not fear the workhouse. In connection with each of the churches a room was to be fitted up for the purpose of "a girls' parlour," or a "boys' reading-room." An invitation to an "At Home," with music and coffee, was signed by Margaret and Tom, and sent to every man who was known to frequent the public-house; while those who were steady, and especially those of the people who were members of Christian churches, were urged to "Come themselves and bring their mates with them."

So Darentdale led the way. It was all arranged quietly and without ostentation, and this is what was accomplished—there was no poor person in the parish to whom no friendship and help was offered. It was the gladdest day the place had ever known; for there is no joy so great as that of "offering willingly" that which we have to men for Christ's sake. "It _is_ more blessed to give than to receive." "There _is_ that scattereth and yet increaseth." There was no man who took the extra money (which was not given as a favour, but yielded as if it were a right—as, indeed, in most cases it was) who did not resolve that he would put in a better week's work for the better week's wage; but it was no shrewd anticipation of this which gave to such men as Whitwell, Dallington, and others the exuberance of that never-to-be-forgotten-day. It would mean more work and self-denial for themselves, they knew; but they faced most joyously all that was involved in the effort which they were making.

Of course there were a few people who shut themselves out of the feast, and sneered at the music and dancing, all the more angrily because they knew that they were not sharers in some strange joy which they could not understand. Mrs. Hunter and her stepson were among the number. William smoked more cigars in that one day than he had ever consumed in the same space of time before, for his nerves needed soothing.

"It is more than a sane fellow can comprehend—madness, I call it," he said, between the whiffs; "throwing money away on the lower orders. I told John so this morning; and what do you think he said?"

"I cannot tell, indeed; something about universal brotherhood or other nonsense of the same kind," said John's mother.

"He said there were no lower orders!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; he said there must always be masters and men—persons who represented property and persons who represented labour: those who

worked with the head and those who worked with the hands; but no Christian man had a right to selfishly keep his riches to himself; and that in this country, with all the money that is going, no one ought to know the meaning of the word ‘poverty’; and that it was adding insult to injury to speak of lower orders.”

“And what did you say?”

“‘Bosh!’ and he said ‘Perhaps,’ and then I said ‘Rot!’ and he laughed. And I told him he was going dead against the Bible, and casting pearls before swine; and that, instead of thanking him, they would turn again and rend him. And he said he was not doing it in the hope of getting thanks, and was paid as he went on, whatever that might mean; and I called him a fool.”

“You did?”

“Yes, I did; but I thought it better not to let him hear me.”

“He will bring ruin upon us all with these stupid, new-fangled notions.”

“He says they are not new-fangled, but as old as the Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount.”

“I cannot understand it. Somebody has got hold of him. I suppose Margaret Miller and Arthur Knight have between them turned his brain.”

“A set of hypocrites, pretending to be so much better than their neighbours! I have no patience with them. But it won’t last.”

“No; it won’t last.”

There were four or five other houses in Darentdale where those who stood aloof from the new movement tried to comfort themselves also, as well as they could, by declaring that it would not last, and no good would come of it.

Margaret Miller and Tom Whitwell had a royal time, assisted by the other young ladies of the village. “Margaret, can you find out what they do at ‘the public,’” asked Tom, “because I am going to compete with the publican for the favour of the men of our parish?”

“There is, first of all, the drink.”

“Yes; but my sisters are clever in the matter of eating and drinking. They have coached me up in a few facts, the most important of which is that the way to a man’s soul, as well as his heart, lies through his stomach. We have acted accordingly, and I really think that our viands are appetising enough to insure any man’s reform.”

“And the men like to be amused, you know; they cannot get on without that.”

“Well, Margaret, you must sing your sweetest, and I will talk to them. They liked to be talked to, don’t they? especially about politics.”

“Most of all, I think a man likes to spend his evenings in an armchair in a warm, well-lighted room, with a pipe in his mouth, something to drink at his elbow, and a newspaper in his hand.”

“If they could but do without the pipe! But I suppose that would be too great a sacrifice. And it is no use to try to ‘wind them up too high for mortal man beneath the sky’; we must take them as they are. Old Benham once said to me, ‘I ham as I ham, and I can’t be no hammer!’ There is a profound truth in that remark, don’t you think so, Margaret? But I am glad we have made up our minds to do something for our brothers and sisters. The inequalities of life have often made me bitter.”

“And how must poor women have felt who have struggled to bring up

respectably a family of children on the money that it has cost us for dress!”

The “At Home” was a great success. Two better persons to manage it could not have been found than Margaret and Tom. They had the rare gift of always being natural. Many a philanthropic endeavour fails because the ladies and gentlemen, though striving to do their best, and longing to be useful, cannot feel perfectly at home among the poor, and make them feel the same. The latter often mistake the stiffness, which is more the result of nervousness than anything else, for patronage and condescension, and they are very quick to resent anything of that kind. It was greatly because Margaret and Tom were already respected and beloved that their invitation was so almost universally accepted. They had some fun, both with the men and the women.

“Christmas comes early this year, Miss Tom, don’t it?” one asked, with a wink at the men who sat opposite to him.

“Does it, Nelson? I think it is about the same time as usual. My almanack declares it to be on the 25th of December, as it was last year, if you remember rightly.”

“Oh! I thought tea-fights and such things only comed at Christmas. What’s all this mean, miss? Are religious people more religious than usual, or what?”

“It only means that they are more friendly than usual.”

“They want to get us, don’t they?” The man’s eyes were twinkling; but Tom answered quite seriously, “Yes, Nelson, they want very much indeed to get you.”

“And they are willing to bid for us in tea-fights, and coffee, and even fires and newspapers?”

“Yes; and anything else that they can think of.”

“Ah! that’s just what I says to my mate. I says, ‘It’s like the ’lections used to be.’ I’ve had many a glass of whisky for a vote; and I ain’t much of a hand at politics, so I voted honest for the man as treated me most liberal; and so I will now. I ain’t much of a hand at sermons and prayers neither, but I wouldn’t mind obliging either church or chapel for once in a way, if they’re after bidding for us; but, of course, Miss Tom, I values myself at the highest price, as is only natural.”

“Quite natural, Nelson. But you are mistaken this time. The churches and chapels are not bidding against each other; the people who”—Tom hesitated—“who are good, you know, are joining together to try and make things a little better and more happy for those who are not as well off as themselves. That is all it means.”

“And ain’t we agoing to be persuaded to go neither to church nor to chapel?”

“No; though we should all be glad if you went somewhere—we don’t care where. You would have a welcome in either case, of course.”

“Well, that beats all!” said Nelson. “And is this ’ere room to be lighted up comfortably every night for us?”

“Yes, it is; and we shall be glad if you will all come every night and enjoy it.”

“What’s this stuff I’m a-drinking, Miss Tom?”

“Beer.”

“What sort o’ beer?”

“Very nice beer, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it’s A 1, and I’ve had four glasses; but it ain’t reg’lar beer, cause, however much you drinks, you don’t get any forrader with it. It won’t make you drunk, will it, now?”

“You surely do not want it to make you drunk, do you?”

“Well—no—not as I knows on,” said Nelson, slowly; and the men around him laughed.

“I used to go to church when I were a boy,” said another man, Benham; “but if I go anywhere now, I goes to the Methodists when they has the open-air service. It don’t agree with my health to be shut up in a close church or chapel.”

“I suppose you find a bar-room better ventilated?” said Tom; and this time the laugh was against Benham.

“I used to go to church when I were a boy,” echoed another man. “My father were one of the singers, and he left all through a quarrel about a anthem. He wanted ‘All people that on earth do dwell’; but another man wanted ‘I will arise’; my father wouldn’t give way, nor the other man neither. Father says, ‘It shall be “All people that on earth do dwell,”’ and the t’other says, ‘Cuss “All people that on earth do dwell”’; and my father put on his hat, and walked out of the church forthwith, and he never entered it again till he were carried there; and that is the truth, and I do not deceive you.”

The last words were spoken so solemnly that Tom had to beat a retreat. But the evening passed pleasantly enough, and Margaret’s singing was greatly appreciated.

The next night the attendance was less, for some of the men spent the evening at the public-houses, talking the matter over; but our friends were not discouraged. They resolved to keep on—and wait. They were trying to feel their way, and by a wise judiciousness overcome the suspicion and opposition which they would probably encounter.

But from that seed-sowing harvest day could be dated a most beneficent change in Darentdale. The homes of the people put on a more comfortable appearance, and the spiritless women, feeling that something was expected of them in return for the sympathy and help which they received, began to be more sprightly, and to take some pride in making their rooms not only clean but pretty. By the end of the year but few had grown weary in well-doing, and in many hearts that had been hopeless before new hopes were springing up.

No one more approved this effort for the people than Mr. Harris. He contributed nothing to the cakes and tea, but he had done a kindness on his own account that was very acceptable, for he had presented every poor person with an armchair! And this he did as a sort of thank-offering for the pleasure it was to him to know that a good man cared for his Margaret.

But a few days after the harvest festival Margaret’s mind was considerably disturbed by an anonymous letter. It ran thus:—“A friend sends you this word of warning. Why do you try to tempt a gentleman from his duty and fealty to another? Already you and yours have wrongful possession of a house and money that by right belong to him. Will you rob him also of his good name, and cast a blight over his life? If you care for him you will not do this; unless, indeed, you are false and fast. Two hearts will break if he be drawn into your meshes; for who and what are you, and _who were your parents?_ Has he come back to his native land to be beguiled by one who will but try to drag him down to her own level? His friends are determined to prevent this sacrifice; so you will but cause him and them the more trouble by your guile. A stigma attaches to you, which God forbid that he should share.”

To the last sentence Margaret breathed a fervent Amen. But it will be readily imagined that this letter caused her a very bad half-hour. Had she really an enemy—she who was used to seeing nothing but kindness in every face? And, if so, what was the enemy's name? She could not tell.

But the pain had a greater sting in it when the thought suggested itself that perhaps this letter was not the work of an enemy, but of a friend. For, after all, there was some truth in it. Who and what was she, and who were her people? She really could not answer the question, for she did not know. And that was the reason why she had hesitated to accept John Dallington.

"The time has surely come for me to know," she said. "I have had vague fears, but they must be either dispelled or confirmed now. It is not fair to me or any one else that I should be left in any uncertainty."

Mr. Harris had a cosy little room opening out of the shop, and here he usually sat during eight hours of every day in case a customer should come and require books, papers, or stationery. "I am for the eight-hour movement," he used to say, with a significant smile at Margaret. "Eight hours are long enough for any man to work."

And she always agreed with him. "Especially when it is such arduous work as yours, Graf, requiring such close attention to detail, so exhausting for the brain and the arms, as indeed all work is in these days of fierce competition. How much did you take over the counter yesterday—fourpence halfpenny?"

"Oh, I had a good day! I sold a copy of Browning's poems, and the purchaser appeared much pleased with it." The purchaser in almost every case would be himself, for few Darentdalers bought books or read them, and those who did sent to London or ordered them through a bookseller in Scourby. But Margaret and her grandfather had much quiet fun over the shop, and were decidedly its best customers.

Margaret loved the old man, and was as tender as a daughter could be toward him; and how much he cared for her all the years of her life had told. It was, nevertheless, difficult for her to broach the subject that was uppermost in her mind.

"Has there been a great rush of customers to-day, Graf?"

"Well, I have been quite busy enough for the greater part of the day. Newspapers have sold well; they are very interesting, for Parliament was last night discussing the question of adopting that new gun—a noiseless, smokeless weapon which can kill at the distance of a mile and fire three hundred shots in succession. Other nations are adopting it, and Christian England must not be behind. One good thing about it is that any number of armies could be annihilated in a day; so if the battles are fierce they will not be long."

"Dreadful! Surely they will never fight again now that killing is so easy and so certain?"

"I don't know; I hope not. I think not, if England would lead the way, as she ought, and would be always for peace."

"I am feeling very warlike this evening, Graf."

"Are you, Margaret? You are young to suffer from nervous irritability. Do you feel as if you want to bang something?"

"Yes, I do."

"Go up the house and down the house and bang all the doors. No? You want something human? I am quite at your service, my dear—bang me! I am substantial enough for anything."

“Graf, you are generally young and frivolous when I want you to be staid and serious. Something has happened to me, and I need help and advice.”

“Really and truly, my child?”

“Yes; very really and truly, indeed. I have had an anonymous letter.”

“Don’t read it, Margaret. I have had many such in my time, denouncing me as a sceptic and an atheist, and consigning me to the lowest regions. They don’t hurt you much when you are used to them. Put your letter in the fire unread, and forget all about it.”

“But I have read it, grandfather; I could not help that, and I want you to read it, too.”

“I think it would be better not.”

“Please, because I wish it.”

The old man read it through twice, and then looked at Margaret, with a curious smile. “You need not mind this in the least,” he said. “I suppose you know who wrote it?”

“I have not the slightest idea.”

“No? It was Mrs. Hunter, John Dallington’s mother.”

“Mrs. Hunter! Oh! surely not? What can make you think that?”

“I do not think it; I am sure of it. There has been an attempt to disguise the writing, but it is certainly Mrs. Hunter’s. Now, my dear, never tell any one that you have had it as long as you live. Burn it, and forget all about it. That is the only thing to do.”

“Graf, you must be mistaken; it could not be Mrs. Hunter.”

“Very well, my dear. Settle it so, and welcome. But I do not believe there is any one else in Darentdale who would have done it, unless her stepson did it, and I am sure he did not. Never mind who wrote it, Margaret, nor what is in it. Somebody is afraid that Dallington has fallen in love with you. It is a proof of his great good sense and intelligence that the suspicion is correct.”

“Grandfather,” said Margaret, in grave tones and with trembling lips, “you have seen what this letter says. Please tell me, who am I?”

Mr. Harris began to look troubled, but he answered, “You are Margaret Miller. I can tell you no more than that.”

“Oh, but you must!” said the girl, pleadingly. “It is not kind to me; it is not right to withhold anything from me that touches me so closely.”

“Margaret, I can tell you one fact. You are fit to mate with John Dallington or any other man. Your parents were good people, and occupied a high position. They were married in Spain, and I was present at their wedding.”

“Which of them was your child, grandfather?”

Harris hesitated, but Margaret was urgent.

“The time has surely come for you to be open with me,” she said. “Dear old Graf, I cannot bear to trouble you; I hate myself for doing it. If you think I ought not to ask you, I will try to be silent; but it is hard to have a stigma resting upon me.”

“Child,” he said, angrily, “there is no stigma of any kind attaching to you! Have I not told you so already?”

“Graf, do not be angry with me. Which of my parents was your child?” Margaret repeated.

“Neither,” said Harris, and he looked white and pained; “but if you had been my own child I could not have cared more for you, and you could not have given me more joy through all these years. Your parents both died of cholera in Spain—one two days after the other. There were perils that beset their only child; and from these you were rescued by Mr. Dallington, who was under an obligation to your father, and who, in order to pay it, adopted you; and whose will provided for you by leaving this house and all that is in it to you after me.”

“And is my name Margaret Miller, really?”

“Yes, that is your name.”

“But there is a secret somewhere?”

“There is; but the secret belongs to the dead. No person living is affected by it; and it will die with me, for I swore not to reveal it; nor will I, neither at the bidding of hate, nor of love. You know enough, Margaret. Be content.”

Margaret bowed her head. “Thank you for telling me so much,” she said; “and for the years of love and kindness which have made my life so happy that I have scarcely missed my father and mother.”

“I have but done my duty and kept my promise. And you see that you owe me nothing, Margaret, not even the obedience and love of a granddaughter.”

“Dear Graf, I owe you everything—all the gratitude, goodwill, and affection of which I am capable. And I will never forget it. We will be just as happy together now as we have always been, and forget the anonymous letter. I am sure that there is not a grain of truth in the insinuation that we are enjoying money that ought to belong to others.”

“You know quite well, Margaret, that a man has a right to leave his property to whomsoever he pleases. Mr. Dallington was an eccentric man; but he was only right and just when he took care that you should want for nothing. It was his duty to do this—mark what I am saying, Margaret—_his duty_. He would have been culpable if he had not done it. But he did it in a curious, unusual way. Some day I will tell you where you will find, on these premises, enough hard cash to maintain you in the comfort you have been used to, and, at the rate at which it is spent now, until you are eighty years old. Now, Madge, my child, you know all that I can tell you; and it is nobody’s business but ours. I want to talk to you on another subject. We have all our troubles, my dear”—the old man sighed as he said it—“and they are not very big ones either, for they give us more worry than pain. But a very little worry is large enough to spoil a life if we will let it. You will not let this thing overshadow your life—if I know you, I am sure you will not—for you are a believer in the Christ——”

“And so are you, Graf,” interpolated Margaret.

“And it seems plain to me, though, as everybody knows, I am a sceptic and an unbeliever, that He meant all His followers to live the same kind of life as He lived. Therefore, my child, you will put yourself on one side in this matter. Such petty things as anonymous letters are beneath you now; you must be invulnerable to the little stings which would force your thoughts upon yourself. Be a large-minded, large-hearted Christian, or none at all, Margaret. Christianity is not a creed; it is a life. Don’t you think so?”

“I do, indeed, thanks to your teaching.”

“Oh, no! I am a very irreligious person; but I do not want you to be.”

Margaret was right in saying that she owed everything to this old man, whom so many denounced. “He is perishing in his sins,” a man had said of him once, because, when he had been invited to a special service, he had replied with a laugh that he would rather have one to himself by the river. But Margaret, whom none ever heard say an unkind thing of another, whose very presence raised the tone of a garden party, who was the champion of the absent, whose loving nature made itself felt everywhere, had formed her opinions and habits after those of her guardian, and was much the better for it.

“Graf,” said Margaret, “a young woman has no right to come between a mother and a son, has she? If Mrs. Hunter regards me in this way I am sure Mr. Dallington must be unhappy about it.”

“I advise you not to mention this letter to him. He gave me to understand that he was not in a position to marry immediately; and while you are waiting things may right themselves. In any case, he is of age, and has a right to choose his own wife. I am glad he has chosen my child. He took me by surprise, though, because I thought he would marry Miss Tom Whitwell—for I have fancied many times since his return that she cared for him. But everything is as it should be. Hear what Browning says, ‘God’s in His heaven, all’s right with the world.’”

But the talk and the letter caused Margaret a sleepless night, though it was not so much the letter as the suggestion about her friend, Tom Whitwell. Can it be true? she asked herself many times; and she was half afraid it was, now that she thought things through. But she did not keep the trouble to herself; and her cry, “Show me the right, and give me strength to do it!” was certain of an answer.

CHAPTER XII.
A NEW ORDER.

Margaret Miller and Tom Whitwell read together an account of some meetings at which Arthur Knight had been speaking, and they confided to each other their own ideas on the subject. As the reader knows, each had her own reason for anxiety and trouble; but each felt that this was a time for laying all personal affairs and feelings on one side, and doing her part in the New Crusade which was being fought.

“We ought to do so, Margaret,” said Tom, “because I believe that for the existing state of things women must bear much of the blame. We have left off sending our knights to battle for God and the right, and we encourage them instead to take to money-grubbing in the city.”

“A good deal of heroism of a certain kind is practised, though, even thus,” replied Margaret. “Many a man who raises himself from a lowly position to a lofty one does it much more for the sake of his wife and children than for his own.”

“Oh, yes! And dies on the field, content to have won a carriage for his widow, and funds for the gambling purposes of his sons. What astonishes me is that women can accept such heroic sacrifices for such small ends. But I am afraid that we are all becoming about as mean as mice; at least, if we are to be measured by the topics of our talk at afternoon tea.”

“Ah! but we are not. We are so foolishly and wickedly afraid of revealing our best to one another that we pretend to be as frivolous and heartless as we possibly can. It is a great fraud, and some of us have eyes keen enough to see through it. I always find it difficult to keep from laughing when you, Tom, make believe to be interested in the edifying tales that are told about your neighbours.”

“It is abominable, Margaret, and I hate it. Fine companions for true men

are we, if we are to be judged by our own representations of ourselves! And we might do so much; for we really have a good deal of power over men."

Margaret smiled significantly.

"'Ah! wasteful woman,'" she quoted. "And yet, you know, there is nothing a woman really cares so much about as the good opinion of her male friends."

"Oh, I know it is the men's fault in the first place; but we are to be their helpers, not their slaves."

"I will tell you where I think our help might come in. You remember when we were in London last we saw quite a crowd of girls coming out of a low-looking public-house, some of them half-tipsy?"

"I should think I do remember it. Who that had once seen such a sight could ever forget it?"

"But the girls would never have gone in of themselves. It was because of the young men who were there. The girls would be easily dealt with if once they could understand that that sort of thing disgusts men."

"Ah! but it doesn't."

"I am not quite sure of that. I believe it does—for every man has a better and a worse self, and everything depends upon which part of the man's nature is influenced by the woman whom he loves."

At this point of the conversation Tom asked a very peculiar and personal question, which brought the colour to her friend's face.

"Margaret, have you any money?"

"I have a little, enough for my needs."

"What I have been wondering is whether you and I together could spare some for the rent of a drawing-room in London near that particular public-house, where we could try our Darentdale plan with those creatures who are neither boys nor men. People say that almost any lad, even the roughest, will treat a gentlewoman with courtesy. We could invite them, before they go into that place, to come into ours, and there you might talk to them in your own way, and perhaps I in mine. We might give two evenings in a week. Our people would not mind if we were together, and we could get home easily, though a little late, for the trains are so good. If we can only succeed in a small way it is worth while to try."

"Oh, Tom, how brave you are! Something of the kind has been floating in my own mind, but I should never have had the courage to try without you."

When the true history of the world comes to be written it will be seen how much in this remarkably formative period in England was commenced in just such a simple manner as this talk between our two friends.

It was on a cold, drizzling night, when the London streets were as uncomfortable as only London streets can be, that two well-dressed young ladies went up to a group of boys, all somewhere in their teens, and invited them to come in and have a cup of hot coffee and some buttered toast. The fair, smiling faces of the girls and their friendly and gracious manners forced the boys to courtesy, and eight of them—about half the number—consented. They looked at their dirty hands and boots when they were taken into the drawing-room with comical seriousness.

"Oh, never mind!" said Tom. "Look at my boots; you cannot keep clean on such a night as this. Have the coffee while it is hot. And here are some

potted beef sandwiches. Perhaps you have not yet had your teas?”

The boys laughed. “We have had our teas,” said one. “A hextra meal don’t make no difference to the likes of us.”

And so, indeed, it seemed; for the coffee and eatables disappeared in almost no time.

The boys were not as much surprised as boys would have been twenty years before, at the invitation.

“They are trying another dodge on us, that’s all,” whispered one to his mates; but they looked with a little curiosity when the plates and cups had been collected; and when, for a moment or two, the ladies had left the room, a brisk bit of betting went on.

“Ten to one on Music!” “Thirteen to one on Sign the Pledge!” “Twenty to one agin Gambling—look out!”

“We cannot tell how glad we are to see you,” said Tom, rather nervously, as she took her seat. “You can spare time to stop a little while, cannot you?”

“That depends,” said one. “I’ve got a pressing engagement—very pressing, indeed; but I’m always ready to oblige a lady, specially such a stunner as you, miss.”

“Thank you; much obliged for the compliment. Well, we are going to tell you a story. You like tales, don’t you?”

“Yes; but not true ones, mind.”

“Very well. Miss Miller will tell the first and I the second.”

No one guessed the trouble to which the narrators had gone to prepare these stories, nor the numbers of dreadful boys’ books through which they had waded in order to get some idea of the style which would be acceptable. Some hair-breadth escapes there were, and a few things to laugh at, especially in Margaret’s, which she told so effectively that her audience was spell-bound. It was the story of a poor boy, dreadfully tried and tempted, who, by his self-control, and because, though he sometimes did the wrong, he loved the right, made his way in the world, and won the gratitude and respect of all who knew him. It was a good story, well told, and the boys applauded it vigorously.

“That is a story of up, up, up,” said one.

“It is,” replied Tom. “That is a clever title for it, and mine is a story of down, down, down!”

“Of course, the fellow was a religious cove.”

“Certainly; he would not have done as he did if he had not had _Some One_ to help him.”

“Ah, but we ain’t religious—not much!”

“No? Ah! that accounts for some things,” said Tom, glancing at the rags and the dirt and the unkempt hair of the speaker—a glance so eloquent that every one understood it.

“Now let’s have yourn, miss; my engagements is a-pressing me like anythink.”

Tom was not herself prepared for the effect upon the boys which her recital had, and Margaret listened in amazement. She made the boy in the story live before her listeners, so that they seemed to know him, and were entirely in sympathy with him. They knew all about his uncomfortable home, and his tobacco money, and his bets. He was a nice

fellow, too, and good-natured to his “pals” at first; but just because he was selfish and weak, and could not say No at the right time, and because he never called upon God except to blaspheme Him, and because he wouldn’t be a teetotaller, and was so altogether mistaken in his ideas about manliness and honour, his end was full of misery. Tom’s eyes filled with tears, and her voice trembled as she described the downward progress of this boy and his death; and when she finished with a little prayer, “O Lord! for Jesus Christ’s sake, save these boys from all that!” she could not repress a sob, which awoke an answer in the hearts of almost all the boys.

The boys were subdued as they went away, and two or three, at least, resolved to make their lives from that night a story of “Up, up, up.” Most of them came on the next appointed evening, and brought others with them. Of course, all meetings were not successes; nor did the boys invariably continue to be interested. All workers have some disappointments, and Margaret and Tom had many. The habits already formed by the boys were not suddenly broken, nor was the evil in them readily subdued. But the effort was yet a remarkably prosperous one; and, though small in its beginning, it was the commencement of a very great thing indeed. It was not quite at first evangelistic, in the usual sense of the word, but it soon became so in the largest and fullest sense. Our friends would not easily forget the first devotional ten minutes they spent with the boys, nor did they.

“They was the realest prayers I ever heered, and they fairly knocked me down,” said one of the boys.

“But we mustn’t have the ladies knocked down, and some of the chaps, and the gals, too, are mad about this thing; so we’ll conduct them to the station.”

And when that evening was over Tom said, admiringly, “What gentlemen they are!”

After a time they saw that the thing would be too big for them to cope with alone. They needed some one older, who resided in London, to help and advise them. And at this juncture Tom remembered that she had heard her cousin speak of a lady who would probably be interested in this movement.

“Margaret,” she said, “My cousin John has told me of a Miss Wentworth, whom he met on board-ship, who is very kind and philanthropic. I will get a letter of introduction from him, and we will call and see her to-morrow.”

This was done, and the older worker welcomed the young ones with great cordiality, and listened full of sympathy to the tale they had to tell.

“The thought has been given to you by God,” she said. “All our hopes for the future are in the young, and especially in the boys. I have myself thought how well it would pay for Christian women to give up all other work, and devote themselves to mothers and the children alone. My house is entirely at your service; I shall consider it most honoured to be used in any way for the promotion of this enterprise. As for myself, I am an old woman, and cannot do much; but anything and everything which I can do will be most gladly done. Do not scruple to ask me for money, or service, or room. If only for Mr. Dallington’s sake, I should like to prove myself your friend.”

The girls were fortunate in having found so able a helper, and they promised that Miss Wentworth should at once be taken into their complete confidence.

The first result of this was that that lady invited by letter all the gentlemen’s boys whom she knew, and Margaret and Tom had a drawing-room meeting of a different kind. They were boys such as Arnold would have loved and Thring believed in—sons, for the most part, of Christian parents, fine specimens of young England, the statesmen and merchants

and professional men of the future. And these boys, full of fun and ready for mischief, but generous and manly, hating lies and cowardice as only English boys can, became the nucleus of a grand army destined to save the nation and lift it into a glory such as it had never known before.

Margaret’s gentle voice and beautiful face won their way immediately to the boys’ hearts. She told the same story as before, but in different words and with a different significance, leaving them to see how they might help those who were down to rise; and that their education and position put upon them the responsibility of doing so. Next, in glowing terms she reminded them of the old Crusaders, and the Knights of Chivalry, and besought these modern boys of England to enter upon the new crusade, and drive out from their native land the drunkenness and gambling, the impurity and misery which were crowding round its holy places. She reminded them that _they_ must bring about the great reformation; that _they_ must acknowledge Christ, and for His sake the brotherhood of man; it would be _their_ sin and shame if poor women were still to work for starvation wages, and wretched men lose their manliness because they had lost their hope. She took it for granted, she said, that they were Christian boys, and that they would be true to the faith of their fathers, which faith was not simply a belief in Christ as a Saviour, though it was that first of all, but an obedience to Christ as a law-giver, and that the command to love one another, to care for the poor, to acknowledge the equality of man, to be strictly fair and honourable, were simple everyday duties incumbent upon all who bore the name of Christ. She spoke of the waste of God-given power in war, and urged them in glowing words to pledge themselves never to uphold those who pressed a national quarrel to murder; and she asked them, now in their youth, and afterwards in their manhood, to suspend for a while even the strife of political parties until the wrongs of the poor and the ignorant were righted; and to accomplish a grand mastery of self that they might become the masters of the world. And then she bade them win the love and reverence of women by being such brave, high-minded, clean-souled men as they dreamed all Englishmen should be.

After this Tom told her story, showing at every step how if the boy who went down into the lowest depths of degradation had had a strong man—a gentleman—to help him, it would have been different. “But the young gentlemen,” said Tom, “were smoking and drinking, and so busy in robbing themselves of their own strength and manhood that they took no notice of the poor wretches who were dying by their side, and _Noblesse oblige_ had no meaning for them.”

“But it has for us,” said a boyish voice, its owner rising in the middle of the room; and Margaret was delighted as she looked at him; a tall, straight, good-looking boy with his brown curls tossed back from his forehead, and his blue eyes flashing with fearless determination. “Let me tell the ladies who have spoken that there are hosts of us quite ready to form a new army of Volunteer Crusaders. But we want a little help and encouragement; we are so cowardly, afraid and ashamed of appearing as good as we are. Could not another word for good be invented? We would rather face a lion than the stigma of being called goody-goody; but let nobody on that account suppose that our hatred of wrong, and our indignation against the wrong-doer, is any less hot in us than in our fathers. We have been born with consciences, and we have energy enough to battle with anything. You fellows, what do you say? Shall we, here in London, and to-night, form a regiment of Soldiers of Peace? I believe the idea would be taken up all over England; for the boys I know—most of them, at all events—do not want to disgrace their names. If we could really believe that we are called to be heroes there is that in us which would help us to rise to the name. Yes, and let us wear a rosette of the red, white, and blue of Old England, which no boy shall wear except worthily; the blue for temperance, the white for purity, and the red for battle or endeavour. These colours have won renown in the past; they shall win higher renown still in the new days for our country, for—” and the young voice rang out like a bugle call—“we swear to God that we will do our part to make our nation exalted by its righteousness.”

The boys shouted “Hurrah!” they could not help it; they were wonderfully moved by the short harangue of their comrade, Ned Northcote, a favourite of all who knew him. And Tom trembled with excitement as she put her hand on the arm of her hostess.

“We must take this holy enthusiasm at its flow,” she said. “Miss Wentworth, will you let your house be the rallying ground for this grand new army?”

And the older woman replied with quivering lips, “Only too gladly! Never before was the house so consecrated as it is to-night.”

She might well say so; for at that moment a boy’s voice, in simple boyish language, was vowing for himself and his fellows, all of them standing, with bowed heads and swiftly-beating hearts, that they would live for the kingdom of Christ, and be the King’s soldiers.

“Here is a book. I think we should have a roll-call,” said Tom. “I am not a boy; I almost wish I were to-night: but I shall belong to the regiment. It is late now; will you enrol your names in your own handwriting, and come again to-morrow?”

The movement became known through the Press. There were several flourishing weekly journals and one daily devoted to the interests of women, the columns of which were chiefly occupied with the fashions and tit-bits of news about “Society People.” A letter was addressed to each of these describing the meetings here referred to, and appealing to the ladies of England to help, by drawing-room meetings and any other means that should offer, in the formation of a national army of Volunteer Boy Crusaders, pledged to the extirpation of evil and the uplifting of the standard of righteousness.

Most of the editors of these papers inserted the letters (and those who did not wished afterward they had done so), and the response to them was marvellous. The religious papers, of course, most willingly gave their assistance, and so it came about that in a comparatively short time after the meeting in Miss Wentworth’s room thousands of meetings were being held in connection with churches of all denominations in all parts of the country; for the idea had everywhere caught the imaginations and consciences of Christian women, and _God wills it_ was borne in upon them.

And then it became evident what a wonderful preparation for this had been going on during the past years. All sorts of societies were already in existence, ready to be amalgamated. There was the “Society of Christian Endeavour,” which numbered thousands of young people; and it was easy and natural to show how their endeavour, which was, firstly, for their own religious advancement, should be, secondly, definitely on behalf of other boys and girls less favoured than they. Then there was “The Boys’ Brigade,” which had made fine, soldierly lads of some of the roughest street boys of the large towns, but which was regarded with suspicion by some who feared that the organisation might be used as a recruiting agency for military purposes. But it was found that these boys were as ready, and even eager, to take the Pledge of Peace as the rest; and so well disciplined were they, so used to obey the officers under whom already they served, that they were invaluable in the new army of young crusaders. The Bands of Hope, too, had their thousands already engaged in negative work, but thirsting to become aggressive, who signed the new pledge, “We will,” after the old one, “We will not.”

As to the Sunday-school, it renewed its youth. “Why, this is what we have been trying to do all along; this is our work,” said the teachers; and they were right, for there could have been no such abundant harvest ready for reaping but for the patient tilling and sowing which had been accomplished in the Sunday-school.

“Where are the headquarters of this great movement?” was a question frequently asked. And the answer seemed a strange one: “In the houses of

a few women."

"It is growing too much for us," said Tom. But on the day when she said it more than a dozen ladies asked to be allowed to do the clerical work of the endeavour.

"What put it in your minds?" one asked, and a bright girl replied with a smile, "You should put your question differently, and ask, 'Who put it into our minds?'"

But, after all, every district, town, and village had to provide its own headquarters. Nor was this difficult; for that had happened for which devout souls had agonised in prayer for many a weary year, and at last the Church was awake.

And it found everything ready for the new work, which was yet not new, but as old as Christianity. A conviction forced itself into many minds, as it might be, simultaneously, that no new organisation, but the old-established ones, were called to make the Great Endeavour, and that they had all the necessary power and means, and especially they had what was of greater importance than all else put together—_they had the boys_.

One town after another, and villages by dozens, gathered the boys into the new organisation; and it was officered by the finest men of the district.

"This must not be left to uneducated, unequipped men; you and I must take it up, or prove ourselves traitors to our consciences." Such words as these were spoken at many a club. And the recruiting sergeants were the boys themselves. "Father, you must come; you are clever; the boys would obey you; and you know how to govern. Don't leave us to any duffers who like to take us in hand. We want real men to manage and direct us." So pleaded the boys; and real men responded.

And yet it was very much a woman's movement. It was always a lady's hand who pinned the rosette of significance upon the boy's breast when he enlisted. The sweet tones of women's voices commended the young soldiers to God when they went forth to fight the peace-battles. They were welcomed once every week when they came for counsel and encouragement by motherly hands and sisterly commendation. Every boy knew that some good woman held him in her heart and mentioned him in her prayers, and would be glad or sorry according to whether he proved faithful or the reverse. For at the very foundation of this movement was the principle of woman's influence. Every lady-member of the Christian Church with which the Branch was connected was expected to take the oversight of some of the boys—not less than two nor more than twenty being the number decided upon. And these women, who, as might have been expected, entered very heartily into the scheme, had to help and inspire the boys in their uphill endeavour; and especially set them to work upon those other boys who, at present, were their opponents. One or two of these ladies, whom we know, brought the old history of the Knights Templars to bear on these modern times. Nor could anything better for their purpose be conceived than the oath taken by this order—"I swear to consecrate my words, my arms, my strength, and my life to the defence of the mysteries of faith and that of the unity of God. I also promise to be submissive and obedient to the Grand Master of the Order. Whenever it is needful I will cross the seas to fight; I will give help against all infidel kings and princes, and _in the presence of three enemies I will not fly, but fight if they are infidels_."

It was not far from Arthur Knight's factories that Margaret and Tom commenced these operations. He had not seen these ladies, but he heard of what they were doing from Dallington and Miss Wentworth, and between him and them his idea was in a fair way of being accomplished, for almost every young person was surrounded by an atmosphere of kindness and good influences. By every means he was endeavouring to prepare his people, and especially the young ones, for a better life under happier conditions in his Land of Promise, which was being got ready for them.

It was a great satisfaction to him to find how much of the work which he considered his was being done for him by others. He had heard of the Basket Woman, and was curious about her. But among the helpers doing Christian work for his people there was one of whom he thought more frequently than of all the others, and that was the young lady who had spoken with such vehement condemnation of the wretched houses that belonged to him. Only once since had he seen her, and it was when, hearing that the woman whom she visited was dying, he went to the house to see if he could render assistance. But the young lady was before him. As he pushed open the door he saw a sight which he would never forget. By the side of the couch which had been provided the girl knelt in prayer, and he heard her soft voice pleading, “Oh, take Thy servant, who has so long borne the burden and heat of the day, into Thy Paradise above, where they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” He closed the door softly, and passed the little window of that room bareheaded and with a reverent heart. And he understood, as never before, when he walked over the dusty stones, through the close court, what such words must be to the poor, and how natural it was that Christ should have thought of them first. “To the poor the Gospel is preached,” and those who receive it are thereby lifted out of the greatest depths of their misery. A wave of compassion passed over Arthur Knight, and the resolutions he had formed grew stronger than ever within him. He passed the house again (it was strange what an attraction it held for him), hoping that he might meet the young lady; but, instead, he heard her voice singing sweetly the well-known strains, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” He waited a moment or two, and then, realising the impertinence of such conduct, he walked slowly away, hoping, however, that an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the singer might be granted him. Could she be “the Basket Woman,” of whom he heard so much? Or were there two ladies who had taken his poor people into their compassion, besides those who originated the Young Crusaders’ movement? Among all his engagements Arthur Knight found time to wonder about this mystery, for he could not help being vividly interested. “It is absurd,” he said to himself; “but I cannot get that young lady who lectured me out of my thoughts. Surely I am not going to fall in love. That is the last thing I ought to do. But I must see her again, somehow.”

CHAPTER XIII.
THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

Even in small towns events follow each other so rapidly that one subject of gossip soon pushes another into the background, and in Scourby Mary Wythburn would have been forgotten, except by a few of her own personal friends, but for the fact that her name had been coupled with that of Dr. Stapleton in a suspicious report which did him great damage in the opinion of his fellow-townsmen. The doctor was a young medical man who was rapidly making his way in the town, and had many friends. He was especially good to the poor, and for several years attended them free of charge at their own homes, and he also held at his house a medical mission. Twice a week his consulting-room was almost like a small “Pool of Bethesda,” for the number of halt and maimed who came to it for advice and medicine. He always made them pay for these by their attendance at a ten minutes’ talk which preceded the regular business on which they came. But the doctor did not usually address these people on religious topics. His faith in the power of Christ to redeem them was strong and unquestioning, but he knew that in the streets, through the efforts of the Salvation Army and other evangelists, they were at their own doors continually hearing of the way of salvation. It was rather a gospel of self-help that Dr. Stapleton preached to them. He wanted them to love God, but since they could not do that because they did not as yet love their fellow-men, he sought to make them at least love themselves, which they were a long way from doing. So he discoursed to them, in rousing words, on cleanliness and health, on language and

character, on habits and opinions, and especially on the delight and the dignity of work. There were some strange ideas among these people in regard to this last subject; they actually talked of themselves as the working-classes, while many of them were as idle as they could be. Public movement was in the direction of shortening the hours of labour for men; and it was hoped, therefore, that since many of them only worked eight hours, the professional classes might presently rest when they had been engaged for twelve, and that women would not be expected to work for more than sixteen. But these women who were helped by Dr. Stapleton, whose homes were dirty and wretched, and whose persons were untidy, did very little real work at all; and he knew that if they could be persuaded to love, instead of hate, it, a vast difference would at once be made to their lives. So he did what he could, and very sympathetically, since he knew under what terrible conditions many of them lived, and how hard it is to keep a very little home entirely clean and tidy.

Dr. Stapleton one morning noticed that the people appeared to be offended with him. This vexed and made him irritable, and it must be confessed that he had not a good temper at the best of times. Just now, indeed, he was overwhelmed with troubles of which few people guessed, though some were evident enough. For one thing, a Parliamentary election was impending, and a section of the Scourby men had decided to lead the way in a new departure. There was to be a grand fight for principle. Every one said that, though exactly what the principle was remained undefined, only one thing seemed clear, that the fight would be between the classes who had property and character and those who had neither. For a change had come into the political world, although both the Government and the Opposition were slow to see it. For several years Christianity had been aggressive to an extent not previously known. The churches had become iconoclastic; they had shut up public-houses by the score; they had put gamblers into prison; they had insisted that brutal husbands and fathers should be flogged; they had suspended races, and closed music-halls, and cleared the streets of evil houses, and altogether rendered themselves so obnoxious that through the land there were risings of the dangerous classes, who were everywhere choosing men after their own hearts to represent them in Parliament.

In Scourby this section of the people had chosen Mr. Richard Lavender. He was an open reviler of religion and morality, but he was bold as well as bad; he was clever at invective, and perfectly unscrupulous in his words and deeds, and therefore he was a favourite with too many of the people. They loved to hear him call names; they applauded his sneers at religion and respectability; he was no “bloated aristocrat,” he was an outcast, as many of them were, and they were going to stand by him, and send him to Westminster to be a thorn in the sides of the respectables.

He appealed to the worst passions of the people, and told them that both the aristocracy and the middle classes were tyrants and oppressors of the poor; and the curious thing was that some of them seemed to believe him. He roused their antagonism by reminding them of the Bills that had been passed—that now a man could not claim his wife’s wages, or enjoy them unless she chose to give him them; that he could not send his children out to work, and, indeed, a man could no longer do what he liked with his own; besides which he did not find a public-house in every street, and often had a ten minutes’ walk before he could get his drink. The liberty of the subject was in danger, and a stop must be put to this sort of thing.

Mr. Lavender was one of three men who aspired to the vacant seat. There was, of course, to be the usual fight between the Conservatives and the Radicals. But the candidates representing the two great parties were strangers, and had been selected and sent down by the wire-pullers in London, while Lavender was well known, and hail-fellow-well-met to many of the people in Scourby. This gave him a great advantage over Mr. Smith, the Conservative, and Mr. Jones, the Liberal. On the evening of the day in question there was to be a meeting of the supporters of the latter, and those who were interested looked forward to it with some misgiving. Lavender gloried in mob-law; and although there was no

society in the town that would have anything to do with him, not the socialists, nor trades-unionists, nor any distinct organisation of the people, it was yet known that he could count upon a considerable following.

Many people feared that Lavender would be returned, and among them was Dr. Stapleton.

In the midst of his ill-humour Miss Whitwell called to consult him about one or two poor patients to whom he had been kind.

“I am looking after some of Miss Wythburn’s pet women,” she said. “I am so bad-tempered this morning, that I thought I would go to them as a sort of diversion; and I feel more wretched than ever now. I think there must be a happy hereafter for the very poor, they are so joyless here.”

“But they do not wish to leave the world. Every patient wants to get well.”

“I could take you to a woman who is praying to die, but I may not. There are plenty of them, though. Is not this a wretched world?”

“I do not think so, neither do you, Miss Whitwell.”

“Oh, yes, I do! Why, everything is wrong. And men who have power and strength and ability are droning away their lives doing nothing—absolutely nothing. Why do you not lift up your voice against the cruelty that is practised in this town?”

“I haven’t a very strong voice. It would not make much noise if I lifted it up all day.”

“Dr. Stapleton, you are brutal!”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Whitwell. What do you want me to do? I am sure the world is better than it ever was before.”

“I am glad I did not live in it before, then. Things seem to me dreadfully bad now.”

“All great growths are slow. But I believe that the right is winning its way more rapidly than slowly, and in the long run it is sure to conquer.”

Tom Whitwell laughed. “You are repeating your creed, doctor. It is very proper of you; but you don’t believe it this morning, do you now? One of your patients is ill because she has had to stand twelve hours a day selling flowers and ribbons over a draper’s counter. Another is ill because a drunken husband brutally assaulted her; another because her landlord did not keep his house in proper repair, and the stairs gave way under her. A little child is dying because he has never been properly fed; another because he has been poisoned by foul drains; and yet another because some men treated him to several drinks of gin. And we are sending to represent us in the House of Commons Mr. Richard Lavender.”

Dr. Stapleton passed his hand across his brow wearily. “Did you say you had a case on which you wished to consult me?” he asked. “Where is this woman who will not see a doctor?”

“In Sloane-street, No. 40. But it is of no use for you to go to her, for she will not see you. Cannot you prescribe for her without?”

“Certainly not. Can you describe her symptoms?”

“No; only she is in great pain, and seems feverish, and has no appetite, and cannot sleep.”

“Not uncommon symptoms these. Most patients have them. Is she poor?”

“Very, and in dreadful trouble about Mary Wythburn, who was always good to her.”

“I have a little money to give away. I will call with it, and perhaps I shall find some way of helping her. Excuse me if I advise you to return. The town will be neither pleasant nor safe later. What is this woman’s name?”

“Robinson. She says a doctor’s mistake made her a widow, and that she never knew one yet who properly understood his business. Good-bye, Dr. Stapleton.”

Tom’s smile was full of pleasant mischief, but it soon vanished. “Poor fellow, I am really afraid he did care for Mary,” she said. “Certainly something is the matter with him.”

The next moment she met her cousin. “Tom,” she said, “Scourby will be no place for you to-day.”

“That is what Dr. Stapleton has been telling me, and I am obediently making my way home already.”

“Have you asked Stapleton to prescribe for you?”

“No; why should I? I am perfectly well. He ought to prescribe for himself, he is looking miserably ill. Are you going to the meeting? I wish you would call for him and take him with you.”

A few hours later Dallington and the doctor were making their way to the hall. The people were thronging the streets and shouting “Lavender and Liberty for ever!” Every election cry has the word liberty in it.

“Where do all these people come from?” asked Dallington. “I did not think there were so many of this sort in the town.”

“They do not often show themselves, but these are the people we have to reckon with. They have been left too much to themselves, and only tolerated for the use we can make of them. They will turn upon us some day and pay off old scores.”

“I should not wonder if they do. Take care! Here is an ugly rush! Can we get out of it?”

Before the words had left his lips the crowd was on the two men. The doctor was well known as a friend of the poor, and he thought that he was rather liked by the women, who had been often helped through their troubles by him. But there were a good many women in the crowd, and there was no mistaking their hostile intentions towards him. He was severely hustled, and when he turned and faced them he looked into countenances full of malice. His hat was knocked off, his coat was torn, and, as he was only one man against two hundred, he was not at all sure that his life was not in danger. He had got separated from his friend, and was wondering if he could find a way of escape, when a door was opened, and he was drawn in by a man who had watched the scene and resolved to help the doctor. Soon a loud knocking was heard at the street door, and Stapleton’s name was called. The door was cautiously opened, and a woman, half-drunk and badly cut, was thrust in. Dr. Stapleton bound up her wounds, the woman cursing him all the while. At length the street grew more quiet, and he reached the hall where the meeting was to be held, and found it a scene of the greatest confusion. The chairman’s appearance and that of the speakers called forth a storm of hisses and groans. He tried to speak, but the people would not hear him; neither would they allow the candidate to be heard. Evidently it was a packed meeting of Lavender’s supporters. But there was strange irony in their making themselves hoarse by shouting, “Liberty! Liberty!” though, after all, it was no new thing that the liberty they wanted was liberty to think and do as they pleased, and compel everybody else to do the same.

Somebody uttered in a lull the name of Stapleton. “Try what you can do,” said the chairman. “I am sure they will not hear me,” said the doctor, “since they will not listen to you.”

And he was correct. There was a perfect yell when he rose to his feet, and he sat down, as the others had done, without being heard. There were a few remarks made for the benefit of the reporters, and then the meeting concluded in an uproar, as it had commenced. Dr. Stapleton noticed, as he went home, a little heap of stones, which he did not remember to have seen before. He understood its meaning later. His servants had retired, and he was reading, when he received a shock. A shower of stones came crashing through the windows of his house, smashing glass and breaking lamps, mirrors, and vases. One stone that, fortunately, fell on the table instead of the person of the doctor, had a label affixed to it, on which was written “Good-night, doctor, and pleasant dreams to you!” Stapleton was rather comforted by this when, having examined the house and discovered the damage done to it, he read the inscription. “After all,” he said, “this looks more like fun than fury.”

John Dallington’s home-going was not much more satisfactory than Dr. Stapleton’s. He entered the door of his house with a sigh. He expected to find the chair in the most comfortable corner of the room occupied by William Hunter, and to see his mother looking anything but happy; and he was agreeably surprised to find Mrs. Hunter alone. She was in an affectionate mood, and took his arm as they went together to the dining-room. “You must need some supper after your drive, for I heard the sound of wheels. Why did you not ride?”

“Oh, I knew uncle would give me a lift; and, if not, I should have enjoyed the walk.”

“Tom has been in. She is a dear girl, and very fond of you, John.”

“Yes; she is most kind and cousinly.”

Mrs. Hunter laughed softly. “I feel sure,” she said, significantly, “that there is much more than a cousinly feeling in Tom’s heart for you. But men are proverbially blind, and cannot see what is plainly before them.”

“Mother, what a fanciful little woman you are! I believe you will never give up dreaming dreams until you become a really old lady.”

“That is no dream, John, but very sober reality. And it is the great hope of my life that you should marry Tom. So it is of hers.”

“I never shall, mother; so I trust you will at once disabuse your mind of the thought.”

“Do not say so. You could never have a more loving and capable wife than Tom would make. And—John—cannot you see that that would be the way out of all your difficulties?”

John’s colour rose. “That is a way I cannot take,” he said. “That will never, never be.”

Mrs. Hunter persisted. “It would undo the harm that I have done,” she said, “and make me feel happy and forgiven.”

“Mother,” said John—and though he tried to be gentle his voice was stern—“have I reproached you? There is nothing to forgive! I am sure you only did what you felt you were obliged to do, and that you did it for the best. I am young and strong. I shall win back every yard of my father’s estate in a few years, if work and thought can do it. But the trouble and the difficulty are mine, not yours, and they will not hurt me.”

“John, why should you keep them when you can blow them away with a word of love to Tom?”

“Simply because I cannot speak the word. What do you take me for?”

“John—I must say it, even if you are angry with me—it will break my heart if that which I hear is true.”

“What have you heard?”

“That you are courting Margaret Miller. Who is she that she dare look at you?” Mrs. Hunter laughed unpleasantly. “Why, nobody knows what she is, nor where she came from; she may be the scum of the earth for all——”

“Mother,” John’s voice trembled, “you are my mother, and I love you, and I will not be angry with you, but please never speak in that way again of Miss Miller.” He paused a minute to steady his voice, and for debate with himself as to whether or not he should confide in his mother, and decided to do so. “There ought to be no secrets between us two, little mother, for whom have we but each other? And so I will at once tell you the truth. I have chosen Miss Miller to be my wife, and have asked her to accept my love. I have plenty to think of besides marrying for some years to come, but if I ever do marry, Margaret Miller will be my bride.”

Mrs. Hunter’s eyes blazed with fury; but her son would not let her speak. He had seen his mother in a passion before, and for her own sake as much as his he resolved that he would not listen to her torrents of angry words.

“Wait a moment, mother. All that I can be to you as a son I will be; but I am a man now, and I must be allowed to choose my own friends and, above all, my own wife.”

He left her after these words, and perhaps his heart was as heavy as his mother’s. He was sorry to vex her; but he was himself vexed, too. It was too bad to bring his cousin Tom into this discussion, and to suggest that most absurd idea! There could not be a particle of truth in the suggestion that Tom cared for him, except as a cousin; of that he was absolutely certain. It was a pain, that was not without shame, that her father held a mortgage on his land, but he would never redeem it in that fashion. He knew that his uncle had obliged his mother to arrange with him instead of a stranger, and he knew, too, that she had almost exceeded the terms of his father’s will in what she did. It was well that he was in the hands of an honourable relative; but the thing was a trouble to him, for the thought of a debt was hard to bear. His case was an exceedingly common one. How to be just as well as generous is a problem given to many to solve.

But what troubled John Dallington more than anything was a doubt that had crept into his mind about Margaret. He did not know what it meant, but he felt that she was not happy with him. She appeared anxious and afraid, and even his love could not melt away a certain coldness which seemed to be creeping over her. Poor Margaret was fighting a battle with herself in regard to her duty. She was uncertain as to what she ought to do. Mrs. Hunter had been more successful with Margaret than with John when she set herself to insinuate into the mind of each the suspicion of Tom Whitwell’s love for her cousin. The two friends spent much time together in London, as well as in their homes; and Margaret’s fear that the suspicion was correct grew rather than decreased.

We have seen how busy the two girls were; but they had each plenty of time for thought, and Margaret, after observing her friend closely, felt convinced that she had some secret sorrow. And having made up her mind to that, she had no difficulty in deciding what the sorrow was, nor how it could be cured.

But Margaret had quite as much sense as sentiment. She was not a good heroine for a novel, because she was so very much an all-round person.

She thought of John first, and then she thought of Tom, and, lastly, of herself; and she meant to consider well before she placed her friend irrevocably between herself and her lover. But the uncertainty was trying; and when Mr. Dallington asked that he might declare their engagement, Margaret said they were not really engaged, and that it was her wish that they should not be.

“I cannot understand you, Margaret,” he replied. “I do not believe that you are fickle, or that you did not know your own mind; and it seems to me that since we love each other, the most honourable thing is for us to be openly engaged. But I cannot urge you further; it would be unmanly to do so; and if I could I would not wring from you a reluctant consent. But I will not at present believe that you finally reject me. Do not be alarmed; I am not going to persecute you with unwelcome attentions; but I shall ask you again, for I cannot give up the hope of years even at your bidding; and some day, perhaps, you will explain to me the reasons for this change. Pardon me, I am sure there is something which you are keeping from me to-day, and that you would not quite treat me as you are doing if the reasons which you have stated were the only ones.”

John Dallington had reached the Old House in excellent spirits, but Margaret had astounded and pained him beyond measure. He little guessed how difficult had been the task to Margaret; but how could she tell him either that his mother had written an anonymous letter to her, or that she felt warranted in believing that his cousin’s happiness would be jeopardised if she agreed to his wishes? Since her talk with Harris she did not dare to lay quite the same stress upon the old doubt as to her parentage, but she hinted at it again and Dallington would not allow her to proceed. “You are yourself and that is enough for me,” he said; but Margaret was very resolute, and he was leaving her, if not in anger, in keen and sorrowful displeasure.

And then, woman-like, her heart failed her.

“Let us be friends,” she said. “And do believe that I care more for your happiness than my own.”

He was very gentle; but he held her hands, and compelled her to lift her eyes to his face.

“I do believe,” he said, “that you are not doing this for your happiness. For some inexplicable cause you think it your duty; but you are mistaken. Friends? Yes, certainly, let us be friends, and very near and dear ones.”

“That is not what I mean,” said Margaret. But her strength seemed suddenly to fail her, and she left him abruptly.

Ann Johnson watched her as she hastened to her own room, and she thought she heard a sob as the door closed. She wondered what it meant. She liked the young Squire of Darentdale, and thought him almost good enough for Margaret; but there was no knowing, and she resolved to fortify her against him in case he was not all he seemed; she therefore took an opportunity to relate one of her stories.

“I shouldn’t like to travel. I should be afraid it would hurt my morals. I knowed a man who lived abroad, and a nicer man before he went there couldn’t be, nor a kinder. I seen him the day afore he went, and I seen him the day after he come back. He were altered then, for he had a scar on his face. I says to him, ‘How come them beauty spots on you?’ and he says, ‘Oh, it were a bird that scratted me with her sharp tallions’; but whether it were the truth I don’t know. He didn’t always tell the truth; for he pretended to fall in love with a lady as I knows, and he proposed to her, and then he set to work to steal her heart away. And he stole it, too; and they was going to be married—it was almost as close as Miss Wythburn’s wedding—and then a woman come as proved as she were his lawful wedded wife. And all the while he had been that proper—not a bit trivial, nor nothing of that, but pious enough to deceive a saint. My opinion is as few men can stand them foreign parts; so you be careful,

dearie."

Ann Johnson's stories always made Margaret laugh, and they did now, though she was sadly wondering where John was, and what he was thinking of her.

CHAPTER XIV.
DEFEAT OR VICTORY?

On the morning of the day of the election Scourby was fairly quiet, although many of the people had taken a holiday, and were spending it in the public-houses and the streets. The noise would come later, when the votes had been counted and the result was known. The greatest enthusiasm was evinced whenever Mr. Lavender appeared on the scene. If only the enthusiasm had been for a better man, how good this feeling of exultation and loyalty would have proved! Alas, for the nation that is not enthusiastic! Few sights in England have been more pleasant than the rapture with which the men have welcomed their Parliamentary representative, when the man has been worthy. Such elections, even when they have been stormy, have been among the glories of our land. It was new for such men as Lavender to be "the chosen of the people," and because it was new the steady, stable middle classes could not believe in it. But much had been going on of which they had little idea. Unfortunately, it had long been the case that many of the best men of the Churches had altogether held aloof from politics, when they ought to have been in the very forefront of the battle. The reason they gave was that Christianity and politics seemed to have little in common. Many a party had had its birth in some public-house, and many a seat had been won by exaggerations and lies told of the opposite side, and by broadcast promises that had never been kept, nor were ever intended to be. To buy the more ignorant part of the working men by flattering their vanity, by setting class against class, by misrepresentations, and the stirring up of their worst passions of hate and selfishness—these had been the policy of more than a few who had by these means won the highest honours in the land; but men with consciences educated at the Cross could not stoop to these things; if they tried, they generally failed; and, in the end, far too many withdrew from politics altogether, thereby exhibiting a pusillanimity which was little creditable to themselves or their Church, since, together, they were well able to insist that political contests should be fought on quite other lines, and with different weapons.

In the meantime strong efforts were made by the opponents of the Churches. The bar-room in many instances was the canvassing ground, and one notable feature in the case was that hundreds of young men were Lavender's adherents. When they grew older they might become wiser; but at present a very large proportion of young householders voted for him. The fact was that he and his party had helped them to their votes, for certain men who had cheap house-property had been careful to encourage young men to become occupiers that they might exercise the franchise; and these men had been well looked after, not only on the eve of the contest, but for more than a year, and had by this means been secured by these far-seeing men of the world.

It was these facts which gave to the new party its hopes; and the party, not only in Scourby, but throughout the country, was dangerous because of its numbers. It sought to pose as "the Labour Party," and whichever side can persuade the multitude to believe it to be that is pretty certain of success. But there were hundreds of honourable, high-souled working men in Scourby who were as much humiliated as the wealthiest, when the state of the poll was declared at night.

For the figures proved the stubborn fact that, though by only a small majority, Richard Lavender was duly elected.

From the yells of delight, and the groans of disgust that followed, two astute working men turned away with hot anger and indignation in their hearts. “There will be a reckoning for somebody or other over this,” said one. “What have all the parsons been doing that they could not save the town from such disgrace?”

“Smoking their pipes in their studies, I suppose. We have been perfectly sold! Isn’t it a pity that none but fools can be found to manage affairs? We ought to have had a local man. Both the Tory and the Radical are complete strangers to us. How is it that a man seldom represents his own town, but nearly always comes seeking the suffrages of some place that knows nothing about him, except what he and the newspapers say?”

“Oh, they are too well known in their own town. But this shows that they are not of the best. If a man has lived an honourable life, and served the interests of the town, he ought to be chosen and sent to Parliament by the men who know him. It is a disgrace if we cannot grow our own members.”

“So I think. If this had happened a year ago, and Dr. Stapleton had been a candidate, he would have gone in.”

“Do you believe all they are saying about him? It is very strange that he has scarcely put in an appearance over this election. It is really most mysterious.”

It was less mysterious than it seemed; and, perhaps, it will be as well to let our readers into the secret, such as it is, while we give the Scourby men a little breathing time. Really, this election proved to be for the salvation of the town, and the sting of shame was for the healing of the people; but all this could not be accomplished in a day.

The truth is that Dr. Stapleton had cared for Mary Wythburn, and, though he had never said so, she had guessed it, and he feared she had. He did not believe that he had awakened the slightest feeling in her toward him, nor that it had influenced her decision in regard to Mr. Greenholme. But when she disappeared he was overwhelmed with trouble and anxiety, and he had been to London several times in the vain hope of finding her.

Indeed, worry had made him so ill, that he resolved to take a few days for a holiday, and see his brother, Mr. Felix Stapleton, of Granchester. He was ten years older than the Doctor. Their mother died when they were both young, and their father when Felix was twenty-nine and Frederick nineteen. He left a small fortune to be equally divided; but Felix needed money more than Fred, for he was married and settled, while his younger brother was at college, preparing for his future. His own share of his father’s money and part of his brother’s enabled Felix to take full advantage of the tide that led to fortune. He was a builder and contractor, as his father had been before him, and a keen man of business. He saw that Granchester was destined to a rapid increase, so he bought up land and built houses upon it. His foresight was abundantly rewarded; odd fields and acres and pieces of land that had come into his possession were one after another wanted, and he sold some of them at a considerable profit, others he covered with houses. Several building societies existed in the town, and hundreds of working men were paying by degrees the money which would make the houses in which they lived their own. This praiseworthy ambition on their part had been a great financial benefit to Mr. Felix Stapleton. He lived in a fine new house in one of the outskirts of Granchester. It stood on a hill which commanded the best view in the neighbourhood, and was itself—with its bright red bricks, its towers and pinnacles and glass-houses—a striking object, visible for many miles around. It goes without saying that Mr. Stapleton, having rapidly accumulated wealth, had also rapidly accumulated honours, both municipal and religious, and that his wife and daughters were among the acknowledged leaders of Granchester society.

Dr. Stapleton was very proud of his brother and all his successes, and there was a glow at his heart when he stepped from the train and saw his

nieces on the platform, and beyond them, outside the station, the carriage with the handsome horses and smart livery servants, which told so pleasant a story.

“Here we are, Uncle Fred,” exclaimed two girlish voices together. “Father could not come to meet you, so he sent us. How are you? You don’t look well; you need doctoring yourself, Doctor. You must get married, or have one of us to keep house for you.”

The girls took possession of him, and beamed upon him with their bright eyes, and one of them at once offered to prescribe for him. His sister-in-law gave him a sisterly welcome, and half an hour afterward the strong grasp of his brother’s hand brought a flush of joy to the Doctor’s face.

“It is good to see you, old fellow. I thought you never meant to come again.”

“I have been sticking pretty closely to work. And so have you, I should say. Why, how grey you have grown!”

“Grey? Yes. Quite the old man. You must blame these romping, rollicking boys and girls for that. A man with such a family can scarcely keep his youthful appearance.”

The Doctor thought there could not be a more delightful, well-appointed home in all England than this. The house had every modern convenience that science could devise, and it was artistic, as well as comfortable, in all its arrangements. Mrs. Stapleton had proved herself equal to their change of fortune, and the house had a very gracious lady at the head of its domestic affairs. There had been no stint of money anywhere. The young people had their own rooms, simply but not cheaply furnished. The pictures were some of the most beautiful and costly of modern times. All the latest books were in the library, and all the latest fashions in the drawing-room. Servants, with perfect manners, moved about the place, forestalling the wishes of the household and their guests. Dr. Stapleton had never dined before as he dined at his brother’s table, nor listened to finer music than that which was provided for him afterwards, nor slept in such a sumptuous chamber. The next morning it seemed to him that the proofs of immense wealth were even more abundant than had been apparent the night before. The stables and coach-houses were buildings that might have served a poor man for his home, and were filled with expensive carriages and horses. And the gardens were fit for a nobleman.

At the breakfast-table the members of the family appeared dressed in exquisite taste. Not a bit of vulgar finery was to be seen upon any of them. The children, not particularly pretty, perhaps, had been made to look so by the careful arrangement of hair and clothes. Stapleton was sure that more than money was expended in order to produce the harmonious whole which proved so attractive; and that thought, care, culture, and talent had been summoned to the aid of his brother and his sister-in-law in order to make their home what it was.

A very merry party partook of the morning meal; for there is always plenty of fun where young people live; and the Doctor was glad to observe how clever and refined were even the jokes. But he noticed something else which qualified his pleasure, and this was a look of care and harassment which sat like a black shadow upon the brow of his brother, who took little food, and scarcely joined in the conversation. At first this seemed to escape the notice of all but himself; but at last his eldest daughter, Matilda, remarked upon it.

“Is there anything you could eat, father? We will get it from the ends of the earth if you will name it.”

Mr. Stapleton laughed. “My appetite has not come yet, Mat; but perhaps it will later.”

“You are worried as usual about those horrible men. I wish you would

retire from business altogether, and let the wretched creatures find work somewhere else, or starve, as they deserve to do."

"I wish I could retire," said her father. "But, Mat, you must not forget that the wretched creatures, as you call them, have a right to live which equals your own."

"Is there another labour dispute on?" asked the eldest son, a lad of sixteen.

"Yes, the usual thing. These labour strikes are constantly occurring with us, Fred. I suppose you know a little about them at Scourby?"

"Oh, yes; we have had our troubles there, and the victories have usually gone with the men."

"The men are often very unreasonable. They ought not to expect to be paid in bad times the wages which they receive when trade is at its best; but they do."

"And they seldom save anything for a rainy day," remarked Mrs. Stapleton, "but live up to their income every week, whatever it may be."

"And they are awfully extravagant," said Matilda. "I had the curiosity to ascertain how many of the girls in my Sunday-school class were learning to play the piano, and found that eight out of fourteen are taking lessons. And their parents are buying pianos on the hire system—so much a week for three years. Eight girls! And I believe that, without exception, their parents are artisans. Is it not absurd? I laughed at the idea, and this so offended one child that she left the class. I told her it would be more to her credit if she learned to scrub floors and mend stockings. She became saucy, and said she knew already how to do those things, and should not ask my leave to learn the piano or anything else her parents pleased."

"You are most partial to the violin yourself, Mat, are you not?" asked the Doctor.

"Oh yes," said her brother, answering for her. "Mat is wild on the violin, and she has a little beauty."

"I heard you playing it this morning, I think?"

"Yes; I am as lazy as any of my set, but my dear violin can draw me out of bed in the dead of the night, we are such great friends."

"Do you think it right to keep that pleasure to yourself?"

"To myself? Why, Uncle Fred, I am willing to play for any one. I will play to you all day if you like."

"Thank you very much. But what I mean to suggest is, that your Sunday-scholars may be musically inclined, too, and can get as much real pleasure out of a cheap harmonium or piano as you out of your harp and violin. Why, then, should they not?"

Matilda coloured partly with vexation. "I think the cases are different," she said.

"Yes, they are. You get your instruments without trouble, and pay for them with a 'thank you' or a kiss; they have to practise self-denial, and part from the weekly payments with difficulty; but if they are willing to do this, why in the world should they not? A working man has as much right to a piano in his home, if he can pay for it, as you have. Surely it is better to spend money on pianos than on beer."

"Why, uncle, I declare you are a rabid socialist. I had no idea you were such a dangerous character!"

“And you forget one little consideration,” added Mrs. Stapleton. “The money with which these are bought has all to come out of our pockets.”

“Indeed! I had certainly not looked at the matter in that light,” replied the Doctor, and he could not altogether repress the ring of irony in his voice.

But the mistress of the house adroitly introduced a happier subject of conversation, and “Uncle Fred” resolved that he would no more give utterance to sentiments that brought a frown to his brother’s face. He enjoyed his visit very much, and especially appreciated the attention paid him by his sister-in-law, who drove a pair of beautiful ponies every day for his especial benefit.

But he could not get rid of the feeling that all was not well with Felix, who, however, vouchsafed no confidence until the last evening of Fred’s stay.

When dinner was over the master of the house playfully observed that no one would be invited to the library that night but Dr. Stapleton. It was a hint which all understood and respected.

Mr. Stapleton appeared nervous and ill at ease, first drawing his brother’s attention to one thing and then to another, and all the time pacing the room as if he could settle to nothing. At last the Doctor broke the ice.

“If you were a patient of mine, Felix, I should say that you had something on your mind.”

“And so I have, old fellow. And I am afraid it is likely to remain there. Fred, do you ever feel the need of confession? I think it must be an immense relief to a man sometimes to tell out his troubles and his sins.”

“I cannot say that I have myself ever experienced the longing; but I can imagine that in some cases, when a man is borne down by a secret burden, it does him good to talk it over with another.”

“I will try it. In whom should a man confide if not in his brother? And if I keep it much longer to myself it will kill me. Mine is a very common trouble. Fred, I am in dire need of money.”

The Doctor had felt that something terrible was coming, and the end of his brother’s sentence seemed so tame that he laughed outright. “You want money?” he cried, incredulously; “then, my dear fellow, what must _I_ do?”

The tone and the laugh hurt Mr. Stapleton, and caused him actual pain. “Ah! you do not understand,” he said; “how should you? But it is true nevertheless.”

“Of course I have heard before of large businesses, with plenty of capital at the back of them, coming to a standstill for lack of ready-money. I remember one or two failures where there was enough to pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound when affairs were looked into. Is it something of the same kind with you, Felix?”

“I could not pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound, and that is not the worst of it.”

“Really! You amaze me! But,” and the Doctor gave a glance at the books and the pictures, “you could realise some money if it became necessary, for, of course, a man, and especially a Christian man, must pay his debts.”

“Am I a Christian? Sometimes I doubt it,” said Mr. Stapleton, bitterly. “You know, Fred, I have had nearly twenty years of commercial success. And at first I deserved it. Every bit of work that I did at the

beginning was well done; the houses that I built during the first ten years of my business life will stand as long as houses of the kind ever do or can. And chances flowed in upon me; and profits, honestly gained, too, grew and increased year by year until it seemed to me that my wealth was so enormous it would last for ever. When this place and the things on it were bought I was justified, or believed that I was, in spending the money; and trade was so good that I had no difficulties whatever then. But a change has taken place during the last few years, the building trade has been slack, the cost of labour has been great, and materials have been costly. Profits have fallen; I have had some bad debts to contend with; and all the time my own expenses have been increasing. It is not easy for a man of my position to retrench, and I have been constantly hoping for better times, and now——" He stopped, and paced the room three or four minutes before he proceeded.

"It is a pity you cut such a dash, old fellow," said the Doctor; "but I am sure your intentions were right enough."

"If I had only myself I would not care. It is my wife and children of whom I think. It has been my one great joy to see how they have delighted in the beautiful things which I have been able to give them; and how naturally the children especially have taken to the new manner of life. How can I now drag them down from the position in which I have placed them? I cannot do it, God help me!"

"It is very hard for you—harder, perhaps, than it would be for them," said the Doctor. "But things may right themselves in time. Let me lend you my money. I have a couple of thousands."

"I have not told you the worst. A drowning man will clutch at straws. Fred, I have lost my own self-respect and I am going to forfeit yours." He hesitated, and finally said, "No, it is no use; I cannot tell you."

"Oh, tell me the worst, old man. Make a clean breast of it; you will feel better afterward. I will find some way of helping you."

"The fact is that I am ashamed, and have reason to be, of much of my later work. I have built houses that cannot stand, without foundations and with thin walls, and green wood, and everything of the cheapest. I have been in haste to sell them, and they have sold all the more readily because, as I had built them, people took them on trust—and now the time of retribution is at hand. One house collapsed last night in a high wind. I am afraid others will follow. Two evenings ago a little mission-room which I built, and poor people paid for with coppers hardly spared, and which is packed on Sundays and many evenings beside, was pronounced unsafe for occupation."

The builder groaned, and the Doctor buried his face in his hands. He would rather have given all that he had, and ten years of his life into the bargain, than have listened to such a confession from the brother whom he had loved and honoured. He knew that all this was common enough in those days, but Dr. Stapleton held it a crime, nevertheless, and that his brother should have committed it nearly broke his heart.

"Did they pass a vote of censure upon you at the mission hall?" he asked, presently.

"Oh, no! I have not heard that they blamed me; and I have the usual excuses about dry rot and all that to offer."

"But—you know!"

"Yes, alas! I know."

"Felix, there is one thing, at least, that you can do. Rebuild this little mission chapel as it ought to be done. I will pay for it, and the prayers of the grateful people may help you."

"Yes. I have thought of that myself. Thank you, Fred. I can do that, and

I will, without your help. It will be like an acknowledgment of my fault; but that I must not mind, it is only justice. O God, I wish I could be just! That is what I have not been. I cannot think how I could have done some of the things which I have done. I think my conscience has been asleep, and is awake now with a vengeance. But competition is ruining many beside me. The little men do some of the mischief. They work themselves for workmen's wages, and get a few to help them who are unskilled, and therefore take less; and I suppose they get some profit, for they go on for a few years, and then, having cheapened things for every one else and having nothing to lose themselves, they fail—while the men of capital have to suffer for their folly and ambition."

"Yes; perhaps some trades are being ruined in this way. But if any people are able to prevent it, the big men, as you call them, are; for they might make a stand, and insist on having none but good work done, or giving up business altogether. And, of course, capital ought not to monopolise the trades. Other men, as well as you, have tried and hoped for success."

"Certainly; and deserved it more than I. I have been too grasping and ambitious. I am truly sorry now that I did not find some plan of making my workmen sharers in my prosperity. I have not trusted them, nor they me. Excepting at first there has been no friendliness or goodwill between us, and this has cost us both dear. I have lost thousands of pounds through strikes, and more than a few through speculation. Ah! if I could have my time over again, how differently I would order my life! But I am afraid the crash must come, though I am not quite sure even now that if I had, say, seven or eight thousand pounds of ready-money, I could not tide over the worst and wait for better times. Forgive me, old fellow, I have put my burden on your shoulders, though it still rests upon my own. Pray for me, as you used to do. I cannot pray myself; and yet I am uttering words of verity when I say that now, as never before in my life, my one desire is to do the right, if I only could be sure what it is."

The words came brokenly, and the speaker threw himself wearily into a chair. The Doctor put his arm over his shoulder.

"You may count on me, you know, without my saying it. I will go home to-morrow and think all this over, and come and see you again soon. You must reduce your expenditure in the meantime—that is certainly necessary and right; but we will avert the crash if it can be done. Go to bed now, Felix; you looked tired to death." And the brothers parted.

The Scourby people were perfectly correct in their opinion that Dr. Stapleton had a secret trouble on his mind. After his return he was a very much sadder man than they had ever known him. He gave offence to his patients by raising his fees, and soon became conscious that his practice was leaving him.

And on the eve of the Scourby election a temptation assailed him. Dr. Stapleton late at night was asked to receive a visitor. At first the two men spoke on ordinary subjects in ordinary tones, but afterwards they were lowered. Once only Stapleton's voice rang out, indignantly, "Am I a dog that I should do this thing?" and the two men, with white faces, glared in each other's eyes; but after awhile they calmed down, and when, an hour later, the stranger left, Stapleton himself let him out, neither lifting his eyes to the other's face.

The Doctor fastened the door after his guest, and then returned to his study, and locked himself into it. He did not stand with his back to the fire, as is an Englishman's wont, but he stood with his back to the table and his face to the fire for half an hour, thinking all the time of his brother, and going over again the trouble which had been confided to him. Presently one little sentence he had uttered came back to his mind, and he repeated it aloud, "Am I a Christian? Am I a Christian? Am _I_ a Christian?" He clasped his hands together on the mantelpiece, and leaned his head upon them, and so stood, as if oblivious of time. At last he turned with a sigh, and forced his eyes to the table which he

had avoided, and, as though it had been some venomous beast, he looked at the only thing that lay upon it. It was a cheque for a thousand pounds!

CHAPTER XV.
A NEW EMIGRATION.

“Oh, Mr. Arthur Knight, I do b’lieve you listened, because you were so close to the door when it came open!”

“Yes, Miss Sissie Hancourt, I did. The singing was so beautiful; who could have helped it?”

Arthur Knight had tapped at the door of a room in which an old blind servant, whom he had pensioned, was living; but the tap had made so little noise that it was not heard, and he waited a few moments to listen. A sweet, tender voice, which he recognised with a throb of pleasure, was preaching that wonderful sermon in song from the text, “Oh, rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,” which few can hear without being hushed into quietness. He wanted to make the acquaintance of the singer, and to know who she was and all about her, so he stood outside the door until the sweet solo was ended; but from some cause the door opened almost before the last word had died away, and his entrance was precipitate. He apologised for it, and was sorry to disturb the little party of three, who looked the picture of contentment. The old servant was listening with a smile upon her white face, and the singer, who was evidently getting as much pleasure as she gave, held on her knees the little talkative child, who looked for once entirely happy to be silent.

The young lady rose to leave, after courteously responding to Arthur’s greeting, and could not be persuaded to remain, although Sissie pleaded earnestly enough. “It’s only Mr. Knight; he doesn’t matter, you know. Do sing again. He will be sure to go directly.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Arthur; “please do not let me interfere in the least. How came you here, Sissie?”

“I am only here till mother calls for me. Geoff was coming, too, but he could not make haste to get ready. He was sweeping his teeth such a long while.”

“What was he doing, Sissie?”

“Sweeping his teeth, don’t you know, with a brush. Everybody does it. Mother says we must take care of our teeth, so Geoff is nearly always sweeping his to make them quite clean. What are you all laughing at?”

“Oh, Sissie Hancourt, you are a rich treat,” said the young lady, kissing her. “Now, be good, and wait with Mrs. Smith until your mother comes for you.”

“Don’t go, I like you. Mr. Knight, please go away yourself, and then my nice young lady will stay.”

“Do not be unkind to Mr. Knight, Sissie. My cab is waiting, I heard it stop at the door. Good-bye, Mrs. Smith, I shall come again soon.”

“Do, dearie, it is such a comfort to see you.” The poor woman often spoke as if she saw, though she was quite blind. Her young visitor shook hands with her, and touched her shoulder caressingly, and then Knight conducted her to the cab, looking rather wistfully into the pleasant face, and wondering if he dare ask her name.

“May I tell you something?” he asked. “You spoke to me some time ago

about the dwellings of my people—do you remember?”

“It was impertinent of me to do so; but I was feeling very strongly for that poor woman, and, of course, I did not know that you meant to do anything for your _employés_.”

“How could you know? It is good of you to take so much interest in the people; and because you do I should like to tell you that I am preparing to take my works and workers away together. I have bought some land in Wales, and am building such dwellings as I think you would approve. Next spring I hope the place will be ready, for there is a colony of builders hard at work there. I could not do what I would here, and it seemed to me that this would be the better way.”

“What a good idea! Do you say that the place is already in course of preparation? I see your name often in the papers, but I have never read of this project.”

“No; we have managed to keep it out of the papers, for a wonder; but the place is being rapidly completed.”

“Have you told the people?”

“Not yet. I have been wondering whether it would be wiser to do so. Do you advise me to tell them soon?”

“I do, partly that it may comfort them, and partly that they may familiarise themselves with the idea. You have not the _élite_ of the working-classes in your employment, and the change which is needed is more in themselves than in their circumstances, though when one thinks of the environment of the people it is little wonder that some of them are bad. I am glad they are to have a chance.”

She drove away with a pleasant smile, and Arthur Knight wished he could have talked with her for hours instead of minutes. He was determined to find out who she was, if possible, so he returned to Mrs. Smith and Sissie.

“I am sorry I frightened your friend away,” he said. “What is the lady’s name?”

“She is Miss Grace. She lives in the country, and sometimes she brings me fruit and flowers and vegetables, and she reads and sings to me. She has a beautiful voice,” said Mrs. Smith.

“She is a pretty lady,” added Sissie, “and I shall go and see her when I know where she lives.”

“Miss Grace? Is that her only name?” asked Knight.

“That was what she said we were to call her, and her home is in Kent, but I don’t know where.”

And that was all the information which Arthur Knight could gain.

In the evening of that day, after he had visited the classes, where, under the best tuition that he could provide for them, the boys and girls in his factories were being trained for their future lives, his thoughts recurred to the remark which Miss Grace had made respecting his people. It was quite true; he had _not_ the _élite_ of the working classes in his employment. The low wages, and the general system on which the works had been carried on, had not secured many of those men and women, who, because of their nobility of soul, their spotless character and high ability, belong truly to the upper classes of this country, although they are but artisans and labourers. There were a few of these, and Knight knew and honoured them; but most of his men and women were of the lower sort. He was not sorry for that, for he and his helpers, including Miss Wentworth, who superintended all sorts of pleasant endeavours for the girls, believed that these same people

could, by kindness and firmness, be so brought under good influences that a change for the better would be effected. And much had already been accomplished. The language of the people had been purified (though not until several had been dismissed for swearing), and their behaviour and appearance had been greatly improved. Every Sunday afternoon Mr. Knight held a service for his own people in a tent which he had erected in his own grounds, and he was greatly encouraged because this effort helped considerably to bring master and men into more intimate relationship with each other. His pleasant, hearty addresses were appreciated, and as soon as the men understood that his life in all its bearings was in full accord with his words, many of them were prepared to give him a respectful hearing. He had not convinced all that he was their friend, but he was certainly going the right way to do so.

And he decided that now he would take the people into his confidence, and tell them about the places that were being made ready for them, and of which he often thought with pride. Accordingly, he invited them, one Saturday afternoon, to assemble in his grounds; and they came—men, women, and children—and filled the space before the old house.

“My friends,” he said, “I want to explain to you my plans for the future, and make a proposition. In the first place, let me tell you that I have determined to close all my works in London, and I have to place before you a scheme of emigration.”

This announcement filled some of the people with dismay, though others saw the twinkle in the master’s eyes, and more than a few had an inkling of what was coming, and waited with interest the development of their employer’s idea.

“I know what sort of places many of you live in, and they are not the houses I should like you to have,” he said. “I know the rents you pay, and that without a great addition to your wages it is impossible for you to find better ones; and, therefore, I say you must emigrate. But, knowing how dear to most of you this old England is, I do not propose to ship you off to other and foreign lands.”

Loud cheers greeted this assurance.

“You know that my father left me a large sum of money, and much of it is already spent; so that it is quite possible, unless you will help me, that I shall become a poor man. I have spent the money in the purchase of an estate, on which I am having built a model town, in a beautiful district in Wales. You will find there friends to welcome you, who are going to spend their lives in helping you, having already taken up their abodes in these places. There is in course of erection a church, a technical school, an elementary school, a building which in time is to be a free library and reading-room, and there is also a people’s park and recreation ground. In neither of them is there a public-house, and I do not intend that there ever shall be; but in connection with the library and reading-room there are a refreshment and dining-room. There are numbers of working men’s homes, comfortable, and as pretty as one could make them, each with a piece of garden attached to it, and each so built that it will be possible for a man and his family to live in it in decency and comfort at the lowest rent that will pay. The workshops and factories and the whole place will be lighted by electricity, for plenty of light is a necessity; and in each of them there will be an abundance of those other necessities which God intended should be free to all His children—plenty of beautiful, health-giving, fresh air, and pure, good water. Now it rests with you to make my plan a grand success, or a miserable failure; for what I propose to do is to remove my business bodily, and you with it.”

The excitement, which had been growing here became intense, and a deafening cheer rang through the crowd.

“My great wish is that you should be able to live under very different conditions from the old ones—that you should get fair wages for your work, and your money’s worth for your money. If you are willing to agree

to my stipulations, then I will advance you the money which you require for your travelling and other necessary expenses. You know that this is an age of great competition. You know, too already, that I have resolved not to have bad materials used or manufactured in any business of mine. ‘Knight’s goods’ shall be good, and worth the price that is charged for them, whatever comes; on that I am quite determined, even if the determination should mean ruin. But if you will help me it shall mean honour, and the highest kind of prosperity to us all. I propose, therefore, to pay you the wages which your trades unions have decided are fair, but I want you, by extra industry and skill, to earn more than your wages. I propose that you should one and all become partners in the concern, and share the profits according to the labour and skill which you invest, so that if it be made a paying concern we shall all get some benefit from it, and if a losing business we shall all lose together. You know how to render it a success. Care, ability, industry, and enthusiasm will make the thing go, and the lack of these will bring everything to a standstill. If you are men enough and women enough to carry this idea forward, then I hope you will come with me. And bring your children too. After receiving a good education, such as will make them able to compete as artisans with Germans, or Frenchmen, or any other nation under the sun, they shall be taught also the trades of their fathers. But if any of you love your bad habits better than this new idea, then do not come with me, for I do not want you. If you mean to do as little as you possibly can for your money, if you mean to be loafers, and spend your wages in drink, we will not waste any money in travelling expenses for you, because I shall not employ you, nor allow you to live in any of my houses. If there are any wives here in love with thriftlessness and idleness, who will let the new houses get as untidy and uncomfortable as the old ones, they may stay in London, for there are no pawnshops in my new places, nor any room for wasteful, idle people of any kind. But if you are willing to leave the bad habits with the old life, and turn your faces to the new, then you shall be assisted by all possible means. I want you to be my friends, as I am yours; but it is only right to tell you that you are not going to serve an easy, good-natured sort of master if you serve me. Whoever breaks my rules will leave my employment, so let none say that I have not given due notice of my intention. To let a man or woman off who is found lazy or drunken, or even incompetent, since I am willing to provide instruction, is not to be really merciful to him or her, and is to be unjust to the others. No gambling, drinking, or dishonesty; but plenty of pleasure of the best sort; plenty of music, entertainment, lovely scenery, good wages, and as much real happiness as one can provide for another—these are to be the accompaniments of your new life. But happiness and well-being are not for others to secure for us; we have to decide each for himself in regard to these things. I appeal especially to the young, whose lives are before them, if they will not resolve to make the most of this opportunity. I now leave you all to make your choice. A month from to-day you must hand in your decision in writing to the foreman of your department, each writing the word ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ and signing his or her name; and the head of each household must also write the names and ages of the family wishing to go. And some time in the spring we will have our new emigration.”

More than a few went away to dream of the future, and prepare for it. But Mr. Knight was mistaken if he thought that his action would be universally appreciated and approved by his employés; and if he could have overheard the remarks which some made as they filed out into the streets, he would have been considerably enlightened.

“What do you think of that, then?”

“I call it the crackling of thorns under a pot.”

“What I want to know is, where’s a fellow’s liberty to come in?”

“That’s what I says; I ain’t agoing to be made a teetotaler willy-nilly, and give up my beer for no young jackanapes like him. Not I! I be a bit too old for that sort of thing. No, no, says I, you don’t catch old birds with chaff, not a bit on it.”

“And I says ditto. None of your buttercups and daisies, and no publics for me. I am a man, I am, and I ain’t agoing to be a child, nor yet a slave. I shan’t go.”

“No, Jim, I guessed you wouldn’t as soon as I heard what he said. You couldn’t be happy if you mightn’t get drunk twice a week, could you?”

“You mind your own business, and let me mind mine. I shall do as I like, and you may do the same.”

“Thank you; as for me, I shall try the new life. There isn’t much to be got out of the old one, I’m thinking.”

“What nonsense it is for him to talk about sharing the profits! As if he would! A fine lot will come to your share!”

“I’m not sure about that. A good many masters are trying that on; and it answers, too! The men put better work in, and more of it, if they think all the reward doesn’t go to somebody else.”

“I’d sell my chance for a pot of ale.”

“Yes, I dare say. A friend of mine down at Hull was in just such a thing as this, and a fellow sold him his chance for a shilling. But when the end of the year came he wished he hadn’t, for his chance told up to seven pounds ten.”

“Ah! a likely tale that.”

“It is a true one, any way.”

“I shall make my man go, because of Polly’s eyes,” said a woman. “Polly’s eyes are dreadful bad.”

“What is the matter with them? Is it inflammation?”

“No, its ulsters. The doctor says its her health fell in ’em, and she wants fresh air. That settles the matter for us. Fresh air she wants, and fresh air she shall have, now there is a chance.”

“The fresh air will make a man of Polly,” said a person, who was dressed in better clothes than most of the men.

“Does the gentleman mean,” asked a young woman, timidly, of the last speaker, “that we are all to go and live in the country?”

“Yes, that’s his idea. How would you like it?”

“I should love it. I go every summer for one half-day. Oh, it must be beautiful to be always there, and see the green grass and all the daisies and primroses.”

“Oh, yes, my gal! All very pretty while the summer lasts, but when the winter comes where would you be?” said the man who had been called Jim.

“Out of the London fog,” was the reply, and there was a general laugh at that.

“But how about my father? I couldn’t leave him behind; he’s only got me to work for him.”

“Very well, then; you must put on your paper ‘Yes,’ and your name, and then say, ‘I must take my family with me—that is, my dad,’ and I bet something will be done for you.”

“What’ll you bet, Jack? There ain’t got to be no gambling down there, you know.”

“And a jolly good job, too,” said a young man who had heard the last remark. “I lost a pretty penny on yesterday’s horse, and where the money is to come from to pay up I don’t know. I expect we shall be fools if we don’t take this offer.”

This opinion was decidedly in the majority. And, indeed, the more the matter was talked over and commented upon the more attractive did it become. And, as may be imagined, there was a vast amount of talk during the rest of the day and the Sunday. Paradise Grove was a most lively place for once, and nobody wanted to be in his or her own house, but everybody wanted a chat with the neighbours. Some of the remarks were doleful enough, for most of the women of Paradise Grove took a dislike to Mr. Knight’s idea, and it is doubtful whether, but for the efforts of “the Basket Woman,” they would have agreed to it. But she spent the whole of that Saturday with them, and by her cheery congratulations and hopeful words heartened everybody up. The poor things, who had known nothing but grinding poverty all their lives, shrank from the strangeness into which they were going, and believed beforehand that they were certain to be, as one girl expressed it, “deadly dull.” They did not want life to become strenuous. There was no ambition in them. They would rather be as they were—in the old familiar places, within reach of a gin-shop, and where they might be lazy and untidy to their heart’s content, and be free to do as they liked—than nerve themselves up to this new life. They did not want to be better off, they said, they were satisfied as they were, if people would only mind their own business and leave them alone.

Their friend laughed at them, and drew the picture of their future in glowing colours. She was not surprised at the apathy of the poor; the rich are apathetic, too, with less than half the reason. The dwellers in Paradise Grove were what they were because of generations of neglect and suffering. It was not their fault that they had no ambition, and no hope, and she pitied and did not blame them. But she had made up her mind that Paradise Grove should be left comfortably vacant, and that the little company she had taken into her care, and put down safely into her very heart, should enjoy to the full the good things that had been offered.

“Are you going down there, Basket Woman?”

“Of course I am. I should not like to be out of that. Besides, I shall want to know how you will be getting on. And you will want me just as much there as here.”

“And how about the parish doctor? What are we to do without him?”

“You won’t want him. I expect you will all pay your own doctor, or have a club doctor, or something of that sort.”

“And do you think Mr. Knight will allow any fun?”

“What nonsense! Of course he will want you to be as merry as possible. Do you suppose he wants to make you miserable? Does he look like it now?”

“Will he allow dancing?”

“He will allow everything that is right. Why, you haven’t begun to dream of the good times that are in store for you.”

But the people, even those who were willing, were anxious about ways and means.

“What are we to do for furniture, Basket Woman? Ours looks a deal better since you’ve ’namelled it, or whatever ’tis you’ve done. But most on ’em are poor bits of things, and can’t be made naught else. They do very well when we’ve only got a room, or, at most, two, to put ’em in; but they won’t look nothing at all in a house; and I should be ashamed to turn mine out for all the neighbours to see how poor they be, and how

few there is on 'em—I'd sooner not go at all."

"Yes, so would I," said another. "And, besides, most of the furniture in this Grove ain't none too clean, and he won't like it, I reckon, if we takes all sorts of things down there with us."

"No; that I am sure he will not," replied the Basket Woman, who wondered if Mr. Knight had the least idea of half of the details involved in his scheme. "Shall I see Mr. Knight for you, and explain your difficulties, and discover what he can suggest? Will you send me to him as your deputation?"

"Yes, we will send you."

"And I will take Fanny Burton with me. You will send her, too, won't you?"

"Yes, yes! hands up. There! we all agree."

"I don't know whether it will be better to have a man or two in the deputation."

"No, no! You go and settle everything for us. You don't want no man. I won't say that they haven't their rights, but they're poor fish whenever there's anything got to be done. You go, Basket Woman?"

"But you must all tell me this! Will you abide by what I settle for you? Do you trust me enough for that?"

They looked at her, and then at one another, and then back again at her; and next a man took his pipe from his mouth, and clearing his throat, delivered himself of the following sentences:—"I ain't no speaker, I ain't, but I say for one as I'd trust that there Basket Lady any lengths. She's the best friend we've ever had in this 'ere Grove, and she knows us, and what we like, and what we won't stand; and she won't prove no sneak, I'll lay my life on that. This Grove ain't been the same place since she come round a-basketing; nor our homes ain't been the same neither, and we've most of us fell in love with our old women over again, all through her; and I say, here's our duty to her, and what she says is right as between Mr. Knight and us, I'll stand by."

"Hear! hear! So we will all. Hooray for the Basket Lady!" said another, and a hearty cheer was raised, in which both men and women joined.

For a moment or two the recipient of all this public honour could not speak. Her lips trembled, and her eyes filled with tears. It was a grand time for her; how grand only those can know who stake their happiness and very life on the good of others. Two lines of a hymn rang through her soul—

> Oh, happy if ye labour,
> As Jesus did for men.

It will seem strange to many who read these words, but it is the truth, that never before, and never after, in her whole life did she know such a rush and ecstacy of gladness as she knew then.

"Dear friends," she said at last, "I thank you very much. As long as I live I will be your friend; and I hope you will not be afraid to go with me into this new life that Mr. Knight has made possible for us. I will see him on Monday morning, and on Monday evening, after work-time, I will let you know what he says."

CHAPTER XVI.
CHRISTMAS DAY.

“You are not like most women, my daughter Tom; you can keep a secret?”

“But not from you, dear. I will tell you what you want to know, really, if you put it in that way.”

Mr. Whitwell and his favourite daughter were spending a cosy evening together in the library at Hornby Hall. The lamps which lighted the room were shaded, the curtains were drawn, and the fire burned brightly. Tom sat on a low chair by her father’s side, and he laid his hand lovingly on the short curls of her closely-cropped head. “Now, tell me if I understand you rightly, Tom,” he said. “Instead of the usual pocket-money which has been your share—a Benjamin’s portion always, you know, because you are my youngest—you want me to give you a pound a month. Next, you wish me to forget that I have a mortgage on John’s land, which, indeed, as you say, I no longer hold since you have it. I am not going to ask you to tell me what is in your heart to do, Tom; but you are too sensible not to remember that business is business and right is right. I cannot afford to make John a present of that deed, and he would not accept it if I did.”

“But he is dreadfully in want of money, isn’t he, father?”

“Yes, he is; and so will you be soon if you try to make twelve pounds a year do for your necessities. Does it not cost you half-a-crown each time you go to London, even travelling by third class? And you would not be content to go up less frequently than once a week; for what would your young Crusaders do if they did not see you, and what would happen to your old and sick people here if you never had a shilling to give them?”

“But a pound a month would not be all I should have. I have learnt how to earn money by my own talents and industry. Has not that a grand sound?”

“What do you mean, dear?”

“I have become a contributor of pictures to the daily papers. You did not know that you had an artist in the family, did you?”

“No, and I do not know it now.”

“That is too bad of you. Really, I have been earning a little money in that way for some time past. There, you see, I cannot keep a secret after all. But, seriously, father, I feel so sorry for Cousin John. He looks most anxious and miserable, excepting when he is doing something for others, and then he brightens up. I know you are not rich, nor as comfortably off as you might be if you would let that scapegrace heir shift as he can by-and-by; but do you not think that you could strain a point, and let me send that parchment to Cousin John as a Christmas-box?”

“No, Tom. It is very unreasonable of you to expect such a thing. Besides, John wants more than a hundred and fifty pounds a year to lift him out of his troubles. I have generally credited you with a fair amount of good sense. Do not disappoint me now.”

But Tom was very persevering, and persistence generally wins.

She was correct in saying that John Dallington looked full of care. Indeed, neither he nor Margaret Miller would have been able to bear the worries of that time equably, but for the vivid interest which each was taking in the new life that was developing around them.

Margaret was discovering how bitter one woman can render the existence of another. Mrs. Hunter made her hatred of the girl felt in a hundred ways. The village of Darentdale was small, and it seemed that the two must frequently cross each other. The glances of the lady’s eyes were always vindictive and her words were barbed arrows. She was not careful

to hide her feelings, and everybody in the place knew how heartily she hated the girl whom her son loved. Margaret was constantly hearing, although she begged her friends to keep silence, what Mrs. Hunter had said; and other letters, unsigned, followed the first, and made her angry as well as wretched. Every action of hers seemed to be misunderstood and misrepresented, and the state of things became intolerable.

John Dallington, upon whose young head some grey hairs were already to be seen, was often vexed as well as unhappy; and a conviction began to force itself upon his mind that he and Margaret would do well to end the present unsatisfactory state of affairs by a speedy marriage. He would leave his mother in undisturbed possession of the old home, and he would take one of the better cottages on the estate, where he and his bride would begin life together in a small way, and work and economise, and love one another until more prosperous times came. It was a very alluring prospect—if he could only get Margaret to adopt it! He resolved that he would at least compel her to think of it, and decided that on Christmas Day, which was approaching, he would lay his project before her.

In Darentdale there were to be no special spasmodic gifts of dinners and flannels on the occasion. For more than a month two vestries belonging to the chapels and the church schoolroom had been the scene of happy evenings of industry, where young people had been busying themselves in all sorts of ways, and especially in manufacturing pretty little Christmas gifts, which had been disposed of at a sale, the proceeds being divided among the workers. The superintendents—the ladies and gentlemen who were trying to help the people to independence, instead of demoralising them with alms—were exceedingly gratified at the result; and it was with a ring of exultation in her voice that Margaret Miller said: “We have not in the whole of Darentdale a single able person whose hands have not been busy for more than a month.”

There was, accordingly, very great happiness in the village on Christmas Day. John Dallington heard the bells ring out their peal of gladness early in the morning, and experienced for a few minutes the sort of joy which had filled him in the spring when he first returned to England.

The post brought him several cards and congratulations, and among the rest a large envelope addressed in the handwriting of Tom Whitwell, which he opened before the others. As soon as he saw the nature of its contents the swift colour dyed his face and his pulse quickened. The envelope contained the deed to which his thoughts had often referred, and a note, which read thus: “DEAR JOHN,—There need be no ceremony between cousins, and so I hope you will let me ask your acceptance of the accompanying Christmas gift, with my love and best wishes. This is a day, you know, when nobody feels vexed with anybody else, and Christian humility fills all hearts, even those of young men. I rejoice, and so does father, in the splendid things you are doing on your farm, and we want to have a little share in them. Dear old John, you will be good, and let us have our hearts’ desire, because of all the gracious associations of the season, and because of the love of your two friends, Tom and her father.”

John Dallington went to church in the morning with his mother, and had early dinner with her and Mr. William Hunter afterward. Then he wrote a cheque which was due to Mr. Whitwell on that day, and sealed it up together with the deed.

“Mother,” he said, “I shall ride over to uncle’s and take tea at Hornby this afternoon, if you have no objection.”

“None whatever, John. Give my love to them all. And perhaps the girls will come over and spend to-morrow with us.”

“I will ask them.”

Tom expected her cousin, but she could scarcely be quite her old natural

self. Mr. Whitwell at once gave John to understand that anything special which he might have to say must be said to Tom and not to him. Tom gave him no opportunity. She soon rallied her powers of merriment, and by the aid of her sisters a pleasant afternoon was spent. John did not wish to prolong his stay, for, however delightful the company of his cousins might be, he was hungering for the few minutes which he had promised himself should be passed with Margaret as the crowning joy of the day. But neither did he intend to leave until he had put that deed safely back into Tom's hands. About seven o'clock he said, in desperation, "Tom, may I have the honour of a five minutes' serious talk with you?"

"Certainly; it will give me great pleasure to be as serious as even you can desire."

"Where can it be? May we go into the library, uncle?"

"Oh, no!" said Tom, in frightened tones, "please let it be here, so that my people can sympathise with me if the seriousness should deepen into solemnity."

But John offered his arm and led her away, amid the significant glances of her sisters.

She was the first to speak when the door closed upon them, and they stood facing each other before the fire.

"You are not going to make a fuss, John, are you? Please don't! There is nothing whatever to be said."

"Yes, indeed, Tom, there is much for me to say. Do sit down." He saw that she was trembling, and thought it best to go at once to the point. "Never had man such a kind little cousin as I have; but, of course, it must not be. I should never respect myself again if I did not meet and discharge my liabilities, as other men do. I know you are your father's man of business, Tom dear, so I hand you this cheque, due to-day, as well as the deed. And I think you had better kiss me, and let us feel that we are now and always the best of friends."

"John, do have it. I shall feel so bad if you will not. And father will like to do it just as much as I. He does not need this cheque. If you should become a rich man some day you can make it all right then; but for the present do let it be as if this had never been. There, it is a good thing that I have not to parse that last sentence, isn't it?"

"Tom, my mother sends her love; and will you all come and spend the day with us to-morrow?"

"No, John, I will do nothing until you put back that letter into your pocket."

"It will be a hard experience for you, my little cousin, to do nothing for the rest of your natural life."

At this juncture, I am sorry to say that Tom Whitwell disgraced herself by beginning to cry, and John Dallington was genuinely distressed.

"Oh! pray don't do that, Tom. Try to be your own sensible self. Why, you would never respect me again if I did this thing; and I should be sorry indeed to forfeit your good opinion. Try to look at this matter from a man's point of view, dear. Your kindness to me has blinded you; but suppose I were William Hunter instead of John Dallington, what would you think? I shall get over my difficulties. They are not unusual ones, and I am strong enough to cope with them. I shall buy back this paper which you so generously wish to give me, and that will be so much the better for us all round. Tom, do tell me that you think as I do!"

Tom's eyes, usually so merry, were suffused when she lifted them to his face, and his mother's suggestion flashed into his mind. He was sure that Tom only cared for him as a cousin, and yet if he could have taken

her into his arms, and told her that he loved her, he could see that it would be an easy way out of the difficulty; and what good news it would be to take home to his mother. And Tom could be made to care for him in time, he really felt sure of that. Dear little Tom, she looked very limp at that minute, and she was hating herself heartily, too.

She struggled bravely for a moment or two, and then conquered her weakness.

“I am a nice cheerful fellow for Christmas Day,” she said. “Excuse me, John, I am miserably disappointed; I think you might give in, and let father and me have a little pleasure for once. But you are so wilful. Come and look at this picture. My sister Clara painted it, and gave it to father this morning. He is very pleased with it, and Clara is really clever.”

John admired it, and several other new things which had been given to his uncle on that day.

“I wish I might be just such a man as he when I am his age,” said John. “There is no man whom I honour as I do my uncle. I hope I shall never give him reason to think other than well of me.”

“Dear old dad!” said Tom. “There is no man like him in the whole wide world; he is a king among men—a high, august, imperial emperor, and, compared with him, all other men are mice, especially some!”

She felt better after the outburst, and presently the two went together into the drawing-room, where they were enjoying some music. Tom flushed at the look of her sisters, but she knew that they knew better than to question her, for she often boasted that she had brought her sisters up in the way they should go, although they were all older than she. Presently John left, and for the rest of the evening Tom gave herself entirely to the entertainment of her father. They were such good friends that he did not need to ask any questions but one, “Have you left it in the library?” and she said “Yes; shall it be chess?”

John’s horse carried him swiftly along the way, which his desire travelled before him. He knew what he should see, and his heart longed for a glimpse of the beautiful lighted face on which he would like to gaze for ever. The roads were hard, and the moon shone brightly. It was a peaceful wintry scene, and John’s heart was full of peace and goodwill. It is true that he gave a few half-troubled thoughts to his cousin, but he would not let himself suppose that more than ordinary relationship had induced her to make the attempt she had made. “Dear little Tom, she meant it kindly,” he said, “but I am sorry to see her so weak. She never would have cried if she had been quite well; it is not in the least like her;” and then all his attention was centred upon that which was before, not that which was behind him.

Ann Johnson opened the door directly he knocked.

“A beautiful night, Mr. Dallington, indeed. Yes, they are at home, they haven’t been out since the morning. Oh, no; it is not too late to wish me a merry Christmas, which it is, though we don’t keep late hours in the country. Why, dear me, there’s lots of houses in the great metrollops where they are, as you may say, just about to commence their jovialities, but I don’t care for that style: no great metrollops for me, thank you.”

Ann commenced one of her stories; but John stepped toward the room whence he could hear the sound of the voice he loved; and Ann let him pass into it without announcing him.

To the eyes of Dallington there was no scene so exquisitely home-like as that which he scarcely saw more clearly now than his imagination had seen it as he rode through the night. The room was old, and not large; it was furnished with perfect taste; there was not a showy thing in the whole apartment, but everything that was comfortable and cosy, soft and

bright seemed gathered there. Mr. Harris sat on one side of the fire, nursing a cat, and Margaret on the other, with her hand on the head of a dog. A lamp was near on a small table, and the volume of Browning from which she had been reading was laid beside it when John entered. She glanced at him half shyly; she must not let him see how very glad she was, but he did see, and his heart leaped for joy. He took the hand she held toward him, and then, yielding to the hunger of love which impelled him, he gathered her in his arms for one moment, and kissed her tenderly, twice. Afterward, he turned to Mr. Harris with an apologetic remark, “See; I have some mistletoe, and it is Christmas time, you know.”

“Very well; if you consider that these give you the right, well and good,” was the reply.

“I have a right, established on a better basis than that,” he said. And Margaret, who was about to contradict him, held her peace. She could not say that he had no right when her heart was filled with such glad music at the very sight of him. All day she had been asking herself, “Will he come?” and it was of no use for her to try to disguise the fact that an hour spent with him held a year of happiness for her.

They had some fruit, and then, at the urgent request of Mr. Dallington, Margaret went on with the reading, John feasting his eyes upon her bright head and graceful form, and watching the expressive face and sweet lips with a joy that had much resolution in it. “Mine, my darling, my very own, mine you are and must be; I would give the whole world for you, and feel that it was too little.” So his thoughts ran as he listened to the inflections of her beautiful voice, and saw the light on her face. She left off occasionally to discuss the passages she had read. “I am obliged to question Graf now and then, to be sure that he understands,” she said, “and he and I do not always agree as to the meaning. It is well to have another opinion.”

Dallington gave his in a most hap-hazard way, and when he was rebuked had the effrontery to confess that he had thought less of the reading than the reader. Yet even he could not do other than listen again to the well-known lines of Rabbi Ben Ezra, and especially the closing stanzas—

“But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men!
And since, not even while the whirl was worst
Did I—to the wheel of life,
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst.

“So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o’ the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same.”

So the time passed, and an hour seemed no time. They moved to the piano, and sang Browning’s songs, after his poetry. Dallington had a good voice, and he sang one after another, concluding with

“So the year’s done with!
(_Love me for ever!_)
All March began with
April’s endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me
Quenching June’s fever.
(Love me for ever!)”

Then Margaret sang a song from “James Lee’s Wife”; and so the hours flew by, and Dallington arose to leave.

“Ann Johnson will be angry with me, and think that I belong more to what she calls ‘the great Metrollops’ than to the country, if I keep such late hours,” he said. But Mr. Harris wanted some music of another kind, and an hour was spent in sacred songs and solos. At last John wondered what his mother would say to him, and felt that he must not linger longer. The old man, whose dreams were of long ago, enjoyed the evening almost as much as the young folks did; and he discreetly gave them a few minutes alone after supper; and this was John’s opportunity.

“Margaret,” he said, “I think you care for me a little, but perhaps not enough to give me the answer that I want. It is a very unsatisfactory state of things that exists between us now: surely you feel it as I do. Why should we not end it by being married at once?”

The suddenness of the proposal took Margaret’s breath away; and as she did not reply John continued: “I am asking you to share my poverty with me. My mother must remain undisturbed, and I should not like her income to be less than it is; but we might begin life in a small way, and be very happy together if you love me, Margaret. You do not care for a great house and extravagant expenditure any more than I do—not that any place would be too good for you, my queen——”

“Oh, John; you know it is not a question of money; but I cannot marry you now, and you must see that for yourself. There are several reasons, but one will suffice. I shall never be married to you while your mother dislikes me as she does now. I could not consent to come between you two. She has no one to think of but you, and it would be too hard, after being separated from you for so many years by the ocean, to be estranged by something else.”

“How do you know that my mother dislikes you? She is civil to you when you meet.”

Margaret smiled. “Yes—in a way—but it is impossible for me to mistake the feeling with which she regards me. I am very sorry, for my own sake as well as yours; but I could never be happy if I made your mother miserable—because she is your mother.”

“I wish she knew you, really.”

“I am afraid it would make no difference.”

“She knows that I love you, and hope to marry you, because I have told her myself. She will relent after a time; but it is hard to wait. At least grant me one favour, my darling. Let me know from your own lips that you accept me, and give me your promise, as I give you mine, that you will not marry another.”

Margaret’s face paled a little. “I will give the promise, but not accept it,” she said.

“And I give it and accept it, too,” answered John, promptly.

The thought that kept repeating itself to Margaret was, “If I could only be sure about Tom!” and she was wondering all the time whether it would not be better to ask her friend a direct question, and so get at the truth.

“And for the rest we must wait,” she said aloud.

“We need not wait an hour before we are pledged to each other. Do grant me at least this, my dearest, so that I can feel sure of you.”

“Wait a week for that,” she said.

“Very well; but you are not going to send me away without a crumb of comfort, to-night of all other times. Tell me in so many words that you love me.”

“Oh, John, you know—you must know! I love you better, I think, than even my own happiness. Be content, my dear one.”

And he was.

CHAPTER XVII.
A REPORT OF PROGRESS.

“May the New Year bring in better times for the people!” This was the wish of the thousands.

“May the New Year bring in better people for the times!” This was the wish of the tens.

As is often the case, the tens were more wise than the thousands, for the times do not make the people, but the people make the times; and if the makers are good, that which is made is certain to be good also.

That year was a most wonderfully progressive year in England: there had never been anything like it before. There were forces at work to make it so, which, though they were as old as Christianity itself, seemed to be more mighty than ever, and the strongest of them all was love. People said that there was a revival among the churches, but it resolved itself into one fact—the members of the churches were honestly trying to love one another more, not in word, but in deed and in truth.

There was, perhaps, not a town nor a hamlet in which no special effort was made to place things on a more satisfactory basis than before. It could not be said that any one man was instrumental in bringing this about, but Arthur Knight certainly had a large share in it, and an indication of what was done in one town will show how the whole country was being affected.

In the fascination of his own personal work among his people, for whom a strange, strong love was in his heart, he hesitated sometimes as to that other work which he also loved. Which was his duty—that which lay the nearest, or that which was the clearest? He had made his resolve: he would do both. He was young and strong, and he would most gladly yield his strength, ay, and his life itself, to this service. It is never the men of leisure who do the great things, it is those who have not an hour to spare who add new duties to old ones; and Arthur Knight was a man of singular energy.

Of course, it goes without saying, that he was constantly told that the time was inopportune for his particular crusade, and that the poverty and wickedness of the people was not the burning question of the day. But what he pleaded for was a truce, and that all sorts of hostilities should cease while the Christian men of England exerted their combined powers to make England Christian. And the people were much more ready for this than their leaders were.

As far as he could, therefore, he accepted all invitations, and, thanks to the newspapers, he always had a good hearing. But it was at Granchester—a city certain to be at the front in such an enterprise—that he was made most to rejoice. An invitation was, in the first place, sent to about two hundred prominent men, irrespective of party or denomination. Arthur Knight had not spoken to them for ten minutes before all who were in the room became influenced by that strong and vivid personality, which was the secret of his power. His heart was on fire with his subject, and his language was expressive, and as he spoke, first in indignation, and then in pleading accents, he won over to his side almost every man who listened. Shortly, he touched upon those specific evils of the day which were filling men with shame and indignation; and then, in terse, strong words, he denounced the lethargy

and cowardice of those who allowed these things to exist. He declared that all things were ready but the Church itself; and in words which burnt their way into their hearts he called upon his hearers to show some heroism for Christ, to give up their own ease, to share their wealth—not always gotten Christianly—with the poor, to be honest in their payments of wages, to come forth, like St. George of old, and kill the dragon of indifference, selfishness and wickedness, which was doing England such deadly wrong.

"We have had such a sublime history," he said. "We used to grow such brave and patriotic men! Do we belong to another race than they? Is our country less dear to our hearts than to theirs? It is such a beautiful land, 'a land of hills and valleys, that drink water of the rain of heaven, a land which the Lord seeketh and careth for, and His eyes are always upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.' But in this land—this land of blessing, this little land—and because it is little so manageable—there are scarcely unchecked powers of evil lifting their brazen faces to our blue skies and pure air—greed, cruelty, lust, drunkenness, slavery, hypocrisy, fraud. Do you know that in this land of ours there are nearly five millions of people in destitution and misery? But there are more than seven and a half millions in our Sunday-schools. Of the thirty-six millions who make up the population of Great Britain and Ireland the churches claim a constituency of more than half. Indeed, it is said that five-sevenths of our people profess and call themselves Christians. Then, why, in the name of all that is sacred and responsible, is it possible for these things to flourish in our midst? Are we hypocrites, or are we cowards? All the real strength of the nation is with those who say they are on the side of the Christ. Most of the power, most of the culture, most of the intelligence, yes, and most of the money is on this side also. Then why do we weep and whine over the sin and the misery of the world, since, if for only one year the spirit of Christ were truly in us, and we were content with one accord to stand together under the white flag of Truce, we are well able to bring about that for which we pretend to long and pray. There are subjects which divide Christendom; let them wait while you set yourselves to this work. You are not called to sacrifice any principle, but to adopt a new one—the principle which keeps the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Retain, if you must, your different forms of church government, but, in the name of Christ, unless you regard your sect and political party more highly than you regard Him, put them behind you while you do the work that presses. Study for a month or two, side by side with the New Testament, the words of the great teachers specially given to this generation and this land—Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, and Tennyson. They tell you how to do this work, to which they have been urging you with all their powers. We have had a magnificent inheritance in these teachers, whom God sent to make us great; and yet so craven are we that we are afraid to use our power to compel a man to be clean-lipped and moral, and so powerless that we cannot help him to help himself to be fed and clothed. To-day there are women and girls drinking themselves drunken by scores in every town, and selling themselves as if no spark of God were in them; to-day there are men the personification of cruel brutality and loathesome vice; there are little children dying for bread, and old people as wicked as they are wretched; man is hating his brother man, and crushing him down that he may make money by him, and there is a seething mass of misery and sin at our very doors. And the saints are folding their hands and sighing, 'Oh, Lord! how long!' Shame, shame, shame! Surely the Lord sends back the question in indignant answer. How long, indeed, before those who are sent to the world as He was sent, awaken to a consciousness of their high calling? Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity; or if he will not, let him stand aside with the brand of the hypocrite upon him. Let no one say, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which He says. Let those who are, on the whole, on the side of Christ join those who are whole-hearted; let them swell the numbers of the heroes and heroines, for there are hosts of them. Above all, let the Church universal come together, and forgetting, at least for awhile, the dividing lines, swear in the name of Christ to wipe out the dark red blots that lie upon Christian England. Oh! believe me, we have been too long and too utterly living for self instead of God. We

have thought that Christianity was a creed only, instead of life and service. The time is surely come for us to choose sides afresh—and there are only two sides from which to choose, that of Christ, and that of unrighteousness. I call upon you to divest yourselves of all encumbrances. (Think of the man with the muck-rake calling himself a Christian!) Come and arrange yourselves under the Flag of Truce. Do you not know yet, after all these years, what our Lord has been teaching all along, that the world will never believe that God sent Jesus until His disciples are one? It is the Church, and not the world that hinders the coming of His Kingdom. But the Church will follow its leading men. Let the remnant that has not bowed the knee to Baal come forth and lead."

The address produced a profound impression, and there was a solemn time of re-dedication of many lives. A subsequent meeting was held, which was of a very practical character.

"I think I shall speak for many," said one. "I know that I do for myself, when I say that it has only been by keeping down the voice of God's Spirit within me that I have waited for these words before acting. I am one of those who thirsted for riches, and got them; but they have not satisfied me. I for one pledge myself to give all that I have and am for Christ."

"And I pledge myself also," said another. "We must make some change if we would save our own sons. Many of us are what we are because of the need to work which was upon us in our youth. But our sons are content that the work was done for them. Gentlemen, _how are they spending the wealth which we gained_? I speak to many fathers, who know that the money which they gave the best years of their life to secure, is nothing but a curse to their sons. Many of the young men of to-day are too idle to keep the positions which we have won for them, and are spending what we have given them, to work their own ruin."

The speaker's voice died away in a sob, and everybody understood what the trouble was which had made him prematurely old and grey.

And then Mr. Felix Stapleton arose, and everybody looked at him with interest. "I am sorry for the fathers whose sons bring trouble to them," he said, "and I am also a little sorry for those whose sons condemn them. What many a man dreads more than anything in these days, when, thank God, the boys of England are enlisting by thousands in the army of the Young Crusaders, is the calm, clear-sighted judgment of his own children. What would they think of us if they knew all the secrets of our business transactions? How would they rate our pious talk about Christian brotherhood if they knew precisely our treatment of those who work for us? Mr. Knight's rousing words are like a summons to arms; but the soldiers in Christ's army must be men without reproach. And who among us is? We need grace to be true, and courage to do the right. We are called to rule the world for the world's good, and to stem the tide of sin and misery; but first of all we must rule ourselves, and our hands can only be strong if they are clean. God pity me; I am speaking of myself."

There were a few who looked puzzled when Mr. Stapleton thus concluded his short address, but his words would have awakened more curiosity at another time. On the present occasion most men were busily searching their own hearts, and were, therefore, less disposed to criticise others.

When he left the hall, Arthur Knight left with him, and the few minutes which they spent together in conversation helped Stapleton at this turning-point in his life to take the right course.

"Let us concentrate our thoughts upon two points," said another speaker. "What ought to be done, and how shall we do it? We must not infringe upon the liberty of the subject—no Englishman will stand that; neither must we constitute ourselves a company of private detectives. But every man must bring his personal knowledge of the world of human nature to bear upon any new work which he may undertake. We all believe that the

best way to aid men is to help them to help themselves. This cannot be done in the mass, but by one individual influencing another. Before we go farther, let us resolve upon this one thing—_let none of us become beggars for money_; there has been far too much of that already. _Let us use the means that we have for the development of our own idea._ And let us each begin at home. Let every man amongst us who is an employer of labour ask himself whether he is fair and honest in the matter of wages. Is there any man, woman, or child working for us at starvation prices? If so, our first duty is to remedy that. No Christian man who is making money can grind down his servants—no matter how unskilled may be their work, nor how overstocked the market—without disgracing his religion. Some of us have done this without knowing it, because we let all these things be settled by middlemen; but the responsibility is ours, and this ought to be seen to first."

Another speaker said: "Every church or chapel must be the centre of all sorts of helpful ministries for the poor who are around us. There is a great outcry because some of us have moved away into the suburbs; but _the people_ are around these buildings in large numbers. Let us use some of these places every day for the social work of the churches. Many of us are looking out for good investments. Cannot we find our opportunity here? I will take or buy one of the cottages in the street nearest my own chapel, and make a workshop for the unemployed of the bottom story, and an evening recreation room of the top. At the chapel we have particularly good arrangements for teas; I will see if we cannot provide cheap and good dinners for the people there. We must care more for the people and less for the buildings."

It will be seen how ready for immediate action these men were, and indeed the need was then very pressing, both at Granchester and everywhere else, for the winter had brought more than the usual misery.

In some towns there was formed what was called "The Committee of Helpfulness," and it had abundant work on its hands. An account of one will serve for all. Anything and everything that love and thought could do was to be done; but the main idea and aim before it was to secure the young. The members of the committee could themselves only feel their way to the full development of the new ministry, and they called for volunteers.

"We will begin with the smallest," said a lady. "I will belong to the Needlework Guild, because there is nothing else I can do. There are poor women in the parish who are overworked with their large families, and who will feel it a very neighbourly thing if we send strong shirts for the boys and dresses for the girls. I will try and enlist others who, like myself, have been do-nothings; and we will utilise such odds and ends of materials as we can find in our own houses, or that may be given to us. If we have more than we need, we will send some to London. Many children would attend both the Sunday and day school more regularly but for the difficulty of dress. This is only a little thing; but it will be a relief to some of the mothers, which they will greatly appreciate."

"I ask to be put upon the committee of the Neighbours' Union," said another member of the conference—a man of fair means. "There are old persons and poor widows who have appealed to our Poor Law Guardians in vain. They, in order to keep down the rates, and to stamp out pauperism, refuse outdoor relief, and offer the hospitality of the union workhouse. But we can do better than that. Every parish is probably able to take care of its very poor, and also to become sufficiently acquainted with the people to know who could be wisely helped, and who ought not to be helped at all. Certainly we can undertake this. In twenty or thirty years' time there may be some national system of insurance against sickness and old age; but we need not wait for that. The strong and the active will have to help the sick and the old. We have been doing it all along. Only now, let it be understood, that the Neighbours' Union exists in obedience to the example of the Good Samaritan. It has been a disgrace to the church organisations of any place, where life has been rendered miserable, through poverty, to the sick and the old."

"I ask to be allowed to work at the other extreme of our social life," said a young man, "and be on the Children's Play Committee. We ought to have every child of the parish in one or other of our Sunday-schools. There are some who are not, but I think we shall find no difficulty in getting every child into our play-places. First of all, we must see that they have good times; and, secondly, we must, while giving them the utmost liberty, endeavour to influence them. And we must not rest until we get all our lads enrolled among the Boy Crusaders."

In this way, and others, the idea of brotherly kindness was spreading; indeed, there was scarcely a church or chapel in connection with which there was not some new activity; and, what was better still, that New Year's Day was, by common consent, devoted to self-examination on the part of those who professed to be the servants and followers of Jesus Christ; and not only where men and women were assembled together, but in the quietude of their own rooms thousands were asking and answering, as in the presence of God, the question which had haunted Dr. Stapleton, "Am I a Christian?"

For the Doctor himself the answer had been found by many people in Scourby, who had decided in the negative. He was so woefully altered, he looked so miserable and ill, he had aged so greatly in a few months, he was so utterly unlike his former self, that, forgetful of the charity which thinketh no evil, some who had been his friends had convinced themselves that only a guilty conscience could account for the change in him, and had treated him accordingly.

Quite how the scandal grew no one could tell; but Stapleton had the bitterness of knowing himself entirely unpopular and disregarded. Ladies passed him in the public ways without recognition. Men, if they saw him coming, turned into side streets; and things came to such a pass with him that at last he wondered if he had a real and staunch friend left in the town where, less than a year ago, he could have counted them by hundreds.

The people of Scourby were feeling bad-tempered with everything and every one, because they considered themselves disgraced. The example set by the town had been followed in other places, and Mr. Richard Lavender had three men likeminded with himself to keep him in countenance, since they also had been sent to Westminster, not as either Conservatives or Liberals, but, as they themselves said, as Anarchists, and in opposition to Religion and Respectability.

These four men unwittingly did more for their country than they intended.

At Scourby there was much bickering between Churchmen and Dissenters, who each blamed the other for what had happened. But they were united in declaring that something must be done, so that at the next general election that which was intolerable to them should be avoided.

Mr. Whitwell came to the rescue. It occurred to him that this might be an opportunity for a common ground of meeting between all sections of the Church of Scourby. He, therefore, called on the Nonconformist ministers and the clergymen, and succeeded in getting from them a promise that for once they would sink their differences, and meet together in the interests of the town. What he had to go through that day, what arguments he found it necessary to use before he could accomplish his object, he never told any one; but his favourite daughter guessed it when he threw himself into a chair on his return, and said, "Tom, play me something soothing, for I have never had such a day's work in my life."

Tom was an excellent musician, and knew well what her father liked, so she gave him one exquisite strain after another until at last he was ready to talk. "The ministers of Scourby," he said, "have agreed to call their people together to consider the present crisis, and to suggest plans. First of all they are to have a meeting among themselves. The vicar of the parish church wanted it in his schoolroom, but the

Congregational minister objected; he said his people would not go to the church school, they would not trust the vicar enough for that, and he suggested his own schoolroom. The vicar did not think his people would go there, and eventually it was settled to have the preliminary meeting here, so you and I are to drive into Scourby to-morrow, and fetch them all to luncheon."

"Hornby Hall is acknowledged to be neutral ground, then? How glad I am. Will the parsons let me be present at the meeting?"

"I wish they would. I believe you could make a very good speech on Christian union, Tom."

It is gratefully recorded, as one of the most hopeful signs of the times, that this meeting of ministers was a success. For two whole hours they elected to believe in one another, and each man endeavoured, to the best of his ability, to give his brother ministers, whether of the Episcopal or the Free Churches, credit for being actuated by the same high motives as those which governed himself. They did not, therefore—as they so easily might have done—frustrate the endeavours of the layman-peacemaker, but loyally seconded them.

Mr. Whitwell, as the host, was also the president. He proposed, after luncheon, that they should open their conference by prayer, and called upon a young Primitive Methodist minister to lead them. This gave the right tone to the conversation, and a few words from Mr. Whitwell, expressing the hope that there would be a concerted action on the part of the Church to wipe out the stain which had been put upon the town, were well received. Then the vicar proposed that a meeting of Christian townsmen should be called to arrange some method of procedure. This was seconded by the Wesleyan superintendent, and cordially carried. They then proceeded to details, first settling upon the place of meeting, and then upon the speakers. There were in all fourteen buildings in Scourby erected for the worship of God, and in the name of Him whose great wish for His disciples was that they might all be one; but it was decided that neither of these would serve their purpose, it was safer to hold the meeting in the town hall. It was to be called by letter, which each man undertook to send to the members of his own church. Mr. Whitwell was to preside over that meeting also, and the least political of the ministers was to move a resolution of regret at what had occurred, and determination to prevent a repetition of it.

A large number of men responded to the invitation; many who took no active part in politics feeling that they ought to be present on this occasion. After the chief speeches had been made, the meeting was thrown open for discussion, and it was at this juncture that some of the most forcible words were uttered. Each speaker was allowed five minutes; and several crisp little addresses were worthy of being remembered.

"Sir," said one, "let us petition Parliament to declare the election void, because it is an insult to our Lord more than to us. And yet I think it would not have happened if we had not been caught napping. Here are all our ministers sitting on the platform together. How is it that such a sight in Scourby was never witnessed before in the memory of living man? If, as soon as the vacancy occurred, you gentlemen had called us together, there might now be representing us in Parliament a man of whom we might all be proud, instead of one of whom we are all ashamed. Gentlemen, are you not supposed to be our leaders? Why, then, did you leave us to ourselves in the late emergency?"

"What we have always wanted is union," said another. "The time has surely come for it now. There are plenty of other men like Mr. Lavender, ready to declare themselves haters of what we love. I hope other towns will profit by our mistake. This is a meeting to be thankful for. We are forgetting, for this one night, whether we are Radicals or Conservatives, and only remembering that we are Christians. For God's sake, let us work shoulder to shoulder in the future."

John Dallington had invited Arthur Knight to come down and speak at that

meeting; and though he only had five minutes, he managed to make one of his characteristic speeches. “Why,” he asked pertinently, “did the men of this town believe in Richard Lavender instead of in you? Is the British working man a fool, that he does not know his friends? What have you, the representative Christian men of Scourby, called to be rulers of men for their good, been doing that this thing should have happened to you?”

Mr. Whitwell was so delighted with Arthur Knight that he told his nephew he must have him for his guest. “Come, too, John,” he said, “and let us talk these things over. My wife and daughters will be glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Knight. Here is the youngest. Tom! Let me introduce you to each other. Mr. Knight, of London—Miss Grace Thomasine Whitwell.”

Tom blushed vividly; and as for Arthur Knight, he was so astonished that he did not know what to say, for he suddenly became conscious that he was looking into the bright face of the lady whom he longed to know, and holding the hand that had rendered such kind service to some of his people. He was going to exclaim, but Tom greeted him as a stranger, and though her eyes were sparkling with fun, they said, as plainly as any words could have done, “Do not dare to say that we have met before!”

CHAPTER XVIII.
DISCOVERED.

The alacrity with which Arthur Knight accepted Mr. Whitwell’s invitation to spend the night after the Scourby political meeting at Hornby Hall, and the readiness which he exhibited to prolong his visit, puzzled his friend, John Dallington, exceedingly. It was as if Knight, one of the busiest men in the land, had nothing whatever to occupy him, so entirely did he yield himself to the passing pleasure of the time. John could not guess what the circumstances were which gave to the incident an irresistible charm, but Arthur felt as if he had found unexpectedly a mine of treasure for which he had been willing to search the world over. And Dallington was forced to acknowledge to himself that from some reason or other his cousin Tom was more delightful, and his friend Knight more happy than he had ever seen them.

Naturally the talk at the supper-table was of Scourby and its troubles, and of the other places where bye-elections had resulted in similar returns.

“It will be a lesson to us,” said Mr. Whitwell, “and I hope that in time politics may assume a new aspect. After all, both parties are agreed upon main points, for Conservatives and Liberals alike have, or are supposed to have, the best interests of the nation at heart. Our divisions are caused by our divergence of opinion as to the means by which the same ends are to be secured.”

“Exactly; and this may be said of our religious differences. We all, or nearly all, believe that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, and that to be a Christian is to be a believer in and a follower of Him. We believe, too, that the peace and well-being of peoples is to be secured through allegiance to Him. Is it not wonderful, then, that both in Christianity and politics we often seem as far apart as the poles?”

“Not at all wonderful,” said Tom, “seeing that man is always a combative and disagreeable creature, and that the more civilised he is the more stubborn is the animosity which he cherishes towards every one but himself. Did you ever know a body of men in committee who did not waste the time in discussion and disagreement?”

“Yes, I have frequently observed the phenomenon, Miss Grace; and are not most things the better for being threshed out in discussion? Many men means many minds; and in ‘the multitude of counsellors there is safety.’

There is not necessarily antagonism because there is difference of method; but no one more regrets than I that these differences should be accentuated until they actually create a division among those who ought to be heart and soul together."

"What names do you propose to give the new parties, Mr. Knight?" asked Miss Whitwell.

"No names at all. We will try and get the things and name them afterward. We want the party of righteousness to oppose the party of wrong, that is all."

"But, of course, that is exactly what we have now," said Dallington. "Every man believes that his own party is for the right and the other is not. It is a question of standpoint."

"Yes; but making allowances for that sort of thing, there is some common ground upon which we can all meet, and men who have consciences ought to occupy it while they make one grand united effort on behalf of those whose existence is little more than a struggle."

"All life is a struggle, though," said Dallington, "and working men must have their share."

"I have been much interested in hearing of your plan in regard to your own workpeople," said Mr. Whitwell. "I hope it will succeed. You are spending an immense sum of money on the new town which you are founding. I know that because of the little I have tried to do on my own farm. I hope you are not doomed to disappointment."

"I am not afraid of that. I am spending all that I have at present; but my London places occupy valuable sites, which I shall have no difficulty in selling. My hopes are sanguine in regard to my people, although I know that human nature is a very difficult thing to deal with. The people need new natures more than anything, but I believe that we are all greatly influenced by our environments, and my men shall have a chance."

"All sorts of good influences are being exerted upon young people to-day," remarked Mr. Whitwell, "and therein lies my hope for the future."

"Yes; and the wisdom and patience of those home missionaries who have taken London in hand appear unfailing," said Knight, glancing at Tom, who returned the glance with a comical smile. "Several educated men are giving all their leisure to the boys belonging to my establishment, and there are some ladies who are bringing about very happy changes in the homes of the people."

"Miss Wentworth has not gone to Madeira this winter, Arthur, has she?" asked Dallington.

"No; and she spends all her days in doing good. There is a young lady, too, who is occasionally seen by the bedside of the sick, who is like an angel of light"—Tom flushed violently, and shook her head warningly—"but" proceeded Knight, "perhaps the best work of all is that which is accomplished by an individual who seems to have no name, but is known as 'the Basket Woman,' because she carries to the doors of the people all sorts of necessary articles in a basket and sells them. She is a lady of culture and refinement, very good and sympathetic, and most sensible too, and she has brought about quite a change in one of the worst courts of London. She appears to be alone; and at first I wondered what her friends could be thinking of to let her be there in the midst of so much that is degrading; but now the men of the neighbourhood would not let a hair of her head be hurt, so entirely has she won their confidence and affection. The Basket Woman is preparing nearly five hundred people for their new home in Wales as I think no one else could. She heartens up the women, and looks well after the children, especially the boys. She has a large number of the young crusaders under her care."

“What a wonderful movement that is!” commenced Mr. Whitwell; but Tom interrupted him.

“Excuse me, father. I must ask Mr. Knight to tell us more of this Basket Woman. What is she like? Is she young or old?”

“She is young and fairly good-looking, and quite devoted to her work. But she gives me the impression of an individual who has had trouble, and is even now undergoing considerable anxiety of some kind. She must have private means, though she lives economically in cheap lodgings in the neighbourhood of the people for whom she works, but she is able to relieve distress when it is genuine.”

“It cannot be Mary Wythburn! I must surely have met her sometimes if it had been she!” exclaimed Tom, forgetting herself for a moment.

“But you do not know Mr. Knight’s place or people, do you, Tom?” inquired one of her sisters.

“I do a little—that is, one or two of them. I went to see a poor woman I heard of who was ill near that neighbourhood. But Mary Wythburn! Is it possible?”

“We had better tell Mr. Knight about Mary,” suggested Mr. Whitwell, and John Dallington related the incident of the frustrated wedding. When his friend had heard the story he was very doubtful as to Miss Wythburn and the Basket Woman being the same individual.

“My Paradise Grove friend is far too sensible to have acted in that manner,” he said.

“But I have a feeling that it is she,” said Tom. “I wish we had Mary’s portrait that we might show it to Mr. Knight. Margaret Miller has one, I will borrow it in the morning.”

“You will be able to spend to-morrow with us, Mr. Knight?” queried Mrs. Whitwell. “I am sure you will be interested in what my husband is doing for his tenants.”

“I shall have to leave about midday, unfortunately,” he said. “I have made an appointment with the Basket Woman, who has been vainly trying to waylay me for some time. She wishes to make a suggestion to me on behalf of the people. The next day I have to be in Granchester again.”

“That is where Dr. Stapleton’s rich brother lives. I wonder if the doctor will go to your meeting, Mr. Knight?” Then followed a little account of the doctor’s doings as far as they were known.

The time passed all too quickly, although they talked far into the night. Next morning John Dallington left early, and Arthur Knight had a country ride with his host over the farm and along the roads. Tom was a good horsewoman, and she accompanied them. Arthur enjoyed a long talk with her; but she was determined not to give him the chance of seeing her alone. He was intensely interested. He found her so pleasantly piquant, so merry and entertaining, that sometimes he wondered if she had two natures; for there was little to remind him of the sweet singer who had comforted the blind woman only a short time before. He had no opportunity to refer to the incident, or to say a word of their past meetings, only as he was leaving Tom said, softly, “Give my love to Sissie when next you see her, and also to the Basket Woman, if she should prove to be Mary Wythburn.”

He had a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Whitwell to repeat his visit, and this he promised to do at no distant date; but for a little time he was full of engagements. He wished, very sincerely, that he might become better acquainted with the youngest daughter of his host, who puzzled as much as she pleased him.

Of course, he did not forget the commission which she had given him.

“When are you going to tell me your name?” asked Arthur Knight, when the lady in grey presented herself before him as a deputation from Paradise Grove.

The question disconcerted his visitor, whose cheeks flushed, while her eyes sought the floor.

“Excuse me, Mr. Knight,” she said, “the name does not matter. Please call me the Basket Woman, as usual.”

She stole a glance into his face, and saw that he was looking at her intently; but she would not allow anything to interfere with the task that she had on hand, and hastily proceeded to explain the cause of her visit.

“I come as a deputation from Paradise Grove,” she said. “Fanny Burton was to have come with me; but, unfortunately, one of the children in the Grove was seized with croup in the night, so that we could not both be spared. Your astonishingly kind proposition has been the subject of much talk among the people, but I am afraid you will find the scheme more costly and troublesome than you have imagined.”

“I suppose they are not enthusiastic, are they?”

“Perhaps it cannot be said that on the whole they are. Years of dull poverty and hopelessness have taken all the spirit of enterprise out of some of them; but many quite appreciate the offer, and are looking forward with interest and expectation. I think the idea magnificent. And I do not mean a single individual of my people to be out of it.”

“That is right. You will no doubt get your own way; and I am much obliged to you.”

“But, Mr. Knight, they are in trouble about their furniture. What are they to do with that?”

“Will they not take it with them? They will want it in the new place as much as in the old.”

“But you do not forget what the old places are like, do you? If you remember, there is very little furniture to speak of in Paradise Grove. The beds and tables and chairs are all old, and most of them broken. The houses, since we tore down the dirty paper and had all the walls freshly whitewashed, are much cleaner than they were, and there has been a considerable quantity of soap and water brought to bear, not only upon the walls, but upon the furniture also. But still, I think it would be a great pity if these old things were put into your new houses. It would be a great expense, too—almost as much as they are worth to take them down.”

“But what is to be done? They cannot do with absolutely empty houses, and I am afraid very few of them have money to buy new tables and chairs.”

“Certainly they have not. How should they have?”

“Do you propose that they should sell their old things and buy new with part of the money?”

“I think, if it is not an impossible thing, for you to have the houses—those for the poorest people, at all events—furnished for them, with a few plain things which are absolutely necessary; it will go a long way to make your idea a success.”

“Yes. And is the furniture to be mine or theirs?”

“Yours, until they have paid for it.”

“I suppose it might be possible, but it would be rather an undertaking added to all the rest.”

“Yes, I know it would, and am not surprised that you hesitate. But you could get so large an order completed for the whole at much less cost than the people could individually; and if you undertake the furnishing as well as the building of these houses, you will be doing it all very completely, and can fairly make better terms for the people than they could for themselves. Many of the better class of workmen have made their homes comfortable, and will probably prefer to take their furniture with them. It is the very poor who would be helped. If I may, I would suggest that those who have goods to sell should prepare a list of them, and then arrange to have them sold at public auction. There will be plenty of buyers among the poor who are to be left behind if the things are sold cheaply, as, of course, they must be, and then whatever they fetch, after paying expenses, might be put down to the credit of the persons who were owners of the goods.”

“Yes; some arrangement of the kind can no doubt be made. We will do the best we can.”

“Thank you. I was sure you would. I often try to picture their delight when they are really settled in their new homes, with their friends about them, and so much of joy and comfort which they never expected added to their lot.”

“It will be good to know that they all start comfortably in their new homes. You have taken a great interest in them. I hope they will repay your kindness.”

“They have done that already. They need to be carefully dealt with; they must not be demoralised with gifts, but helped to make themselves comfortable by their own earnings, and then they will be all right. I am delighted with the change in the Paradise boys and girls.”

“Yes, so am I. You have dealt wisely with them, and gone far to prove what an educated woman can do among those who, notwithstanding our so-called system of education, are deplorably ignorant. I suppose you had no idea, when you were graduating at the University, that you would spend these months in slum-work.”

“No, indeed, I had not,” she said, and suddenly stopped, and looked at Arthur Knight in amazement. “Why do you suppose that I have had a University training?”

“I have heard so.”

“But who could have told you? No one knows anything about me.”

“Pardon me, Miss Wythburn. I was at Scourby yesterday, and I spent last night at Mrs. Whitwell’s house near Darentdale. Your friend, Miss Tom Whitwell, showed me your portrait. I had mentioned the Paradise grove Basket Woman, and she cleverly jumped to the conclusion that you are yourself.”

“It was like Tom,” she said, and hid her blushing face in her hands, overcome with emotion. Knight considerately allowed her a few minutes in which to recover herself, which she speedily did, and said, trying to laugh, “So I am found out at last. How are all my people, Mr. Knight?”

“I suppose you know that your father and mother are not now in Scourby?” he asked, gravely.

“Yes, I know,” she said, “for I have been to see. I had no answer to two letters, although I gave my address in them, so one day I went down to find my home shut up. Do you know where my father and mother are, Mr. Knight?”

“You have been wrong, Miss Wythburn,” said Knight, gently, “so far as your parents are concerned. They have been in London looking for you. I am glad to be able to give you their present address.”

“Oh, thank you, so much.” The Basket Woman could scarcely repress her tears.

“It is not my place to lecture you, and I apologise for doing so; but I cannot help pointing out to you that you owe a greater duty to your parents than you can possibly owe to strangers, even though the strangers are the very poor, who greatly needed a friend. I quite appreciate the real good you have been doing in Paradise Grove, but you know as well as I that it ought not to have been done at the expense of the happiness of your own father and mother.”

“Yes, you are right,” she said, humbly; “but I think you do not know all the facts of the case.”

“I know some of them,” he said; “for instance, that you have the right to wear the graduate’s cap and gown instead of the grey cloak.”

“I prefer the grey,” she said, brightly, rapidly recovering herself; “and although my conscience has not been at rest, I have spent the happiest months of all my life in Paradise Grove. But I am glad you have seen Darentdale. Is it not lovely?”

“It is, indeed; it is almost as beautiful as our new place in Wales. Are you going there with our people?”

“Oh, yes; unless my father and mother object. I will always take them into my confidence in future. I need not tell you, Mr. Knight, that the thought of them and what I have done to pain them has made me constantly unhappy.”

“I can well believe that. I hope you will still be able to help the people for whom you have made Paradise a real thing.”

“Nay, that is what you are going to do, if you do not spoil your lovely valley with houses and factories.”

“I hope not; I think not. There are no tall, smoky chimneys, you know, and there will be no noisy machines; all will work cleanly and silently, thanks to the benign inventions of the age. And every house has a garden attached to it.”

“Oh, it will be delightful,” she said, rising to leave. “And I will lose no time in going to see my dear ones now.”

She could scarcely wait until evening, but as she had promised, she did so. The talk with Mr. Knight had disturbed her considerably, and her thoughts had flown back to her happy home life, and her pleasant college days. She would not give up her work, she resolved nothing should cause her to do that; but she was glad, indeed, to be going to live, though only for a few days, the old calm, restful life.

“It is all right,” she said, as soon as the people gathered in the evening. “Your cottages will be plainly furnished for you, and you will pay for the furniture, and add to it afterwards. And, oh! it is a most lovely place to which you are going. The sea is like silver and the woods are like Paradise—ah, not such a Paradise as you know here! Now, I am going to take holiday for a week; you will grant me that, will you not?”

“Oh, yes, but mind you don’t stop longer than your time!”

“No, I will not. And now I must say good-bye, for I shall be off before any one is up in the morning. I must make the most of my time, you know; a week is not long.”

“She looks mighty glad about it,” said one to another, as soon as she turned to go to her house.

“Yes, she does that. I think it’s right what they say; and she ain’t really no Basket Woman!”

“Not she! She’s a lady, if ever there was one, and that I’ve said all along.”

Before she could close her door a man presented himself.

“I want to send to my wife, ma’am,” he said. “I’m going to send her some money, and tell her to get ready to go with me to this new place; but it stands to sense as I don’t want all the neighbourhood, so to speak, to know my affairs; and if so be as you’re too busy to help me, I don’t rightly see what’s to be done.”

“What do you want me to do?” The manner of the speaker was patient and sweet as ever, and the tumult in her own heart was made to subside as she rendered the service which the man required.

“Well, I want a letter to go with the money, and I can’t write.”

“Oh, I see. Here is some paper. Now tell me what you wish to say, and I will write it. First, take a seat, and make yourself comfortable. Now, are you ready? Tell me how to begin, then.”

“My dear wife.”

“Yes.”

“I write these few lines to you, hoping to find you quite well, as it leaves me at present; thank God for it.”

“Yes.”

“I’ve had the skyattiker very bad, indeed, lately——”

“The what?”

“Sky-attic-ker!”

“Oh! ah! yes; sciatica. Thank you; go on.”

“The skyattiker all down one side; but it is better now, through a Basket Woman as give me some Holloway’s ointment. Beg pardon, ma’am.”

“Not at all! Basket Woman—ointment—yes; what next, please?”

“I hope the children are all right, bless their little hearts.”

“Yes.”

“I’ve got some news for you.”

“Yes?”

“Me and my mates are going out of town to live and to work, and I want you to join me.”

“Yes?”

“So get things ship-shape with the post-office order what I send, and be ready to come to me as soon as I send for you.”

“What next?”

“So no more at present from your affectionate husband, John Sturman.”

“Affectionate husband, John Sturman. There it is, then,” and the writer proceeded to blot the page and fold the sheet. But the man looked very dissatisfied.

“Stop a minute,” he said; “you had better put at the end of the letter: ‘P.S.—Excuse bad writing and bad spelling.’”

The letter-writer’s laugh rang out merrily, but she faithfully added the postscript.

“Now for the address,” she said. “Have you a stamp?”

The man afterwards confided to a mate that the thought of going out of town seemed to have been “too much for the Basket Woman,” for he had caught her “giggling like anything.”

CHAPTER XIX.
A NEW MINISTER.

A church and congregation in Granchester were without a minister, and had been for some time. If there were not many of them, there were many minds among them, so that it was not quite easy to find a pastor who met the wishes of them all. It was unfortunate.

The congregation became smaller and smaller, the week-night service was so neglected that there seemed little use in keeping it on at all, until at length it dwindled into a prayer-meeting held by half-a-dozen men, whose one cry was, “Send us a man,” one good brother on one occasion solemnly adding, “and let him come clothed and in his right mind.”

And at length he did.

Every one was surprised that the Rev. George Collinson accepted the invitation, for there was no doubt that he was a very superior man. He preached one Sunday, and everybody was so delighted that they gave him a unanimous invitation that same evening to become their pastor. And he, without asking for time to consider, took them at their word and accepted at once.

Mr. Collinson knew very well what he was doing. He was young and full of vigour, and desired earnestly the work of a minister. He enjoyed the idea of occupying a difficult post, and coveted anything rather than ease or inactivity. He foresaw the chances for work there were in Broad street, and he was ready and even eager for the fray. The church that had secured him was no longer to be considered unfortunate. He was a man with a purpose, and this purpose was to live and work almost entirely for the young. His few years of ministry had convinced him that this was the future work of the Church. He had entered the profession with his heart full of enthusiasm, and already he had been disappointed almost to despair. But the formation of this Society of Young Crusaders had reawakened his youthful interest, and now he meant to devote all his powers to the service of the young, and he began as he meant to go on. The adult population of Granchester had many preachers, the young should at least have one. So he told the men of Broad Street who had invited him, and they at once saw that he was a man of independent spirit, who formed his own plans, and executed them without consulting others. He accepted the salary that was offered him; but he had private means, and was, therefore, not entirely dependent for support upon the church. This fact, perhaps, at first contributed to his popularity, and it certainly made it impossible for capricious people to starve him out if they should ever desire to get rid of him, which he hoped they would not do. The “welcome home” which he received was a hearty one, and he commenced his work auspiciously.

He was a ready speaker, and his sermons were short and practical. “There

is always something to do you good, though," said the brother who had prayed that he might come clothed; "and I find it helps you through the week to have something to think of." Whether his sermons cost him much or little effort, no one knew; but there was one part of his work about which there was no doubt.

Mr. Collinson told them at the outset that he would live and work for the young.

"You begin too late," he said to those who sought his aid for missions and refuges, and other efforts to save the adults. "There is no hope for England excepting in the salvation of her children."

"Well, there are the Sunday-schools," was, of course, the answer, but this always brought a peculiar smile to the face of the young minister.

He spent the whole of the afternoon of his first Sunday at Broad Street in the Sunday-school. The teachers were gratified, and they thanked him for his presence.

"Oh, do not thank me," he said; "the Sunday-school is, of course, a part of the church. This is, therefore, my school, and I intend to be present at it every morning and afternoon."

Now this was quite a new idea; and the teachers were not sure that they would like it. It had been a pet grievance with them that their old minister was never seen in the school, excepting on special occasions and by personal invitation. They were never tired of speaking about this at teachers' meetings, when he was absent, and sometimes even in his presence. They often hinted, too, at the lack of sympathy manifested by the church, as if they were not themselves the church, or at least the most important part of it. They frequently declared that a minister's place was in the Sunday-school, and that his duty in this respect was too often neglected. But all the same, when they were informed that the minister intended always to be at the school, most of the teachers felt embarrassed, not a few heads were shaken, and there were many muttered hopes that he would not interfere.

But he did, and that very speedily.

At first he offered to take any class from which the teacher was absent; and whenever he did so the children were very candid and unceremonious in their expression of the wish that their teacher would remain absent always. But the absentee was invariably visited the next day; and if he had not provided a substitute, or had only a trivial reason to give for his absence, that teacher was sure to have a bad quarter of an hour with the minister.

Then he adopted the plan of giving an address at the close of the school, and the address was exceedingly like a lesson, for he had a large blackboard on which he wrote points to be committed to memory; and he asked many questions, which happened to be mostly addressed to the classes that knew the least. After this had gone on for a few Sundays he called a teachers' meeting, and astonished the teachers by the directness of his words to them.

"The most important part of the work of the church," he said, "is the Sunday-school, which ought, therefore, to be in the hands of those whose whole hearts are in it. It is so great, and of such infinite moment, that it deserves to occupy the men and women of highest culture and talent; but it is work which is best done by those who love it, for without enthusiasm in the teachers Sunday-schools are a failure. I hope you will not be offended—but in any case I dare not hold my peace—when I say that in all departments of our own schools there are some classes which greatly need reform. There is a lack of discipline which is fatal; and I fear that sometimes whole classes are dismissed which have not had any real teaching at all. Now, my friends, this work must not be left in incompetent hands. For my own part, I tell you frankly that I dare not be a party to anything so disastrous to the future well-being of this

church. Let no earnest teacher be discouraged; but let all who are not in earnest reconsider their position. The first thing for us to do is to form a Teachers' Training Class, and let us also meet together for mutual preparation of the lesson. What times will be most convenient to you?"

The teachers, as a whole, did not approve of the minister taking things into his own hands in this fashion, and some of them ventured to say so.

"We've took this school ourselves heretofore, and we're masters here," said a man, his face flushing with anger. "If the minister likes to come and visit us sometimes, and say an encouraging word to us, why, we shall be glad to see him; but I, for one, ain't agoing to be dictated to."

Mr. Collinson made no reply to this, and another spoke.

"It is all very well to talk about training and preparation classes, but few of us have time to attend them, for what with our two week-night services, and all the things going on in the town, it is not easy to take up two new subjects. I think we do enough if we come to school Sunday after Sunday and take a class, for the children are so bad that it is dreadfully hard work to do that."

But the new minister had his own way.

"It is my school as well as yours," he said. "I am at the head of it, and while I wish to dwell in harmony with you all, yet, as I place a higher estimate on Sunday-school work than any other, I am extremely anxious that only teachers whose hearts are devoted shall attempt to perform it. We must raise the whole character of this school; who will stand by me in my endeavour to do this?"

"I will," said a voice; and every one looked in amazement at the speaker, whose name was Stapleton.

CHAPTER XX.
A TRICOLOUR CRUSADER.

Ernest Stapleton blushed when Mr. Collinson looked at him, and all the teachers of the Broad Street School followed the minister's example. For he was only a boy, not yet seventeen years old, and he was not even an acknowledged teacher, since he only helped with the library, and occasionally took a class for its absent president. He had been attracted to Broad Street by Mr. Collinson himself, who was already known in Granchester as "The Friend of all the Boys." When they looked at Ernest this is what they saw: A straight boy, rather tall, with well-developed limbs, and a strong face, whose brown hair curled over a thoughtful brow, and whose grey eyes met the gaze of the teachers with frankness and fearlessness.

"How that boy is changed!" was the thought in the minds of several persons who had known him all his life. And, indeed, he was; and the secret of the change was declared to all by the little badge of ribbon which he wore on his breast—the red, white and blue of Old England; the blue for temperance, the white for purity, and the red for battle, or endeavour.

The very first thing which the Rev. George Collinson had done on his settlement was to establish a branch of The Young Volunteer Crusaders. It can scarcely be said that Ernest Stapleton was a volunteer, for he had cost Mr. Collinson some trouble and solicitude before he was finally enrolled; but the new minister had loved the boy, and prayed for him and sought him with wisdom and patience, until at length he was won altogether and entirely. The effort had been made only just in time. The boy had been fast sinking into bad habits that would have weakened and

debased him; already his sisters used his name in irony, and declared that “Ernest had not a bit of earnestness in him,” for he cared for nothing but smoking and drinking, and other discreditable self-indulgences; but now, happily, he was saved, and was showing brave qualities of alertness, endurance, and good sense, such as delighted every one who cared for him, and won from his friends the declaration that “No boy had in him the making of a finer man than Ernest Stapleton.”

Mr. Collinson looked at him admiringly when his “I will” rang out in the teachers’ meeting.

“Yes, Ernest,” he replied, “I am glad to believe that you will, indeed, stand by me, and help to raise the character of this school.”

“But, sir, I am not a teacher,” he said, “I am only a boy, and I am almost afraid to speak before those who are so much older and wiser than I am; and yet, because I am young, and can look at all this from the children’s standpoint, I should like, if I may, to express the hope that all the teachers will agree with you, and have the training and the preparation classes, and anything else that will make the Sunday-school more helpful. You do not know how hard it is for boys and girls to be right. Some fellows that I know, who belong to the Crusaders, had a prayer meeting last night, and we all prayed to God to give us courage not to pretend to be worse than we are. We are bad enough, I know that——”

The young speaker hesitated, and broke down, and the most prejudiced old teacher in the room felt some sympathy for him.

“Go on, Ernest,” said the minister gently, and the rest cheered the boy with an encouraging clap. Presently he recovered himself. “We are not good; we need a Saviour; but many of us would scorn to be as bad as we make ourselves out to be, and there are some of the ‘boys’ ways’ which those who teach us ought to know something about. But boys—the boys of Broad street—will be as bad and black as—because it is supposed to be the thing—some of them make themselves out to be—unless they are helped; and what I want to say—and I hope you will not think me too presumptuous—is this, that the old Sunday-school, as it is now carried on, is not equal to the needs of new boys in these new times.”

“Well, to be sure! What next!” exclaimed a lady teacher; and one or two men felt as if a good horsewhipping would do the young upstart good; but for the most part the teachers knew that Ernest had spoken the truth, and though his words had given them pain, yet they were glad that he had uttered them, and hopeful that the result would prove beneficial.

“I, too, will stand by Mr. Collinson,” said the superintendent, “and by right of the office with which you have invested me, I venture to repeat Gideon’s words to his army, ‘Whosoever is fearful and afraid let him return and depart.’ It is quite true that the usual Sunday-school, though it has done splendid work in the past, is quite inadequate to the needs of the children to-day, and if we are not willing to do anything and everything to bring ourselves up to date, we had better stand aside and yield the work to those who will.”

The scene which followed could not be other than painful. One after another of the teachers resigned; and the resignation of a few was accepted, while the discriminating superintendent advised some to try the new plans before they quite gave up.

It was with an anxious heart that Ernest Stapleton went home after the meeting. He was not at all sure that he had not been wrong, and the author of much mischief; although with the usual confidence of youth he had great faith in his own opinions. Still, he thought that Mr. Collinson had approved of him, and if so, there was not much to fear, for though he doubted himself a little, he doubted the minister not at all; so his courage rose as he passed through the gates of his father’s residence.

He ran up the steps, whistling as he went; but on the top one he sighed, and a fear which he had known before came back to him. He was afraid that there was something wrong in his home. His father looked dreadfully worried, and although he knew that among his men another strike was impending, yet even that was not sufficient, he thought, to quite account for so much anxiety. And his mother—his beautiful mother, whom he loved so dearly—looked sometimes pale, and as if she had been crying. Ernest wondered what it all meant, and feared that trouble was impending.

When he stepped into the hall he heard his uncle's voice, and that, too, he thought a little strange. Dr. Stapleton had visited them very rarely until quite lately, but now it was no unusual thing for him to be there once or twice in a week.

The Doctor came forward to greet him. He was looking wretchedly ill and worn, but he had always a cheery word for his nephew, whom he cordially approved.

"Well, Ernest, old boy, how are you? How are the Crusaders going on? Is there much fighting at present?"

"Plenty of fighting, uncle, though we do not have a big gun to accompany us. How are you? Have you come to stay a few weeks, or will you run away directly, as you generally do?"

"I think my patients consider that I usually stay quite long enough. I must try to get back by to-morrow evening. How many boys do you number now in your regiment? Three hundred? That is splendid. I hope they will all be faithful."

"Certainly something has improved the boys of Granchester," said Miss Stapleton. "They are not nearly as rude and coarse as they were. Mother and I were remarking it the last time we went through the streets. Although it was evening we did not hear a single boy swear. And that is a thing that ought to be written in red ink among the chronicles of Granchester.

"You see, Mat, that these fellows are all capable of being taught and persuaded, only the wrong teachers get hold of them. The best lessons are not to be got in the streets; but it is in the streets that most boys get their lessons. They are a little mistaken as to what manliness is; but that is not their fault. How should they know if they are not taught? They judge by the men whom they see. They seldom have the best types exhibited to them."

"They know something of their fathers' masters, I suppose?"

"Yes; but all their fathers' masters are not like our father. Many of them do not treat their men properly."

"You see, Uncle Fred, what Ernest's tendencies are! He is a Socialist. And he is a poet of the people! Think of it! Ernest, you will let Uncle Fred see your last attempt. Here it is, uncle. I made him give me a copy."

Dr. Stapleton took the paper, and read—

"THE LOWER ORDERS."

Who are the "lower orders,"
  Not those who toil all day,
And for fair wages give good work,
  As honest workmen may.
Such men are of the noblest
  Who life's rough paths have trod;
Faithful to wife, and kind to child,
  And true to self and God.

These are the higher orders,
  The self-restrained and strong,
Too great to yield to selfishness,
  Too proud to do the wrong;
Who copy Christ of Nazareth,
  And live and toil as He,
And claim their right as freemen,
  Since He has made them free.

Men talk about “the masses,”
  And call them “lowly born,”
But many are more worthy
  Of reverence than of scorn.
Ah! some of wealth and place might learn
  Of these heroic ones;
And well for dear old England
  Were such her only sons!

But of “the lower orders,”
  Enough and hosts to spare
Has England for her sorrow,
  And have we all for care.
The idle and the dissolute,
  The cowardly and base;
Alas! for countries and for homes
  That have to give them space!

They are “the lower orders,”
  Who practise low deceit;
The drones in hives of industry,
  The loungers in the street,
The self-indulgent sons of vice,
  The sullen and untrue,
Whose useless hands are stretched to take,
  But are not skilled to do.

There are no lower orders
  But these—the self-made low.
Men are despised and scorned because
  They choose to have it so.
Unworthiness, not poverty,
  Alone supplies the ban
Which keeps the hand of fellowship
  Of man from brother man,

Cannot we lift the low ones
  Up to a fairer height?
O! Love shall be the teacher,
  And God will speed the right.
Let us go down in loving quest
  These lowest ones to reach;
God’s heaven has room enough for all,
  And His grace is for each.

Dr. Stapleton said very little after reading the verses; he simply congratulated his nephew, and advised him to continue doing that sort of work; but when, after supper, the household had retired, and the two brothers were consulting together in the library, the Doctor spoke of the boy to his father.

“It is a fine thing to have such a son,” he said; “he will be a help and comfort to you, Felix.”

“Perhaps,” was the reply; “but I am afraid of the boy’s judgment. When he comes to know the truth about my circumstances I am afraid he will turn against me. He has strict notions of honour and truth, and I am glad that he should have. But what will he think of me?”

“When are you going to tell him?”

“I cannot tell him at all—and yet he must know soon.”

“If I were you, Felix, I would take him into confidence at once. He is a good boy and sensible, and his counsel may be as worth having and following as that of any man of the world.”

“But he believes himself the heir to a fortune. It will be a terrible disappointment and come down for him.”

“Oh, no! I think not. The young do not care for money as the old do. And it is too bad to deceive him longer. Let us tell him the truth in the morning. Who knows but that he may be able to throw a little light upon the darkness?”

“Will you help me to break the news to him before you leave?”

“Yes, I will, and I cannot help hoping that good rather than harm will come of it.”

Ernest slept soundly, as a healthy boy should, whose conscience is at peace, and he awoke the next morning in a most merry mood. He opened the letter-bag, and made his sister chase him for a letter addressed to herself, and then he tossed his youngest sister into the air and caught her like a ball, after which he took her for a ride on his bicycle, until she screamed with delight.

He remembered all this years afterward; for it always seemed to him that this was the morning when he suddenly grew out of boyhood into youth.

When breakfast was finished his father sent for him into the library; and as the boy entered the room, he knew that he was going to learn something about the shadow which had so long hung above his home.

“Ernest, my lad,” said Dr. Stapleton, gently, “your father has some bad news for you, which it is harder for him to tell than for you to hear, though it will trouble you greatly. You are young, but you are the oldest son he has, and he has a right to look to you for sympathy and help. You will not fail him, I know.”

The boy looked pale—it was such a solemn address for his uncle to make—but he left his seat, and went to his father’s side and stood with his hand on his shoulder.

“What is it, father?” he said. “Please tell me quickly. I have known for some time that there was a trouble, though I cannot imagine what it is.”

“Do you find your pocket-money enough for your needs, Ernest?” Mr. Stapleton’s voice trembled a little, but he tried to speak as cheerfully as he could. The boy looked surprised at the question.

“It is now, father,” he said, “because I am more careful than I used to be. Why? Has any one spoken to you about me? Indeed, father, I assure you that I have no debts now.”

“No, my son, it is I who have the debts. I am sorry to tell you that I have had heavy losses, and that my riches have taken to themselves wings and flown away.”

“You mean that you are not as well off as you used to be, father? I have guessed that lately. But there might be worse troubles than that, don’t you think so?”

“Yes, my son, and there are. I cannot pay my debts.”

“Then let us part with some of the things we have. I will sell my pony and my bicycle, and anything else that I have. We can sell this house and our carriages, and go into a small place in the country, for, of

course, we must not live on other people’s property. If we cannot pay for things, they do not belong to us, and we have no right to them.”

“But, Ernest, think of your poor mother.”

“It is of my beautiful mother that I am thinking all the time. Father, we could not let any disgrace touch her, could we? There is no disgrace in being poor, unless we pretend to be rich. You were rich once, so you had a right to seem so; but now if the riches are gone, we shall be just as happy. Do not doubt us, father; mother, Mat and I will not add to your trouble. Be sure of that. Don’t become a bankrupt, father. Sell everything, and let the money go as far as it will, and then after a time we will pay the rest.”

It was all easy and natural and simple to the boy; and Mr. Stapleton was half convinced as he listened to him. “Perhaps it will be best,” he said; “indeed, it is the more honourable way, but for the disgrace of it.”

Ernest opened his eyes widely. “Disgrace!” he cried. “There is no disgrace if we pay people.”

“Ah, Ernest,” said Dr. Stapleton, “you do not know what temptations there are in such a crisis as this. I will tell you what happened to me soon after I knew of your father’s troubles. Naturally, I would give all that I have and more to save my brother. One night, when I was wondering how I could get money, a man came to me and offered me a thousand pounds as a fee for doing something which both he and I knew to be wrong. I hesitated; for I have always endeavoured to act honourably in my profession; but I thought of the use that thousand pounds would be in our present difficulty to your father, and seeing me waver, he placed the cheque on my table, and left me.”

“Oh, Uncle Fred, I am so sorry; and I am sure father would not wish you to do wrong for him, would you, father?”

“No, Ernest, not when I am in my right mind, but a drowning man will catch at any straw, and I don’t know what I might have said if your uncle had asked me just then. But that was before Mr. Knight’s visit. I do thank God for that man’s faithful talk to me.”

“I thank God for him also,” said the Doctor. “I kept that cheque for about thirty hours, Ernest, and then, I am glad to say, I sent it back. Had I not have done so I never could have looked Arthur Knight in the face again, and what would have been worse, my nephew would not have respected me more.”

“But you never could have done it, Uncle Fred, if it was really wrong,” said Ernest.

CHAPTER XXI.
A HAPPY EXODUS.

“Mother, are you really sure that you can forgive me? It is so good to have a mother, that I feel as if I can never be grateful enough.”

“You are fully and freely forgiven, Mary. I have always known that my child’s heart is right—it is her head that is wrong.”

Mary Wythburn had found her parents, thanks to Arthur Knight’s assistance, and she was supremely happy. It was wonderful that they had not met before; but there is no place where it is so possible to lose one’s self as London, and they had been within a few miles of each other without once coming into contact. Mary had learnt many salutary lessons during her voluntary absence from her parents. She felt herself more

than a year older, though less than that time had elapsed since she disappeared from her home on the day fixed for her marriage. That the marriage had not become an accomplished fact she never regretted; but she would ever feel sorrow and humiliation as she thought of her own cowardice in not facing the situation earlier. But that was all over now, and the new life, with all its vivid interests, was that which of all others she would have chosen.

“Mr. Knight will not let me go with his people unless you give your consent,” she said; “and, indeed, I could not myself go without it, for I have never been really happy, knowing that I must be causing you pain and anxiety.”

“You never ought to have set yourself up as a teacher of others when you were so failing in your own duty,” her father said; but it was the only stern sentence that fell from his lips. “You shall go with these people,” he added; “and if Mr. Knight will let us come too and help, as far as we are able, in the good work, we will be very glad.”

So Mary, who wept first for home and sorrow, afterward cried for joy, and when the party of English folk went away to settle in one of the loveliest parts of the north of mid-Wales, the Wythburns all accompanied them.

Arthur Knight had found the very place he wanted—a large space of moorland and waste miles of land unoccupied, excepting for a few farmhouses. The land was not in a very high state of cultivation; but when, for the first time, he stood and gazed upon it, his imagination covered it, as it was to-day, with bright and pleasant homes and long bits of garden-land, in which the people might learn the joy of growing their own flowers and vegetables. The place chosen was at the head of a glen, which led down to Afon Wen, a small village on the shore. The place itself—five miles from Afon Wen—was called Craighelbyl. There was a large old house on the top of the hill standing in its own grounds, which wore a very neglected and dejected appearance. It had been left to itself for nearly a hundred years, and all sorts of interesting and dreadful tales were told about it. It had belonged to “one of the great families” years and years ago, and the old sailors could spin as good a yarn about it as of the sea itself. The owner of the Hall had kept a smuggling cellar on the coast; and it was said that a long underground passage led from the Hall to the sea. This man had been an irreligious Englishman, who had married a Welsh lady and treated her badly; and there were dark stories of a crime once committed in the house, which had in consequence stood tenantless for a long period. There were not many things left in it; there was a little furniture, but it had disappeared, nobody knew how; and if there did happen to be a table or a chair in some of the cottages thereabouts which looked as if it did not quite belong to the cottages, nobody knew how it came to be there, certainly nobody belonging to this generation. The last person who had occupied the house was a farmer, but he and his wife had died there. Another farmer thought of taking it, but there was no land to be farmed, little but moors and rocks and sea, and this man only spent a week there, and it was such a stormy week as only this part of our country knows. So he soon had enough of it, and he declared that the rooms were so dismal that all the wealth of the Indies would not be payment enough for him to stay. So, as there was no one to tempt him by offering him such wealth, he left, and since then it had been empty. Some stone had been taken away from the place and used to make walls; and, indeed, sometimes they had talked of pulling the house down altogether, for the sake of the materials.

It was a happy thing for Arthur Knight and his people that this had not been done, for of all his purchases this old house, perhaps, pleased him the best. The ancient mansion was to be put to highest uses, and every room in it was to echo with the joyous voices of the young people who were learning to be good citizens, and Christian men and women. For educational and social purposes no better place could have been discovered. It was itself a lesson in Welsh history; and Mr. Knight had expended a large sum of money in providing it with a good library,

pictures, and a museum, in keeping with its traditions. Round about this house the new village had been planted.

Mr. Knight hoped that there would be good fellowship between his English and the Welsh, to the ultimate advantage of both. He could not tell what the natives of Craighelbyl said about him and his people, because he did not understand Welsh; but he found them quite willing to work for him, and it was very much through them, and because any number of labourers could be secured to unite in friendly rivalry with Englishmen, that the township rose so rapidly to completion. It was fortunate for him that the building trade was bad generally, and he had, therefore, no difficulty in securing a colony of builders.

One evening some young Welshmen were talking over the affairs of the nation. “We are on the eve of a change,” said one, “when every man will have what is right and true. It is coming.”

“And soon—forthwith, as you may say. At least, that is my creed.”

“Well, we are going to have a change anyhow, for Mr. Knight will bring his people down to the top of the hill next Thursday.”

“Thursday, is it? They have soon got the place ready. Shall you take his offer?”

“And move up there to work? Yes, I think I shall.”

“I shall stay here. Three of us are going shares in a boat or two. It is certain that the folk on Saturday half-holidays and so on will come down here and want some rows on the sea, and we shall make a very good thing of it.”

The distance from the “large house” to the shore was four miles. The hamlet by the sea had only about a dozen houses, and at first Mr. Knight was half inclined to buy them all up, but even a millionaire has to be careful in regard to his expenditure when he attempts such things as Arthur Knight had done, so he left the place alone. The few inhabitants were prepared to give the strangers on the hill top a kind welcome, though, with true Welsh prudence, they would not commit themselves to anything until time had been given to judge the Londoners and see of what stuff they were made.

Mr. Knight chartered a special train for the use of his people, and there was a great crowd at Euston Station to see them off. The poor have many friends, and there were some pathetic leave-takings among them. Wales was “them furren parts” to those who, most of them, had never been five miles away from London. The journey was a great event in their lives, but a pleasant one, too; and this new emigration had much of the novelty and excitement of expectation, with very little of the pain of an emigration of the ordinary kind.

When they had travelled rather more than half way the train stopped at a small station, and the people were told to alight.

“The master has thought of everything. At this place is a substantial meal of sandwiches, bread and butter, and tea and coffee, all at his expense,” they were told.

The born leader of men knew how wearisome the journey might appear to some of the women and children to whom the experience was the most novel, and that when their heads and backs ached, and they got hungry, their courage would begin to ooze away, and they would be half afraid of the new life and regretful of the old; but this break in the journey would cheer and refresh them all, and help them to complete the remaining miles in better condition and spirits. It was but a little thing, perhaps, but it was worth thinking of, and it was like Arthur Knight to have arranged it.

He himself met them at the station, with two or three friends who were

already domiciled, and who had each his special part to perform in the new village. First, there was the Rev. James Davies, the minister of the church, who was entering upon his work with as much enthusiasm as Arthur Knight himself; who would be the friend and brother as well as the preacher, and who deeply felt the solemnity of his position, for to him the care of the souls of these people had been given. Next, there was Dr. Armitt, whose duty it would be to keep the community in health, as far as in him lay, who was to administer advice and medicine without charge, and who was to perform the duties of a sanitary inspector, with the right to prevent everything likely to affect the health of the community. There was another important person, Mr. Freeman, the manager of the trade department, at whose handsome store-rooms the people could purchase all necessities of food and clothing, and whose business was to be regulated on co-operative principles. Besides these there were a few men and women helpers who had prepared the homes. By the help of Mr. and Mrs. Hancourt, the Basket Woman, and Fanny Burton, the head of each family had a card with the name or number of his house, for they had been located beforehand so as to prevent confusion on their arrival. It was evening when they arrived, and Mr. Knight had a fire burning and a table spread in every house to give it a home-like appearance; and, full of happy expectations, he awaited the result.

Nor was he disappointed. When the train steamed in, and the people sprang out of the carriages and looked around on the scene of beauty before them, the pretty houses in the little town, the fair sunset light on the hills, and the kind look upon the face of their master, they raised a ringing cheer, and the boys began to sing “For he’s a jolly good fellow” as boys only can sing.

They were soon streaming down, and up toward their homes, each party following their guide, and each naturally somewhat curious. Very soon there were exclamations of delight and satisfaction—“Well, I never!” “Did you ever!” “Ain’t it grand!” “We sha’n’t know ourselves here in these fine places.”

The men, a little incredulous, and half afraid that “things were not what they seemed,” but that, somehow or other, Mr. Knight meant “having” them over it, were sober in their praises and cautious in their joy. And so were some of the women, though most of them were in raptures.

“Now rub your shoes,” cried one mother to her children. “Don’t you know what a mat is for?”

Another turned to her husband with quivering lips (which he kissed) and said, “Jim, here’s a chance for us; we’ve never had one before;” and Jim replied, “Please God, we’ll make the best of it, old woman.”

“Here’s a lovely home, father; scrumptious, isn’t it? And tea ready for us! Why, here’s a loaf and everything we want to begin on. Isn’t it a splendid kitchen?”

“Mother, here’s a bath. Well, I never! I thought only gentlefolks’ houses had baths in ’em. The poor wasn’t supposed to get dirty.”

“Ain’t Mr. Knight a brick?”

“He is the brickiest brick in the world.”

“I’ll have a bath this very night. I wouldn’t go into that lovely bed without being clean.”

“And look at the cupboards and the nails.”

“And, oh, what a lovely cooking-stove! If ever a man deserved to be sent straight to heaven the master does!” Mr. Knight happened to hear this last remark and was much amused by it.

“But I don’t want to be sent to heaven yet,” he said. “I want to see how you get on in your new homes, and to take care that you are able to earn

something to put in the lovely stove."

"Law, yes, sir. I hopes you'll live to be a 'undered, and so we does all; but we've all got to die sometime, you know, and you wouldn't object to heaven at last, I suppose."

There were two days for the people to enjoy before work commenced on Monday; and the men and women had time to visit each other, and offer congratulations, especially in regard to the new factories in which they were to work. There was no heart of them all so full of joy and gratitude as that of Arthur Knight; but when Sunday morning dawned over the little place, he felt, as never before, the great responsibility which rested upon him. That which he had been able to do for his people had been done for humanity's sake; but behind that motive was another and a stronger one; and he knew, if no one else did, that it was all _for Christ's sake_. He was extremely anxious now that the people should come to understand that, and should give the credit of all that was good in his scheme, where it was due, to the Christianity which some of them despised, and only a few rightly apprehended.

They had been happily busy about their homes and in their gardens, and had visited their future work-places with a good deal of interest and curiosity, and they had swarmed into the Old House, and examined their treasures there with the greatest delight; but the church had not yet been open, excepting to a very few. It stood on the side of the hill, a conspicuous and beautiful object, bearing its name on its front in letters which might be read at a distance—

"OUR FATHER'S HOUSE,"

and the people knew that on the Sunday morning it was to be consecrated. Word had also been sent to every house that Mr. Knight asked, as a great favour to himself, that all the people—men, women, and children—would, for that one morning, at least, go to church. Many of them wished he had not; there was the inevitable question of clothes still to be considered, and the men especially declared that they had not the least idea "how to go on"; but good influences were brought to bear upon them, Hancourt and his wife especially putting it to them whether it was not worth while to endure even a little awkwardness rather than treat Mr. Knight with ingratitude and unkindness, and so, at length, consent was won all round.

It was an ideal morning. The sun lighted up the blue sea in the distance, and rested lovingly on sloping hills and green fields. A fresh breeze blew across the space, and fanned the faces of the people as they stood in little groups, each in their own doorway and garden. The men and women were so proud of their new possessions, and so glad in the new possibilities of their lives, that a touching tenderness, seldom seen among them, was everywhere visible. Women stood with their hands on the shoulders of their husbands and a strange light in their eyes, and men, usually so rough that the children crept out of their way, looked so kind because they were so happy, that the boys challenged them to a game and the girls lifted up their faces to be kissed.

And then the air was filled with exquisite music, for up the hills and through the valley came the sounds of the Sabbath bells. They had not rung before, and they came with a surprise to the people, who for a few minutes hushed their voices and listened in quiet pleasure. And then, for a little while, the homes were filled with the bustle of preparation, and soon the green hill was dotted with ascending figures of "young men and maidens, old men and children," on their way to "praise the name of the Lord, whose name alone is excellent."

One of the last to go was Fanny Burton, who had lingered in case any laggards among the people needed shepherding. She found several, and took them to church with her. "I will wait for you," she said; "we must not disappoint Mr. Knight to-day. It is his birthday—don't you know?—and such a little thing as he asks in return for all the great things he has done for us, we couldn't be so base as to deny him, not if we tried ever

so.”

And all the people found a home in the Father’s House. The best places, if there were any best, were allotted to those who had come in their working attire, because they had no other. The children were not put away in the gallery by themselves, but sat with their parents. The church was light and bright and comfortable; the colours were harmonious, and the arrangements simple and artistic.

A great hush fell upon the congregation, and then the organ sounded softly, and the choir began to sing the first public words heard in the new sanctuary, “I will arise and go to my Father.” Next they knelt, and repeated together the prayer which Christ taught His disciples; and lips quivered and hearts throbbed as the old words, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” seemed to take new meanings. Then the grand _Te Deum_ rang exultingly through the building, and linked it to the sacred edifices of all the centuries, and the minister offered a short dedicatory prayer:—“Let the glory of the Lord fill the house of God. Let Thine eyes be open and Thine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place. Choose and sanctify this house that Thy name may be here for ever, and Thine eyes and Thy heart be here perpetually. Here may Thy wandering children come home to Thee, their Father; and here may they learn to love and to keep Thy statutes and Thy commandments. And here may Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour, see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, because through Him Thy children turn to Thee and are reconciled. Here let the little ones call His name blessed. Here may the old men find rest and peace in Him. And here may men and women come to have all that is good in them strengthened, and all that is evil cast out. From this place let us all go forth to do our work and live our lives in the way that is pleasing in Thy sight. And so let this our Father’s House be the dear home of all this people.”

The service throughout was bright and attractive and conducted with great reverence. The organ was a good one, and the hymns were sung to well-known tunes. The sermon was short and very practical, and the children were not forgotten. There was no inattention, no weariness anywhere; and Mr. Davies was resolved that there never should be. He had his chance now, for all the people were there, and he meant them all to come again, not because Mr. Knight wished it, but because they chose to come. The minister was not one to talk about himself, and therefore no one knew how he had agonised in prayer to God for some souls to be given him on that day, spending a whole night in prayer asking for Divine light and guidance, so that this great opportunity might be used to its fullest extent. It was a rousing little sermon, which called forth a feeling of gratitude among the people. At its close there was silence for a few minutes, in order that souls might be offered in secret to the Lord, whose presence in His sanctuary so many people felt.

And then Arthur Knight stepped upon the platform, and gazed upon the faces, eager with interest, and beautiful with feeling, of these people who belonged to him, and for whose welfare he was passionately solicitous.

“My friends,” he said, and there was a tremor in his voice which instantly awoke a response, “I thank you for giving me the joy of welcoming you one and all to our Father’s House, a building which by prayer we have this day consecrated to our highest welfare, and one which will be open every day, so that any of you may at any time come in for quiet and rest, in which you may make known to Him your wants. I am not afraid of desecrating either the church or the day, though I speak to you on some subjects which, perhaps, hitherto we have not considered religious; but I know it will not be easy to get you all together again, and I cannot let slip the chance which has been given me. Mr. Davies uttered a sentence which, if I had to preach a sermon, I would almost take as my text—‘Every social reform that starts at Calvary will be successful.’ I hope his words are true, though, indeed, I am sure of it, for that is where this started. Several years ago, in a foreign land where I knew no one but the two friends with whom I travelled, one was taken ill. He knew that he had to die, and he was afraid, for death

opened his eyes, and he saw a Beyond, a Hereafter, of which he had been sceptical before. Neither of us knew anything of religion, but we had all heard of Jesus, and I remembered His death on Calvary, and the story of His resurrection. So I prayed to Him, and asked Him, if He were really living and able to save, to save my friend, and make it easy for him to die. And we remembered some words of His: ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out’; and my friend asked Him to take him, and to give him some assurance of His pardon and peace. And a most wonderful change then came over the dying man; I think that his eyes saw the King in His beauty, for his face grew radiant, and his voice triumphant, and he said several times, ‘_He loved me, and gave Himself for me_,’ and he told us that he was glad to depart and be with Christ, and so he died. I think you will not be surprised to hear that I have never been the same since. The Lord Jesus Christ has been a great deal more to me than a person in history, or a great reformer, or anything of that kind; He has been to me a living personal Saviour and Friend. I started from Calvary, and because He had died there for my sins, I felt that I must give my whole life to pleasing Him; so I studied the New Testament, which is the revelation of Him; and I soon saw that the most acceptable thanks I could offer Him would be to imitate Him as far as I could. You know how, soon after my return home, my father died, and his business came into my hands, and with it you, my people. And my prayer became one you have all heard before, ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ I think that by degrees He has shown me. Because you were my own people I wanted you to be good and happy. I could not bear to live in my own large house with every luxury, and think of you, in miserable courts, cramped for space, and denied most of the things which I liked. I was grieved, but not at all surprised to find that many of you had left off caring about doing the right; that men and women drank beer and gin to make them forget for awhile their woes and wrongs; and that only those chiefly who knew the love of God, or who were gifted with great strength of character, had power to resist the demoralising influences that were around you. I soon began to see that my duty was to make things better for you, and I have tried to do it in the way that seemed to me the best. Many of you have not had a chance, but you have one now, to make your life a different thing altogether. The future is in your own hands; for me I can do no more. I was a rich man, but I am a poor man now. If this venture is to be made a success, it is you, not I, who must do it. If you choose to be idle, and careless of the interests of the firm, we shall all be ruined together. To-morrow you will begin work. You know all that I can tell you of the great competition in the markets of the world, and how articles that are badly made or expensive will be returned on our hands. At my father’s dying request I have made a change in our productions, and henceforth Knight’s goods are to be of the first class only. I am told that I shall end my days in the workhouse. I am not afraid of it, because I trust you. And this I declare, on this Sabbath morning, in God’s house—you shall have a rightful share in all the profits that accrue from your labour. Your houses can be in time bought by you, and so can the business itself; and very glad shall I be if, on honourable and just terms, we are able eventually to turn it into a co-operative concern. There are two matters in regard to you respecting which I am most anxious—one is work, and the other is character, the latter being by far the more important. There are certain things in regard to the manifestations of character which are in my power, and this power I shall exert to the utmost. I will not have swearing, or drinking, or gambling, or immorality carried on in any building or space that belongs to me. This is a law, and the breaking of the law will be followed by instant dismissal. Of that I am determined. But I pray you help me in this, by voluntarily giving up habits which you know to be wrong. And if you cannot hate sin, ask my Helper to help you; for Christ knows what temptations are, and it is He only who can cleanse us at the source of all our actions, the heart and the will. We have no police; you must be your own policemen. I trust to the public opinion of our little community, and to the efforts of all good men among you, to keep the peace. At present—and I hope we shall remain so—we are simply a private family, with whom no one outside has a right to interfere; and the affairs of the village will be managed by a board chosen by you all.

“No provision has been made here for three institutions, which we all

admit to be good where they are necessary; but which, I hope, will not be necessary in our own village of Craighelbyl—they are the poor-house, the hospital, and the Sunday-school. There is no poor-house, because we do not mean to have any poor. There is to be a compulsory system of insurance, by which an income for the sick and the aged will be provided, and which will be supplemented by a scale of pensions to be paid out of the profits of the business. I want every one to enjoy the blessings of independence. In regard to the hospital, that is a splendid thing for people who have not comfortable homes. But when we are sick it would surely be better for us to remain with those who care for us rather than be taken away among strangers. Dr. Armitt and Miss Wythburn will be glad to train some of you young women who wish to be nurses, so that to any home where sickness should unfortunately come a nurse can come also if she be needed, and bring with her the requisites for a sick room. Of course, if a fever should break out, other arrangements would have to be made; but we will not anticipate this. An ambulance-class will be at once formed, and one of the rooms of the gymnasium is to be set apart for its use.

“What I have next to say to you will, I am sure, surprise you. Our day-schools are to be as excellent as they can possibly be made; but at present there is no Sunday-school, though that is not exactly what I mean, for I hope there will be quite a universal Sunday-school, but there is as yet no special building set apart for it. If you desire a Sunday-school on the old lines I will not oppose it. How can I when I know how much of that which is best in England is the outcome of the Sunday-school system? And our day-school buildings will be the best that could be imagined for the purposes of the Sunday-school, if such an institution should be required. But if I were a father I would trust the religious teachings of my children to no one but myself. The home is the true Sunday-school; mothers and fathers are the best teachers; it is in the family that the children should learn that which is most important for them to know. And I hope there will be little gatherings of neighbours this afternoon, in which the right sort of schools will be inaugurated. At the same time I am glad to give notice that in our church there will be, every Sunday afternoon, a young people’s service, to which all over thirteen are invited.

“In regard to the church itself, will you bear with me while I say a few words? Those of you who are Christians—and I am most thankful that you are so many—represent, no doubt, every denomination of the one great Universal Church. Divided upon some points though we are, we know that there is for us all but one Saviour, that one God is our Father, and our great hope is that at the last we shall live together as one family in one heaven. It is surely possible, therefore, for us to worship together in one building now. As you know, there is but one building provided in Craighelbyl, and I hope that we shall never furnish material for a division among Christians in this place. I am myself a Nonconformist, as my father was before me. At the same time, I honour and revere the Church of England. Ours is, of course, a Free Church. Personally, I should like the beautiful Litany to be used here, and much of the ordinary service; but this I leave to be decided by the majority of members of the church. I hope that you all—Churchmen, Wesleyans, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, or whatever you are—will resolve, for the credit of our common Christianity, to keep the peace among yourselves, and that you will worship and work together for the kingdom of God. The time has surely come for the establishment of one great united Church, the members of which are resolved, if not to end all strife and competition among themselves—which God grant!—at least, to suspend all differences, and beneath the flag of truce to labour for the suppression of the evil and misery of the world. My dear friends, I congratulate you and myself on the fact that we are leading the way, and that the multitudes of Christ’s disciples will surely follow. We are doing what we can, but we need help and guidance lest we spoil our endeavour by mistakes and failures. This is a day of great joy and thankfulness; let us make it also a day of great prayer, that the spirit of wisdom and understanding may be given to us. And may God bless us, and make us blessings to each other. Amen.”

“Amen!” heartily responded the people.

There was a sedateness upon the faces of the people as they filed out of the Church; but hope and resoluteness were visible there also. Many of them were beginning a new life, indeed; and some remained behind to pray; and others went to their homes with such joyful hearts that God must have heard their song, if no one else did.

As soon as Arthur Knight reached the road, a young man, who took off his hat and stood bareheaded, addressed him.

“You have forgotten me, sir, no doubt; but my name is Jones. It was I who threw the stone at you on the first Sunday after your return to England.”

“Yes; I remember you. I am glad to find you are here.”

“Sir, I want to give my life to you. I suppose you are not going to settle down with us here, because you have your great work in the world to do. We do not like you to go out as you do, alone. Oh, we know that God will take care of you, and no harm will come to you; but sometimes you must want a servant to do an odd thing for you, or some one you know to speak to you.”

“My dear fellow, no; I do not want a servant in the least. My habits are far too simple, and my portmanteau is too small for that. I carry it in my hand, and I stay with friends, so that there is no expense.”

“Yes; we know. But a dozen young men are going to keep me and pay my expenses. I am just to follow you about, but not to interfere with you in any way. You won’t know that I am there unless you happen to want me. But I shall be where you are, and I can let them know at home, here, how you are and all about you. I shall be in the same train and the same town. I shall hear you speak, and be near you all the time. Don’t say No, please, sir; for we have all set our hearts upon it. I am to do it for a year. I, who deserve it least, am to have the honour first, then I shall go back to work, and the others each take a turn, sir; please do give way on this thing, and let us have our own will in the matter.”

Arthur Knight was much touched.

“I do not know how it will answer, but since you desire it so much, we will try this plan.”

“Thank you, sir; thank you! All the fellows will be much obliged to you. As for me, the fact is, sir, I—I—I love the very ground you tread upon!”

CHAPTER XXII.
“GET ON, GET HONOUR, GET HONEST.”

Geoff and Sissie Hancourt were staying at Hornby Hall, and Miss Tom Whitwell was having a splendid time with them. She had been introduced to the parents of the children, and when she heard of the projected emigration into Wales, she begged that during the time of the removal the children might be her guests.

“I will take as much care of them as their own mother could,” she said, “and bring them to you when you are settled. We have already an invitation to visit the place with the horrible name—what is it? Craighelbyl. For Mrs. Wythburn has invited Margaret Miller and me to see for ourselves the working of the millennium which the new Don Quixote is bringing about; so if you will lend me the children, Mrs. Hancourt, I promise not to keep them or run away with them, but to return them to you, whole, and in good condition.”

The little which Mrs. Hancourt knew of Tom was enough to assure her that her darlings would be quite safe in her care, and she felt that it would really be a relief to be free from the worry of them during that busy time; though she found it difficult to part from them even for a week or two. Tom, however, carried her point, and took the children with her.

“It is a trying thing to be a mother, Margaret,” she said to her friend, “and very bad for the emotional part of a woman’s nature. Poor Mrs. Hancourt embraced those children and wept over them until her hands trembled, and her eyes were swollen, and she looked ready to faint with grief. She kissed their hands and their faces, and I think she would have kissed their feet if she could conveniently have got at them. It is a mysterious sort of love which a mother has, Margaret, but these children are darlings. They are asleep now; come and look at them.”

The friends were walking in the Hornby grounds, and as Tom uttered the last words she lifted her eyes to the window of the room where she had left Sissie comfortably tucked into the dainty little bed which she and her sisters had prepared for her reception.

The next moment a low cry of anguish broke from her, and Margaret, looking in the same direction, felt as if her heart froze with horror. The window had been pushed up, and standing outside on the sill was the little figure in white which Tom had promised to restore to her mother.

The child’s nightdress floated in the breeze, and she was looking up to a swallow’s nest built in the roof, while clapping her tiny hands to see if she could make a bird fly from it.

“Oh, God, have mercy!” groaned Margaret, with white lips. “Don’t let the child see us, Tom. Run upstairs; but do not startle her. Go into the room quietly, and hold out your arms.”

Tom flew up the stairs, and Margaret stood below under the window, holding out the skirt of her dress to catch the child if she should fall.

There were three flights of stairs, and it appeared to Tom that it took her an age to ascend them. She thought she could not pray; but body, soul, and spirit seemed to go up to God in one voiceless but impassioned cry of entreaty.

She could scarcely breathe when she reached the door; but she opened it gently, and said softly, “Sissie! Sissie!”

The child was too much interested in the nest to hear her, and Tom felt suddenly as if she had lost her voice.

A chair stood by the window; the little one had evidently stood on it to gain access to the sill. Would she step back to the chair now?

“Sissie! Sissie, darling!” said Tom. But she was afraid to go too near the window, for fear of frightening the little one. What should she do? Had she better ring the bell and rouse the house? Or fetch Geoff to call his sister?

Presently it occurred to her that if she went softly round by the wall she could manage to suddenly clutch the little form. And she tried; but Sissie saw her, and Tom’s heart sank with dismay.

“You can’t catch me, Miss Tom!” she said.

And Tom opened her arms, and said, “Come to me, darling; I have something for you.”

The next moment Tom sank to the floor with the little one in her arms; Sissie murmuring, in tones of contrition, “Poor auntie! Naughty, naughty Sissie!”

Almost directly there were steps on the stairs, and sobs in the voices of those who tried to ask questions.

But when Tom sat up, looking dazed, and Mr. and Mrs. Whitwell came into the room with white faces, Sissie Hancourt was lying quietly in the little bed, with her eyes closed as peacefully as if nothing had happened.

Margaret lifted her out and wrapped her in a shawl. “I am afraid you are a very, very naughty little girl,” she said; “and I am sure you must be scolded; indeed, I think you must be punished as well.”

“I only wanted to look at the nest,” she said, “and I holded tight nearly all the while. Geoff says there are some young ones in the nest.”

“But you might have fallen down and killed yourself.”

“Well, I don’t want you to scold me. I love my Auntie Tom the best.”

Tom tried to take her, but she was feeling so weak and giddy that she could not hold her.

“I think,” said Mrs. Whitwell, “that we shall have to whip you, Sissie. See how white Auntie Tom looks because you frightened her so much.”

“Don’t be frightened, Auntie Tom; I won’t hurt you.”

“You had better take her in hand,” said Mrs. Whitwell to her husband. It was not the first time that she had passed a refractory and difficult child over to the same management.

“Go downstairs, all of you,” he said, “and leave Tom and me to deal with her.” When they had left he sat with the child on his knee, and in grave tones began to talk to her. “You do not want to be naughty, dear child, but you will make us all very unhappy if you do such things as that. You are only a little girl, but I am sure you know what is right and wrong, and that getting out of a bedroom window is very wrong indeed. If you want to see a nest, I will try to find one for you in a hedge to-morrow; but you must not go and do what you like in this way without saying a word to anybody. What would your father say if his little girl were to fall from a window and be killed, and he should never see you any more? And what would your mother do if there were no longer any little Sissie? I shall be afraid to keep you in my house unless you promise me to be good. When you are put to bed you must lie still, and go to sleep, as other little girls do, because, you know, you say your prayers, and ask God to bless you; but how can you expect Him to do it if you are so naughty? He looks at you all the time, and takes notice of what you do; so you must always try to be good and obedient. And you will in future, won’t you, Sissie? Say you will; now promise me, there’s a dear little girl.”

There was a beautiful expression of thoughtfulness on the sweet little face that was upturned to his, and the child passed her soft, cool hands to and fro over the bald part of his head while he waited for the promise. She did not speak for a moment or two, and then she said: “What a big forehead you have got! It goes all over behind.”

Tom took the child from her father with a hysterical laugh, which soon changed to weeping. Then the little one began to cry, too, softly and pitifully. “I will be good,” she said, “dear Auntie Tom. Put me to bed, and I will be a little mousie, so still, and never, never do it again.”

Tom’s nerves had been dreadfully shaken, and for some hours that night sleep was out of the question; so she and Margaret had a long talk together of that which was really uppermost in the minds of each. Margaret had been earnestly desiring to confide in her friend, but had not ventured to do so because she could not be certain of Tom’s feelings. On this night, however, Tom herself introduced the subject.

“Margaret,” she said, “you have not told me, as you ought to have done, considering what good friends we have always been, that you are engaged to my Cousin John; but I know you are, because he has told me so, and I want you to accept my congratulations. Nobody in the world will be more pleased than I to see you two happy together.”

“It is most good of you, Tom. Thank you very much. I have told no one; indeed, I am not sure that we are really engaged; but it is true that he cares for me, and I—he wishes us to be engaged, and perhaps there is no reason why we should not be. Do you know of any, Tom?”

“Not any, Madge,” said Tom, demurely, “because I know you care for him too. Poor fellow!”

“Why is he a poor fellow, Tom? Because _two_ young women care for him?”

“Oh, no! He is to be congratulated on that account. I love him very much in a cousinly way; but if he wanted me to marry him, which he never has done, I would not, for I think it would not be right, since we are cousins. But I call him a poor fellow because I know how worried and troubled he is.”

“Is he, Tom? I expect he confides in you more than in me.”

“I am sure he does; but you need not therefore be jealous, Margaret. Some things he could not tell you.”

“But you can, Tom, and I shall be most thankful if you will. Does his mother hate me as much as she did? That is a great trouble to me also. What would I not give if I could win Mrs. Hunter’s good opinion! But I have no chance. She avoids me as much as possible, and when we happen to meet she will not look at me or speak to me if she can help it. Sometimes I think I will break through all reserve, and tell her that I will not marry her son until she wishes it, for I do not mean to do so.”

“You had better not say _that_, Margaret. Aunt is very one-sided and narrow in many of her notions, and as stubborn as only a woman can be. John’s happiness ought to be of far more consequence to you than his mother’s good opinion. The one you can insure; the other you may deserve, but it is doubtful if you will get it.”

“You are not very encouraging, Tom; but I do not despair, notwithstanding all that you say, and I know, of Mrs. Hunter. She will, perhaps, receive me yet as a daughter some day, if I am patient. My grandfather often says that all things come to those who wait, and I am only in a hurry for John’s sake.”

Margaret spoke the last three words with such tender emphasis that the colour came into Tom’s face. She would never tell any one of the battle which she had fought with herself over her cousin; but she thought the victory was completely won, and had spoken quite sincerely when she congratulated her friend. The two talked together of John, and when one was not sounding his praises the other was. They both knew, though Tom more than Margaret, of the many troubles that made him look grave, and caused him—and them too, for the matter of that—many an anxious hour. He was doing the right thing by his men; he was cultivating his land to its fullest extent and farming on the most scientific principles; but at present he had been able to do nothing toward paying off the mortgage, which pressed heavily upon his mind.

Margaret’s dreams were often of what she would do if she had a legacy—how she would help John without his knowing who did it, and change his losses into successes. But her love was able to do so little to express itself; and her faith was so sorely tried when she saw that he was not happy, that frequently she was not the bright Margaret which she knew she ought to be.

When she returned from her visit to Hornby Hall she found her grandfather had been thinking of John Dallington also.

“You will not be a penniless wife, Margaret,” he said; “and that reminds me that I have never shown you our treasure-trove, or, to put it as I ought, your treasure-trove, for really it all belongs to you. You will not be surprised to hear that our bank is in the house, for I have told you so already. That was one of the promises which I had to make to Captain Dallington—namely, that I would keep in the house a certain iron box which he gave into my charge. I often wonder why he did this; he was a sensible man in many respects, but he had some of the most peculiar and eccentric ideas. And the money which I was to use for your wants, and in order to keep a comfortable home for you, is in the house. Would you like to look at it?”

“I should very much, indeed, Graf. Is it a heap of shining sovereigns, such as you read of in books?”

“Come with me, and you shall see. I wish we could give some of it to Mr. Dallington; but he would not take it, of course, unless he had to take you with it; and even then, though there is enough for you and your children, there is not enough to buy back a farm or an estate, and I am afraid there is nothing we can do.”

As he was speaking, Mr. Harris led the way to his own room, and with a key which he took from his pocket he opened a drawer, from which he took another key. Then he removed a table and inserted this second key—a very small one—into a hole in the wall. A door flew open, and all that Margaret saw was another key, and a plaster wall in front. Mr. Harris touched a spring, and the wall slid back, and then a box was discovered. The opening of this box was watched with considerable interest by Margaret, for she, who wanted nothing for herself, wanted much for the man whom she loved. It was a deep iron box, and when it had in its turn been unlocked she saw the gold she had dreamed of—a great pile of it, and of notes, at the sight of which she burst into a low laugh.

“Here is enough for John’s needs,” she said. “Oh, Graf, dear, we must contrive for him to have some of it, because, you know, it belongs by right to him; for if Captain Dallington had not made that will, John, who is heir, must have had it all.”

Margaret took some of the shining pieces almost caressingly, for she thought of the beneficent power there might be in them, and was resolved that she would get Mr. Harris to set his mind to the problem which often troubled her—how to help John without offending him.

“How much of this do we use every year, Graf?” she asked.

“Very little, indeed,” was the reply, “for I have a source of income which prevents me from using a penny of this money on myself. All this you will know of some day, for my will is made, and all that I have, as well as all that Mr. Dallington had, is left to you. You will never be a rich woman, though, Margaret; and I hope you will be content to let Mr. Dallington fight this battle of limited means himself. I am an old man now, and I have learnt a few things in my life, and one is that if a battle be fought nobly, even though one’s antagonist be ignoble, the result is beneficial to a real, true man. John Dallington’s great trouble is that he wants more money than he has. He must learn either to do without it or to get it. That is the daily worry which is spoiling many men’s lives; but John is made of stuff too good surely to let it spoil his. Why does he not sell some of the land, and live on what is left?”

“Sell the land, Graf? Sell it, when it belonged to his father, and his father before him?”

“Yes, sell it; why not?”

“Well, of course, if you cannot see why not, I can scarcely hope to make you,” said Margaret, in tones which showed that she was offended.

Mr. Harris smiled as he went into the shop to serve a customer; but he believed that Margaret felt, as he did, that lack of money, so long as the absolute necessaries of life could be secured, ought not to be considered the great affliction which many people seemed to consider it.

The customer proved to be Dr. Stapleton. It was a strange thing that the only person taken into the doctor's confidence was this man, whom he often heard spoken of as an irreligious man who had "never been converted." He had been thus spoken of on this very day, and the doctor had irritably replied that he hoped he never would be, for it would be a great pity for Harris to be changed into the sort of thing that many were who believed themselves undoubtedly converted.

The shopkeeper threw open the door of his little sanctum, and the doctor passed through.

"I have not much time to spare," he said, "but I wanted to tell you that my brother will do the thing which you advised—not because you advised it, though, but because he has a son. Do you know anything of the Young Crusaders?"

"Of course I do. My Margaret and Miss Tom Whitwell had the honour of originating that movement."

"Well, my brother's eldest boy, Ernest, is one of them. He is the finest boy, handsome to look at, and grand to trust in. There was a scene to be remembered the other day. Felix told the lad of his trouble, and he at once seemed to comprehend it all. He told his mother and his sisters more than they had guessed before, and then—it was the strangest thing—he knelt down and prayed to God to give them all courage to do the right. I would have called him a prig, but he isn't one; he is a real, frank, manly Christian, such as we all ought to be. It seems a pity that the young are so much better than the old. But Ernest Stapleton is splendid. He said that he had seen a pretty little cottage, large enough to hold them all and one young servant, in a village two miles from Granchester, which was to be had for £20 a year. He asked them where would be the hardship, really, if they went there to live, and he and his father did the best they could with the business, and made it firm by the simple means of reducing the family expenditure and taking nothing out of it. He said that if they could fearlessly state the reason for the change, all whose opinion was worth having would think well of them; and that if they did not, their consciences would be at rest, for they would defraud no man; and that, with God's smile on them, they would not only get on, but they would get honour, and get honest, too. And that boy is actually to have his way. The beautiful home and estate, with all the pictures and carriages and the rest, are to be sold; and my brother hopes that he can not only save himself from bankruptcy, but pay everybody fifteen shillings in the pound now, and the other five shillings in a year. Ernest says, and no doubt he is right, that the threatened strike will collapse, since the men will work for the wages which he is able to offer them, for a master who is honest enough to act in such a way as that. What do you think of that for a Twentieth Century boy, Harris?"

"I should like to shake hands with him, doctor."

"And so you shall."

CHAPTER XXIII.
A CITY OF HOMES.

It was Saturday afternoon at Craighelbyl. The sun shone on the woods and the mountains and lighted the beautiful blue sea, while the birds sang in the trees, and the flowers smiled upon the banks as if they all cared for the London settlers and were doing their best to make them happy. It

was an ideal day for a holiday, not too hot to be unpleasant, but sunny and breezy together; and the people, as they stood in the doorways of their homes felt themselves drawn away to the objects of beauty on which their eyes were resting; and many who had never thought of walking long distances in London were preparing to go down to the sea, or up to the highest point, in order to see the view.

The first working-week was past, and the freshness of the new conditions had gone with it. Everything that occurred in those few days would for ever stand forth with crisp distinctness in the memories of the people, to whom such experiences were so new as to have been previously even undreamed of. Such a week no one had known before; and, the best of it all was, that it was not merely one week in a life given as a great treat, and never repeated: it was the beginning of a new life for them all.

“It is a pleasure to work in such a factory, and I will put in for the master the best week’s work I have ever done in my life.” One of the girls said this at the breakfast-table on Monday morning, and her father repeated it to his fellow-workmen later in the day. It expressed what every one felt. There was a unanimous resolve that Mr. Knight should not suffer in his circumstances for all the good which he had done for his people.

“Bless him!” said a woman, who had worked for Mr. Knight, senior, nearly fifty years. “Bless him! He will die as rich as Creasote, or else I ain’t no prophet. Such a man as gives his goods to feed the poor, and throwed up his London places ’cause they was dens, and don’t mount no ladder hisself without trying to drag us all up arter him; why it stands to sense as he have a reglar gold-mine in this world, and the cattle upon a thousand hills hereafter. As for me I wish I had fifty pairs of hands, they should all rattle along at railway speed before he should lose a penny for all he has done for me.”

“I wish I was cleverer at it,” rejoined a girl, who was working near this woman. “I’ve never troubled to make myself a first-class worker, nor I ain’t cared a bit about the work except for the pay; but now I shall go to those evening classes, and learn all I can, and see whether I can’t do credit to Mr. Knight. I’ve never took pains before, but I’ll take pains now, as sure as my name is Sarann.”

Many other “Saranns” made the same resolution, and Arthur Knight was touched to see how gentle all his people seemed to become; and how they continued to manifest their gratitude in a dozen ways, though many were too shy to endeavour to express it in words.

He was himself profoundly thankful for all that had been accomplished.

But he was exceedingly solicitous as to the future. He took into his confidence some of his helpers, and consulted them as to the best means of meeting certain emergencies which he feared would arise.

“The men will work in their gardens or go down to the shore, and perhaps be quite happy for a time,” he said; “but afterward there may be a reaction, and I am afraid their thoughts may go back a little regretfully to the public-house bar where they sat and smoked and drank and swore in perfect freedom. Perhaps if we cannot let them have the beer they must have the skittles and the smoking. It is no use to try to wind them up too high. You must help me to find some ways in which they can all be amused.”

“I am going to try to get them interested in gardening,” said Mr. Wythburn. “Coming as I do from the country, I have been able to bring with me a quantity of splendid peas and beans, as well as cabbages and potatoes; and I have talked to a lot of the fellows this week about what they can do with their bits of ground. The soil isn’t bad, and in a fortnight’s time there will be some home-grown cress at the family tea-tables, which will be a sort of first-fruits, and will encourage them to get on with the planting or sowing of other things. I have

undertaken to give practical advice on the subject of crops to the community, and am not without hope that digging will—for the present, at all events—quite take the place of drinking."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Wythburn," said Mr. Knight, "and to you all, for what you are doing for me. It will, I think, be a good plan to call in the aid of those who happen to have been born in villages, and get them to lend a hand to their more inexperienced neighbours."

"I have some creeping plants which will grow rapidly. We shall put them outside the houses, and in a little time they will cover the new walls with beauty. A word of commendation from you, Mr. Knight, will go a long way to encourage the men."

"It shall certainly be spoken," said Arthur Knight.

But the men were even less interested in the outside of their homes than were the women in the inside. It was the first time that they had ever had a real home in the lives of many. And every woman took a pride in making the best of what she had. The houses were plainly furnished—there was nothing answering to a drawing-room so far as Mr. Knight's arrangements went; but there were two rooms besides the scullery, and one of them, intended to be the living room of the family, was large, light, and comfortable. There was plenty to be done still in order to beautify the places, and add to their convenience; and the women, especially the young ones, were eager to use up their Saturday half-holiday for this purpose.

The love of home is born with every Englishman, and the women in whose hearts it does not live are untrue to the traditions of their race. These women, who had been brought into Wales by Mr. Knight, had forgotten many things; but few there were who did not honestly try to remember the old lessons of their girlhood, when the word was passed round to them: "The places are clean and comfortable, and you are expected to keep them so." And, therefore, on this Saturday there was an immense amount of scrubbing and rubbing, of making dainty curtains and pretty rosettes, of hanging up pictures and ornaments, and of showing in a dozen ways how dear the new homes were becoming to the hearts of those who dwelt in them.

"Craighelbyl must have another name," said Mary Wythburn; "something that means a city of homes; for that is what our place will become."

"It is that already, thanks to Mr. Knight and to you, dear Basket Woman," said a girl, looking with loving eyes at her friend. "My father is delighted at the thought that the rent which he pays is to be really purchase-money, and that in ten years the house will be his own. Mr. Knight does not know how he has saved father. Every Saturday he used to sit and drink, and then come to our wretched home cross with himself and every one else. To-day he is gone with Mr. Wythburn to get two trees to plant in his own garden. Mr. Wythburn said he could take the men where they could find young saplings which they might transplant. Father is looking for a sycamore and an elder tree."

"The elder tree grows rapidly," said Mary, "and perhaps that is the reason why your father has chosen it."

"No, the reason is that there was an elder tree in the garden of the house in which he was born, for my father was a country boy. I should prefer a birch; but perhaps that would not grow, and the elder will. Miss Wythburn, please, I am sent to you as a deputation. Some of the girls want to know whether they may come and look-through your house to see if they can imitate the pretty things which they are sure are in it."

"Oh, no! Of course not. What impudence!" The exclamations were not Mary Wythburn's but Fanny Burton's, whose face flushed with anger, and whose tones were those of indignation. Mary laid a restraining hand upon Fanny's shoulder, and answered the request very differently.

“I will ask my mother; and I am sure that she will be happy to show you the clever contrivances about which she has been busy all the week. There is nobody like my mother for the fancy-work which beautifies a home. I believe that if she had nothing but an underground kitchen to live in she would contrive to make it look pretty.”

“But, of course, she does not want everybody to copy her ideas; it isn’t very likely,” said Fanny, grudgingly.

“Yes, Fanny; it is not only likely, but certain, that she will be glad to see her plans repeated in any number of homes. My mother is a very large-hearted woman indeed; it is worth while for you to know her better than you do.”

Fanny was silenced, and Mary Wythburn went away to arrange with her mother for the object-lesson in housekeeping which some of the girls wanted. Mrs. Wythburn was exceedingly amused. She was living in most simple style, having taken very little furniture into the new home. But Mary was right. No place could be other than pretty and home-like where her mother was, and, though the house was new and the furniture plain, there was something which made it look altogether different from all the other houses in Craighelbyl. All the girls who wished passed through the rooms and admired or criticised their arrangements, and the gentle hostess not only allowed them to examine the objects which interested them, but explained how they were made. This was greatly appreciated by the young housekeepers, who were anxious to improve themselves and their homes.

Later in the season there would be introduced at Craighelbyl some Saturday occupations and amusements for the people if it should be found necessary; but at present they all—men, women, and children—were too much interested in making their homes to care for anything else.

The conveniences and beauties of the factory buildings, where most of them had worked for ten hours a day during the week, had delighted and encouraged them greatly, but it was each man’s home that made him feel independent and glad.

When the day was waning Mary Wythburn was sitting in her own little room, when there came a tap at the door, and Fanny Burton entered in response to the cheery “Come in” for which she listened. A close friendship existed between the two girls, who had been so differently educated but who were now brought together in constant intercourse.

It was a beautiful evening. The setting sun dyed the mountains and the sea, and lighted the stone houses of the new settlement. Birds sang on the branches of the trees, and the scent of some wild flowers which had been gathered in the woods filled the room.

“What a change from Paradise Grove!” said Fanny. “It is not like the same world. To be here, with all one’s own people, so near London, and yet so far away from its misery, seems wonderful.”

“Do you think the people regret any part of the old life, Fanny?”

“Not yet. Perhaps they will, though; but surely not very much, nor for long.”

“Listen! There is singing.”

“Oh, yes! There are to be all sorts of little gatherings this evening in the homes of some of the men. They are so ready for Sunday that they wish to begin it overnight. There will be no vacant places at church to-morrow. Everybody who went last Sunday wishes to go again.”

“I am glad of that, for Mr. Knight’s sake.”

“And the people’s sake also. This has been the most beautiful week!

People’s hearts are full of joy and gratitude, and there have been a hundred home missionaries among them, seeking to lead them to Jesus, and so make the happiness more real and lasting. I don’t think there has been a Christian man who dared to hold his tongue. I know of many for whom the new life has become an accomplished thing this week.”

“I am very glad. And to-morrow afternoon we are to have a Bible-class under the beech-tree here. I hope it will be a class of women only, or chiefly.”

“It will be, because Mr. Knight has a meeting for men, and they will all go. The life of the master is more eloquent than his words; but it is a treat to listen to his addresses.”

“I hope the desires of his heart will be fully gratified, and that he will never be disappointed in this place.”

“Oh, he never will be, surely! for God’s blessing will be upon such an enterprise. How many changed lives there are among us! And my own is the most changed of all. I have been thinking of the Sunday when you first took me into your room, and talked with me, after I had offered up my first prayer. I sometimes can scarcely think that I am I, so wonderfully different is my whole life. And how much I owe to you, my own dear friend. You have taught me what real religion is; and I am so happy that no words can express my joy and thankfulness.”

Miss Wythburn caressed the girl, whose voice faltered with emotion, and her eyes grew dim with tears.

“God has been very gracious to us both, and all,” she said, “and we must show our gratitude by making other people as happy as we are. I wish we could have all the East-end of London here with us.”

“I am afraid I am glad we cannot,” said Fanny; “but I will not be selfish. That would be too wicked.”

Fanny thought of her own words half an hour later. She had said good-night to Mary, and had turned at her own door, to take a last look at the fading sunset, when a hand was laid upon her arm, and a voice that seemed to bring Paradise grove back upon the scene said, “Is there any room for me here?”

Fanny turned, with a flush of anger on her face, and looked into the eyes of Andromeda Jones. “No,” she said. “You have no right here. You are not one of Mr. Knight’s workpeople. Go away!”

“Don’t send me away, Fan. Think of what you used to be, and have some pity for me. I am sick of the old life. I have walked all the way from London because I want to be good, and have a home, and be saved like you are.” And poor Drom’s voice died away in a sob.

“There is no room here for you,” said Fanny, endeavouring to disregard the words which still lingered in her ears. She did not want to pass on to this interloper the good which she valued so highly.

“No room? It is a wide place, and not crowded,” said Drom. “I am very tired, for the way was long and dreary. You cannot mean that you will not take me in after all? You have not been served so yourself, Fanny.”

It was very true. The girl of the slums had become gentle, and refined, and very happy, all because some one had taken her into a loving heart, and she had been dealt with tenderly and graciously by the Divine Friend and the human ones. She looked across at the western skies, with the beautiful evening glow upon them and hesitated. One more would make very little difference here, where there was enough and to spare of all good things. That she knew, but did not wish to remember it now. It vexed her exceedingly that this girl, whom she had never liked, but who would always remind her of the worst part of the old life, should have followed her there, and should still be so persistent.

“You have not brought any clothes with you, I suppose?”

“No, I had none to bring. There was but little work all the winter for me, and I have been only able to keep myself, poorly enough, too; there have been very few luxuries for me, I can tell you. Oh, Fan, I am so sick of the old life. Can’t you help me to a chance?”

“You know, Drom, this place is a private estate. No one has any right here except by Mr. Knight’s permission.”

“Oh, yes, I quite understand that. But you might speak for me, or get the Basket Woman to do it.”

The colour flashed into Fanny’s face.

“The Basket Woman?” she said. “The lady of whom you speak is Miss Wythburn.”

“I can’t help it,” said Drom. “You know we always used to call her the Basket Woman. I suppose you are mighty fond of her; she would do anything you asked her, and Mr. Knight would do anything she asked him; so it all depends on you whether I am to be sent away from the place like a thief, or whether a home can be spared for me here. Anyway, as I have walked more than twenty miles to-day, I suppose I may take a seat on your doorstep for ten minutes.”

Fanny began to feel ashamed of her inhospitable mood. “Come in, Drom,” she said; “we must put you up somewhere for the night. If you go back to London it must be by train, and there is no train from here till Monday. We will make the best of it. But I must report the case to Mr. Knight, of course; it is for him to decide it.”

Fanny led the way into her own bedroom, which was plainly, but comfortably, furnished. The only thing in it that was not absolutely for use was a text, framed, and hung upon the wall. Mary Wythburn had given it to her, and Fanny wondered sometimes whether the words had been selected that they might preach a constant sermon. They were: “Freely ye have received, freely give,” and they seemed fairly to stare at her on this evening when she took her unwelcome guest into her room. “I cannot feel glad to see her,” her thought replied to the text; “but I will be good to her, because I have myself received so very much.”

“This is too fine for me,” said Andromeda, as she looked at the white bed and the clean aspect of the little chamber. “I can sleep anywhere, Fan, for I am so dead beat.”

“The more reason why you should be comfortable,” was the reply. “I can make you up a little bed here while you have some supper. And you would like a bath, wouldn’t you?”

The poor overwearied girl cried a little, and Fanny relented and became kind; but she was almost too tired to eat or think, and very soon she was fast asleep.

When she awoke the next morning the light was streaming into the room, the soft winds were stirring the leaves into whispers, and the larks were pouring down their music upon the happy earth. Fanny was kneeling by the side of the bed, with an open Bible before her, and a look of quiet happiness upon her face. Presently she closed the book, and her eyes and her lips moved as if in prayer. Andromeda watched her most curiously, lying very quietly the while, and wondering what it was that Fanny was saying, and whether there was really a God who cared to listen, and who could answer prayer.

The eyes of the two girls met as Fanny arose from her kneeling posture, and seeing that Drom was awake, she went swiftly toward her, and kissed her.

“Why do you do that? You know you don’t like me,” said Drom, but her face lighted with pleasure, and her heart beat more quickly.

“Yes, I do like you—a little,” said Fanny. “I am not a very affectionate girl, but I have been reading about Jesus, and talking to Him, and after that I always feel as if I love everybody.”

“Even me?”

“I was not good to you last night, Drom. I am sorry for it now. I am not naturally good and kind, like Miss Wythburn, but I try to be. I am sure what you have done, in following us down here, will please her, and I am not going to be cross any longer. Will you let me lend you some clean things? You and I are about the same height and size, so you will manage nicely. See, I have laid out a dress.”

Andromeda did not know what to say, so she said nothing in response to the surprising kindness of Fanny, who went down to make things right with her mother. This was not difficult, as Fanny was quite the ruling spirit in the home, and when their visitor presently appeared at the breakfast table she was greeted kindly, and a plate and cup and saucer were set before her. Indeed, Mrs. Burton was much more pleased to exercise her hospitality than Fanny was, and it was a real pleasure to her to take the stranger under her protection, and show her the wonders of the new place.

“Come to church,” said Fanny’s mother, “and I will introduce you to Miss Wythburn outside. She will have a kind word for you, I know. She has for everybody.”

“But I have not been to church for a long time.”

“You will enjoy it all the more for that. Come out and look at the view from our house. It is beautiful.”

Indeed it was. Drom shaded her eyes, not more to keep out the light than to hide her tears, which, for some reason that she could not understand, were very near the surface. As she stood thus, a pleasant voice spoke to her: “Good morning! How did you get here? I saw you arrive last night.”

“I walked.”

“Why?”

“Because I wanted a chance and a home.”

“And you shall have both,” said Mary Wythburn, placing a kind hand upon the girl’s shoulders. “For Christ’s sake I welcome you, Andromeda, and will find you some work to do.”

“Oh! are you sure that I shall not be sent back? I have no home anywhere now.”

“You shall have one here,” said Mary, confidently. “This is a city of homes, and there is certainly room for one stranger who desires to live a better life.”

“I do desire it,” said Drom. And Mary took her to church.

CHAPTER XXIV.
A CHURCH IN CONFERENCE.

The second rest-day at Craighelbyl was even more peaceful and happy than the first, for there was less excitement and a greater feeling of at-homeness in the hearts of the people. Arthur Knight and his friends

wondered very much whether the response to the invitation of the church bells would be as universal as before; but it was. At the appointed time groups of neighbours, with their families, were seen wending their way to the Father's House with one accord. The people did not go, perhaps, from the highest motives. Can it be said that all the members of any congregation do? But so much were they impressed with the great kindness and good feeling of the master, that they, one and all, were trying to keep as right as they could, and many of them, knowing their own weaknesses, were thankful for the strength and help which they received from joining in the hymns and listening to the sermon.

This notable Sunday was commenced with a communion service. The invitation was given to "all members of churches who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and consider His laws of life and conduct binding upon them." And a large proportion of those who filled the building went forward. This service was short and solemn; it was a time of reconsecration to many, and it prepared them for what was to follow at the close of the day.

After the evening service those who had joined in the communion service in the morning were requested to remain behind in order to attend the first church meeting, and, indeed, to form the church itself. The church was formed accordingly, and on a very simple basis. The following was the creed:—

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

"I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world, as my Saviour and Law-Giver.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Revealer, the Enlightener, and the Comforter.

"I take as my rule of life the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that His laws are binding upon His disciples, and assured that He who lived for thirty-three years among men has raised no impossible standard of excellence and brotherly love in the Sermon on the Mount, and the other words of His placed on record in the gospels."

This confession was inscribed in a book, and those who were prepared to subscribe to it wrote their names beneath.

At the close of this ceremony the minister, the Rev. James Davies, offered a dedicatory prayer, and the people sang, on their knees, the solemn and significant hymn,—fit to voice the faith and feelings of those who are resolved to consecrate themselves entirely to God, and to do His will, "the Lord being their Helper"—the hymn composed by Gregory the Great, somewhere between the years 540 and 604, and translated in 1627—and as good for the new time as the old—

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire."

After the hymn, Mr. Davies gave a short address on the creed to which they had given their adhesion, and the resolution contained in the last clause of it.

But the people would not leave until Mr. Knight had spoken, and he was ready with a few words.

"Dear Friends, you know, and I am sure many of you share, my belief, that Christianity is a life, and that all real discipleship is eminently practical. You have declared, by adding your signatures to this book, that you mean to live up to your faith. I think you understand that my heart's desire and prayer to God is that our little community shall be strictly governed on New Testament Principles, and, according to the laws of the New Kingdom which Christ came to set up in the world. I believe that those who have entered this kingdom, and who live in communion with its Head, do receive daily enlightenment from Him who is

the Light of the World, and therefore I believe that the true rulers of men must be those who are ruled by Jesus. Now, I ask you, the members of Christ's Church, to take upon yourselves the responsibility of the management of this community, and to govern it according to the will of your Master, as revealed in the New Testament, and in the events and progress of these times. You surely know the right; _do it_, and, as far as you can, see that others do it also. I invite you to become during the next week a church in council; to consider certain things which relate to the well-being of the community; to decide what, if any, by-laws shall be made and enforced; to appoint an executive committee; to settle certain sanitary, educational, and other matters; and generally to undertake the responsibilities of our little State. You can govern in your own right, which I hereby commit to you; or you can, if you prefer to do so, submit your suggestions to the whole society. In a little while, perhaps, we shall discover that the best way to rule will be to have a number of men and women chosen and elected by the people; but at present I ask you to appoint a committee of, say, twenty men and women, who shall prepare and propose, not to the community, but to the Church, certain resolutions touching the interests of us all. This will be your first work to-morrow. I do not propose to be on this committee, nor to interfere with it unless it should become absolutely necessary, but to leave the management of affairs in your own hands. You know better than I who are the wisest among you. I hope you will choose these, and ask them to serve you, and that they will gladly do so to the best of their ability. But, dear friends, do not forget that you can legislate for our little world as well as our own small church; and that it will depend very much upon your treatment of those outside the church whether or not they are attracted to Christianity. May you, therefore, be guided in all things by the spirit of love, fairness, and righteousness; and may God give you the wisdom which you require! It is for you to show yourselves disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to win others to Him by your unselfishness, your consideration of others, and your goodness of heart and life. If you are true to your Master we shall have reason to rejoice in our Craighelbyl life. This is a great trial place; it is a test of the real worth of Christian principles; everything depends upon your faithfulness to Him. I hope you will hold your deliberations here, in this sacred place, and that no spirit will be exhibited contrary to His Spirit, and no laws enacted but those which He would sanction."

The next evening the church again assembled.

The first thing was to appoint an executive committee, numbering about twenty. Mr. Knight and the minister asked to be allowed to stand aside excepting as they were needed. Dr. Armitt, a Christian man of great ability and kindliness, was first elected; then Mr. and Mrs. Wythburn and their daughter; next Mr. and Mrs. Hancourt, but the latter excused herself on account of her domestic duties. Fanny Burton was asked to become a member, and she consented; and then a dozen of the working men of the community, who were known to be wise and honourable men, in equal proportions of young men and old, were asked to serve; and the business before them was at once commenced.

The first question which was settled affected the age at which the children of the town should leave school. Two evenings were occupied in discussing this; but it was eventually decided that the children were to remain in the ordinary school until they were twelve, and that two supplementary years were to be added, during which half the school day—which was to be extended to seven hours—should be spent in the ordinary and half in the technical school.

This involved considerable self-denial on behalf of the parents; but one man enthusiastically declared that at Craighelbyl the heroes and heroines of the future were to be born and trained, and then sent forth into the world to take the highest places everywhere, and teach other men to copy the example of Knight's own town. It was worth while, he argued, for fathers to manage without the earnings of their children when such issues as the reformation of the world depended upon it. And although some of his neighbours laughed at his "tall talk," they decided

that fourteen school years were none too many for the children of Craighelbyl.

The next matter settled was a law that all young people should pay into a fund to provide them with an income in old age, and that a savings bank belonging to Knight’s business should be at once established, in order that some provision should be made for sickness.

And yet another law was passed, that if any man or woman should tempt a child to take intoxicating drink, he or she should be asked to at once quit Craighelbyl.

Another excellent resolution was passed affecting the women who were employed in the factories. A young Crusader introduced the subject in words that went directly to the point. “Most men,” he said, “are jealous of the positions that women are making for themselves, and this feeling renders us unjust. They work as many hours as men, and always for less wages. If they do the same work why do they not have the same money? Many masters would probably give them the same, but for the knowledge that in so doing they would displease their men, who have always been content that women should labour under this disadvantage. They do work often that men might do, we say, and they are not to be encouraged in it. But how many factory lads are there who are chivalrous enough to prefer to keep their sisters? How many fathers who object to the money which their daughters earn and bring home to pay for their board and lodging? Yet we are full of complaints that factory girls do not make good wives. How in the world are they to make good wives when they are at work all day? They ought not to be expected to work as many hours as we do; and I beg to propose that all who are willing shall sign a petition to Mr. Knight, asking him to make a woman’s working day in Craighelbyl two hours less than a man’s. (Murmurs of dissent were heard.) Nay, with such helpers of womanhood as Miss Wythburn and her assistants we may be quite sure that the women and girls would turn those two hours to good account, and that in the end, we, the men of the place, will be better off for the change. Of course it is all very well for us to pass this resolution; you say Mr. Knight will be the only loser by it. But the women would not be willing for him to lose, neither would a man among us. What I mean is that we should offer to work one hour a day longer for the same wages, and also that heads of households should be willing to take a little less money for the ‘keep’ of daughters or sisters; or, if that does not answer, that every man, who is a man and deserves the name, should pay into a fund in order to make this matter straight. Why, you know it is only of late years that women have been expected to earn their own living, and it is only because the men have grown more feeble and less gallant, less chivalrous, less manly. Here at Craighelbyl we have a chance to show that we at least are made of different stuff from many of our fellows. Let us set the example of putting this women’s question upon another basis.”

In consequence of this resolution the meeting had to be adjourned, and two evenings were given to the discussion of the subject. Eventually, however, it was agreed to ask Mr. Knight to make the women’s day an hour less than the men’s, and to keep their wages at the same rate as before, and to assure him that in Craighelbyl there would be enough volunteers among the men to prevent his having any loss from the change.

And it may be safely said that no action of the Craighelbyl Church in conference created such a sensation throughout England and Wales as this.

CHAPTER XXV.
THISTLES OR GRAPES?

“Are there any lodgings to let in Darentdale?”

The village post-office closed early; and the postman had just called, in his curious red cart, drawn by a gaunt horse that was celebrated for getting over the ground quickly, and, having received the bag, was hastening away to the nearest town. The postmistress, an active woman who, having a paralysed husband, needed all her activity, had come to the door to look after him, when a stranger arrived with a letter. “Too late?” he asked; and she replied “Too late!” and was about to go in and close the door, when his other question arrested her.

Now, it happened that Mrs. Orley had been thinking only that afternoon how well she could spare her best parlour and the bedroom over it, if by doing so she could earn an honest pound or two. She knew that in many villages there had been inquiries for lodgings, and wondered that none of the inquirers came her way—and here stood one before her, as if in answer to her thoughts.

But Mrs. Orley was a wary woman, and the very coincidence of her thought and his appearance created a doubt in her mind.

“Lodgings?” she said, “No, I never heard of anybody who lets lodgings in this village.”

“No? Now, that is a pity, for a prettier village does not exist in England.”

“Maybe you’ve seen all the others. I haven’t, so I don’t pretend to say. ’Tis pretty enough for us.”

“And healthy, I suppose?”

“Yes; we live as long as most folks, especially in these days, when the houses are better than they used to be.”

“Well, I should like to stay here for a week or two, and I wouldn’t mind paying fairly. I have taken a fancy to the place. I like the undulations and the woods; and I think the squire’s house is very pretty. But I suppose it is no use to stay longer. You know everybody. I have always found that a postmaster is the best person in a place of whom to make inquiries, so if you say there are no lodgings, I must go on to the next village.”

“How much did you want to pay? I have a sitting-room and a bedroom. I wouldn’t mind obliging you if we can come to terms. Would you like to look at the rooms?”

“I should,” said the stranger, with alacrity; and no sooner had he seen them than he declared that they were exactly what he wanted.

“Make me an offer,” said Mrs. Orley.

“I shall not give much trouble,” said the stranger. “Would a pound a week satisfy you?”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” said Mrs. Orley; “I will oblige you if you like for a pound a week.”

If she had mentioned a sum, it would have been half that amount. But the stranger appeared pleased, and soon settled down, giving his name as Samuel Smart. Mrs. Orley decided that he was an author, for he was always writing. She was not surprised at his coming to Darentdale, for she knew that a good deal had been written about the place, and no doubt this man was making up a story in which Darentdale would figure to advantage. So, being a kind-hearted woman and very fond of an innocent bit of gossip, she told her lodger many interesting things about the inhabitants of the village. She offered to introduce him to the parson and the squire, but he declined her services in this respect, and only made a few acquaintances on his own account. He bought a good many books during his stay. He had a list of those which he wanted, and asked for them one at a time of Mr. Harris. He had none in stock, but could always

get the volume in a day or two; so there was much coming and going between the bookseller and the customer, and however busy with his pen the stranger might be, he had plenty of time to spare for a talk with him.

“He interests me exceedingly,” he said to Mrs. Orley; and she told him all she knew of Margaret and her grandfather. “Miss Miller is much more interesting than the old man,” said the postmistress; but Mr. Smart did not seem to think so, and she set him down as a confirmed old bachelor, with very poor tastes and little knowledge of beauty. Margaret was a great favourite of hers, and she was never tired of talking of her; but only once did she succeed in arousing anything like feeling in Mr. Smart. And that was when she had done something which she certainly ought not to have done.

For, of course, Mrs. Orley had sworn before a magistrate that she would regard as sacred all letters that passed through her hands, and she did not doubt that letters included postcards; and yet one morning she not only read the whole contents of a postcard herself, but actually took the card to her lodger, and he read it too.

It was a very insulting postcard, written anonymously, and addressed to Margaret Miller.

“Read this, sir,” she said, handing it to him with the contents side up, and he read it before he turned it and saw the address.

Mrs. Orley was frightened; she did not think her lodger could exhibit so much passion. “A coward!” he said, between his teeth, “and, of course, a woman. Men are bad enough, but no man could do such a mean thing as that. It takes a jealous, spiteful woman to insult another woman by means of an anonymous postcard. Let us throw the thing on the fire.”

Mrs. Orley snatched it away in alarm. “It is as much as my place is worth not to deliver it,” she said, “and I’ve just bethought myself that I ought not to have shown it to you; not that the envious thing who wrote it cares how many people see it; it is put on a postcard on purpose. But I don’t think it will hurt Miss Miller very much. Her lips will tremble a little when she reads it, and she will ask herself if it contains a lesson that she ought to learn and benefit by, and will read it again to see, and then she will burn it and try to forget the unkindness of it. That is her way.”

“And a very good way, too,” said Mr. Smart, more gently, as he put on his hat and went out.

Mrs. Orley watched him a little after that; but she could never discover that he took the slightest interest in Margaret Miller, or ever spoke to her, or even looked at her if she happened to pass him in the street.

He stayed at Darentdale three weeks, and when he left he asked his hostess to accept an extra pound, which he declared was only her due, because he had been so much more comfortable than he expected.

He had appeared much interested in the scenery, the place and people, as well he might be, for there was another village beside Craighelbyl in which the summer passed ideally; and it was Darentdale, where all were trying to make life as joyous as God intended it should be. It is one thing to make a great effort of good work in order to float a scheme, it is quite another to keep it going when the first enthusiasm has died out. The little homes among the green were inhabited by no stronger people than the rest of the world; but their friends were far-seeing and patient, and exceedingly solicitous that there should be no failures. It was known that many towns and villages had followed when Darentdale led the way; and it could be said of more than a few places that all that man could do to prevent sin and misery was being done in their locality. Some complaints, indeed, were made that there was danger of a narrowing of interests; but this was scarcely true. A farmer who puts forth all his powers to keep every inch of his own land in good condition is yet

quite able to look at his neighbours' farms, and even, by means of the Press, to cast a glance over the whole wide world. The Darentdale Church, united, for the sake of those who were outside, had plenty of work on its hands, and a great solicitude in its heart.

And there was a "revival" in Darentdale. There had to be—first, in the church, where it was most needed; and, secondly, outside—among those whom it was necessary to bring in. For those who worked the most earnestly were not able to do, of themselves, that which they most desired to do, and the more entirely they felt their own helplessness the more entirely were they thrown upon God.

They were disappointed again and again. One woman, who had been helped and who had seemed grateful, relapsed into drunkenness, and was quite candid. "I have been a fool," she said, "to sign the pledge and pretend that I want to be goody. But never again! A short life and a merry one for me!"

The way was too narrow, the fight too strenuous, for them. They needed a Helper stronger than the human, and until they sought Him, the immoral could not become moral, or the evil good.

"We must pray more! Let us give an hour a day to intercessory wrestling with God, that He will save the people, for they cannot save themselves; neither can we save them; but we are sure that, if it be God's will, they must be saved," said one.

"And I am sure," replied Mr. Harris, "that it is most certainly God's will that they should be saved." But he prayed with the rest, for, although he did not even now attend the ordinary religious service at church or chapel, he was always present at the united meetings that were public.

The whole church, indeed, gave itself up to prayer, both private and united; and, as is always the case, there were some remarkable incidents proving that prayers were heard and answers abundant; one man, Benham, declaring that after what he had seen he would never doubt again. "Since that woman is changed," he added, "I am sure that any one can be. There is an alteration in this place, sure enough."

"There is," said Nelson, who was the recipient of Benham's confidences; "but it is because good people mean it all much more than they used."

"Yes; and things will never be the same again, for now they know how to look after the boys and girls. And this is the most promising thing of all."

And indeed it was. The Darentdale Committee of Helpfulness set a very high value on every young person living in the village. If he or she should show vicious tendencies the best and ablest person among them undertook the case. All the ingenuity and watchful love of wise parents were brought to bear, and at present there had been no case that proved invulnerable to these benign powers and influences. It soon became an extraordinary thing to the Darentdale people that there could ever have been a time when a child was of small account in the place. "We shall make _men_ out of these," was a consideration never overlooked now in regard to the children.

A very merry place was Darentdale during those summer evenings. There were a dozen tennis-courts, and as many cricket-grounds, each presenting a scene of most complete enjoyment. The young ladies played with the poor girls. Mr. Dallington, the clergyman, and the Baptist minister, each superintended some recreations, and all sorts of delightful games were organised, in which lads and girls joined and their teachers assisted. There were botany classes held in the fields and woods; there were the sounds of sweet songs in the meadows, and open-air concerts in the groves; there were gymnastic feats in the orchards, and races in the lanes; but everything was under the supervision of Christian men and women, who guided the conversation, and helped with the jokes, and made

it impossible for gambling or bad language to be mixed up with the play, and who believed that in all this they were doing the Lord’s work as certainly as when they were teaching in the Sunday-school.

Margaret Miller and John Dallington were quietly waiting. The look of youthfulness had passed from John’s face and form, but Margaret was as sweet as ever. John shouldered his cross of care manfully, and Margaret daily laid hers down at the feet of Him who is as able to bear our sorrows as our sins; and both helped in the efforts that were being made for the betterment of the people who had been, as they believed, committed to their care.

One thing had greatly delighted Margaret, and it was that her grandfather, as she still called him, had undertaken the care of a dozen of her Young Crusaders. At first, though neither he nor she knew it, there had been a demur among some of the committee.

“This must be kept in the hands of Christians,” one said “and we have no proof that Mr. Harris believes in Christ.”

But another replied, “Let us judge him by the Master’s rule, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ We cannot doubt that _He_ would deal very tolerantly with such a man as Henry Harris if He were here now. No one has ever heard him say a word against Christ in all the years we have known him.”

“And now he never says a word against anybody, he has become wonderfully gentle and good. He will do no harm to the boys.”

And this was certainly the feeling of the majority. As for Margaret, she almost envied the boys, for she knew how wisely and lovingly they would be trained.

For two hours each evening Mr. Miller’s house and garden were open to them, and for the first hour he gave them something to do with their bodies—gardening, or quoits, or football, or cricket—and for the second he was at their service to tell them tales or read to them, or take walks with them, or anything else they pleased. Before they had been a week with him they all loved him, and would have done anything or given up anything for him. And he loved them greatly. He believed that every boy had the making of a hero in him, and he sought to find out how to develop the best of his nature and his powers. He liked to set the eleven to some work or play which they liked, and take the twelfth away where the two could talk confidentially to each other. The boy would pour out his very soul to his friend, telling him his ambitions, his troubles, his sins, and his hopes, as he had never told any one before. And what wise counsel he received in return, what good words to be treasured in the boy’s heart even after he became a man, no one knew but God, not even the man or the boy himself.

Mr. Harris was always very tired after the boys had gone. It was really a bit of his very life that he gave them. If the heart be not put into work of this kind very little is accomplished; but if it be heart work it can only be done at great personal cost to the worker. But he was always very happy, too, and had usually something to tell Margaret which she was glad to hear.

One evening Mr. Harris was walking over the fields with a lad called Dick Nelson, a bright, mischievous boy, “worth saving at any price,” Harris said to himself, when a question was put to him of a more direct character than any which he had ever before been called to answer. They were talking about men who had made England, especially the warriors and the statesmen, and at length they mentioned General Gordon. “He would have done more lasting work if he had been less general and more Gordon,” said Harris. “He was a very fine man, but I have always wished that he had not been a soldier. You know, Dick, that is one of my fads. I don’t like war, but I like Gordon; he was a splendid Christian fellow, true as steel.”

“You don’t like him any better because he was a Christian, though, Mr. Harris, do you?” asked the boy, looking curiously into the grey eyes beneath the shaggy brows.

“Don’t I? Indeed, I do,” said Harris, with a kindly smile.

The lad was thoughtful for a moment too, and then an exciting incident occurred; for they saw a fox running across a meadow, and of course the boy must needs chase it. What boy could resist such a chance as that? He came back hot, but pleased, and ready to endure the banter of his friend, who had been watching with an indulgent look upon his benevolent face, and thinking of his own boyhood as if it were but yesterday. After that they had a talk about amusements; but when that subject had been dropped, and a silence had fallen between them, the boy suddenly asked, “Mr. Harris, what do you think about Jesus Christ?”

Harris replied very gently, “I think He was the greatest and best Man that ever lived.”

“But don’t you think, sir,” said his questioner, wistfully, “that He must have been more than a man to do all the things He did—that is, if He ever did do them—I suppose we cannot be sure of that.”

Harris detected the tones of regret in the boy’s voice. “Why cannot we be sure?” he said. “The writers of the biographies of Jesus Christ are certainly as much to be believed as any other writers, to say the least of it; and for my part I have not any doubt that they told the truth about Him. Dick, my boy, you cannot do without Jesus Christ. He is the best Friend a man ever had—don’t doubt that; and as for a poor, hard-working lad like you, why, you will find the world a very dark place if you try to shut Him out of it.”

“But I don’t want to,” said Dick. “I like to read about Him. There is nothing sham about Him, is there, sir?”

“Sham! There is nothing half so real as Jesus Christ,” and Harris took off his hat.

“I am glad you think so,” the boy said gently, putting his hand affectionately on the arm of his master.

Young Nelson never forgot this talk, and it influenced his whole life.

Mr. Harris was half touched, half amused at the incident. He spoke of it to Margaret that evening, for she kept all his confidences, and thoroughly understood him. “I am not quite the sceptic I think myself, I suppose,” he said. “Certainly, the longer I live the more am I impressed by the strong personality of the marvellous Man of Nazareth. I think His time is coming nearer; and it will be a happy time, indeed, for the world. Do you see the signs, Margaret?”

So they talked together; and presently he asked her to sing “one of the old, old hymns,” and she sang “Jesus, the very thought of Thee,” and he joined in as if he felt it. Indeed, that night, after Margaret had left him, sitting as he loved to sit, with the blinds up, and the moonlight filling the room, she heard him sing softly the words, which for so many generations loyal lips have sung to Jesus; and she said to herself, “Dear Graf! Why does he call himself an unbeliever?”

In Darentdale those who were joined together in Christian love and helpfulness had instituted a communion service which was for their mutual comfort and edification. It was held usually in the house of the clergyman, but although many church people attended, the number of Nonconformists was still larger. They did not call it a sacrament, but “a breaking of bread together,” and “all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity” were invited to be present. A few evenings after the boy’s question to Mr. Harris the friends were together as usual. The door of the Vicarage was open, and they were singing a hymn of praise, the sound of which floated through the garden, and reached the high road. Along

the road Mr. Harris was walking, and he stopped at the gate to listen. Then he went noiselessly to the room where the meeting was held, and took his seat at the door. Of course he was at once recognised. After the hymn was sung a chapter was read, prayer was offered by any who wished to pray, and the chairman asked any friend who could to speak.

Mr. Harris rose and said a few words, which came from his heart, and went to the hearts of others. He told them that he had not been quite sincere in his profession of lack of faith in Christianity, that he had believed always in Christ, but only lately in Christians. He said that he had long ago put his trust in Jesus as the living Saviour, and could say, “I know in whom I have believed”—although he had not thought it necessary to join any part of the Church. “But now,” he said, “I have a great hunger for the communion of saints! Unworthy as I feel myself, yet, because I love our Lord, I ask you to let me join you in this service. Will you receive me as one of yourselves? I love my Master, and I love His brethren, and I crave your prayers and your help. I want to be taught and strengthened. Let me take the lowest place among you, but do not shut me out, for I believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

His voice grew rather unsteady—perhaps it was because he saw Margaret weeping—and he resumed his seat. But the little company stood, and with one accord they sang,

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

CHAPTER XXVI.
“HIS OWN WAY.”

The reason why Mr. Samuel Smart spent that short holiday in Darentdale became apparent a few weeks afterward when Margaret Miller received a letter. The letter was as follows:—

“DEAR MISS MILLER,—Pardon the presumption of an old man, who is a stranger to you. I knew Captain Dallington, and I once saw you when you were a little child of three, and since then I have heard of you, and of the great host of Young Crusaders who, in all parts of the country, are learning to be good citizens because they are trying to be good Christians.

“I am sorry that I have come to the end of my life, because life was never so well worth living as now, when it is quite the fashion for a man to give what he has got for the good of his fellows. I have something which I also wish to give; but every man gives in his own way, and I know—for I have dreamed of it by day and night—exactly how I wish my gift to be administered. And I write to you because I have a great hope that you will help me.

“Let me tell you a little of myself. I was born in a narrow street in Bristol, and my childhood’s home was a house of four small rooms. My father was a bricklayer’s labourer, who earned eighteen shillings a week. He married early, and there were seven children. My father was a decent man, who did the best he could, and gave all his earnings to his wife; but my mother was a poor, incapable creature, who had been a factory girl from the time when she was ten years old until she was married, and who had not the least idea how to make the best of the small means she had. I can remember her as a young woman, with dirty face and ragged dress and untidy hair, sitting for the most part of the day on the doorstep or by the fire, gossiping with the neighbours or reading cheap papers while the breakfast-things were still on the table, and no dinner was ready for my father when he came home. We lived on bread bought at the baker’s; we were all dirty and ragged; there was always a baby, and my mother never seemed anything but miserable and cross. She used to beat us savagely at times, and though I have often

tried, I do not remember any time when she took me into her arms, or taught me a useful lesson. And yet she was not what is generally called a bad woman; she was ignorant and incapable; she had been vain and uncontrolled, she had married without serious thoughts, and had not the energy to meet the circumstances of her life, or fulfil its tasks.

“Our father was kind to us, and I do not think that he quarrelled with my mother oftener than he could help; he never spent much money in the public-house; he made his small wages go as far as they could without his wife’s help, but she never seconded his endeavours, and our home was as miserable as thousands of other working men’s homes are, and which are made a thousand times more so by the hopelessness and idleness and incapacity of the conscienceless women who are in them.

“We children went very irregularly to school, but began to earn a few coppers, or to pick up odds and ends of food for ourselves in any way that offered. I liked the quay better than any place, and used to spend whole days there, and at last a captain who was going to sea offered to take me. I ran home to ask my father and mother if I might go. ‘I don’t care where you go,’ said my mother; ‘go where you like, only don’t bother me.’ My father went back with me to the captain, and talked with him, telling him I had no clothes excepting those I wore, and that my mother was not very strong and could not see to me, and asking the man to treat me well; then he patted my head and told me to be a good boy, and gave me a penny.

“That was the last I saw of them for several years. Then I came back with the ship, and went to see my people. Two of my brothers and a sister had died, and my mother looked more miserable and dirty than ever. I gave her some money but was sorry afterward, for the money was worse than wasted, and my father was angry, and bade me, when I came home again, give the money to him and not to my mother. I stayed a few days at home, but there was no room for me, and after the first day I felt that no one wanted me; and when the ship sailed again my heart was hard and bitter, and I had resolved never to trouble my people with my presence again.

“That is more than fifty years ago. I am not going to inflict upon you a detailed biography, nor to tell you how it has come about that the son of a Bristol bricklayer’s labourer has become a rich man, and is alone in the world without a single living relative. But so it is. I have been in England five years; but though I have spared no pains or endeavours, I can find no trace of my brothers or sisters other than the registers of their deaths. They seem to have left no children behind them.

“I am, therefore, free to do as I will with my money; and, naturally, I should like it to benefit my native land. I have looked at the different methods of doing good which others have adopted; but I do not quite like any of them. I could leave a large legacy to a hospital; but it seems to me better to nurse the poor in their own homes than in big places where all are strangers. I could buy a people’s park, and present it to some town which has none: but I have a hope that the future will bring the people back to the villages. I could give my money to some grand scheme for providing employment for the unemployed; but the worst of the unemployed do not want work, and would not do it if they might. So many benevolences commence at the wrong end of life. It is with the children that Hope dwells. Your own Young Crusaders are the great makers of the future, such as we wish it to be. But they are—most of them—working lads. In a few years they will be falling in love with pretty faces, and marrying them. And what then? Many girls are still in factories, as vain and frivolous as girls ever were. What sort of wives will they make for your Tri-colour Crusaders? How many years will it take for thriftless, soulless women to undo what you are trying to do?

“I think if you had wanted money for your Crusade I would have given you some of mine. I am, however, greatly rejoiced that you do not flood the country with appeals and begging letters, but that this vast and most important organisation is, like the great Sunday-school system, carried on at small cost, which is met by local voluntary contributions.

“But that which I desire to see accomplished cannot well be done by existing institutions, or without extra money.

“My wish is to provide a Training Home for young women who are about to be married, where they may stay, free of cost, for six months, and be under the influence of Christian women at the same time that they are practising such household duties and economies as pertain to the wives of the poor; and for such only as have no mothers to teach them, or those flighty young girls who are not willing to be taught. Plenty of such cases must be known to city missionaries, district visitors, and all the other kindly souls who look after the poor and take an interest in girls.

“Personally, I rejoice in the better wages now paid to the working man. Whoever helps to make the prosperity of a nation should share in it. But wages have less to do with the well-being of a family than most people imagine. Two men are neighbours, they earn the same wages, pay the same rent, have the same number of children; but in one case the people are respectable and respected, in the other they are dejected, suspected, and miserable. What makes the difference? A little bill announcing a Band of Hope meeting is in the window of one, and a broken pane of glass in the other. In the one case the man is steady and the woman is industrious and thrifty, in the other, both man and woman are failures in life and character. I know that human nature is exceedingly stubborn and intractable, and that only the Spirit of God can change the heart; but is not the Spirit always working? Have we not the right to hope that many giddy young things, who would otherwise rush into married life quite unprepared for its duties, may, under the influences of love and happiness, be brought to take more serious views of their responsibilities? I cannot imagine any better way of serving our country than by helping to raise the character of the young mothers among the people. I am casting no slur on the women of England as a whole; no one has anything but praise for the hosts of loyal, loving, enlightened, working mothers who are training their sons and daughters for high and noble futures; but our great weakness and danger are in the multitudes of other women, and it is the lowest class that is laid upon my thought.

“But nothing can be done in this matter except by women of courage, tact, and strong character and goodness. I can find the house and the money; can you find the organisers and the workers? Will you, dear Miss Miller, for the love of Christ and your poor miserable young sisters who do not know Him, undertake the management of the home? and will you love them and care for them, and teach them what goodness is? I ask you, partly because you are yourself young, and can therefore understand and sympathise with girls, and partly because, from all I know of you, I am assured that you can carry this idea forward to success, and mostly for another reason, which is my own alone. My friend Smart has told me all about your private life and character. And I have no hesitation in saying that if you will do your part I will do mine, and with all possible speed. A large, substantial homestead near the coast, in the north-east of Yorkshire, has lately come into my possession. It could be ready for you in a month. It will accommodate forty persons; and I will not only pay all the bills, but will give a present of five pounds’ worth of household utensils to every girl who stays with you six months, and satisfies you. I have an idea that this bribe may win some who would not otherwise submit to any process of improvement, however kindly performed.

“I am only like many other men of my day in my wish to remain unknown, and to do this thing anonymously. You may call me ‘Friend Philip’ if you will; and all our communications had better pass through the hands of my solicitors—Messrs. Smart, Watkin, and Smart. I cannot but hope that your reply may be in the affirmative. Think of the lives you may influence, the homes you may bless; and I pray you help me in this important work. We shall be the pioneers of the movement. Before many years are passed all the big cities—London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and my own Bristol—will consider a Training Home for Mothers as great a necessity as a workhouse or a gaol, and will support one out of the rates. This is

surely a crusade for women; and it is worthy of your best powers. But if you will not undertake it I must find some other means of disposing of my money.—Believe me, with great respect, yours faithfully, FRIEND PHILIP."

Margaret might have been disposed to question the validity of this letter but for one from Mr. Smart which accompanied it, and which stated that the necessary funds for commencing the enterprise had already been lodged with his firm, subject to her consent to act. She was, naturally, greatly disturbed by the incident. How could she take up this work when her hands were full already? And it was not of such a life that she dreamed. No woman does. She may accept it, when God sends it, and find it full of wonderful content and exquisite joy; but her early dreams are of something very different from this.

Margaret's thoughts were of John. She hoped to prove that one young woman was capable of making one young man a good wife—when the time came. Her pleasantest occupations had to do with economical housekeeping, and her imaginings were of a bright little home where hands that love made clever were instead of gold. But in that home, in her dreams, there was always a seat for John's mother, who had at last taken to her arms the Margaret whom she once despised and hated, and a pang shot through the girl's heart as she acknowledged that this dream was as far from realisation as ever. She had declared that she would not marry John without his mother's consent, and his mother had shown no sign of relenting.

"Perhaps I am not to be happy, and God has sent me this work instead," she thought.

John was to call upon her that evening, but she scarcely knew how to wait until then. She must show him this letter even before Mr. Harris saw it, for John had the greater right. And what would he say but what she had said already, that this strange man who had written to her must find some one else to use his money and do his work?

And yet, as Margaret thought the words she corrected herself. "It is God's work, I am sure of that," she said; "but I cannot think He wishes me to do it."

Margaret did with her letter as, many years before, King Hezekiah did with his. And then she tried to wait patiently.

In the afternoon it occurred to her that it would be a good plan to compel Mrs. Hunter to see her and talk to her openly. Naturally Margaret shrank from the ordeal, but she thought it quite possible that good might come of it. She would try to tell Mrs. Hunter that she need have no fear that she would marry her son if that would be to separate him from his mother, but she would point out to her that she had come to the parting of the ways, and needed to decide on some action, and then she would appeal to the mother's love and see if the proud woman would not yield a little.

Poor Margaret! After nerving herself to the effort she entered the garden of John's house, and saw Mrs. Hunter at the window. But the servant informed her that Mrs. Hunter bade her say that she was not at home.

So Margaret swallowed her disappointment and returned home. Happily for her peace of mind, John came early enough to take tea with her.

"Margaret, my darling," he said, "I am hungry for your love. I must see you oftener than once a week, or I shall become a very disagreeable fellow. What is the matter?" His eyes were searching her face, and love made them keen. He saw that she was labouring under some excitement.

She thought she would not tell him quite at first about her visit to his mother, if at all, for it would only give him pain.

“I want my tea,” she said; “let us have it cosily together. Even Graf is out, and I do not expect any one to call. I want to ask you something?”

“What is it, my Madge?”

“The name of this wild flower. It is new to me.”

“Nonsense! It is not at all an uncommon flower. You must be blinded by love, or you would have seen it before.”

“Perhaps I am,” said Margaret, demurely. “Another cup?”

But when the tea was drunk she could wait no longer.

“I have a letter to show you. It is from a gentleman,” she said, lightly.

His brow clouded. “Who is he?”

“Ah! that is what I do not know. But you need not be angry. He has made me a proposal; but he is a very old man.”

They read the letter together. At first John was pleased.

“It is a capital idea,” he said. “It is just what is wanted. Does not everybody say that the great design of the Zenana work in India is to train mothers? And there is not a town of any size in England but has hundreds of mothers such as this man had.”

But as he read further he was not so satisfied.

“What does the fellow mean?” he said. “How perfectly absurd! He asks you to do it. A pretty thing, indeed! You have something else to do with your life, Margaret. I want you.” But he was very pale, and a fear had taken possession of him.

“The letter has disturbed me a little,” she said; “but the writer surely cannot mean that the scheme hangs upon my accepting or rejecting the management of it. I am too young and inexperienced.”

“Of course you are,” John rejoined, hastily. “But oh, my darling, we must not wait longer. Why should we? I am of age. I can please myself. I am not under my mother’s control, and she is wrong to try to thwart me. We should have to be economical, for I am getting poorer every day, and the lack of money tries and troubles me greatly; but you would not mind that. Say you will marry me, and will not let my mother come between us.”

“John, dear, I dare not come between you and your mother. You are all she has. There is no change for the better, is there? I tried to see her to-day.”

“You did?”

“Yes, for I think if she would talk things over with me, she would feel differently; but the servant told me that she was not at home.”

“We will see her together, Margaret, and she shall talk with you.”

“And, perhaps, it will be right for me to let her decide whether or not I shall undertake this work?”

“Nay, my darling, why should she decide? It is for you and me to decide, and we have done it already.”

But though he spoke confidently there was a great doubt at his heart all the time, and Margaret had a curious feeling that she would have to go to that old homestead in Yorkshire—if not willingly, then against her will.

“Talk to my cousin Tom about it,” said John, “and also to Arthur Knight’s friend, Miss Wentworth. It is she who ought to undertake this thing. She is just the person for it.”

“Yes, I will see Tom to-morrow, and if she can spare the time we will go to Miss Wentworth and lay the matter before her.”

The next day Margaret and Tom had a long talk about it, and Tom was most enthusiastic.

“Margaret, I scarcely like to say it, because of John, for I do not know what he could do without you; but you were made for this work. There is nothing that so badly needs to be done just now, and God has given you a very motherly nature on purpose for it. Do not hastily refuse this call. I think it is from God.”

“I have not told my grandfather yet, and I must. And we shall hear what Miss Wentworth says about it. But, Tom, most of all I want to know whether there is any hope of John’s mother receiving me kindly.”

“Margaret, I am afraid there is not the very least chance of it. Aunt is really dreadful about John’s love for you; and it is only right that I should tell you.”

“Then, Tom,” said Margaret, slowly, “I think I must do this thing that I am asked; not that I am able or worthy, but because it is given me to do. I dare not separate John’s mother from him, and the state of things that exists at present is really injuring him; so, for his sake—yes, and for another reason—I feel as if I must say Yes. It is such a splendid mission to be engaged in.”

“It is. And if I may help you, Margaret, I will. But we must not be hasty. We have others to think of.”

“Yes,” said Margaret; “and I think John’s mother shall decide it for me.”

CHAPTER XXVII.
A VISIT OF INQUIRY.

Many troubles are worse in anticipation than in reality. Mr. Felix Stapleton had cut the difficult knot of his affairs in the only right and direct way; and all the haunting spectres that had filled his days with care, and made his nights hideous, vanished at once.

He had rebuilt the little mission chapel, which had been pronounced unsafe; he had made atonement in some way to every man who had paid him more for a house than it was worth; and he had met his liabilities like a man and a Christian.

Of course all this had not been done at small cost to himself. Much time and thought had been given to his affairs, and competent advice sought by him. It goes without saying that there had been many consultations at which his brother and his son assisted, and they were frequently joined by Mrs. Stapleton and her eldest daughter. In one point they were decided and united, once for all: whatever came they would not forfeit their own self-respect, and that of each other; nor would they do what their consciences, cultivated by Christianity, declared to be wrong in God’s sight, and dishonourable in the sight of the best men. And having thus decided it was wonderful how easy and practicable all the rest became.

The Granchester folk were considerably surprised, and almost filled with consternation, when they discovered that Mr. Stapleton’s house and

estate, and even his horses, carriages, and furniture, were for sale; but he gained immensely from the fact that he was himself selling them, and not his creditors. His place was so convenient and beautiful, and in such excellent condition, that it sold exceedingly well, and with little delay; and the wonder of it all scarcely lasted the proverbial nine days. The greatest trouble Mr. Stapleton had was to get the money at once, and pay it away as quickly; for this is not the way in which business is done in these days; but he was a very determined man, and even the lawyers had for once to be in a hurry. For a few days he had much to endure—since it took that time for the people to make up their minds whether he was a rogue or a hero—and one or two acquaintances became less genial in their greetings and more cautious in their dealings with him. But after the meeting of the creditors, when it was understood what the man had really done, and how he had vindicated his honour and Christian principle, he was treated with a respect which almost amounted to veneration. One of the happiest memories of his life, henceforth, was that of the testimony which the chairman bore to his uprightness and sustained honour, and of the emphatic approval and handshakings of the other men.

And now himself and family were safely ensconced in their pretty country cottage, and had entered upon their new life. Mr. Stapleton went off every morning on the outside of the tram, and enjoyed his twopenny ride. He was always accompanied by his son, and generally by his eldest daughter, who now gave lessons on the violin, and had several pupils. Mrs. Stapleton spent an hour in the garden daily, and was assisted by some of the younger children. The girls were taking lessons in housekeeping of their mother. The troubles of the family had brought them all more closely together, and there was more love and brightness among them than before.

“Do you feel as if you have come down in the social scale, mother?” asked Ernest one day.

“Not in the least,” was the prompt reply. “My friends seem to have settled in the affirmative the question, ‘Ought we to visit her?’ and many of them have taken the trouble to come over and call. But they quite understand that I am too busy now to give much time to social civilities; and I am prepared to spend the rest of my days in the bosom of my family.”

As for Mr. Stapleton, the cloud had been lifted from him, and his step became once more buoyant and free. And the best of it was that his courageous example was followed by many other men, who would not have had strength to be honest if he had not shown them the way.

Before many weeks had passed an incident occurred which rendered it possible that he might once more win his way to fortune, although, as he often declared, if he were a millionaire he would never again live as extravagantly as he had done; and, indeed, simple life was becoming fashionable in many quarters.

The story of Arthur Knight’s removal to Craighelbyl had been frequently told in the illustrated and other newspapers, and it had excited great interest. Some manufacturers who were finding the expenses of their location in London and other large cities almost too heavy to be borne were fascinated by the idea of getting away into some country district, where the cost of living and production would be so much less as to cover in time that of removal. Before long several firms had resolved upon making a similar venture, and one or two limited liability companies were formed for the same purpose.

At a meeting of the managers of some of these companies it was resolved to ask Felix Stapleton to undertake the requisite buildings; and, as may be imagined, there was great rejoicing in his home at the news, as also at the home of Dr. Stapleton; for his brother hastened to inform him, and to ask his help and advice. “It could not come at a better time for me,” he said. “Most of my men will go with me anywhere, and will work for fair wages. The building trade is slack here so I shall have no

difficulty. I am advised to go to Craighelbyl, and see the place for myself."

"Certainly, and I will go with you," said the doctor. "I was wishing for just such an opportunity. A daughter of a friend of mine is going there—Miss Tom Whitwell—and I shall be glad to offer to be her escort. How soon can you go? There is nothing like seeing for yourself, and I would lose no time about it if I were you; for Knight's idea is certain to prove fruitful seed in more directions than one."

"Yes, there is no doubt of it. The day of the big cities is over, at least in one respect. It has always been a mistake to plant new works in the metropolis; London is for other purposes than to make kettles, or shoes, or blankets in. It has been growing more beautiful and healthy every year. And there are plenty of other places where the common work of the factory can be better and more cheaply done than in her streets. It is waste of many kinds to continue immense black works within the sound of Big Ben. The laws of England will always be made in Westminster, and her books within a two-mile radius of Paternoster Row, while round about the Bank and the Exchange King Commerce will reign for ever; and from the Thames will still go the ships that are to conquer the world, not with their big guns but with their cargo."

"Ah! A cargo of rum and whisky!"

"No, indeed. Do you suppose that England is going to stand that sort of thing much longer? I am sure she will not, for, Fred, the Church is waking up at last!"

"Yes; I really believe she is."

"And, in the meantime, the denizens of 'darkest London' are being taken out by thousands into the light of broad fields and green spaces, and are being educated to love work by enterprising Englishmen who will actually _make it pay_."

"They are sure to do that if it is to be done."

"I believe it is. There are great capacities for work in the ordinary working man of England, and now, when so often he is given a share in the profits which he helps to make, we shall be able to hold our own, no matter who tries to block the way."

"Bravo, Felix! I congratulate you on the change of heart and head which has taken place in you. And when will you go to Craighelbyl?"

"On Monday. I should like to be at home on Sunday. They have asked me to preach in our little village in the evening. Of course, I cannot preach a sermon; but a man ought to have learnt something by his prosperities and adversities, and all the ways in which God deals with his soul, and I will gladly tell the people that which has been taught to me. And, after all, they like that sort of thing. Even the parsons are the more successful the more they let life teach them, and the more of the real teachings of life which they put in their sermons. Too many of them really do not understand the fierce temptations which beset men who are doing the world's business, and I suppose that is how it is that a man may so often attend two services, and yet fail to grasp anything which will help to keep him steady and true on the Monday."

"That is so. And although all congregations like to get from their ministers what is called an intellectual treat—or, better still, a spiritual treat—every one needs and appreciates the direct talk of a practical man. But, Felix, we must keep to business now. Can you spare a few hours to go over to Mr. Whitwell's?"

"Can _you_?"

"Yes; I will drive across at once if you like. I shall be back in time to see two patients this evening. It is always a pleasure to go to

Hornby Hall."

The master of the Hall was delighted to make the acquaintance of Felix Stapleton, since he honoured the man, as many others did, for the fidelity to Christian principles which he had exhibited. The two men had much in common, and the time flew rapidly while they were together.

"I shall be greatly indebted to you for taking my daughter under your charge during her journey," he said. "And I am sure you will enjoy your visit. I should like to accompany you, too. But you will not find the man who is the life and soul of the place there. I see from the papers that Mr. Knight is trying to be in half-a-dozen places at once. He is endeavouring to prepare for the next political battle, and there is no time to lose, for a dissolution is imminent."

"Do you think so? That is my own opinion also."

"Oh, yes. The Government is in great straits. There must be an appeal to the country, and that soon."

"It will be a big fight."

"It will, indeed, and fought on altogether new lines; for the conflict will be between the Church and the world, and not, as before, between two parties who themselves make half the difficulties that are supposed to separate them."

"Are the churches ready?"

"I think they are more nearly ready than ever before. They have made their influence more surely felt during the last twenty years than at any other time since the formation of the present British Constitution. And this has naturally aroused the antagonism of the opposing powers, who do nothing but sneer at the development of the Christian conscience in politics; but the result will be that those who are for righteousness will ignore their minor differences, and stand together in this contest."

"If they do, the right will be victorious. Scourby means to lead the way," said Dr. Stapleton. "There is not, I think, the least fear that Mr. Lavender will be returned again. The people have learned their lesson thoroughly."

"I think so, though it remains to be seen."

"I did not tell you, Felix," said the doctor, addressing his brother, "that I had the pleasure of making one of a deputation from all the religious societies of the town, to urge Mr. Whitwell to allow himself to be nominated."

"I am glad to hear it. I need not ask whether you were successful, because the feeling is strong that no man who is solicited by the united churches can do other than accept the honour and responsibility."

"That is my own feeling," said Mr. Whitwell. "But for this I should certainly have declined, for I have no wish whatever to enter Parliament; but I think in the present crisis every man should put his patriotism before his own wishes or convenience."

"And in your case there can be no doubt of victory."

"I am not sure. I believe it will certainly be a hard fight."

"I hope every man will vote. There ought to be a law to compel him to do so," said Dr. Stapleton.

"What!" cried his brother, "do you want to still further curtail the liberty of the subject?"

“I believe,” said Mr. Whitwell, “that Arthur Knight will have done a great deal to bring about a better state of things in England. Have you heard him speak, Mr. Stapleton?”

“Yes; several times. He is a man of marvellous power and eloquence. What he says goes directly to the hearts of his hearers. His personality is so vivid, and his words and gestures are so telling, that it is difficult to resist him. He sways an audience as few have been able to do. I am sorry he is not at Craighelbyl.”

“I should think he will probably be there during your visit,” said Tom—and then she stopped, as if confused.

“But he is quite on the other side of the country,” objected her father.

“Yes? But the country is not a very broad one, and Mr. Knight is a good traveller. I am sure he would wish to see you, Dr. Stapleton, and would return, if possible, in time to do the honours of his own place.”

Mr. Whitwell shook his head. “He is engaged just now on grave business,” he said.

“I suppose we are to have another eloquent man in our midst directly—the young clergyman from Canada?”

“Macdonald? Yes; I understand that he will rival Knight. It is another case of Wesley and Whitfield. Only Macdonald is a very staunch Churchman, and speaks in the interests of the English Church.”

“What a good thing it is that the Church will hear him!” remarked the doctor.

“Dr. Stapleton, I wish you could persuade my friend, Margaret Miller, to accompany us to Craighelbyl,” said Tom.

“I could not urge her to do so now, for, although she does not yet know it, I am afraid that her grandfather is ill.”

“Mr. Harris ill!”

“He is not well, certainly, and I am rather anxious about him. I want him to consult a specialist.”

“It would be a sad thing for us all if Mr. Harris were ill. We could not spare him just now.”

“I hope I may be mistaken. He is a fine man, and my best friend,” said the doctor. “Felix, my time is up. I shall call for you, Miss Tom, at nine o’clock on Monday morning. Our train leaves Euston at eleven.”

Three of the passengers who travelled into Wales by that train, although they had as pleasant a journey as any of the rest, and were quite as talkative, had each some thoughts which were kept entirely to the thinker, and a profound secret from the others. They were going, as more than a few other people had gone, in order to see for themselves the new departure which created so much interest everywhere, and their conversation was chiefly on this theme. Tom, too, was eager to see her friend Mary Wythburn, and renew the friendship of the old school days, and hear all that Mary would tell of her strange experiences since that morning which she never liked to think about, when she had fled from her friends rather than be married. Tom was very desirous, too, to introduce to Mr. Stapleton the two children, Geoff and Sis, and discover how they liked the new life. Tom’s stories of these prodigies were very amusing, and helped to while away the tedium of the journey. But that which she was thinking of the most frequently she told to no one; and perhaps Dr. Stapleton and his brother were as little confidential as she.

It was evening when they neared Afon Wen, and saw the beautiful blue sea

spread before them; but Craighelbyl looks its loveliest and best in the evening lights, and the travellers agreed that a more charming situation could scarcely have been found.

Miss Wythburn and her father stood on the platform, and the two children were beside them. As the train drew up, Sissy shouted, “Aunty Tom, what have you brought me? I am such a great, good girl now.”

The child was exceedingly useful, for the meeting might have had some elements of awkwardness in it if she had not created a diversion.

Mary hastened forward to greet her friend. “Oh, Tom! how good it is to see you. But how pale and tired you are! The Welsh air will soon change all that though. If you had but brought Margaret with you my joy would have been perfect. How do you do, Dr. Stapleton?”

The doctor looked so intently into the face that had seldom been absent from his thoughts that Mary was obliged to turn from his keen gaze in some confusion. Mr. Wythburn’s pleasure was very great; he had longed for the sight of an old friend, and he had always liked the doctor. He wished he might have come to stay for a month; and he promised himself the greatest possible pleasure in showing him the features of the new place in which Mr. Wythburn almost felt that he had a share.

The two girls walked together to talk as girls will; and Tom was soon in ecstasies about everything. “But I wish very much that Mr. Knight were at home,” said Mary; “for the place never seems complete without him.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.
“FOR CHRIST AND THE PEOPLE!”

“And you are really happy, Mary?”

“As happy as it is possible to be in this world.”

“And you do not require any one but these people to fill your heart and life? You are sure that you have never regretted Alfred Greenholme?”

Mary laughed merrily at the suggestion. “I do regret acting as I did, Tom; but I thank God every day that instead of being Alfred Greenholme’s wife I am at work among my dear people in this most beautiful place.”

“And no doubt Mr. Knight fully appreciates your services?”

“Mr. Knight appreciates everything that is done to help to make Craighelbyl what he has set his heart upon its becoming—a model town occupied by model people. It is not all easy, you know, Tom. We have some obstreperous ones among us; but there is every inducement to the people to behave well, because everything is done that can be thought of to make them comfortable and happy.”

“And they are certainly a merry set, if one may judge from last night.”

“Yes; they have developed a capacity for enjoying themselves which is remarkable when one remembers how they looked when they lived in Paradise Grove.”

“I really must congratulate you, Mary, on being able to assist in so good and great a thing as this. I should have liked the chance myself.”

“I am sure you would have, Tom. But now tell me of Margaret, and this new idea of a training home for young housewives.”

The two friends were together on the shore, with a long afternoon before them, and much to talk about. Mary wanted to know all that Tom could

tell of Scourby and Darentdale, of old and mutual friends, and of the success of the new plans for helping the poor to help themselves, which had been tried for a longer time in the places adjacent to Tom's home than anywhere else. When she heard the particulars of the suggestions contained in the letter which Margaret had received she was delighted, and almost wished herself back again that she might help.

"Margaret must undertake the management, and she will do it splendidly," she said. "Nothing must stand in the way. It is, of all other missions, the one that is most needed in England."

"I am not at all sure that my Cousin John ought not to stand in the way. There are always private interests to be considered, and it is not right that they should be ignored. But if Margaret abides by her resolution not to marry him until my aunt consents, I quite think she may count upon several years for this work. But whoever shall attempt it will find the task bristling with difficulties. Those girls who most need to be made to think do not wish to; and they will not voluntarily go into exile during the time of courtship—it is not likely."

"But the bribe of five pounds' worth of furniture will secure many. And I am sure there must be hosts of girls whose hearts and consciences are made tender by love, and who would most thankfully embrace such an opportunity of making themselves more worthy to be wives."

"Oh, yes! And it will be a great thing to help these; but I am afraid the lowest of the low will not be reached."

"Even if it be so, it will be much to prevent the class just above the lowest of the low from sinking down into it. What are you going to do yourself, Tom? Will you help Margaret?"

"Yes; I think so," said Tom. "We have pulled together well, Margaret and I; but I have not as much of the missionary spirit as she."

Mary laughed. "The real truth is, I think, that you will have to be married. I am sure that in your secret soul you have a great love for 'quiet household joys,' shared by somebody."

"Shared by whom?"

"Ah! we shall all know some day."

"When?"

"How can I tell when? Perhaps soon. Certainly at the right time."

The days of Tom's holiday passed very pleasantly in gambols and rambles with the children, in walks over the hills with Mary and Dr. Stapleton, and at the different classes which were vigorously carried on in the delightful "Town of Progress." Everything which they saw charmed the visitors, and compelled the Doctor to remark that if Craighelbyls could be multiplied England would at once deserve the name of Christian, which years ago she claimed.

Tom felt all the time that if only Mr. Knight were at home the thing would be perfect. Since the place owed everything to him, he ought really to have been there. She wondered many times whether he knew of her visit, and whether it would make any difference to him if he did; and, after much thought, she concluded that it would not. He was the one man in England in whom the hopes of the people were centred; he had been most kind and pleasant during those days when she had met him in London and the short visit which he had paid at her father's house, but it was not likely that he, of all men, should give a second thought to her.

And yet she rather resented one little circumstance. She had not felt the slightest possible interest in the man until he had made her! Why had he put that something into his manner, and then made no further sign?

Still, it was, of course, an indisputable fact that no one could see Craighelbyl without feeling the keenest interest in Arthur Knight, so that was, no doubt, the reason why Tom thought of him, not only every day, but many times during the day.

In the meantime Mr. Stapleton had been making the most of his time, and had been assisted by the officials to the information which he desired. That which he saw he most heartily approved. The buildings were not for a year’s wear only, but were meant to last, and Mr. Knight had not put the work into the hands of a contractor that it might be done cheaply, but he had only cared to have it well done; and, consequently, all that modern science had established in regard to public buildings, factories, and the homes of the people had been used in the erection of Craighelbyl. Mr. Felix Stapleton had his dreams. If he should ever be able he would himself be the founder of a similar place.

Neither he nor his brother could spare many days, even for the study of so interesting a place as Craighelbyl, though the Doctor was particularly charmed with some matters, and especially with the experiences of Dr. Armitt, with whom he had many conversations. Mr. Knight had placed Dr. Armitt at Craighelbyl, not so much that he might cure the people when they were ill, as keep them well; and, understanding this, the latter was trying various plans. Once a week he gave a medical lecture; but his audience was a different one on each of the four Thursdays of the month. One lecture was to men only, another was to mothers, one was to children, and the fourth was an ambulance lecture open to all. The Doctor knew how to make his talks chatty and humorous; he had always some story to tell which raised a laugh, and he was listened to the more regularly for that. Then, besides, there were examinations, and competitions for prizes; and by these means he got together the majority of the residents. He was also the Sanitary Inspector of the place, and a merciless examiner he made; so that all careless occupants of houses had a bad half-hour whenever he visited them, for he was, as one woman said, “awfully masterful and tyrant-like.” He was; and, what was more, he could keep it up, so that it was really less trouble for the men and women to be regularly particular and attentive to their duties than to clean and turn out places while the Doctor stood fuming and storming by. And the Doctor did this part of the work all the more thoroughly because the community was at present in an entirely healthy condition.

Dr. Stapleton would have liked to change places with him; and the two men parted with the understanding that if a second doctor were required Stapleton should be told of the circumstance.

He was loth to leave Craighelbyl without that which he had really come for—a talk with Miss Wythburn; and the time for his departure came before he had the opportunity. But on the last night of his stay he spoke to Mary’s father of that which was in his heart.

“She is so much occupied with Miss Whitwell and with her work that I have tried in vain to see her alone even for five minutes,” he said.

“Perhaps Mary has intentionally contrived that it should be so,” said Mr. Wythburn. “Women are curious creatures, Doctor, and they read men like a book—or think they do. I don’t think Mary cares to get married to any one. But you shall have a chance to ask her.”

Tom Whitwell was not nearly ready to return, and neither could her friend spare her so soon. It was, therefore, easily managed for the Doctor to have his opportunity.

“There need be no beating about the bush,” he said. “I think you must know what brought me here, Miss Wythburn.”

“Everybody knows that,” said Mary. “You came to see Craighelbyl.”

“Yes; but, most of all, I came to see you. I am not vain enough or

stupid enough to suppose that you have ever thought of me since you left Scourby."

"Oh, yes; I have thought of you often, Dr. Stapleton," said Mary, gently.

"But I have thought of you every day, and in spite of myself. I have tried to forget you, because I have feared that you could not return my love; but I cannot help myself—there is no other woman in the world for me."

Mary's eyes filled with tears, for she was so sorry for him. She had feared this all along, and yet had hoped she might be mistaken. She liked the Doctor so much too—but that was all.

"It is very good of you to care for me," she said, "after all that has happened; but I am sorry you do, because I can never be married. It would not be right."

The Doctor misunderstood her, and answered angrily, "Why is it not right, when Greenholme has been married all this time?"

"I was not thinking of him, but of myself. I have my work here, and am quite content. It is not every woman who desires to be married, or who ought to take upon herself the responsibilities of a home. I have chosen a different lot from many, but it is my own deliberate choice, and I cannot go back from it."

"Pardon me," said the Doctor, "it is a very unnatural choice. I think the real truth must be, not that you cannot love, but that you do not care for me. Your occupation is a noble one, but you would not be prevented from doing the same kind of work if you were happily married. Is not much of the philanthropic work of the time done by women whose hearts are large enough to take in the whole world, and yet are true to one?"

But Mary did not wish to pursue that inquiry.

"It is of no use, Doctor," she said, "you must accept my decision as final."

Dr. Stapleton did not feel that he could do so, but he judged it better to say no more. He had still his work, and since the burden of his brother's affairs had been lifted from his shoulders, he was much more happy than before. Moreover, he was trying to live down the unreasonable prejudice of the people, who quite believed that there was something wrong about him. Considering all the circumstances of his life, he was not in a despairing mood when the train that carried him moved out of the station, and he smiled back pleasantly into the merry face of Miss Tom Whitwell, and waved her a farewell, which was also a congratulation upon her extended holiday.

"I am sorry they have not seen Mr. Knight," said Tom; "it would have made their visit much more pleasant."

"And yours too," agreed Mary, glancing at the brown face of her friend; "perhaps he will return before you leave, Tom. I wish he may, but he is very busy just now. Father had a letter from him this morning; but it was only a short one, and full of his hopes about the new General Election, which is coming. He did not say when he would be back, but we may hope it will be soon."

It was scarcely likely to be; for although Arthur Knight's personal interest in his people and their well-being was great, he was even more solicitous in regard to his country. He rejoiced to know that from a thousand pulpits and platforms the imperative duty of the Church was being announced, and the need of Christian union insisted upon. To a great extent, he knew, and deplored the knowledge, that the Church had lost her hold upon the masses; and he thought that the coming contest

would be a life and death struggle in more respects than one. Would she awake and put on her strength, and do the work to which God had appointed her in the emergency that was at hand? He did not know; but he hoped.

If England would send to Westminster a body of picked men, pledged not to party or to politics, but to Christ and His kingdom, determined to make short work of even high positions and vested interests if they stood in the way of righteousness and the people's good, a body of men of high character and sound sense and iron resolution, who were afraid of nothing but the sin that disgraced the nation, a body of men chosen by the united churches, and well-tested in the places they were to represent, who would fight together under one banner, "_For Christ and for the People_," then, indeed, there was hope for the world and for the Church.

But if not?

During that time of stress it was noticed that Arthur Knight's voice rang like a clarion. He spoke as he never had spoken before, and his urgent thought and impassioned speech roused many thousands of men. There was coming to be a look of stern determination on the faces of the people that had seldom been seen during many years; and they were making a promise—which they meant to keep—to themselves and one another, and even to God. This is what it was: That they would not rest until dishonesty and cruelty, drunkenness and impurity, were put away from the high places and the low places in England.

Many sneeringly asked, "Do you hope to convert the world by Acts of Parliament?" and the reply was "No; we do not! Conversion is another matter; but we will so punish the perpetrators of these wrongs, and so restrict their power and influence, that they shall not insult the better sense of the English people as they have so long done in past years."

Committees were formed everywhere, and meetings were held in vestries and in chapels, for the Church at last realised what her business was, and meant to do it.

In the very midst of the rush of meetings Arthur Knight stood aside for two days and let them go on without him. He disappointed many people; but he believed that he was doing something of the utmost importance while absenting himself from the meetings.

He spent those two days in listening to and talking with the Rev. Peter Macdonald.

Mr. Macdonald was the son of a Canadian farmer; and he was himself, to use his own words, "a priest of the Church of England." His ancestors were Scotch, but they had settled in Canada before he was born. They were nearly all members of the English Episcopal Church, and young Peter early evinced a marvellous love of Church history. The result of his study was that he dreamed day and night of what the Church might become in England if only she were as great and as faithful as she might be. He grew into a young man of fervid imagination and impassioned speech; and conducted a mission in Canada which was productive of great good. Then he longed to visit England, and at length his bishop sent him over with many letters of introduction, which secured him a welcome in high places. He was "of the Church Churchy," as some one told Knight; but he spoke as few of her sons have been gifted to speak. And the burden of his speech was this:—

"You have lost too many of the people! Get the people back. Our Church is theirs, and they must come home. They threaten us with disestablishment; _let us disestablish ourselves_. Let the endowments and the positions go. They are as nothing in value compared with the people."

Knight resolved that he would know this man. He found him at first

rather suspicious of the Dissenter, for such Arthur declared himself to be, and Knight found some distasteful things in Macdonald; but neither man was hard to win, and, when they had spent two days together, they were fast friends, and had resolved to drop all differences, and fight side by side for Christian unity.

Instead, therefore, of ignoring each other, or laying plans to thwart one another, these two young men of many gifts, who had also much sanctified common-sense between them, resolved to work into each other's hands. Each, therefore, revealed his designs for the future in perfect assurance that his confidence would not be abused.

At last Macdonald said, "Knight, I am going to introduce you to one who is a silent spectator of our work—a young man, but the greatest man in England."

Knight rose from his seat in excitement. "The Prince?" he cried; and the answer was, "Yes, the Prince."

Arthur Knight and Peter Macdonald both believed more in peoples than in princes; but there was at this time in England a young man who had won great respect and affection for his nobility of character and goodness of life. He was not a Prince by title, though one of his parents was of the Royal family; but the people called him "the Prince," because he was princely. It was known that he loved the people, as they loved him. His tastes led him away from the pursuits and pleasures commonly adopted by his peers, and he was foremost in every enterprise that had for its end the amelioration of the conditions of the poor. He lived as quietly as was possible, for rumour declared that some of his relatives were a little jealous of his growing popularity; but it was impossible for him to remain in obscurity, for he could not but have a share in the best things of his time.

"Do you know the Prince? How have you managed to make his acquaintance?" inquired Knight.

"In a very simple fashion. He came to a church in which I was preaching, and after the service he invited me to his house. If only he had no Royal blood in him, what a sublime work that man might do in England!"

"The little Royal blood that he has in him will not hurt him, but do him good," said Knight. "You are honoured in having an acquaintance with him; and do you really mean that he is coming here?"

"No, I am to take you to him. He wants you to speak freely to him of all your work, and you will find that his suggestions are worth their weight in gold, for Solomon's wisdom has been given to him."

A little later the three young men were seated together in a large room, substantially, but not luxuriously, furnished. There was hope for the country in such a trio—a descendant of the Royal Family, a son of a Canadian farmer and a clergyman, and a layman, the son of a rich manufacturer. That the three should have anything in common was one of the wonderful signs of those wonderful times; but that they had in common everything which each held dearest was more remarkable still.

They conversed together, as young patriots must needs do, of their country and the services which they desired to render her; and when they parted, with a strong clasp of the hands and a "God speed you," each felt that he had received strength which would nerve him for his future life whatever duties it might bring.

CHAPTER XXIX.
YOUNG ENGLAND.

As soon as the dissolution of Parliament was declared, more than the ordinary activity was displayed, and everywhere for a few days the usual tactics were observed. The two “great parties,” as they were called, sent representatives to the various towns, and these issued their addresses, put in various forms of expression, but all meaning the same thing: “Send me. I am for progress. Your interests will be supported, and the Millennium will come, if only you do your duty and plump for me;” or, “Send me. I am a patriot of the true colour, and all that is most desirable for the Empire will be secured, with peace and prosperity, if you obey your consciences and plump for me.”

The immediate occasion of the dissolution was that Parliament was not sufficiently united in regard to the age at which children should be allowed to leave school and commence work. The Government and its supporters said thirteen, the Opposition said fourteen, and got the larger number of votes.

In almost all the Parliamentary boroughs the work of the wire-pullers in London, who tried to dictate to the voters as to the men who were to be their representatives, was in vain. The towns had already chosen their men. Almost without exception they were local men, well known to the people, among whom they bore unblemished characters, and by whom they were pronounced men of knowledge and ability. In the country, in more than a few cases, the squire was the favourite candidate because he was the squire; but the rule everywhere was not for the man to choose the people, but the people to choose the man. For once in the history of England the man did not solicit the suffrages of the voters, but they requested him to allow them to place him in Westminster, in order that he might serve them.

It was agreed that there should be no canvassing, and there was therefore less need than usual of workers and conveyances and all the old-fashioned methods of impelling men to the poll.

But there was an organisation, alert and active, which served the good cause in a way so effective as to astonish the world. It was the society of the Young Crusaders who came forward at this crisis and showed their power, not only in their vast numbers, but in their complete discipline. They took the country by storm. To every political meeting they sent a representative who could speak, and who asked to be allowed to place the wishes of the voters of the future before the voters of to-day. “The laws you make now,” said they, “will affect us much more than they will you. Ought we not, therefore, to have a voice in the matter?” And the voice they raised moved men, and made them stand to their principles, and gave them courage for the conflict.

They succeeded in getting their colours adopted—“the red, white and blue of Old England: the red for Battle, the white for Purity, and the blue for Temperance.” The Crusaders were themselves seen everywhere during the fray; their fresh young voices cheered and sang; they cried “Shame!” whenever unfairness, or slander, or untruthfulness characterised a speech, and shouted God speed when they knew and honoured the speaker. It was a great change. For many years women had taken some part in the political battles that had been fought; they had addressed meetings, and canvassed householders, and driven in their carriages to the scene of action; but it was a new thing for the lads to take part in an election. They were at present without votes, but they were learning the duties of citizens as thoroughly as they were learning their trades, and the real questions that were at issue were questions in regard to which they were often less ignorant than their fathers, because they had the advantage of good, clear-headed, and impartial teachers.

Of course, many of the newspapers published satirical articles every day. Were the men of England so fallen, so lost to the sense of their own manliness, as to be dictated to by a lot of little Sunday-school boys? The producers of caricature and illustrators of all the comic papers had a fine time, _Christian Society_ and other journals of a similar type were more scurrilous than ever, and there was no end to the sneers at religion and religionists which were produced.

But, for the most part, those whom they were intended to hurt and irritate were too busy to take any notice of them, and so went calmly on their way. The constituencies were most earnestly appealed to not to send men who were not altogether, as to their private life and character, the upholders of purity, honesty, and uprightness. And the greater number of the constituencies responded. A man might be rich, but if he paid his workmen poorly it would be vain for him to seek the suffrages of the people. Or he might be clever, and be able to talk persuasively; but unless his life had been speaking in his favour he need not hope to represent his fellow-men in Parliament. For there was a new patriotism for the new times—a patriotism which placed in the forefront of its political battle a banner, with the old device: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

There were other banners with other legends, but they meant much the same thing—"No More Working for Starvation Wages," "No More Unemployed," "Send Clean Men to Make Clean Cities," "For the Women and the Children's Sake," "No More Brute Force," "A True Man for True Men."

Arthur Knight declined the invitations of several cities to represent them. He thought he could serve his country better outside than inside of Parliament; and he was probably right, for it was not in him to be in any sense a political man. But it needs no saying that he was intensely interested in regard to this election.

And he was one of the few men who do not mind being laughed at. He laughed with the laughers when in the daily papers there were articles intended to be funny with such headings as "A Government of Grandmothers," or "Old Maids in Office," or "The Childishness of Chivalry."

Among the meetings was one that was addressed by a young Crusader already known to us.

"Let young Mr. Stapleton talk to us," shouted a workman, and the suggestion was so heartily applauded that the lad was called upon by the Chairman to say a few words.

He was very nervous, as a boy in such a position ought to be; but his voice was clear and distinct, and it rang through the meeting, touching all hearts.

"One of the rules of our order is that of obedience," said Ernest, "and since I am asked to try to speak I must do the best I can, only begging you to be patient with me, since I am but a boy. The Young Crusaders are all taking part in this election, because we believe that no previous Parliament has had such grave issues depending upon it as this which is now being elected. And we are encouraged, as all the world must be, by the knowledge that, for the first time, Christian men of all denominations occupy the same platform. The chosen of the Church will surely be the chosen of the people. And therefore we pray you to choose wisely. You are preparing an inheritance for us; let it be one that shall not bring us shame. We ask of our leaders that they will prove their power by making England better. We love our country, and, if necessary, we will fight for her; but we want a Hercules to clean out all the dark places and lead the people into the light. Help us, for we are not all strong, by removing from us the temptations which might cause us to fall. Send men to Parliament everywhere who will care more for the good name of England and the future well-being of her sons than for their own riches. You are our fathers. Oh! be great that we may be proud of you and copy you. Let the cause you espouse be the people's cause, and especially the cause of the young people. Is it not more important for you to secure us than wealth? Keep us on your side, and make for us only such laws as shall tend for our good. And in return we will honour you, and work for you, and love you. But my time to talk is not yet come, and so I will cease trying, only I ask you to remember the boys when you are making up your next legislature."

The young orator had made some long halts between his sentences, and sometimes it had seemed as if he were reciting from some book which he had studied; but on the whole he made an excellent impression.

“There’s a good time coming when a youngster in a jacket can talk like that,” said a man.

“Yes,” replied another with a sigh; “the next generation will be better than we are.”

“If we do our duty by them! We were left too much to ourselves, you know. Our grandfathers believed in the stick, and had their boys well in hand. Our fathers went too much the other way, and didn’t care what became of us, so long as we got out of their way. But our boys don’t want to be let alone; they want to be looked after and helped; and if we do it there will be a fine time to follow ours. I wish I could live to see it.”

“Well, anyway, we will put our man in, for he is one of the right sort.”

“Oh, we shall do that, sure enough.”

And so they did.

There was no more bitter struggle anywhere than at Scourby, where Mr. Whitwell and his friends had resolved upon wresting the seat from Mr. Richard Lavender, though there were several other places in which the battle was fought on the same lines.

In Scourby, since the churches had decided to unite in Christian and philanthropic endeavour of all kinds, there had been a marked change. Every building consecrated to the worship of God had been a centre round which all sorts of plans for ameliorating the condition of the poor had been tried. One man, at his own expense, had rented a couple of cottages, and there provided occupations of different kinds for those who were out of work. Another cottage had been taken by a lady, who kept it for the use of mothers who might come there to be helped in their cooking, sewing, or anything else that they had in hand. The committee of Helpfulness had been so successful that the whole town had been canvassed, and there was no one in the place who had been overlooked or disregarded. And, best of all, the children were under control in their times of play as well as during their school hours. And all this told upon the working men, on whose votes the election depended; so that, although it could not even yet be said that they could be got to flock into the different places of worship, they did not all flock to public-houses; and they were permeated with the idea that their best friends and staunchest helpers and supporters were Christians.

It was strange that they had ever believed otherwise; but many of them had, and the fact that at last they were being convinced of the truth was an unspeakable gain.

There were some lively scenes in Scourby. Mr. Richard Lavender was every evening in some public-house or other, drinking with the voters, smoking with them, and promising them everything which they liked to ask. But the public-house business was not what it used to be. There were so many other comfortable meeting-places for men in those days, and so many men meant business of another kind, that the number of votes secured over the pot and the glass were fewer than ever before.

Still, there were enough of Lavender’s supporters to have interfered with the right of free speech if the populace had permitted it. There was one public meeting called in support of Mr. Whitwell which was the scene of a disturbance. Men had been primed with beer, and sent on purpose to disturb the proceedings, though as soon as Mr. Whitwell appeared a most enthusiastic welcome was accorded him, and the cheers quite drowned the hootings and the groans. But when the first speaker commenced it was found that interruptions were to be the order of the day; and then it was proved that an indignant working man cannot be

insulted with impunity. There were no cries of “Turn him out!” but whenever in the audience a man endeavoured to prevent a speaker from being heard, two men quietly seized him, and three or four others surrounded him, and he was ejected with very little ceremony. Still, even that was so unpleasant that Mr. Whitwell decided that his election should not be won by talk at public meetings, and his spoken address was a very short one.

“At former political meetings,” he said, “the interrupters have been lads and young men. Gentlemen, all is well now, for the _youth of England is with us_. (Cries of “Hurrah!” “Thank God!” and “Don’t be too sure of that!”) I cannot be too sure! I know. The Coming Race will set many wrong things right. As for me, I am here not by my own wish, but yours. Unless you think I am able to carry out your wishes you will not send me to Westminster as your representative. You know me, for my life has been before you many years. I do not believe that all men can be equal; but I believe that no man ought to be poor. I do not think that my farm ought to be cut up into allotments; but I think that every man who wants a bit of ground for his own cultivation ought to be able to hire or purchase it on easy terms, and that the men whom I employ should get a fair share of the increase. I do not think that labour ought to tyrannise over capital, or capital over labour, for neither can do without the other; but I think that capital is for the many rather than the few. I am sure that every man who is willing to work ought to have work to do, and that his wages should be sufficient to keep in comfort. But I also believe that every man ought to work; and if he is lazy, and will not, then he should be starved until he does. I believe that it is the duty, as it ought to be pleasure, of every father of a family to work for his wife and children, and that he should be compelled to do it. I believe that every brutal husband or father should be dealt with according to the old law—‘With the measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,’ and that any selfish drunkard who ill-treats a woman or a child should be made to feel the same pain he has inflicted, to hunger if he has made another hunger, and to be beaten if he has beaten another.” Here there was an interruption, and Mr. Whitwell said distinctly, “Yes, I would have the whip invariably punish cruelty.” Some one cried, “It unmans a man to thrash him!” and the speaker replied, “Any man who strikes a woman or a child is unmanned already; he is not a man, but a coward.” “But,” he continued, “I would make it penal for a landlord to receive rent for an insanitary house, or for a master to compel his hands to work in unhealthy conditions; and I would have every man, woman, and child enjoy some leisure as well as work, some pleasure as well as duty. And, gentlemen, if a rich English merchant sends out an unseaworthy ship, or a cargo deliberately intended to ruin a race of savages, I would have him imprisoned. If a magistrate should take the part of the rich against the poor, I would have him deposed. In a word, what I long for, and will do my best to promote, is justice! Down with hypocrisy, whatever garb it wears! Let us have real men, for the times demand them. I do not say to you that I am one of these; I only say that I will try to be; and, if I cannot hasten on the right, at least I will not hinder it. Gentlemen, I shall say no more at any other time or in any other place during this contest. The issue shall be as you desire!”

Dr. Stapleton and Mr. Dallington walked away from the meeting together.

“The streets are much more quiet than at the last election,” remarked John; “but that is because the public-houses are now closed at ten, and night is not made hideous by the shouts of half-drunken men and women.”

“And the election will be as we wish it, for the same reason,” said the Doctor. “I am not as advanced as some people in regard to total abstinence, you know; but this Local Option arrangement is splendid.”

“Ah! there has been a vote to-day, has there not, to decide whether the public-houses shall be open or closed on the day of the election?”

“Yes; and it is decided that they are to be closed.”

“Really! The majority has it?”

“Yes; and a very respectable majority it is. The figures were handed to me as I left the hall. It was not a large vote—a good many abstained from recording their wishes; but there is no mistake as to the desires of the community that this issue shall not be befogged by drink.”

“I am exceedingly glad to hear it. Then there is not a shade of doubt but that our man will win?”

“Not a shade!”

CHAPTER XXX.
PEACE!

“Victory all along the lines!”

This was the triumphant report made from a thousand pulpits on the Sunday following the elections, and the _Te Deum_ was sung in the churches with increased fervour.

“So political!” said the objectors; but since politics had now become a part of Christianity, why not?

There was great rejoicing at Scourby and Darentdale and its neighbourhood, for Mr. Whitwell was duly elected by a majority of undreamed of magnitude.

And if they could have understood it, there would have been still greater gladness in the hearts of a million of the children of the nation, for the first duty to which the members of the new Parliament were pledged to address themselves was the amelioration of their condition. Henceforth, every child’s life was to be considered sacred, and of priceless value to the State. There were to be no more little lives sacrificed to the passion of brutal men and women, for it was at last recognised that every child born in England had a soul, had its rights, its powers also, and possibilities; and if there were parents who did not desire to own it and care for it, the country did. How it was to be paid for, and who was to pay—whether it was to be housed, fed, and trained by the State, which would recoup itself by certain services rendered in the future; or whether unwilling parents should be compelled to work for their own children; also, whether it would be more easy to secure for the child the love and motherly ministrations which are absolutely essential to its well-being in the home of its parents—or in other homes, from parently, but childless, people, were details for the Government to settle. “It is your duty to solve these and other problems which are waiting,” said the people to their representatives. “It is our will that every abuse which is a national disgrace shall be swept away; and if you have not the ability to do it, or do not care to take the necessary trouble, we have made a mistake in our choice, and shall call upon you to vacate the seats which others can more worthily fill.”

So it was perfectly understood that there were to be no more days weakly and wickedly wasted by the stupid talk of obstructives, many of whom had gone to Westminster hitherto for the expressed purpose of preventing the opposite party from doing anything, since they were not strong enough to do anything themselves. It had been prophesied years before that when the Church “meant business” there would be change in many things, and the Church meant business now, and was determined that henceforth in England the Houses of Legislature should be composed of real men, with not one idiot among them. And it will be readily understood that there were, therefore, great rejoicings among all men and women who were the true patriots of the land.

But while these changes, for which, during many years, a silent preparation had been going on, began to be accomplished, there were the

usual joys and sorrows in the domestic lives of the people.

Henry Harris recorded his vote early, as did also Dr. Stapleton, and then they both went away to London, the former to consult the greatest physician of the day, and the latter to accompany him, and give him such support as friendship could if he should need it.

Persons in search of the dramatic elements of our life in its reality would scarcely find them more developed than in the house of an eminent doctor. In the waiting-room, where patients gather and await their turn, what striking contrasts and vivid harmonies there are! Here is an unloved wife, who yet desperately clings to the life that has so little to offer here; and there is one so deeply loved that her husband would part with his all to buy one little year longer which they might spend together. Here is a man who might drop out of Society at once and never be missed; and there is another, of whom it is said in the town of his residence that he cannot possibly be spared, for there is no one, and even no dozen of men, who could fill his place. Yonder is one for whom his mother prays: “Oh, take him that he may do no more evil!” And here another for whom ten thousand people pray, “Oh, spare him that he may yet further bless us and glorify Thee!” And what breathless suspense there is in the consulting-room of the great man! No prisoner at the bar waits for the verdict of the jury with more consuming anxiety than does the innocent man, whose heart is full of his wife and children, as the perspiration stands in great drops on his forehead, while the sentence of hope or of doom is pronounced by the oracle. He may be wrong, and often is, this man whose fiat has such terrible power; but if he has a heart it must often know the acutest pangs of sympathy.

Mr. Harris was pale but calm when Dr. Stapleton introduced him. Really, he did not share his friend’s fears. It was true that he had suffered much, but not enough to indicate any disease that might prove fatal. Of that he felt sure, or thought he did; but his eyes had read the faces of the men and women who had waited as he had, and his feelings had been greatly touched. It was more of them than of himself he thought while he answered the physician’s questions and submitted to his examination. He was surprised when the Doctor at last said, “If you can spare the time to wait I should like to call a friend who understands these cases even better than I.”

“Certainly I can wait,” replied Harris; “I have no other errand in London but this.”

“Then I will see if he can be summoned,” said the Doctor, as he went towards his telephone.

“You are not quite sure whether there is anything the matter with me?” asked Harris.

“Perfectly sure,” was the reply; “but there may be something that can be done.”

The other doctor arrived, and Harris was not kept long in suspense. “I am sorry to tell you that yours is a hopeless case.” It was put bluntly, and yet the tones of the man’s voice were as gentle as he could make them.

“There is no cure for me?”

“I am afraid none; at least, we do not know of any.”

Harris’s face became white to the lips, and he did not speak for a few seconds. Presently he said, “Very well. Other men have had to bear pain for many years; what they have done I must do. I suppose it will be years?”

“Do you positively wish me to tell you?”

“Most certainly; the exact truth, as far as you know it.”

“I am afraid it will not even be months.”

The doctor considerately left his patient for a few minutes after he had thus pronounced sentence upon him. Stapleton was waiting anxiously. He was almost certain there was no hope, and yet it was a keen disappointment to him when he found his worst fears confirmed.

“He will bear it like a man,” he said, “for there are few better and braver men in the world than Harris. I am truly sorry. I shall lose a friend whom I greatly respect. You can have no idea what a fine fellow he is!”

“Has he a wife and children?”

“No; he has a granddaughter, or a ward, I do not know which—a young lady who loves and honours him; but all the village in which he lives will mourn him.”

“The worst of it is the horrible suffering he must bear.”

“Ah, yes! It is terrible to think of what it must be before release comes. How long will it be?”

“Three or four weeks probably, not more, though he is a strong man, and I should judge that he has not played fast and loose with his constitution.”

When Stapleton joined his friend he was met with the kind smile which always had a wonderful tenderness and sweetness in it, quite characteristic of the man. It almost brought tears to Stapleton’s eyes now, and he silently grasped the hand that was quite firm, and whose clasp was as true as friendship itself. “It is all right, Stapleton,” he said. “Do not grieve for me; and let us get home as soon as we can.”

The short railway ride between London and Darentdale was through a pretty well-wooded country. It had never appeared so beautiful as now to the eyes that would soon be closed to it all. The man had loved Nature in all her moods, and she seemed to put on her most beautiful garments in which to receive the farewells of her friend. His eyes swam with tears several times as they looked out at the cool woodland ways, the green meadows, and the bright blue skies. When the train stopped at one of the village stations a lark was pouring down a shower of song upon them. Harris was glad it was so happy, but the whispering leaves seemed to have more sympathy with him. It was as if they knew that his life was as transient as theirs, and they were sorry for him as for themselves. “We shall probably pass away together,” said his thought. “They will fall to the ground, and so shall I. But I am no leaf, to perish when my body withers. There is a future for me. Where? I shall soon know. I am not afraid, for God is love.”

“I suppose you would rather not talk,” said Dr. Stapleton.

“Thank you. I have much to think of. I must put my house in order, you know, since I shall surely die,” he answered.

And then he thought of Margaret. He must make her future more sure. He must indeed tell her everything now, and he would see Dallington first of all. They must be married at once; there was really no reason why they should not be; and if they were, and they both knew all, he would have no misgivings in regard to his dear child to make his death the harder. “Presently,” he reminded himself, “it will be too late to do; I shall only be able to bear.”

Margaret’s heart sank with dismay when she saw him. He looked like a man who, though habitually calm, had been forced into a conflict so bitter that it had taken his very life from him. She threw her arms around him, and drew him to a chair, and put his head upon her breast, and kissed him with the fervour and tenderness of a daughter. He had not told her

that he was ill; but she had feared, and now she knew.

“Dear, darling, how tired you are!” she said. “I shall fetch a sponge and bathe your face, and you must have some tea at once. Rest a little first.”

He did not speak, but lifted his hand caressingly to her face, and felt that, but for distressing her, he must have sobbed.

After partaking of some refreshment, however, he revived, and they both tried to be cheerful.

“How have you got on without me to-day?” he asked. “Has there been a crowd of customers? Have you sold any more of the poets?”

“At one time the shop was very full,” she answered. “There were three people in it together, and all talking at once.”

“How did you manage without assistance? Did you call Ann to help you?”

“I could not, for Ann was in the midst of one of her most thrilling stories, which she was recounting to the baker, and I knew that genius does not like to be interrupted. But I was as adroit as I could be, and my customers were patient; so we managed fairly. And I have such news for you—James Peters is engaged.”

“Really? Well, he’s a nice boy, and deserves a good wife. Who is it that he has chosen?”

“Guess!”

“Nancy Jones? Emma Swift? Louisa Mellars? No? I give it up.”

“I think it is very ungallant of you not to guess me. Why should it not be me? I am tall enough and young enough and all the rest enough for him, I hope.”

“He knows better than to choose you, Madge. Tell me, now—Jennie Swain? Well, I never!”

“But so it is; Jennie has the prize, and a dozen of us have nothing but the power and privilege of tearing our hair if we please.”

“You respect your hair, Madge, far too highly to tear it.”

So they talked on, while a great burden of fear was on Margaret’s heart, and it seemed to Harris that the shadowy man with the scythe stood behind his chair.

There was presently a pause in the conversation; and afterward Harris resolved to prepare Margaret a little for what was coming.

“What do you think took me to London this morning, Madge?” he asked.

“The train, dear.”

“How clever a guesser _you_ are! And the train was punctual. I went to see the great Doctor Fulton.”

“I am glad you did, for Dr. Stapleton is young, and has had comparatively little experience. Have you brought home some medicine? It must be time for you to take it.”

“It is no use to take the medicine. He says that nothing can cure me.”

“Oh, Graf! Graf! You must not say such a thing as that to me.”

“But you must know it, my darling, some time, and soon, for it is not going to be long; and if you love me you will be glad of that, for the

pain of the disease which I have is terrible to bear, and it would be hard for you to see me suffer."

"Oh, my dear, it cannot be! There is surely some other doctor who can do something. What becomes of all this modern science that boasts itself so much if it cannot help one in an emergency like this?"

"It is all right, Madge, dear; a man must die some time. Of course, he does not want to, and never would, but we all have to, you know. Life is very short here, but it is continued somewhere—of that I am increasingly sure."

A great darkness came over Margaret. What could she do if this best friend of hers were to be taken now, when it seemed he could the least be spared?

"I will tell you all you ought to know, dear, about yourself, and give you the keys so that you may find the money you will need, and——"

A faintness came over him, and he gasped for breath.

"Oh, not now," cried Margaret. "Do not distress yourself. I will not hear anything to-night."

"To-morrow, then."

"Yes, to-morrow, or next week, or any time. It does not matter about me."

"Margaret, sing to me that hymn of Faber's—

"I worship Thee, sweet Will of God,
And all Thy ways adore,

It will do us both good just now; if we sing the words we shall be able to feel the sentiment."

But Margaret was on her knees by his side, sobbing out her grief. She soon was ashamed of herself, however. She must bear up for his sake, who had so much more to bear.

"I cannot sing, dear," she said; "but we will each have the book open before us, and I will play it through."

She did so, and then he asked her to read to him.

"The prayer of Jesus for His disciples, Margaret, and His words to them—they are for you and for me, dear, as much as for any one else."

"Surely."

And Margaret read the wonderful words to which we all turn, quite naturally, in the supreme moments of our lives, and which comfort us as nothing else can do when death or trouble has forced itself into our houses and will not be turned out. Margaret knew them by heart, and so did Henry Harris, and yet they seemed to have new power and grace on that evening, for the face of Harris was lighted with joy as he listened.

"'Never man spake like this Man,'" he said. "His Sermon on the Mount is for everyday life, and this, His last address, is for the evening, when the working day is over and rest is near. I have not done all that I might have done; but I am really tired, and shall be as glad of my rest as if I had deserved it. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety. Margaret, what a marvellous conqueror of men is this Jesus Christ!"

"Ah, yes!" said Margaret, with glowing eyes; "and all the world must surely call Him Lord some day."

“Someday. Yes. I wonder which day it will be, Margaret. I think we could sing now, dear. Let it be, ‘Jesu, lover of my soul.’”

They sang it together—there is no hymn like it for such a time. Harris had a good bass voice and Margaret a sweet mezzo-soprano; and the hymn rose softly but melodiously to heaven. It is a fine prayer, and at the same time a grand ascription of praise. When it was ended, Harris repeated the collect, “Lighten our darkness,” and Margaret the Lord’s. Prayer, and both hearts were calmed.

“It is time you were in bed, dear,” Margaret said; “you are so tired.”

“Yes, I think I shall sleep well to-night. Hark! the boys in the street are crying the state of the poll! See if Whitwell is all right, dear.”

“A magnificent majority,” said Margaret, holding the paper towards him.

“Hurrah! I am very glad! The old bad times are past. The new aristocracy of character takes its proper place. The best men, the true kings, whom God will crown, will be henceforth the rulers of men. I hope you will live long to enjoy it all, Margaret. As for me I shall be satisfied when——”

He fell back, and Margaret thought he had fainted. She called Ann Johnson to open all the doors, while she tried to restore him.

John Dallington and Dr. Stapleton at that moment came to bring the news of the election, and, seeing the door open, entered.

“He is faint!” cried Margaret, in agony.

But Dr. Stapleton said, gently, “It is more than faintness. It is perfect peace.”

CHAPTER XXXI.
FROM DARENTDALE TO HIGH SEATHORPE.

All was peace. It was impossible to look upon the stately face and form of the dead man and not feel that Christ had laid His hand upon the white brow, and said, “Peace, be still.” The doubts and impatience which had characterised him in his earlier years were set at rest once for all. The strife was over, the misgivings were quieted, and if the questions were not yet answered, the questioner was asleep in deep repose.

Margaret could not at first believe that the kind heart which had loved her, and the lips which had blessed her, were still for ever.

“Dr. Stapleton, surely you can revive him,” she said, “and bring him back again to life, if only for a few weeks.”

“I would if I could, perhaps,” he said; “but no mortal power could do it, and you should be thankful that he is spared the suffering which we feared.”

“For his sake, my darling, you must not mourn,” said John Dallington tenderly, as he took her in his arms, and tears were in his eyes for her sorrow.

“Not mourn!” Had any one else uttered the words Margaret must have felt that she was being mocked. She would mourn for him through the rest of her life, for was he not the only father whom she had ever known, the friend and protector of her infancy and girlhood? Oh, that she had loved him more, that she had expressed her gratitude more earnestly! And yet

she was sure that he had understood, and was satisfied.

The inhabitants of Darentdale were greatly shocked by the news of his death. The familiar figure, the genial voice, the friendly hand had seemed to belong to the place for ever.

“Mr. Harris dead! Who will care for us now?” said the children. “There is no one to take his place,” said the men. “He had a good word for us all—he understood us,” said the women. There was no home which was not darkened by the shadow that had fallen, and very few individuals who did not sympathise with Margaret.

But there was one person who laughed cruelly at that which brought sadness to so many. John Dallington took the news to his mother. “He died suddenly,” he told her, “but the doctors had only that day pronounced him incurably diseased; so the sudden death was a blessing to him.”

“Did the doctors frighten him to death, then?” asked Mrs. Hunter.

“I do not think he was afraid to die; he was too brave a man for that; but his heart must have been very weak.”

“And so my enemy is dead!” said Mrs. Hunter. “I can scarcely believe it.”

“He was not your enemy, mother. He was everybody’s friend. If you had known him you must have known that.”

“How I hated him!” said Mrs. Hunter.

“Yes, and it was most absurd of you, mother, for he never injured you in the least thing.”

“Oh, yes, indeed, he did! He had my money. What will become of it now? If he had been a just man he would have bequeathed it to me.”

John was fast losing patience. This idea which had possessed his mother was nothing less than a craze.

“The money was not yours, and never could have been,” he said. “Do be reasonable! How can you talk of justice, when you are so unjust in your judgment of him? Oh, little mother, how much happier you would be if you would only be kind! Do cast out the evil spirit of jealousy which has poisoned so many years of your life, and see things as they are. There will come a day when you, too, will need mercy——”

“As Henry Harris does now.”

“Yes; and as we shall soon. Be yourself merciful therefore now. He has gone home to God. He is the Judge, and He only knew all about Mr. Harris.”

“Is there a God? He did not believe in one.”

“How can you say so, mother?”

“I am not the only one who says so.”

“No one says so who knew the man. He certainly had what many of us have not, the Christian spirit of love and helpfulness, which made him the friend of everybody. But, mother, even if he was as wrong as you think him, it is time to forgive him now. I wish you would do a kind thing for me. Do you care for me in the least, my mother?”

“You know that I care for no one but you, John.”

“Then do me this kindness. Everybody will be calling on Miss Miller in this her time of trouble. Will you not call too?”

“That girl! How dare you ask me!” Mrs. Hunter started up in her fury, and her eyes blazed forth on her son. Then followed a string of invectives, and even of curses, such as made John shudder. As he looked and listened, a great fear entered his heart. Surely his mother must be going mad! It was impossible in any other way to account for her rage and hate. She was in a frightful passion; her face was ghastly, her hands clutched each other, and there was such a baleful light in her eyes that John was grieved beyond expression. He tried to quiet her, but it was of no use, and presently he forced her into her own room that the servants might not hear her ravings.

Poor John! “There is more trouble coming to me,” he said, and he was right.

It is only natural that there should be sorrow when a good man dies; the world cannot afford to lose him, and the people feel in a sense orphaned. At Darentdale they had never seen such a day in the memory of the oldest inhabitant as that of the funeral of Henry Harris. Every shop was closed, every window had its blind down. No arrangement was made for a public funeral; but the people obeyed the impulses of their own hearts, and the highest and the lowest showed their sorrow in every possible way. The whole village stood around the grave, and sobbed forth its grief. Positively the only persons who held aloof were Mrs. Hunter and Mr. William Hunter.

The Vicar held a service in the church; he was visibly affected as it proceeded, for he felt that he had lost a friend. At the grave the service was most impressive; and there was a ring of certainty in the Vicar’s voice as he pronounced the words which seemed to him to carry more meaning than ever now. “Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.” The service did not close without earnest words to those who felt themselves bereaved, urging them to carry on the good work which Harris had begun, and to copy his character—a character which, the Vicar declared, must have been founded on the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was not during the funeral, nor even for a day or two afterwards, that the desolateness of her position forced itself upon Margaret, for it is never while the body of the beloved one is in the house, and the mind is forced to lend itself to the customary preparations for the signs of mourning (stupid enough in themselves, but serviceable in that they compel the thought from the acute woe of the first terrible days)—it is never then that the loss is realised in its greatness. When the last caller has spoken the condolences which he meant to be kind, and the door is shut, enclosing the empty house, it is then that the weight of the loss is most crushing. To Margaret everything seemed to have gone with that presence which had pervaded the house. The shutters had not been taken down from the windows of the little shop, but Margaret knew without looking for them where the books were which he loved, and the papers he had handled. The animals that he had fed looked at her with wistful eyes that made Margaret weep afresh. The chair in which he had sat seemed to hold a shadowy form, and Margaret could not but throw herself beside it and cry—

> “O, for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!”

It was not the time for her lover to speak of his love, or to urge its claims. John felt that all that he could do was to sit sometimes by her side, that she might get what comfort she could from his presence. She was so entirely alone in the world that he thought she must consent to marry him. What else should she do? And as he said this to himself a

great joy of hope filled him. He loved her so greatly—his own beautiful darling, that he would gladly live with her in this little home, and leave his own to his mother; or he would take her beyond the seas, and work for her as a common emigrant, and feel himself a crowned king when she rewarded him with her love. There was nothing—nothing that he would not do to possess her; and surely the time was nearer than ever now.

But a few days afterward a terrible thing happened, which put that for which he longed even farther away than it had seemed before, and which would have made a weaker woman than Margaret really ill.

It was evening, and Ann Johnson had gone to visit some friends, so that Margaret was left in the house alone. Her thoughts were very sad ones. She was trying to face her future and arrange her course of action, but it was very difficult. She shrank from a lonely lot, as every woman does. And what was she to do? The new work that was waiting for her seemed less attractive now. The poor girls who needed care and love and training became less interesting to her mind as she thought of her own position, and felt that she was herself a poor girl, needing everything. And, besides, how could she give up the Old House, which her grandfather had loved, and which belonged to her now? And, on the other hand, how could she live in it without him? She was not obliged to remain there, even if she did not accept the other engagement which had been offered her, for Mr. Harris had property, and had left her with a competency. But how could she go away and leave John? He had become unutterably dear to her in this time of her sorrow, for he had been most thoughtful and kind and strong for her, and she felt that she would have given much if she might have laid her head upon his shoulder and said, “John, take me anywhere you please, only do not leave me.” And might she not do this? Was it right to let Mrs. Hunter keep them apart, and spoil both their lives? She did not love John as Margaret did, or she would not have made him unhappy. Surely she must give way at last. Why not now? If only she could see her and talk to her!

The front door was opened when Margaret’s thoughts had reached this point. “Ann is back soon,” she said to herself, and then it was borne in upon her that it was not Ann who was approaching. Neither was it John. Who could it be that came so unceremoniously into the house? A nameless fear possessed her, and she arose to meet her visitor. It was nearly dark, and the lamps were not yet lighted; but she saw at a glance that Mrs. Hunter stood before her.

Mrs. Hunter in that house, unaccompanied, and at that hour! What could it mean? Margaret held out her hand, and looked her full in the face, and at that moment the swift conviction that had passed through John’s mind passed through hers also—Mrs. Hunter had become insane. Hate had made her mad.

“Will you take a seat, Mrs. Hunter?” said Margaret, trying not to be nervous. “I am afraid you must be tired after walking so far. It is a beautiful night—at least—no—it rains, and I see you are wet. May I help you to remove your cloak?”

Mrs. Hunter answered not a word. She sat down wearily in the chair, and passed her hand over her face; but the next instant she sprang up, and to Margaret’s surprise—and, it must be confessed, to her terror also—she seized her by the shoulders.

“I have you now, you Margaret Miller,” she said in dreadful tones, “and I shall make you do as I wish, for I will kill you—I will kill you if you do not! Show me now, instantly, before any one comes, where is the hidden treasure, the gold that belongs to me and mine, which you have in this house?”

Margaret was a strong young woman, with a considerable amount of physical power, for which at the moment she felt thankful; but the grip of Mrs. Hunter’s hands upon her was so violent that it was almost certain that, small as she was, compared with Margaret, she could win a victory over her opponent if it came to a struggle in deadly earnest.

“What is there in this house which belongs to you?” said Margaret. “I do not want to keep anything that is not mine.”

“But you and that bad man have kept it—ah! I am glad he is dead; and there is only you now—only you—and you are nothing! Give me my own! Where is it? I want it for my son—the gold that his uncle had gained, and which is his by right. The lack of it has ruined us! It has made a wicked woman of me, and it will make me mad! Give it to me now! Show me its hiding-place, and I will take it. Do as I tell you, or you shall die!”

Margaret said that she did not really know whether she could find it. And in truth she felt that she would only too gladly give up every coin there was. It was true, she supposed, that this gold, for which she cared so little, was the thing which brought so much hate and misery, and was the real cause of separation between John and his mother, and also was the secret of her hatred. She would give it to the woman who wanted it, and then, perhaps, the trouble would be over.

“Let me get a light,” said Margaret, “and see if I can do as you wish. It is nearly dark.”

But Mrs. Hunter held her, and laughed wildly.

“Ah! you think to escape me, but you shall not. I will go with you while you get a light. But you do not need a light. I know the chest. Where is it? Give me the keys. I will hold you till you do.”

“If you hold me how can I get you the keys?” cried Margaret; and then she felt herself turn cold with fear, for Mrs. Hunter began screaming terribly.

Margaret wondered what she could do. Her nerves had already been very much shaken, and this seemed really more than she could bear. She would like to have rushed into the street and summoned help, but she would not do that for John’s sake; she must pacify and satisfy his mother in some way, and get her home, and into John’s care before any one knew what had occurred. As for the money——

At that moment Ann Johnson came in. She stared at Mrs. Hunter, and saw what was the matter. Margaret signed to her to be quiet, but before she could speak Ann rushed out of the house again, greatly to Margaret’s vexation. But Ann had seen Mr. Dallington in the village, and had decided that the right thing was to fetch him. She had the good sense to speak quietly.

“Your mother is ill,” she said. “She is at our house. Come directly, but say nothing about it—we must keep it to ourselves.”

There is no need to describe the scene which followed—a very painful one, which the three persons who witnessed it never forgot. Ann showed herself invaluable in the emergency, and John succeeded at last in getting his mother home.

Ann could not quite make up her mind whether Mrs. Hunter was insane or intoxicated, but she had not much time to consider the question, for Margaret had borne all that she could bear, and Ann’s hands were full for the present.

The next morning Margaret wrote accepting the management of the home for training young girls for their future life.

John called in the afternoon, looking so ill that Margaret’s heart ached for him. She put her arms around him, and touched his forehead with her lips.

“Oh, my dear, I wish I could help you,” she said. “Yours is a worse trouble than mine.”

“Were you not frightened last night, Margaret?”

“Yes, I was, and terribly surprised; but I saw at once that Mrs. Hunter was ill. Is she better to-day?”

“She is quiet and exhausted. Margaret, what am I to do?”

“You must take care of her, and nurse her. Let Ann Johnson come and help you. Mrs. Hunter seemed to like her. I cannot stay here, John, and you must take this house, and all that is in it. I do not want the money. I have no use for it, and I think your mother will get better, and look at things differently, if I am no longer here to irritate her.”

“I shall want some one to help me.”

“Yes, you will, dear; but I must not come. It would make her worse if I were near. Oh, John! John! I wonder why such trouble is allowed to come to you. I would give my life to help you if I might; but you must bear it all alone. Perhaps Mrs. Hunter is not really as ill as we fear.”

“She is worse than I thought her. I am afraid of the future. Is there hope anywhere? Margaret, you will always love me whatever comes?”

“Always, always; be very sure of it; and when I may I will come to you. But for the present you must take this house and the money, and let your mother do as she likes with it.”

“You are not exactly a woman of business, my dear,” said John. “You cannot give up your house and money like this, you know. Neither must you go away.”

“Yes, John, I must—for the present, at all events. There is no other way out of the difficulty.”

John considered gravely. Love ought to be first, he thought; did not every one say it was the greatest force in the world? But Duty? John Dallington and Margaret Miller gave Duty the highest place in their lives, and both knew that neither could be happy by trying to put even love itself before it.

“I can scarcely tell, I do not really know what is right,” said John. “I could not put my mother into an asylum, unless it should become absolutely necessary; and neither could I let her be a prisoner in her own house. And just now I think that she is not in a fit state to be left without my oversight, and, therefore, it seems necessary for me to remain at home with her. As for you, my darling, I am afraid it would not be safe to bring you to my home at present. And yet, how can I let you go far from me? Cannot you remain here for awhile?”

“No, John, I will go to High Seathorpe and commence this new work which has been given me to do. I shall be the better for such an occupation. It will absorb my thoughts and fill my days with congenial labour. I wrote this morning accepting the position, and Ann posted the letter.”

“Very well,” said John, with a sigh. “I suppose we must take life as we find it. Perhaps things will right themselves, and bring us happiness by the time that we are too old to enjoy it.”

Margaret laughed gently. “We are both young,” she said, “and we shall be faithful to each other. Nor shall we have long to wait. Let us do the right and leave it. But, John, I must show you that money which your mother thinks, and I think, ought to be yours. Come and see where it is; and I hope you will agree with me as to what should be done with it. You do not want to see it? But you must, please.”

But John would not be persuaded; and his face flushed with anger. “I will not see it,” he said. “I want to know nothing whatever about it. I am sick of it. You ought to put it away in a bank; it is absurd of you

to keep it in the house. If it became known that you had it on the premises you might be robbed or murdered on account of it. But I don’t care what becomes of it so long as I never hear of it again. Sometimes it seems that the only reason why you consent to marry me at all is that that detestable money may be forced upon me.”

Margaret turned away with tears in her eyes. John had never spoken to her so angrily before; and at that moment she felt also as if she did not care what became of the money.

“Since we have to part so soon you might be kind to me,” she said; and, of course, John called himself a brute, and begged her pardon.

A few days later, Margaret and Ann Johnson locked up the house, and went into Yorkshire to open the Home which was already prepared for its purpose.

Mr. Smart met them at High Seathorpe, a station between Scarborough and Whitby, and took them to the house. It stood upon the moors, in a sheltered hollow, with a few brave trees surrounding it, and from its grounds, as well as from its windows, magnificent sea-views were to be obtained.

“I am glad to welcome you, for my client’s sake, Miss Miller,” said Mr. Smart. “I am afraid he will never be able to see for himself how the work on which he has set his heart progresses, for he is ill; but it is a comfort to him that you have consented to come. I think you will like your surroundings, and High Seathorpe is exceedingly bracing.”

But Margaret was weary from her journey, and the place looked bleak and cold in the grey of the evening. Her thoughts went back regretfully to John, and also to her own cosy little home at Darentdale, so that for a time she felt sad and fearful of the future, and her powers to endure it. But when she reached the house a pleasant surprise awaited her.

Mr. Smart ushered her into a large room, well warmed and lighted, and a lady came forward, with both hands extended in greeting.

“Miss Wentworth!” cried Margaret, in surprise. “Is it possible that you are here! How can that have been brought about?”

“Ah, my dear, you did not expect to see me. I have brought thirteen of my girls to start this establishment. You will need me, I know, and I shall need you too; for girls are much more difficult to manage than boys. Come to your room, and let me make you feel at home at once.”

It was a great relief to Margaret to find that not only was Miss Wentworth at High Seathorpe, but that the work which she had come to commence was already successfully inaugurated. She looked in at the girls that night, and saw at a glance that the right ones were there. When she opened the door one of them was saying: “I don’t care! It isn’t nice to miss the courting, but my young man is a good fellow, and I mean to make the most of this chance and learn how to be a real good wife to him.”

That little sentence was like a tonic to Margaret; for her sympathy and interest were at once aroused, and she went away to dream once more of pleasant hours spent in the service of others.

The next morning she was ready for work, and before the day had passed the girls had decided that she was trustworthy, and that they would like her. One girl confided her love story to her also, and begged that she would teach her how to cut out and make some shirt collars with her own hands as a present for _him_. “There’s only one him in the world, you know, miss,” she said; “though I suppose it is a hymn that may be sung to the tune of the Old Hundred.”

CHAPTER XXXII.
A LETTER.

In the meantime the new Parliament had got to work, and the first thing it did was to make an appeal to the Churches. This appeal reminded the followers of Christ that it really rested with them, and not with Parliament, to bring about the social reforms for which the nation was crying. Parliament would do the Churches' will, and make such laws as they unanimously asked for; but if the Churches were not united everything would be hindered. Everywhere the country was called upon to send to those lesser parliaments, town councils, county councils, local boards, school boards, and all representative bodies, only such men as were known to uphold and to illustrate in their own lives the principles and practices of Christianity. The flag of truce, therefore, was generally uplifted, and beneath it the men of Christ stood side by side without reference to name or party.

Proofs were abundant that the Churches were keenly alive to their powers and possibilities. A great revival had especially taken place in the Episcopal Church, and it was as much a revival of brotherhood as of anything. Its clergymen appealed to Nonconformists to help them, and the response was general. Mr. Macdonald was rousing the people to fever-heat. At the close of his addresses, when the collection was taken, it was not unusual to find jewellery on the plates, put there by ladies whose consciences had been aroused. But this was not the sort of thing he wanted. Both he and Arthur Knight were seeking not so much to alleviate the present sorrows of the poor, as to bring about an entire change in Society; and they scorned this giving of conscience money by those who, in their eagerness after cheap things or riches for themselves, had brought the poverty about. Years before, a lady had written a small booklet entitled, "Only a Factory Girl," in which she showed how, in the East-end of London, young people live. "Each house in these crowded streets contains several families, and in many cases six or eight people occupy a single room. One of our girls sleeps with a family of six in one small room, that is let in the daytime to two women, who are out on the streets all night." This writer had gone on to say:—"Factory girls by nature are like other girls; they crave a little pleasurable excitement, and aspire to personal improvement. Can anything be done to furnish them with what they need? Easily, if Christian women will only do it. The need is a great one, but, happily, it is one far more easily met than many others. All that is necessary is that there shall be in every neighbourhood where these girls reside an institute to which they may resort, where they will find instruction and sympathy, innocent amusement, the society of their companions, and food at a moderate price. Is it right that when their long and weary day's work is done, and they turn out into the streets at night, they should find nothing open to them but the theatres, the music-halls, and the dancing saloons, in which they are ever welcome? Is it not sad that, besides these, the only other places to which they have the entrée are the 'sing-song' rooms connected with the larger public-houses—snares and traps of the evil one to ruin both body and soul? The haunts of vice and folly are open nightly to our factory girls, but should the Church of Christ leave it to the world, the flesh, and the devil to care for them?"

The Churches and Parliament together answered that question now, as it had not been answered before, with an emphatic _No_. They were not going to allow these mothers of the future to be tempted thus. The outcome of this pamphlet had been the excellent Shaftesbury Institute; for the writer had pleaded: "We have quite a sufficient number of volunteers to make the effort a success, and nothing hinders our entering on it except the lack of premises." These had been long ago supplied, and excellent work was carried on within them. But the plea of "lack of premises" was not now anywhere to be allowed; so men sternly determined. Lack of premises, when there were churches and chapels with vestries and school-rooms, which the people's money had paid for, shut up all the week? It would have fared ill with any one in the new times who kept the

good work of rescue waiting, while complaining of lack of premises. But it was such endeavours as those of the author of “Only a Factory Girl” which had brought the happy change about.

And the new Parliament passed two short and simple rules which had an immediate effect. The first provided that no one was to employ a girl in work of any kind who did not pay her for her labour wages enough to enable her to live respectably. And the second made it actionable for any one to take rent without being assured that the rooms were only occupied by the right number and the right kind of persons.

Of course, there was a terrific howl from the quarters of vested interests. But this Parliament was as strong and sturdy as that of Oliver Cromwell, and a great deal more enlightened; so it simply closed its ears to all noises, and went straight on, doing its duty.

Its courage was in nothing more evident than in the very stringent liquor law which was speedily passed, and which attacked drunkenness as a deadly disease, and punished those who had been accessories. It also insisted that for a third offence a drunkard could be taken to a Home for Inebriates, and kept there until cured.

Mr. Whitwell was able to meet his new responsibilities. Darentdale was so near to London, and the rules of the latest House of Commons were so sensible, that a man was not compelled to spend all the nights in talking or listening to the talk of others; it was therefore possible for the Member for Scourby to attend to his duties in Westminster, and yet not altogether neglect those of his own farm and home. Tom always met her father on Friday night, and his two leisure days were happy ones for her as for the rest of his family. Quiet, self-effacing Mrs. Whitwell could not bring herself to be glad that her husband was a Member of Parliament, but her daughters were unfeignedly so; and it was a pleasant sight to see them hovering around him, and questioning him as to his votes and general conduct in the House. He electrified them one day with news that they did not expect.

“Have you read to-day’s paper?” he asked. “Did you see the account of my speech?”

“Your speech? Have you been speaking in the House?”

“Yes; I have, indeed, and my speech was very well received, too. A man has not much chance to be eloquent now, you know. I had not a new Bill to bring in, or, of course, I should have been allowed to speak for half an hour; it is not much one can say in ten minutes, but I said all there was time to say as forcibly as possible. Some day I mean to introduce the subject of these Retreats for Girls, and then what a chance I shall have to make my powers of elocution known!”

“You will be quite carried away by your own eloquence, dear; but that will not matter if no one else is,” said Tom, soothingly, moving a little from her father lest he should punish her for that saucy remark.

“What did you talk about yesterday?” asked Mrs. Whitwell.

“The railways. There are men who think they should all belong to the State. I say they do, since any man may get shares in them, and since they are managed by a part of the nation for the nation’s good. A railway that does not serve the public cannot exist, you know; and the companies are not as rich as they were, now that rates and fares are lower; but if they were, I have no objection if they do honestly what they undertake to do.”

“You are an old Tory, father, whether they call you so or not. You must know that the railway companies exist for the sole purpose of making themselves rich. They are nothing but firms in business. All they do for the people they do because they are compelled, in order to make the thing pay.”

“Very well. We are to judge by actions, since we cannot understand motives. If the companies pay fair wages to their men, and keep faith with the public, we have no right whatever to interfere with them. Besides which, we have our hands too full of far more important things than trying to get money out of the railway business; and that is what I said yesterday. We do not exist for the purpose of interfering with any business that is not injurious to the people.”

“And did the other honourable gentlemen agree with you?”

“Most of them did. Of course, we need money, since we are anxious to benefit the people and tax them as little as possible; but we are not going to be unwise enough to interfere with private interests unless these clash with the welfare of the commonwealth.”

“But did not any man get up and declare that railway interests do this, since they make a few rich at the expense of the many?” asked Tom.

“No; such a remark was not made.”

“You are, indeed, a model Parliament.”

“We are, at least, resolved not to waste time. Who do you think congratulated me, and expressed his approval of what I had said?”

“The Prince?”

“No; almost as great a man as he—Mr. Macdonald.”

There was a general smile at the mention of his name.

“Of course that principle of yours would meet with his approbation,” said Tom, “because of its bearing on other things than railways, and especially those which touch him most closely. But I am glad Mr. Macdonald has spoken to you. He must be a man worth knowing.”

“He is a splendid fellow. I heard him a day or two ago. He addressed those reverend Church dignitaries at the Conference in words that made them feel. He besought them to disestablish the Church from the State for the sake of reestablishing it in the hearts of the people. He believes that if this were done the Dissenters would come over in whole congregations.”

“Does he? He may be a good talker, but he cannot have much knowledge of human nature,” said Tom, “if he really believes that. Only think of the numbers of people who would find their occupation gone if they were not permitted to take part in the management of the affairs of their own chapel. Life would lose half its interests for them.”

“But they would be able to help in the management of their own church, which would come to the same thing.”

“No; it could not be the same. There would not be space nor opportunity for half of them; and they would not like to be nobodies after being important leaders in their own religious communities.”

“But it is a grand idea,” said Mrs. Whitwell. “One Church, one people.”

“Too grand for the English constitution,” said one of her daughters.

“Mr. Macdonald does not think so. And he has been considering this all his life. It may come, even if we do not live to see it, this one united Church which is the dream of so many faithful hearts. I should like to see our own beautiful old place crowded every Sunday, as it would be if that which Macdonald hopes for should become an accomplished fact.”

“I say, God grant it!” said Mrs. Whitwell.

“And we all say Amen,” added her husband. “You will be able to hear for

yourselves what Macdonald thinks, for I have asked him to come and see us, and speak to the people here; and he says he will."

"Oh, father, how could you? He must have invitations to all the best houses in the land. I believe you think our old hall is a good-enough place for the entertainment of any one."

"Yes, I do; and every one who comes appears satisfied and pleased. I thought we should have had Mr. Knight with us again before this."

Tom did not mention a letter which she had in her pocket at that moment, and which had given her some pleasure as well as amusement. This was the letter—

> "DEAR MISS TOM,—As you said I must rite a leter to you all by meself I will, and Sissy helps me. We like what you sent us verry much, and Sissy says the appels are nicest of all, and the pares and filbuts too. Mother thort we should be ill, but we wasn't, not a bit, nor we sharnt be if you send us some more. We mist you when you went away, and it wasnt nice without you; so plees come back as soon as you can. Mister Nite come to-day. He brort me a book, and Sissy a nedlkase, but she likes my book best, and says I may have the nedlkase because she pricks her fingers; but I don't warnt it. Mother says Mister Nite looks tired; and I heard her say to Miss Margrit that he expekted to find you here. I told Sissy, and she arsked him was he sorry you gone, and he said 'Yes'; but he says he is com to see you, only she must not tell, because it is a secrut. Sissy loves Mr. Nite, so she give him that prutty pictyer you made, and Mister Nite says he shall keep it for ever-never. It rained that day, so praps the pictyer got wet; but Sissy says Mister Nite wuddent let it. I speld that word rong. I carnt spel verry well, so pleese xkuse it; com agan to see us soon.—Your fekshnut,
>
> "GEOFF."

Mr. Knight did not go to Darentdale as soon as Geoff's letter led Tom to expect. But they were all very greatly stirred by the visit of Mr. Macdonald. He went to Darentdale and to Scourby, and addressed the people, who were only too glad to have the opportunity of seeing and hearing him. His mission was the means of a spiritual revival in England, and Scourby and Darentdale shared in it. His appeals to those who already professed to hold the Christian faith and live the Christian life were exceedingly impressive. His cry everywhere was to the Church, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee." In his own way, and to the members of his own Church, he delivered much the same message as that of Arthur Knight; and the two were evidently sent of God to meet the great need of the time. There is a picture in that unique collection of pictures, all by the hand of one painter, Wirtz, in Brussels, which frequently served him as a sort of text. It represents the Man of the Future curiously contemplating the things that interest the people of the present. He is a big man, and there is nothing little about him, but he holds in his hand a flag, a cannon, a pile of money, and a few other things which represent the poor little aims of so many of the men and women of to-day. He cannot understand where their power and charm lay. So, said Mr. Macdonald, will it be with those who realise Christ's ideal; and he pleaded that it was not worth while for the Christian to trouble himself about any of those things.

For a week he stayed at the Whitwells, every day speaking at some meeting. Tom was profoundly impressed. Day after day she accompanied him and her father, and she listened to him with the deepening conviction that she was herself living on too low a level. He stirred the very depths of her nature, and it was as if she experienced a new conversion. She had the opportunity of frequently talking with him, and she learned to revere the man as if he were a prophet. He seemed to know so much and to understand her so thoroughly that she half shrank from him even while she was attracted to him. Among the members of her church religious things were seldom talked about. She could not remember, since her

confirmation, that the clergyman, whom she yet trusted greatly, had asked her any personal questions, or had any direct conversation with her respecting her Christian life and experience; but Mr. Macdonald could not talk with any one for ten minutes without bringing in the subject of personal consecration. Tom felt sometimes as if her soul were bared before him, and he knew all about her. He was a good guide—for there was nothing of the priest about him—and he had an intense realisation—as all must have who can arouse others—of the power of the living Christ; so that his visit to Darentdale was the means of lasting good.

"It is as if the very house has been consecrated by his prayers," said Mrs. Whitwell. "We have never had as good a man within the walls before."

And, indeed, all the members of the family were the same. Mr. Whitwell, as he parted from his guest, expressed what the others felt when he said: "You have brought a spiritual blessing to us all. It is good of you to visit our small place when you are wanted in all the big towns."

"It has been a pleasure to me to visit you, Mr. Whitwell," he said. "I had heard of your family from my friend, Arthur Knight, and you have given me a time of peace in the midst of strenuous labour. I am glad to know your family too."

"They are well worth knowing, especially my youngest, with the masculine name. She is not by any means a Tomboy, is she?"

"She is very sweet and womanly," said Macdonald. "She is, indeed, an ideal woman. She must be an immense help and comfort to you."

"Yes, she is. I cannot tell what I should do without Tom. And she will be better than ever now, for I think she has heard every sermon you have preached in the neighbourhood. I am sorry they have been so few. Come to us again when you can. Like Arthur Knight, you make us think, and do us good."

The two men went to London together, and separated at the railway terminus, each bent on his work.

A fortnight later, Mr. Whitwell, with a very grave face, called his youngest daughter into his study. "Tom, my dear," he said, "I have a letter from Mr. Macdonald which has greatly surprised me, and he has enclosed one for you in it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Miss Thomasine Grace Whitwell locked herself in her room, and read twice over the letter which she had received from the Rev. Peter Macdonald. The letter—a very short one, but one which went directly to its purpose—was a manly declaration of the love of its writer. "I have known you only a short time," it said, "but I know you well enough to feel that the greatest joy I could have would be in the knowledge that you cared for me—a knowledge that would fill me with inspiration for my life and work. I am not of those who think that a clergyman can better fulfil his mission by debarring himself from the sweet domestic ties of home and wife and children. He can, certainly, unless his wife be a real helpmeet; but if she be, surely he will be the better fitted to help and sympathise with the dwellers in the multitudes of homes which Christianity has made possible for the people. I do not pretend that it is entirely because I have seen your ministry of mercy among your people that I ask you to come to my help; it is because I love you, and because it is only since I have known you that the alluring picture of a home of affection, with a gracious woman at its head, has formed itself in my

mind. It is frequently there now, and always it is of yourself that I think in connection with it. Will you be good to me, and make the picture a reality, not because I am worthy, but because you are kind?”

It goes without saying that Tom was profoundly moved and impressed by this letter, and equally surprised by it also. “What can such a man as he see in me that he should care for me?” she asked herself, and the answer was not forthcoming. She admired and revered Mr. Macdonald exceedingly. It seemed to Tom that she had never been converted, or experienced any real religion until she knew him, and listened to his teachings; but it had never occurred to her that he could be like other men, or that human love could be essential to his happiness. Tom was a little disappointed as well as greatly astonished and flattered.

She knew what her answer must be; and she also knew, though it filled her with shame to acknowledge it to herself, that the true reason was because another knight had won her fealty. Why _he_ was silent when she had expected him to speak she could not tell. She felt sure now, since months passed and brought neither Arthur Knight nor a word from him, that her lot would be that of so many other women of her time—a lot which contained great joy, if not the bliss of which almost every woman dreams, and the larger ministry of love which embraces many instead of one. And Tom deliberately chose it for herself now. There was only one possible person for her; and if he did not wish to share her life, no one else should.

We are not going to tell any tales of Tom. She was a sensible girl—too sensible, perhaps, to waste time and shed tears in useless regrets. And, moreover, as she often said to herself, “No woman can have everything.” She would not have liked to give up her share of philanthropic work which was occupying the best energies of so many of the women of the day; and she had only to do from compulsion what they did from choice. Hundreds of educated women deliberately chose to be patriots instead of parents; and they proved in their own experience that love is not everything. They wisely saw what—happily for England and the Church—was being increasingly realised, that fathers and mothers of children are culpably unfaithful to their trust and duty who are busily engaged in their endeavour to save other people’s children while their own are unsaved; and now men and women who had families, instead of being besieged with requests that they would leave their homes and preach in the Sunday-school, or help in the Band of Hope, were left to meet the responsibilities of their state, or, at the most, were asked to receive and instruct, with the members of their own family, a few other boys and girls who were not amenable to ordinary efforts. As for Tom, she knew that it was a pleasure to her to be in the thick of the grand work of the times, and this self-knowledge came to her aid.

Her letter to Mr. Macdonald left no doubt as to its sincerity. Tom showed it to her father before she sent it.

“Are you sure that this is what you mean, Tom? There is no woman in England who would not be proud of the honour which you are refusing to accept,” he said.

“I know that, father, quite well. Indeed, the honour lies upon me, and afflicts me night and morn—the burden of this honour unto which I was not born.”

“Do not be flippant, my dear; this certainly should be considered gravely.”

“Father, don’t you know that I am really grave enough even to satisfy you? I am not doing this thing hastily. Nothing would induce me to marry Mr. Macdonald—because I do not care for him, and never could. I respect him with all my heart, so, you see, there is no room left for love. Read this letter, please, and see if it will do.”

Mr. Whitwell drew his daughter to his side, and looked at her with the anxiety of tenderness. Sometimes he had thought that Tom was not quite

her own merry self, and that there must be a reason for the change. He told her so; and that little sentence spoken by her father was the most powerful tonic she could have had. Tom became from that day as mischievous and merry as ever.

If Mr. Macdonald received her letter with great disappointment no one ever knew it. He read it as final; and, after replying to it in a kindly letter, which Tom kept as one of her treasures, he dismissed the thought of marriage from his mind, and threw himself unreservedly into his work.

As Arthur Knight was doing also.

Mary Wythburn had shared with several other persons the belief that Tom cared for her cousin, John Dallington, with a regard that was more than cousinly, and she had imparted this belief to Mr. Knight in all good faith.

“But he is engaged,” he had objected.

“Yes,” said Mary; “but it is doubtful if he and Margaret Miller are ever married, for the opposition of his mother is very strong, and Margaret’s life is full of other and larger interests. Mr. Dallington will be faithful to her if she will let him be; but if she should really break off the engagement I should expect to see him and Tom married speedily.”

It was like Mary Wythburn. No one made fewer mistakes in the one great work among the poor to which she gave her life, and few could have blundered more in regard to other matters.

John had more and more trouble with his mother, for hatred had made her mad. Is not all hatred a species of insanity? Certainly the hatred that is fed by jealousy and nourished by envy is well calculated to produce it. Mrs. Hunter made no attempt to hide the disgusting truth. “I hate her! I hate her!” she said a dozen times every day. John had terrible misgivings. At present she was not often violent; but her son was afraid to trust her. And he did for her all that a good son could do; he neglected his love for her sake; he spent all the time with her that he could spare from his farm; he read to her, sang to her, played games with her; and there were times when he hoped that she would at last become clothed with kindliness, and in her right mind.

But one night an event occurred which robbed him of that hope.

He was sleeping soundly, as a tired man who had passed a long day in the open air ought to do, when he was suddenly awaked by shouts of “Fire!” He sprang from his bed, and threw up the window.

“Where is it?” he cried.

“It is in the village—in the street—will you lend me a horse that I may fetch the firemen and engine from Scourby?”

“Certainly. I will be with you in a minute.”

He hurried down, and found one or two of the men already on the spot; and in a few moments two horses were carrying men as rapidly as possible in the direction of Scourby.

“Whose house can it be, I wonder? But, perhaps, it is no house at all,” he thought, as he returned to his room and dressed hastily. It was a bad fire evidently, for the flames were lighting up his place, although the farm was some distance from the village. He felt that he must go and see for himself. He went to the door of his mother’s room. It was locked, and although he listened he could hear no sound, so he concluded she was sleeping. He asked the housekeeper to be at hand in case Mrs. Hunter should want anything; and, promising to return early, he started at a rapid pace for Darentdale.

“What place is it?” he asked the man whom he left; and the man hesitated

before replying: “It is Mr. Harris’s old house.”

When John reached it he saw at a glance that the old place was doomed—there was so much dry wood in it; the floors and wainscots, and in some of the rooms even the ceilings were all of wood, and it was blazing most fiercely. “How did it happen?” cried John.

“Is there any one inside, sir?” asked a dozen persons at once. “We can find no one. It is too late for rescue if there is.”

Before John could reply his arm was grasped by a woman whose head and face were wrapped in a shawl; and he was horrified to recognise his mother.

“I hate her! I have burnt her to death in her bed! I hate her!” she said, first in a whisper and then in a shriek. John seized her, and he shouted to the people, “There is no one in the house; Miss Miller and her servant are in Yorkshire. Is it too late to save anything? There are some valuables there!”

“We must wait till the engines come,” was the answer. “The house seems to have been set on fire in several places, and paraffin or spirit of some kind must have been used.”

Mrs. Hunter broke into a fiendish laugh. “Yes, I did it,” she said; “and I have burnt her to death. She was there; I heard her breathe. I have burnt her to death in her bed. I hate her! I hate her!”

It was a terrible scene; John dragged his mother away, and one of his men helped him to get her home, raving mad.

He heard the engines rattling to the spot. He would like to have remained, to protect Margaret’s interests, if necessary, but he could not. He was sick with horror and dread, but he knew that he alone would be able to manage the mad woman without violence.

“She will never be sane again,” he said to himself that night. And his foreboding was correct. She never was. Medical opinion pronounced her hopelessly insane, and he was obliged, for her own self-preservation, to allow her to be put under restraint at once, without the delay that would have been extremely dangerous.

Margaret was telegraphed for before the fire was out, and she hurried back to find her home in ruins.

Everything was gone but the walls. They stood firmly enough at present, and none but Margaret knew what was concealed in one of them.

She and Ann Johnson walked about among the ruins, thinking of all the memories that were associated with them, and their hearts were full of sorrow.

“I am glad he died before this happened,” said Ann; “it would have broken his dear heart, and killed him into the bargain.”

Margaret felt very desolate as she stood among the ruins. John was not there; he did not know that she had been sent for; he had not been able to give a thought even to his love. She could have cried out, not for him, but for her grandfather, as she always lovingly called him in her thoughts.

As soon as it was known in the village that she had arrived, a dozen offers of hospitality reached her. But best of all Tom Whitwell hastened down, thinking it possible that she might have arrived. Margaret was unfeignedly thankful to see her friend.

“You can do nothing. Come home with me,” said Tom.

“I must see a magistrate. I have something to tell him,” answered

Margaret. “It is very important, and must be told at once.”

“There is no magistrate nearer than my father, and he is at Scourby to-day. What is it, Margaret?”

“Do you think the walls are safe? There is something inside one of them, something that belongs to your Cousin John; and I am afraid that if that wall comes down, all these people would be tempted to take it.”

Tom looked at her friend as if she thought Margaret must be going mad too.

“John also is in great distress,” she said, “for my aunt is—very ill.”

“Will you drive me to Scourby first, Tom, and let us find your father? I must have some one to act for me now, for John’s sake,” said Margaret.

It was well for her that Mr. Whitwell happened not to be in London that day. Margaret told him her strange story in a few words. It was like bringing an old-time romance into modern prosaic days.

“I must not act alone; I must get a brother-magistrate to come with me and a few policemen,” he said. “Will you go home with Tom, Margaret, and leave it to me?”

Margaret was very willing to do that; she had much to hear from Tom, and much to tell her too; and their confidences were more lengthened than their drive.

“Poor John! what a terrible thing it is for him!” she said. “And poor Mrs. Hunter, too! I think it must have been her mental deficiency which caused her so to dislike me.”

Tom could not help smiling, but Margaret did not see the joke, until Tom said, “I agree with you, dear, that no one in his or her sober senses could help liking you.”

“Oh, Tom, how can you joke at such a time?”

“Indeed, I do not know, Madge, unless it is because of my inherent wickedness. But I assure you that I do not feel very merry. It is a sad enough time for us all. You must marry John now, Margaret. You cannot do otherwise if you have a woman’s heart, or indeed a heart of any sort.”

“How can I? We have only just commenced our home in Yorkshire, and the man, whoever he is, will hold me to my agreement. Not that I am necessary there, for the real, moving spirit of the thing is Miss Wentworth. And as for that Andromeda Jones, whom Mary sent, she is invaluable. She will make a most clever woman; she can influence those girls as none of us can; she knows them and their ways so thoroughly; and she loves them, and they love her.”

“I expect she is what she is in consequence of the Craighelbyl training. That is the place in which good characters are made.”

“It is one of the places; and our High Seathorpe is another.”

“How is your enterprise there going to answer, really?”

“It will do much good to many young women, but it cannot do all. The girls who are sent are young, but they are not young enough. It is already too late to do all that we wish. The time to influence girls is before they become engaged. I should like to hand over the engaged girls to Miss Wentworth and Drom, with the other valuable assistants whom we have, and myself to form a home for neglected girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen; for that is the important age.”

“Yes, it is; but, you know, Margaret, that girls as well as boys are to be kept at the ordinary and the technical school now until they are

fourteen. And they are no longer to be trusted to anybody who likes to take up the teaching profession for a livelihood; some of the best, and ablest, and highest people of the land are undertaking the work of the upper standards in the schools."

"Yes; I do not forget that, and I am most thankful for it. In a few years such a place as that at High Seathorpe will surely not be required. In the meantime, it is needed very greatly, only the worst of it is that those who need it most will not come to share its advantages."

"I wish they could be compelled. But I do not myself think so highly of these big Homes, as they are called; they are very different from real homes, you know, Margaret. If I ever have a home of my own—which I suppose I never shall have—I should like to keep two rooms for the use of poor little girls who have come to the turning-point in their lives, and need a friend."

"Yes, I should like that, too," said Margaret.

"Very well," rejoined Tom, "you can have the privilege at once. There are several unused rooms in the Manor House."

It was late at night before Mr. Whitwell reached home.

"We found your treasure-trove, Margaret," he said, "and have placed the contents in safe keeping at my London bank. It was a most astonishing find. I had no idea that it would prove so valuable. You are a lady of fortune."

"I do not feel that the money is mine, Mr. Whitwell. It belongs to Mr. Dallington."

"No; that it certainly does not. It belongs to you. John's uncle had every right to do what he pleased with his own, and the terms of his will could not have been more explicit than they were. You are his heiress after Mr. Harris, the house and all that was in it being left absolutely to you. I am glad that wall was not destroyed; but the thing that puzzles me is where Captain Dallington got all that money, foreign and English, and why he chose to hide it in a wall, instead of putting it in a bank, or investing it in some way, as any other man would have done. But he was always eccentric. I have been told that even as a boy he was considered strange, and only a little better than an idiot; and I think he must have remained so. But whatever may have been his reason, he was evidently very fond of you. Do not answer me unless you please, Margaret; but I have often wondered whether you know the secret of his life and of yours."

"No, I do not, and I expect that now I never shall," said Margaret. "For some reason—and I am sure it was a good one—my grandfather—Mr. Harris—never told me. Only on the evening on which he died he promised that he would; but he was so weak and ill that I begged him to wait until the next day, and the next day he was gone."

"It cannot be helped, my dear, and it does not matter. You are whatever your life and character make you."

"And they could not be better," said Tom, affectionately.

"And it will not matter who you were when you are happily married to my nephew," continued Mr. Whitwell. "He is so good a fellow that it will be too bad if you keep him waiting longer. His mother is quite out of the question now, I am sure of that. And the best medical authority of the land has declared it to-day, for I met Dr. Stapleton, who told me so. That will be the way out of the difficulty. If you think this money ought to be his, what is yours may be made his, in spite of the Married Women's Property Act."

Margaret returned to Yorkshire the next day without seeing John. She

rightly judged that it was better so. It was doubtful if John would ask her again to marry him after all his trouble, and especially when he knew the amount of her possessions. But the long railway ride gave her time to think; and by the time she reached the Home her mind was fully made up.

The place had been speedily got into good working condition, and already there were thirty girls who had been sent down from London, in order that they might be prepared for the work that was before them. And there were as many helpers as could possibly be needed. Miss Wentworth, who knew London well, and who had spent her life and her money chiefly in work among women and girls, knew exactly where to find the right women to help, and the girls who would be the most benefited by their ministrations. She had entered into the scheme with enthusiasm, and it was she who was making it a success.

Her large motherly nature made her very sympathetic. If the truth must be told, she already loved every inmate in the Home; but she loved Margaret the most of all, and when the girl laid her head upon her shoulder, and told her all the history of her life, and confided the secret about John, she was most tender and kind.

“My dear child” she said, “you must marry your lover, and at once. Love is not everything. I do not say it is; but it was meant to occupy the first place where it has been given at all. This work is beautiful, but it can go on without you; and no one else can take your place in that other empty home which needs you so greatly. Now, you must write, and tell all your story to our eccentric friend—Friend Philip, and I am very much mistaken if he does not say as I do. I feel sure he will trust in me, because his lawyer and I are such good friends, and he has seen for himself how we go on with the work here. Write your letter as simply as you like; when your story is known the rest will follow.”

And so it did. The owner of High Seathorpe was ill; and it seemed to him as he read Margaret’s letter that it was a great thing that she should make the man whom she loved happy. He had discovered that there were many other women longing to do the work which he most wished to see done, and since they were well able to carry out his wishes, he was perfectly willing to release Margaret, only stipulating that she should occasionally visit and supervise the institution.

But Margaret had not waited for his answer before she wrote to John.

“We are both so lonely and desolate without each other,” she said, “that if you still wish me to come to you, I will come at any time. Let me try to comfort you a little; and perhaps we shall both find that we can still do something for the great world though we live in a little one of our own.”

John was not slow in responding to that letter; and a few weeks after its receipt the two were married quietly from Mr. Whitwell’s home, and in the old church at Darentdale.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
WAS IT A DREAM?

It must not be forgotten that this is a forecast, as well as a story, and the following is a dream if you prefer to think it so.

It was about this time that an event occurred which showed the immense strides upward which the conscience of some of the people had accomplished. All the British world was electrified by the news that war was imminent. An insult had been offered to the British flag, and of course it was said that the honour of the nation was at stake. Some of the newspapers hastened to magnify the occasion, and fierce articles

called upon the Government to demand satisfaction, unless, indeed, as the writers declared they half-feared, all the manliness and pluck of the British nature had died out. Men looked and felt very angry, and not a few were eager for the fray—especially of those who knew that, however fiercely the battle raged, they would themselves not be called away from their own firesides.

There were many peacemakers; but against them old accusations were made, and they were scorned as the “Peace-at-any-price party.” They held their own, and pleaded for unimpassioned consultations and temporising delays; but they found that the Jingo spirit had been revivified. It was true that England had the men who, at the expense of the nation, had been kept in idleness for many years, in case—perhaps in the hope—that war would break out. She had guns, too; but grave scandals about them had been whispered, and though many thousands of pounds had lately been spent upon “the last sweet things” in cannons and torpedoes, it was not at all certain that these would not fail in the day of trouble because of bad workmanship and inferior materials. As to the money, she certainly had not got that. England was painfully paying off year by year what she could of the enormous debt which she owed on account of former wars, and the real fact was that she had not a penny which could be honestly afforded for new ones. But, as usual, many wished to withhold this truth from the nation’s ears at this moment, and much was done to make the people forget everything excepting that there was a stain on the national honour which could only be washed out in a sea of blood.

Yet there was one circumstance that made thoughtful men pause.

Germany had invented a new gun, which was more awful in its power than anything which had previously been dreamed of. Germany had tried to keep its own secret, but there was an uneasy feeling abroad that it had been sold by a money-loving traitor, and more than one other nation was in possession of it. England did not yet know all that she wished of the “patented” gun, and the Government was told that the secret must be purchased at any price.

But the Government hesitated. The members of this House of Commons were not for war, but very strongly against it. The men now at the head of affairs could not bear the thought of the slaughter of thousands of their brothers. They had been sent to Westminster to govern men, not to order them to be killed; and, though they could not close their ears to the clamour of the war party, they maintained an attitude of firmness that, while it gave great hope to the peaceable, irritated their opponents.

Moreover, England’s quarrel was with her neighbour, France.

Some Frenchmen had gone over a boundary and taken to themselves a bit of land, which the English had stolen a thousand years ago. They were ordered off, and refused to go, and had been so very impertinent and consequential that the English who held the bit of land had appealed for help and sworn to be revenged.

It was unfortunate that just at that time, in a little matter of trade and commerce, France was feeling irritated. Otherwise it is possible that an apology might have been offered and graciously accepted, and so the peace have been kept. But France was silent, and English Ministers were unhappy and anxious.

“This is a case for arbitration!” said the Government. And so it might have been if they could have induced the nation to keep quiet and cool for a little time. But that curious general irritability of temper which in the world’s history has so often been the cause of mischief, made the multitude impatient and impassioned at this crisis. The cry for Arbitration was loud, but the cry for War was louder. And it gathered in force, day by day, until it seemed overpowering.

It is humiliating to have to make the confession that even the Church

was not unitedly and entirely for peace. A large section was overwhelmed with sorrow and disappointment on this account, and most earnestly seconded the endeavour of the Government; but the men of peace had less power than they thought they had. They made pathetic appeals to the nation, but a large part of the nation refused to be moved by them. The peace-people had soft voices, but the war-sowers were noisy and clamorous, and drowned the pacific suggestions of the others. The Government proposed that a council of arbitration should sit in Germany, and that other nations should be asked to come between the two angered peoples. But the English war party was in haste, and would not consent to the delay. “Let us pray,” became the burden of many a sermon; but “Let us fight!” was the suggestion more in keeping with the popular temper of the times.

Public pressure began to be increased. “A war would be good for trade,” some said. Religion was all very well, but it would not always do to abide by it. Besides, did not religion uphold war? Of course it did, for the Bible was a book of battles. The new leaders of the people might be deposed unless they proved themselves capable of responding to the popular wish. Some of the newspapers were to blame for the agitation. There were bloodthirsty leader-writers who were nothing less than traitors to their country at this juncture. And there were agitators who still further inflamed the passions of the people, until at last it was proposed that the “Patriotic Party”—for such the war-makers impudently called themselves—should form processions in the streets, and even storm the Houses of Parliament, and compel the Government to obey their will.

And then _the Prince_ came forward.

There was no telling what might have happened by this time, but for the sake of this one relative of the Royal family, who, because of the true nobility of his character and great lovableness of his disposition, had been singled out from all the rest and designated significantly “_The Prince_.” Wherever he appeared the hearts of the people turned to him. They called him “The Good and the Great”; for he was strangely gifted in person and ability, and was, moreover, a born ruler of men. He was certain to occupy the first position in the nation by right of his singular powers, and though he kept in the background as much as possible, far-seeing men knew that, not because he was of the Royal House, but because of the kingly nature, which was God’s gift and not man’s, he was one of the lights that could not be hid. Everybody loved him, but mostly the poor, because whenever he had lifted up his voice to plead it was for them, and because he had taken the trouble to understand them. It was little wonder that he was beloved by all classes in England, for, in truth, a princely prince had arisen.

The Houses of Legislature received a request from the Prince that he might be permitted to lay before them a suggestion.

The Upper House, composed now of the new aristocracy, among whom were the best representatives of the old nobility of England, immediately decided to send a courteous assurance of welcome to the Prince, and the Lower House added their response to that of their co-workers.

When the Prince arrived both Houses united to give him audience. The scene was indeed worthy of the time, and there is nothing better in the whole history of England to be perpetuated, in the best way possible to Art, than that which was enacted then.

The whole assembly arose as the Prince entered and took his place beside the Speaker’s chair, deferentially bowing to its occupant. The light of earnest purpose shone in his eyes, and his voice was clear and strong as he addressed the assembly.

“Sir, my lords and gentlemen,—It is known to you that the wisdom of the ancients is a treasure-trove for modern seekers; and the thought that is in my heart to-day is one that has passed down to me through a long line of heroes. I sorrow with my countrymen for the misunderstanding which has arisen between ourselves and France, and which seems to be

developing into a quarrel that can only be healed by blood. But, sirs, if war were declared between the two nations, as things are now it would not be battle, but murder. We want our men for other things than that. And so does fair France, with her broad fields spread out to the sun, and her chivalrous men and women with their new ideas of life. In this quarrel we are the aggrieved, and therefore have the right to declare war. May we not also choose our mode of battle? Is it necessary—can it possibly be right—to call out our soldiers, who have no part whatever in this quarrel, and bid them go over and fight with French soldiers, who are by no means unfriendly—nay, I will not call it fighting—shall we allow them to kill each other in cold blood by thousands? It cannot be right, and it is not necessary. Sir, I have to propose that England should take the initiative, and request France to allow this dispute to be settled by single combat of arms, so that one life should suffice and the many be spared. And I hereby offer myself to you as the representative of this nation, and declare my willingness and most earnest desire to meet any man whom France may appoint, and to fight with him to the death, in the cause of Old England, my own beloved country, which may God bless and preserve! I make this entreaty because I know that if I am allowed to have my will, and if I should die for the nation, the blow that kills me will be also the death-blow to war. You have not been able to get this quarrel settled by arbitration, but it is the last time that such a suggestion will be powerless. Gentlemen, the world needs an object-lesson; let it have it. Here am I, send me; and I declare to you that by God’s help I will make it impossible that there should ever again be a European war.”

The Prince bowed first to the Speaker and then to the members, and before the latter could recover from their astonishment he sat down. Then a murmur filled the house, first of applause and next of demur.

It was noble and brave of him, but it could never be allowed. The Prince was too dear to the nation—better a thousand lesser men be sacrificed than he. And, besides, this would be such an antiquated form of warfare; it would make England ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Nor would France agree to it. And who had she that was the peer of the Prince whom England loved? Such things, as soon as the speakers had found their tongues, were said one after the other, without in the least abating the resolution of the Prince. He would not be convinced, and he prayed them not to hinder him. The Republic of France, he was sure, had been growing to hate war more and more during the last few years; and if Frenchmen wished to fight, it was certainly not with England. Moreover, the times were new, and new ideas had taken possession of the people in all civilised countries. If some, still uncivilised, chose to laugh, what did it matter, since the quarrel was none of theirs? Let England and France be satisfied, and nothing more was needed. So said the Prince, and more than a few agreed with him; and when the time for closing the debate came a resolution was unanimously passed, thanking the Prince for his magnanimous offer, and begging him to attend the meeting of the House on that day week in order to receive the reply of England.

Next morning the whole country was in a state of ferment. A good many people tried to laugh off the whole circumstance as if it were something too absurd to be worthy of sober consideration. But it was soberly considered none the less; and it was soon apparent that a very large proportion of the English people came to feel that the Prince’s offer ought to be accepted. Not at first. At first there was a universal howl against it. There were many men whose names were mentioned as far more suitable for the sacrifice than he. But though the nation could compel fifty thousand people to fight at its command, it was quite impossible for them to compel any one man to do so; and though volunteers were not wanting, the Prince would not yield.

The New Party was unanimous in the opinion that the Prince should be allowed to have his will, if France were willing. They loved the Prince as dearly as the rest, but they saw that because his life was so precious, it was the one to be forfeited. Its value would make it acceptable to the French nation, and the fact that the Prince would fight any man France might send would go far to pacify that

high-spirited people. Moreover, if the Prince were killed, his death would be more mighty than any other force could possibly be toward that on which their hearts were set, the abolition and extermination of war.

That week seemed to fly by. At its expiration the Prince duly presented himself to receive the nation’s reply to his proposition. Never was a vote more solemnly taken than that which decided the issue at stake. It was not a unanimous vote; but that the Prince should fight this battle of his country was decided by an overwhelming majority.

The subject had been rigorously excluded from the French Parliament until it was formally laid before it in official despatches from England, but naturally it had been well discussed in every other gathering, small or large, of the French people. There was, therefore, little need of delay; but a week was asked and given before a final answer was decided upon. At length it was sent, and the whole world knew that the quarrel of two great nations was to be decided by two of their greatest sons.

A request was sent in that the number should be augmented, and that ten persons on each side should fight, but that was overruled, and the two nations proceeded to fix the date of the most memorable duel that had ever been fought.

The Prince asked for a week, but the French proposed that it should be a month, in order to give each man time to become perfect in the use of the sword; for both the Prince and his antagonist declared the sword to be the only weapon for the occasion. It had been easy to find a man in chivalrous France. Indeed, there were so many volunteers that it was necessary to decide the matter by lot. And, strangely enough, the lot fell to Bayard, a descendant of the noble man whom even to-day France delights to honour.

The two young men spent the month in strict retirement, each setting his own affairs in order. There was a great wish that the Prince might be seen by the people, but this he refused. Also the date on which he would set out on his journey was kept a secret; for there was a fear that the populace would prevent by force the consummation of the idea. It had been settled that the fight was to be on French soil, and in some spot as far as possible removed from human habitations. It was to take place in the morning of a day, the date of which, with all other details, was settled by the two nations.

Of course the papers were full of it. Every little scrap of information that could be gained was printed in large type and eagerly read by the people. As the time drew near the whole thing was felt by many to be intolerable. There was something so cold-blooded about it that it appeared a much more awful thing for these two lives to be lost than for two armies to be annihilated. Foreign newspapers were especially severe, and many a comic sketch of the two nations gone mad came to England and went to France. Most foreigners appeared to regard it as a fiasco, and declared that the battle of two would never occur. But, on the other hand, a great many people were determined that it should, if only to save the two peoples from being ridiculous in the eyes of each other; and there were some spirited articles written to show up the absurdity of the false sentiment of pity which could have borne a wholesale massacre, but could not endure a single duel.

The month seemed as long as two, but it wore away, though slowly; indeed, the last few days were all too short. The people were determined that their Prince should not go quietly out from their midst, and for several days Buckingham Palace was watched by crowds that refused to be dispersed, and stood quietly through the days and nights to wait their chance. The multitude was augmented every day. At last it grew so enormous that fears were entertained by the authorities of a catastrophe of some kind. The police was insufficient, and the soldiers were told to lie in readiness.

On the evening before his departure the Prince caused the time to be

made known, and it was decided to form a triumphal procession to escort him to the coast, the like of which had never been seen before. It could not be allowed that all the pomp and glitter of battle should be omitted, and the Prince consented to the martial music and the guard.

The best regiments were chosen, and it was in the midst of the finest English soldiers that the Prince rode through London. He looked every inch a hero, full of courage and life. The crowds grew wild with enthusiasm as they saw him, and their shouts rent the air. The band played the National Anthem and “Rule Britannia,” and there was a great cry, which was taken up by tens of thousands—_Come back safely, and we will make you king!_ In front of St. Paul’s a halt was made, and from the steps the Prince spoke to the people.

“I am going glad of heart to fight this battle for you,” he said. “I do not believe what is told me, that if I fall you will hate the French people more than ever. God forbid! Hate war, and make up your minds that this shall be the last blood shed in the cause of any quarrel between the two nations. Take away the sting of death from me by giving me a pledge, I pray you, that you will not revenge my death, and that hereafter England will set the example of arbitration, as she has now done of single combat.”

A shout of approbation rent the air. Then there was a cry, “Into the Cathedral!” and the Prince entered, and all else who could. There was no rioting among the people—the occasion was too solemn for that—and they waited patiently. Was it by accident that it was the time for the morning service? A great hush fell upon the throng, and never before was there so imposing a scene as then, all the more so because it was unpremeditated. When the anthem was sung a thrill went through the assembly, for the clear notes of a boy’s voice rang out the significant words, “I know that my Redeemer liveth!” Men were not ashamed of their tears that day. Who could help shedding them?

But the Prince was not one of the weepers. His eyes shone with a lustre that told of the high thoughts that filled his soul, and his steadfast heart feared nothing. When he came out of the cathedral, and cast his eyes over its proportions, there was a smile upon his lips, though he knew how probable it was that he had seen the building for the last time.

All the way to Dover crowds of people attended him or flocked near to get a glimpse of his benignant face. When at last the sea was in sight he was glad, for the lengthened strain was beginning to tell upon him.

The ship was decorated with flags, and some girls came forward to strew flowers in his path.

The Prince thanked the soldiers for their escort, and urged them to give the weight of their influence to the peace party. “Men are wanted,” he said, “for other things than to slay and be slain. If the armies were disbanded, and the soldiers would learn the arts of peace, a better day would dawn for the world. You could go _home_. God bless the homes of England!”

Never was vessel watched by so many eyes as this, which seemed to fly across the Channel. Other ships hastened after it, and a thousand prayers went up that the Prince might come again to the people who loved him, and that the battle might be decided in his favour.

They were asking the same in France for their Bayard, who had suddenly become their hero.

But is not this prayer, “God be on my side,” characteristic of every fight?

CHAPTER XXXV.
WAS IT EXPEDIENT THAT ONE SHOULD DIE?

Our story has dealt with the people rather than with the upper classes; but when a detailed history of these times shall be written, one of the foremost places will certainly be given to the Prince. He had worked quietly (the Society journals had kindly left him very much alone), and he was, besides, only a young man, but his influence amongst the aristocratic classes of England had been immeasurably great. His mother was of the Royal family, but his father was a commoner, and he seemed to have been born to such a heritage of sympathy as could not be confined to any class. He had a passion for philanthropy, but his love of justice was even stronger still. He regarded the rights of others, as he did his own; and nothing could make him believe that England ought, or was obliged, to have within her borders a million of people in poverty. But the way out was by the gate of work and wages, and not alms; and so sure was he of this that it was frequently remarked of him, “The Prince gives nothing away.” What he gave, how he gave it, and to whom, were his own secrets, and he kept them; but every one knew that in the length and breadth of the land none was more really a friend to the poor than he. Nor had any done more to convince his class that they who owned much of the wealth of the land had no right to satisfy their consciences by gifts of soup and coals to the poor, but that it was their duty to find work and pay wages. He was a doughty champion who was always ready to fight for the lowest; and his own people loved him the more because he spoke the truth to them in tones that there was no mistaking.

The age, that was rich in valiant young men, had none more true, and honourable, and kingly than this man who had craved so earnestly to be allowed to die for his country.

It is needless to say that the New Tournament occupied both public and private attention, to the exclusion of all other topics; until, if only for the sake of relieving the strain, which every day became more intolerable, everybody hoped that the matter would be decided speedily. And, indeed, there was little reason for delay, excepting in the circumstance that the two young men had asked for a week in which to become better acquainted with each other.

What passed between them was never known; only a written document, signed by both of them, and containing reasons why the two nations should trust each other, gave some indication of the themes on which they conversed.

It was a lovely spot among the hills that had been chosen for the fight; and thither on a bright morning a great multitude repaired. Medical men were on the spot, and several of the most eminent Judges of the two countries. Many people went with the hope still in their hearts that the contest would not really be to the death; but no such hope or wish was in the mind of either of the brave knights who had come to fight for his country.

“Let the arrangements be as simple as possible,” the Englishman had said. But no pomp or show could have added to the awful solemnity of the occasion. As the two men faced each other, looking so resolute and brave, and yet so gentle, a thousand eyes grew dim. They shook hands cordially with each other, and spent a few moments in private conversation. It was hoped that they would address the assembly, which, indeed, consisted of the greatest men of all nations, and the hope was not disappointed.

“It is no time for words,” said the English Prince, “but the occasion is a marked one, and perhaps words, however poor, may prove to be seeds which shall hereafter grow into a harvest. The brave knight of France has become my dear friend, and therefore there is no enmity, but only love to each other in our hearts this morning; and our friendship is none the less strong because one of us will certainly kill the other. We are both more willing to-day than ever to sacrifice our lives in the

cause of peace and in the interests of our country. I am for England with all my heart, and to the very backbone—brave, heroic, Christian England. She has been spoilt by some faults, but the morning of her regeneration has arrived, and I call upon you Englishmen, in God's name, to be worthy of her traditions, and arise to the demands of the new era which is upon us." Then, in a voice that pierced to the outer edge of the crowd, he cried, "Never more shall war mean the slaying of thousands! And _God bless England_!"

The Frenchman's speech was longer, and it called upon his countrymen to live and die for fair France.

Then the trumpeters gave the signal for the contest to begin, and men held their breath—watching with their souls in their eyes. There was a little play and parrying at first; but presently the men fought in deadly earnest, and their flashing swords became stained with blood. Suddenly there was a halt—the Prince's sword had snapped, and a new one was required. Then there was a cry for intervention. "Let the contest cease! Enough! Enough!" But the young men would not yield to that cry, and again there was a clashing of swords. The moments seemed ages to those who looked on, and several fainted and could gaze no longer; indeed, the excitement proved too great to be endured. But the contest was not to be prolonged. Presently one fell from his horse, wounded fatally.

It was the English Prince.

The doctors were at his side in a moment. He could still speak a few words.

"The wound is fatal, I know," he said. "Bayard, where are you?" The Frenchman took the Prince in his arms and put his head on his shoulder.

"Forgive me," he said, hastily.

"Oh, do not ask that! We have no quarrel—the real fighters in a real war seldom have. God bless you, Bayard, and your country—_Vive la France_! But God bless my country too—old England! destined to be the leader in peace and righteousness yet. God bless England! Bayard, say it, too." And the Frenchman repeated the words. Then the Prince whispered, "Better I than you. To be with Christ."

And so he died.

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A sense of infinite loss fell upon England, in which the whole world had some share. And with the loss came not only pain, but anger.

The Prince's family had the worst of the sorrow to bear. And the upper classes were loud in their execration. "Better a host were slain than he," they said. And the masses for once felt with them. So did the army, which was likely, everybody thought, to give trouble in the future. The time was altogether a dangerous one, and a terrible revolution might have been brought in with blood but for those leaders of the people who were able in the emergency to possess their souls in quietness. America was saved once by the voice of a man who cried, "God is not dead, though Lincoln is!" And now in England there were ten thousand men who, in pulpits, on platforms, and through the Press, said the same thing. And they earnestly besought their hearers to help in the great work of preventing the Prince's sacrifice from being non-effective. He had been willing to die, as everybody knew; but only because he hoped that a better life would come to many through his death. And now, if the people were actuated by revenge and hatred, not only to France, but also to the new English Government as well—as seemed likely to be the case—then, indeed, the best blood of the land would have been shed in vain. And so universal among Christian men was the adoption of this speech that the people were quieted, and wise counsels prevailed, together with a profound conviction that the Prince's prophecy would be fulfilled, and

England become “the leader in peace and righteousness.”

They brought the body of the beloved Prince home to England, and in that sepulchre of kings, Westminster Abbey, they buried him.

The publication of the Prince’s will created a profound sensation.

The little which had been given to him by the nation was to go back to whom it belonged. But that which had been given to him for his own use and distribution, by private individuals, and which constituted a most surprisingly large sum, was, he considered, entirely at his disposal. The times had seen many gifts of enormous sums to the poor, not a few of which had come from anonymous donors; but it was not before known that so great had been the love of the people for their Prince, and so absolute their confidence in him, that many had preferred to trust him with their money, assured that he would use it wisely. It was to this wealth that the will written by his own hand chiefly referred. It set forth his faith that soon after his death the Government of England would set an example of peace to the nations of the world by permitting those who chose to withdraw from the British army, after making all necessary arrangements for the calling together of volunteers from among them in case of an emergency. The Prince declared that he had found constant solace and strength from the thought of the joy with which these men, now kept in idleness at the expense of the country, with no rights as citizens, and unable for the most part to secure domestic joys, would go home to their friends and take their rightful places in the world. But he recognised the fact that at first they would be at a disadvantage with their fellows because they had forgotten how to till the ground, or choose and sell the merchandise, or guide the machine. And he therefore directed that his money should be kept in trust until required, and then used for the purpose of instructing the soldiers in the arts of peace; and, if necessary, for providing for them in the meantime, and until they could become engaged in remunerative occupations. And he asked as a favour to himself that _the piece of land which was the original cause of the quarrel should be set apart for the free use of discharged English and French soldiers_. He knew that the money which had been entrusted to him—much as it was—would be all too little for so large a purpose, though he prayed that it might be wisely managed by able and honest men, and so he left, as his dying bequest to all who loved him, an importunate prayer that they would of their riches add to the sum until it should answer the end designed. And the Prince appointed as his executors his sister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Peter Macdonald, and Arthur Knight, whom he trusted to see that the terms of his will were duly carried out.

A committee was at once appointed to consider this remarkable will, and work with the executors. And this committee proved itself to be composed of men who had understanding of the spirit of the Prince, and determination to give effect to his wishes. They lost no hours in fruitless debate; nor did they cavil with one another in regard to phrases, nor multiply difficulties which might never exist. They met every day for a time, and as soon as possible were ready with their report.

The first fact which they made public was the gratifying one that the money left by the Prince had already been doubled by the contributions of rich men who had been waiting for some opportunity to dispose of part of their wealth for the good of their country. This was the fruit of a conviction that had been for many past years growing, that a Christian man has no right to keep to himself the wealth which has been entrusted to him.

Another fact, which for the first time was put into words for the public information, was the somewhat disquieting one, for the war party, that it had now become exceedingly difficult to secure men for the British Army. The youth of the nation of these times had no taste for swords, and guns, and red coats. The veterans of the army often wondered what England could possibly do if she had to engage in a big war while so short of men. And although Englishmen believed still that their nation

was destined to lead the world, it was evident to all thoughtful minds that it must be by other means than war, for even now she could not cope with other nations in regard to military power.

But, all the same, the Government was asked to reduce the standing army, since it would be wiser to do that than to let it die out gradually and ignominiously; and it was absolutely certain that this would be the case in the near future, since the Christian Churches of England had enlisted the youth of the nation in the grand army of the Young Crusaders, every member of which had solemnly sworn to preserve peace.

The committee, therefore, recommended the Government to give immediate effect to the Prince’s will; to allow men who had already served ten years in the army to leave it if they chose; and to give them, under certain conditions, a lump sum, instead of a pension, so that they might commence business or emigrate, or provide themselves with tools and equipments for labour. Had all this happened before, there would have been a great outcry that the already overstocked labour market would become congested by the turning into it of thousands of new men; but people were really wise enough now to see that it would be cheaper for these men to work than to be kept in idleness at the expense of the State, and they were learning to solve the problem of the over-production of commodities by the industrial classes by making it possible for the industrial classes themselves to enjoy the commodities which they were producing.

So the suggestions of the committee were accepted.

“Our Quixotic Government can no further go,” said one of the papers next morning; but its small light was snuffed out during the day, for the journals that were of consequence took the other side, and it became evident that the life and death of the Prince had converted an enormous number of thinkers.

Still, it was decided that such a drastic measure could not be carried out till after an appeal to the people, and the House of Commons first adopted the suggestion of the committee and then resigned. The step was at once proved to have been unnecessary. The people were in advance of their leaders, and had come to be their friends, and supporters of these good measures. The world looked on in wonder as one after another of the constituencies decided to return without opposition their present representatives to the new Parliament. In only a few cases was there a contested election, and in nearly every one of these there was returned a man more strongly on the side of the people, and for peace, than the one who had been deposed. The Government, therefore, went back to its work with its hands greatly strengthened.

And the first thing it did was to ask that a Council might be elected, consisting of the same number as the House of Commons, and elected in the same way, each constituency to send one man as the representative of the united churches of the locality, whose duty it would be to act for the churches in the direction of the social and domestic affairs of the nation. This Council was to sit in London for ten days of each quarter; and it was to take into consideration more than a few changes which were now admitted to be within the range of practical politics.

One of these was a new poor law. There was to be no more separation of the aged poor from their friends. No more was the answer to an appeal for help in the last extremity to be “The House or Nothing!” If an old man or woman, or both, had sons and daughters, or grandchildren willing to undertake the care of the failing life, if only a little pecuniary assistance were given, the assistance was to be at once vouchsafed. Young men who had become absolutely penniless through affliction, or loss, or through no fault of their own were to be henceforth helped into some sphere of work where they could live by their own earnings. If they were ill, they were to be nursed back into health, or sent into a convalescent home; if they were idiots, to an asylum; or, if incapable, to a place where kindly patient teachers would foster the little spark of intelligence within them. The children were to be taken away from the

workhouse into a home—or, rather, the great uncomfortable building was, in some cases, to be itself altered and made home-like. But, for the most part, the workhouse was to be true to its name. If a man refused to work for his wife and children, he was to be captured and brought there with them, and compelled to support himself and them, unless he preferred to starve. If he treated them cruelly, he was to be, for the second offence, punished with the lash; and it was wonderful how soon this treatment made cowardly brutes civil in their treatment of those who were weak. But, at the same time, everything was done that could be to make the workhouse a city of refuge, where those who had made themselves and one another wretched learned to love one another and be happy.

And over these buildings were painted the words which Christendom was bent upon obeying, with shame that the obedience came so late: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.
FOR EVER AFTER?

Twelve months later an old year was passing away in perfect calm. If it had been memorable for no other reason, the weather would have made it so, for no year had been more stormy or wrought more violently than this; now, however, as if it knew a late repentance, and had grown ashamed and sorry for the excesses of its hot youth, it seemed to be caring for nothing but to take and give the kiss of peace before it died. Nature was in a mood of profound sympathy. Enough snow had fallen to beautify all rugged and unlovely things; the wind had ceased its loud tones, and only spoke in whispers; the moon spread its light over the restful world, and the stars shone in the blue heavens like lamps of gold.

There were thousands of people waiting in the expectancy of faith and hope, who felt that an augury of good had come to them with that night.

There was a gathering of notable people in John Dallington’s house at Darentdale, who intended together to see the old year out and the new year in. Arthur Knight had issued an invitation to them all to meet at Brent House in London, the home of his boyhood, but if they had done so the meeting must have been without Margaret, for she declared that not for all the friends she had would she leave her baby, or run the risk of his taking cold on a journey, and therefore the meeting was at Darentdale, since Margaret’s absence was not to be tolerated.

It was a representative gathering, and Arthur Knight called it a “stock-taking supper,” for they had met, not only to see one another, but to consider their gains and losses. He was the first to arrive, and Dr. Stapleton came next. Then followed Mr. Collinson, known all over England now as the Children’s Pastor, because he had insisted that a minister’s first duty was to the young of the congregation. Mr. Stapleton, the builder, was also there; so was Mr. Emerson, the vicar of Darentdale; and also Miss Wentworth and Mary Wythburn, besides Mr. Whitwell and his daughter Tom, with several other friends and helpers, among them a man who was ready to give his life for Arthur Knight, a servant and companion, who always spoke of himself as “the boy who threw the stone at the Knight.” There were also one visitor from America and one from Germany.

Darentdale presented a different appearance from that which it revealed on the morning after its master had returned from his travels. There were now no leaves on the trees nor primroses in the woods; and yet, as he glanced over the scene, he thought it more lovely than ever. One reason was that he had kept his resolution and redeemed the land. It was a happy day to him, as well as to his uncle and cousin, when he paid off

the mortgage which had always been a trouble to him. And the means by which he had been enabled to do this had in themselves been reasons of rejoicing. He had been quite determined not to use a penny of his wife's money, even for so good an end. Equally determined was he that the labourers on his farm should not suffer because he had a debt to pay. The way out of his difficulty had been one proposed by his friend Knight, who had come to him one day with a proposition. "Since your land is so dear to you," he said, "I do not ask you to sell it; but will you let me have a few fields on a long lease that I may plant a factory and some workmen's houses upon it?"

Dallington was only too glad to do this. There was a waste piece of land that only grew gorse and bushes, and that land was now covered with pretty houses, of which Dallington was as proud as Knight.

The latter had conducted the American visitor over this place in the morning, and he wanted to talk of nothing else.

"Will you explain to me, Mr. Knight, what you mean by calling this new colony of yours a Missionary Settlement?" he asked.

"Certainly. It has been built wholly at the request of some of my Craighelbyl people, whose money is invested in it. They are men who have made the Welsh place a success, and who, happy in their new life, have not forgotten their old companions in London. They petitioned me to advance the money, and allow them to take it up in shares and manage it. It is really a co-operative concern, as the Craighelbyl place is fast becoming now. The factory is to produce second-class goods—that is, articles which are to be worth every penny asked for them, and warranted to wear, but without the finish, the polish, for which our other goods are—if you will excuse the egotism of a manufacturer—known all over the world. These men of mine are themselves conducting this factory, and every man whom they employ is one who has been rescued from drunkenness or some other wrongdoing. So, you see, it is more than a factory—it is a mission of usefulness. Every foreman or manager is pledged to patience and watchfulness. No one has been allowed to help in this matter who is not known to be a strong and consistent Christian man. Of course, they have had some disappointments. They told me to-day that already they have had to send to the Asylum for drunkenness as incurable six men and seven women; but they are hopeful that these will prove the only ones who need go; and that the workpeople, brought away from the temptations of London, will live sober and godly lives."

"You have greatly solved the problem of the poor by taking them from the crowded centres of great cities."

"Yes; I do not think we could have accomplished all that has been done excepting in this way. I know of more than four hundred manufacturers who have taken their people and their work away from big towns to little villages—where land is cheaper and the air is fresh—and there have helped them to begin life again under new conditions. In this way numbers become quite manageable. Every man, woman, and child is known to the master and the mistress, who are now awake to their responsibility, and understand that if they employ people it is their duty to look after them and care for them. I believe there is not a Christian man in England to-day who regards his _employés_ merely as hands to earn money for him."

"Thank God!"

"Yes, indeed, we have reason to thank God. There has been a great awakening of the individual conscience in the Church."

"We in America consider your latest liquor law rather severe."

"We have had to be severe in order to be kind," said Dr. Stapleton. "The Legislature was resolved to stamp out drunkenness at any cost; and I believe it is in a fair way to be accomplished now. We never required so few prisons as we do now; and it was a good idea to use them as refuges

for drunkards, and compel every man or woman who had been thrice convicted of drunkenness to live in them."

"This has been a marvellously executive year," said Mr. Emerson. "It has been like a dream. Only a few years ago, and at every Christmas time there were numbers of men out of work, and some nearly starving, and now there is work for every man who likes to do it."

"And, what is almost better still, every man has to work whether he likes it or not," said Mr. Stapleton.

"You nearly had a revolution over that thing, though," said the American. "The liberty of the subject was in danger."

"Yes; only a Government that knew its own strength could have given such an excellent definition of liberty as ours has," replied Mr. Whitwell. "Every man has liberty to do right, but no one has licence to do that which is evil."

"But the happy change which has been brought about is not the work of the Government. It is the work of a united Church," said Mr. Emerson. "That which has been accomplished might have been done long ago if the Church had known its power and done its duty."

"You might have said if the Church had been Christian," suggested Tom Whitwell.

"But no new thing has happened, nor has any new doctrine been preached," said Knight. "The only reason of all the change is that we have come to believe that what was said in Nazareth eighteen centuries ago is true and possible. We were told all along that the merciful were blessed, that the pure in heart should see God, that those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness should be filled, and we have simply discovered that when Jesus gave His few plain directions regarding His kingdom He did not make impossible regulations. That is all."

"Yes, that is all. But it is not a little."

"The best of it is that the light is flooding Germany and America as well as England," said the German guest.

"And," replied Arthur Knight, "Canada has been blessed that it has such a son as Macdonald. How I wish he could have been with us to-night! He has been invited to deliver his message in all the States of America. What he has done for and in the Church of England only God knows. He has been a second Wesley, or a Church Spurgeon, or a modern St. Francis of Assisi. If he has not taught the people to love poverty, he has made them ashamed of being afraid of it; and the young men of the Church are being convinced that there are more desirable things than luxury, wealth, and idleness, and they are proving that there are no such noble men in the world as Englishmen who are Christians. Macdonald, too, has done much to bring about that Christian union to which we owe everything. A united Church has done what nothing else could do, and completely lifted the poor and the degraded out of their former position."

"One wonders now," said Mr. Collinson, "how it could be that so many of the best people never seemed to give any thought to their social and relative duties."

"It is strange, indeed; but it can scarcely ever be the case again."

"Oh, surely not, for very shame! So many have come to realise that their birth, and education, and wealth are given to them in trust for others, that they will not dare to use them entirely for themselves in the future."

"It is something that at last goodness and kindness are fashionable," said Miss Wentworth.

“Do you think there is any hope of a general disarmament?” inquired the German.

“There is a hope, certainly. The events of the past months have made a profound impression all over Europe and America. At present there is assuredly no nation with sufficient courage to declare war.”

“The people are disgusted with it; and now, as always, they form the final Court of Appeal, in Germany as everywhere else.”

“The best of it is that, so far as England is concerned, we have the boys on our side,” said Mr. Collinson. “There is no sign so hopeful as this. Your appeal, Mr. Knight, is bringing an abundant harvest of good.”

“Yes; our hope is in the boys. I watched a number of them in the gymnasium the other day, and a fine time they were having; but the difference that a year or two has made in their language and behaviour is very marked.”

“Mr. Collinson, the children’s minister of Granchester, has had much to do with that,” said Dr. Stapleton, “for he set the example, which other ministers have followed.”

“Ah, no!” said Mr. Collinson. “The originators of the Society of the Young Crusaders have accomplished the greatest thing of the generation. What fine fellows those boys are! They are the saviours of the nation! I declare to you, Stapleton, that I never see your nephew without feeling that I must take off my hat to him.”

“Yes; if the Society goes on manufacturing men of this kind we need have no fear for the future. They will finish what we begin. I am glad that the girls are being well looked after, too,” said Miss Wentworth.

“The great effort of the day on their behalf,” said Arthur Knight, “must be to make them domesticated and home-loving, for our young Crusaders are growing up with the idea that it is a disgrace to men to let their sisters and daughters work for a living. That is the duty and privilege of the male.”

“The boys of England are having a splendid training now,” said Mr. Whitwell. “Our plan—to put every boy that is born under the care of a good Christian woman (his mother, if possible, and, if not, some other)—is having excellent results.”

“It is only going back to the old idea of the Church,” said Mr. Emerson. “Every child is to have a godmother and godfather. All that is best in these modern improvements has come from our section of the Church.”

An amused silence which followed this remark was broken by a question, put by the German, in regard to Craighelbyl, which Mr. Knight answered.

“The cure for strikes everywhere is to give the people a direct share in the business. Craighelbyl has adopted this plan from the first. The people are buying their homes with the rent they pay. I gave them twenty years in which to do it; but they got dissatisfied, and considered that too long a time. Perhaps it was. I am getting recouped more quickly than I expected; and the time is short yet. So I gave in. We talked the matter over together, and I altered the term to fifteen years, at the end of which time, supposing the rents to be faithfully paid, every man’s house will be his own. But all men are not alike; some save money more quickly than others, even though they earn but little more; so I have had a sum fixed for every house, and if a man can pay it off in ten years, or even less, I have no objection. Some will be their own landlords in less than ten years, I believe.”

“And what will you do with the business?”

“If they are willing to unite together, and buy it as a co-operative

affair, I shall sell it to them. I think they will, for the old jealousy which they used to feel towards each other, and the suspicion with which they regarded any man who seemed to be doing well, are less than they were."

"Everybody who serves in any capacity is chosen by vote, is he not?" asked the American.

"Excepting myself, the minister, the schoolmaster, and the doctor. Eventually, perhaps," said Knight with a smile, "they may choose individuals to fill our places, but at present we have been given to them, whether they liked us or not. In Craighelbyl the people are very keen and critical. We have fine men there. Hancourt has been a splendid manager of the business. I am sure he will always be triumphantly put back in his place, whatever new candidates are forthcoming. We have an Irishman for a doctor. The people pay no fees; they are doctored at my expense, because it is very much to my advantage that I should have healthy workpeople; and we have very little sickness, because the sanitary arrangements are good, and the first symptoms of disease are promptly seen and met."

"Do they all go to church?" inquired the German.

"No; but a very large majority may be found there. They nearly all go to the Sunday-evening concert, held from eight to nine in the lecture-hall, where high-class sacred music is performed and sacred songs are sung."

"Do you pay these musicians and singers?"

"No; they give their services very willingly, for they are our own people. Those who have musical taste and talent receive an education in music, as do those who are scientifically inclined in science."

"I suppose all education is free?"

"Most certainly! You see, my point is that I shall be best served by an educated, contented, and healthy set of people. It is all a matter of self-interest."

During the laugh that greeted this assertion Mrs. Dallington arose, and the ladies followed her into the drawing-room. Mary Wythburn sat before the organ with a book of Mendelssohn before her, and the other guests made themselves comfortable, to listen or think, as they pleased; but Margaret and Miss Whitwell sought a quiet corner for talk.

"Madge, how well and happy you look."

"And I look as I am! Dear old Tom, I hope you will stay a long time now, for you do not know half the delightful things my baby can do. Your father must spare you. To have you here is just the crown to my joy."

Margaret's dark eyes were looking full into the face of her friend.

"I suppose you are quite busy again, Margaret," asked Tom.

"Yes. There is plenty of work close at hand, and, you know, Tom, we always said that the thing that was nearest was the right thing to do."

"But I am not so sure about that now as I used to be."

"Oh, you may be certain it is right in the main! We are going to have 'At Homes' every Saturday afternoon and evening for the youths and the girls on the farm. I want the girls to copy my home as well as my dress. We shall make them welcome, and see that they have good times—in the drawing-room in the winter, and the garden in the summer; and we hope they will be having an object-lesson all the time. I used to think this sort of thing not altogether kind, and to be afraid that after experiencing the comfort and refinement of such a home as ours they would go back to their own abodes more discontented than ever. But I am

not afraid of that now, for the contrasts are not so great; they can all have comfortable homes too."

"Ah! Darentdale led the way."

"It did; and I cannot tell you how thankful I am. It used to be shameful that people were compelled to live in such utter, hopeless misery as they did only a few years ago."

"Are you going to have the youths and the girls at the same time, and together, at these 'At Homes' of yours?"

"Certainly; why not? Were they not intended to be together?"

"Your house will become a paradise of lovers, Margaret."

"I only hope it may. I promise myself all sorts of pleasures in watching my friends making the discovery that they love and are beloved. Do you know, Miss Thomasine Grace Whitwell, that there is nothing in all the world half so well worth winning and having as that?"

"That? What?"

"You do not need me to tell you, I am sure."

"You were always romantic, Margaret. Our friend, Mary Wythburn, does not agree with you."

"I am afraid not." And she glanced significantly towards Mary, and Dr. Stapleton, who had been the first to join her, and who had gone at once to turn over the leaves of the music-book. "You know, Tom, we are all committed to the task of securing the greatest happiness for the greatest number; and whoever makes herself and one other individual happy is doing something towards it."

"Margaret, you are getting most disgracefully frivolous. I shall move to the piano. I am in danger here of being corrupted."

Mary had left the instrument, and some one was asking, "Will not Miss Whitwell sing for us?"

"Miss Whitwell is not at all in a singing mood," she said; but John Dallington added his request, and she was too good-natured to refuse. At first she played a sonata, then a march; but "A song! a song!" cried her friends, and she gave them a ditty of her own:

"There was, among the fields of earth,
  A little patch of ground,
Which loving hearts held priceless,
  And tender hands hedged round,—
A small brown patch, with naught to show,
  Save a weed here and there;
But it proved a triumph-trophy, won
  By kindliness and care.

"Frosts sealed it down in safe, close warmth
  Till the cold passed away;
Then genial showers fell softly,
  Then the sun shone all day,
And deft hands turned it over,
  And treasures green and gold
With lavish generosity
  Were given for it to hold.

"And through the summer, beautiful
  Was that same patch of ground,
For fragrant flowers, and rich, ripe fruits,
  And golden corn were found.
And over it the glad birds sang

Their merry hymns and lays,
And near to it the hearts of men
Poured forth their Master's praise.

"And, best of all, He came to see
The patch of ground prepared,
And His eyes noted the green spot,
And knew how it had fared;
And smiled the gentle Master then,
For He saw what love had won,
And crowned the workers with the words:
'My faithful ones, well done!'"

"Now, Margaret, it is your turn," said the singer. "Give us something merry."

"The Doctor will do that," said John; and Stapleton gave "Rule, Britannia!" with variations, that were very varied indeed.

After a time, "Will not Mr. Knight favour us with a song?" asked Margaret. "I know he does sing."

"Not often," replied Arthur, as he took his seat at the piano, and prepared to accompany himself.

All eyes in the room turned affectionately towards him.

"He is a man, take him for all in all,
We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

John Dallington made the quotation softly, so that only those nearest to him heard it; but they realised its aptness as they looked at the truest knight of the century. What a brave battle he had fought, and how little he regarded himself as a hero! How unswervingly he had run his course, turning neither to the right nor the left, but reaching the goal of his desire only to lay his victor's crown on the altar of his faith. A man of remarkable talents, indeed, and thankful for every one of them; for the high thoughts which he knew had been given to him, not made by him, for the power to speak so that men were persuaded, for the health which had enabled him to endure fatigue, and the wealth which he might use as he pleased, and for the courage of his convictions, which had made him do where others had but ventured to dream! He could not ignore it all on this, the last day of the year, any more than others did, but he had many misgivings and regrets to keep him humble. Strange to say, he was feeling very lonely, though in the midst of his dearest friends; and perhaps the sight of Dallington's happiness made him realise more than ever before that, however much he had gained, he had missed something without which no man's life is complete. His thoughts were with his father. Some one a few minutes before had asked him whether he ever took up a newspaper nowadays without seeing his own name in it; and he answered half irritably, "Yes, very often," for that was not a particularly interesting item to him; then he wondered what his father would think of it all if he could know; and a shadow of self-reproach stole over him, and a fear, lest, after all, he had not done wisely and well. But they were waiting for his song, and presently his voice, to which he owed so much, rang out clearly, though in subdued tones:—

"Give pardon to-night,
O God of the light!
For we are like children who wail in the shade,
Half afraid;
And look up to Thy face
For love, comfort, and grace.
Around Thee we gather—
Forgive us, our Father!

"The day breaks at last,
The shadows are past,
And we must go forward, pursuing our way

Through the day;
Go Thou where we go,
Thy will make us know,
And, all danger scorning,
Go forth to the morning."

"The morning is almost here," said Dallington.

"Would you not like to meet the year outside? It is a glorious night."

The scene in the garden was so beautiful that few words were spoken. It was as if the very world held its breath and listened. A silence fell on every one, for every heart was full of prayer. Margaret forgot all her guests for a few minutes, and slipped her hand within the arm of her husband. Miss Whitwell stood a little apart from the rest, thinking her own thoughts. Dr. Stapleton whispered to Miss Wythburn an old wish from Shakespeare—

"God give thee many days of happy years."

Arthur Knight repeated his own words:

"Give pardon to-night, O God of the light!"

Then the silence was so deep that it seemed almost as if their thoughts could be heard. Perhaps they were! Miss Whitwell softly whispered hers—"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; grant thee thy heart's desire, and fulfil all thy mind." Some irresistible power drew her eyes to where Arthur Knight was standing, looking perhaps the most sorrowfully of any of the party. He met her look, and a thought flashed into his mind that electrified him.

"Can it be possible! Did she really only care for Dallington as a cousin! What does it mean? Can it be?——"

With a sudden impulse of hope he stepped to her side.

"Grace," he said, "the old house in London is very solitary; and so is the heart of its owner, in Craighelbyl as well as in London."

"Oh, no, no!" she said. "How can you be solitary when you have been so honoured?"

"Grace, do you know that I love you, that I have loved you all the time, ever since I first knew you?"

Again she whispered, "Oh, no, no!" scarcely knowing what she said. But Arthur had put his arm around her, and could feel the beating of her heart. "Oh, my darling," he said, "is it possible that you can care for me? I had not dared to hope it! Is it really true that we may begin the year together—_together_?"

The first stroke of the Darentdale church clock struck through the silence of the night. Arthur drew the trembling girl more closely to him, and held her fast while the slow bell sounded twelve times. She tried to be perfectly still, and not even sigh forth the gladness that was almost breaking her heart; but when the clock ceased, and the bells pealed out, she lifted her eyes to his face for a moment, and he stooped and kissed her.

Then they remembered their friends, but no one seemed to have observed them. The old formula, "A Happy New Year!" was on the lips of all; but before it could be uttered some one began to sing the opening words of the _Te Deum_, and everybody sang with a full heart: "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting." Then dark forms were seen coming quietly towards them; and presently Dallington said to Knight, "They are the

people from the village; they have come over the hill to wish you a Happy New Year. Ah! the thousands who would like to do the same thing! How well they sing!” And indeed they did sing, joining in the anthem, as if every one was contrasting the joy of this New Year with the sorrows of past days, and feeling such joy and thankfulness as could only be expressed in praise to the Great Father. And that old grand psalm of the ages, sung in many an august scene, never thrilled with fuller meaning than now, when the stars looked down upon the singers, and the very air of the night seemed alive with human emotion. So the anthem swelled to its close—“O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded!”

THE END.

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2. P. 207, changed "was an ideal day for a holiday, not too hot to be pleasant" to "was an ideal day for a holiday, not too hot to be unpleasant".
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