

# The Hill of Trouble

By A. C. Benson

There was once a great scholar, Gilbert by name, who lived at Cambridge, and was Fellow of St. Peter's College there. He was still young, and yet he had made himself a name for learning, and still more for wisdom, which is a different thing, though the two are often confused. Gilbert was a slender, spare man, but well-knit and well-proportioned. He loved to wear old scholarly garments, but he had that sort of grace in wearing them that made him appear better apparelled than most men in new clothes. His hair was thick and curling, and he had small features clearly cut. His lips were somewhat thin, as though from determined thought. He carried his eyes a little wrinkled up, as though to spare them from the light; but he had a gracious look which he turned on those with whom he spoke; and when he opened his eyes upon you, they were large and clear, as though charged with dreams; and he had a very sweet smile, trustful and gentle, that seemed to take any that spoke with him straight to his heart, and made him many friends. He had the look rather of a courtier than of a priest, and he was merry and cheerful in discourse, so that you might be long with him and not know him to be learned. It may be said that he had no enemies, though he did not conceal his beliefs and thoughts, but stated them so courteously and with such deference to opposite views, that he drew men insensibly to his side. It was thought by many that he ought to go into the world and make a great name for himself. But he loved the quiet College life, the familiar talk with those he knew. He loved the great plenty of books and the discourse of simple and wise men. He loved the fresh bright hours of solitary work, the shady College garden, with its butts and meadows, bordered by ancient walls. He loved to sit at meat in the cool and spacious hail; and he loved too the dark high-roofed College Church, and his own canopied stall with the service-books in due order, the low music of the organ, and the sweet singing of the choir. He was not rich, but his Fellowship gave him all that he desired, together with a certain seemly dignity of life that he truly valued; so that his heart was very full of a simple happiness from day to day, and he thought that he would be more than content to live out his life in the peaceful College that he loved so well.

But he was ambitious too; he was writing a great book full of holy learning; and he had of late somewhat withdrawn himself from the life of the College; he sate longer at his studies and he was seen less often in other Colleges. Ten years he gave himself to finish his task, and he thought that it would bring him renown; but that was only a far-off dream, gilding his studies with a kind of peaceful glory; and indeed he loved the doing of his work better than any reward he might get for it.

One summer he felt he wanted some change of life; the sultry Cambridge air, so dry and low, seemed to him to be heavy and lifeless. He began to dream of fresh mountain breezes, and the sound of leaping streams; so at last he packed his books into a box, and set off a long journey into the hills of the West, to a village where an old friend of his was the priest, who he knew would welcome him.

On the sixth day he arrived at the place; he had enjoyed the journey; much of the time he had ridden, but he often walked, for he was very strong and active of body; he had delighted in seeing the places he had passed through, the churches and the towns and the castles that lay beside the way; he had been pleased with the simple friendly inns, and as his custom was had talked with all travellers that he met. And most of all he had loved, as he drew nearer the West,

to see the great green slopes of hills, the black heads of mountains, the steep wooded valleys, where the road lay along streams, that dashed among mossy boulders into still pools.

At last he came to the village which he sought, which lay with its grey church and low stone houses by a bridge, in a deep valley. The vicarage lay a little apart in a pleasant garden; and his friend the Vicar had made him greatly welcome. The Vicar was an old man and somewhat infirm, but he loved the quiet life of the country, and knew all the joys and sorrows of his simple flock. A large chamber was set apart for Gilbert, who ranged his books on a great table, and prepared for much quiet work. The window of the chamber looked down the valley, which was very still. There was no pattering of feet in the road, as there was at Cambridge; the only sounds were the crying of cocks or the bleating of sheep from the hill-pastures, the sound of the wind in the woods, and the falling of water from the hills. So Gilbert was well content.

For the first few days he was somewhat restless; he explored the valley in all directions. The Vicar could not walk much, and only crept to and fro in the town, or to church; and though he sometimes rode to the hills, to see sick folk on upland farms, yet he told Gilbert that he must go his walks alone; and Gilbert was not loth; for as he thus went by himself in the fresh air, a stream of pleasant fancies and gentle thoughts passed lightly through his head, and his work shaped itself in his brain, like a valley seen from a height, where the fields and farms lie out, as if on a map, with the road winding among them that ties them with the world.

One day Gilbert walked alone to a very solitary place among the bills, a valley where the woods grew thickly; the valley was an estuary, where the sea came up blue and fresh twice in the day, covering the wide sandbanks with still water that reflected the face of the sky; in the midst of the valley, joined with the hillside by a chain of low mounds, there rose a large round hill, covered with bushes which grew thickly over the slopes, and among little crags, haunted by hawks and crows. It looked a very solitary, peaceful hill, and he stopped at a farm beside the road to inquire of the way thither, because he was afraid of finding himself unable to cross the streams.

At his knock there came out an ancient man, with whom Gilbert entered into simple travellers' talk of the weather and the road; Gilbert asked him the name of the place, and the man told him that it was called the Gate of the Old Hollow. Then Gilbert pointing to the hill that lay in the midst, asked him what that was. The old man looked at him for a moment without answering, and then said in a low voice, "That, sir, is the Hill of Trouble." "That is a strange name!" said Gilbert. "Yes," said the old man, "and it is a strange place, where no one ever sets foot—there is a cruel tale about it; there is something that is not well about the place."

Gilbert was surprised to hear the other speak so gravely; but the old man, who was pleased with his company, asked him if he would not rest awhile and eat; and Gilbert said that he would do so gladly, and the more gladly if the other would tell him the story of the place. The old man led him within into a large room, with plain oak furniture, and brought him bread and honey and milk; and Gilbert ate, while the old man told him the legend of the Hill.

He said that long years ago it was a place of heathen worship, and that there stood a circle of stones upon it, where sacrifice was done; and that men, it was said, were slain there with savage rites; and that when the Christian teachers came, and the valley became obedient to the faith, it was forbidden the villagers to go there, and for long years it was desolate; but there had dwelt in the manor-house hard by a knight, fearless and rough, who regarded neither God nor man, who had lately wedded a wife whom he loved beyond anything in the world. And one day there was with the knight a friend who was a soldier, and after dinner, in foolish talk, the knight said that he would go to the Hill, and he made a wager on it. The knight's lady besought him not to go,

but he girded on his sword and went laughing. Now at the time, the old man said, there was much fighting in the valley, for the people were not yet subject to the English king, but paid tribute to their own Lords; and the knight had been one that fought the best. What the knight saw on the hill no one ever knew, but he came back at sundown, pale, and like a man that has been strangely seared, looking behind him as though he expected to be followed by something; and from that day he kept his chamber, and would not go abroad, or if he went out, he went fearfully, looking about him; and the English men-at-arms came to the valley, but the knight that had ever been foremost in the fight would not ride out to meet them, but kept his bed. The manor lay off the road, and he ordered a boy to lie in the copse beside the way, and to come up to the house to tell him if any soldiers went by. But a troop of horse came secretly over the hill; and seeing the place lie so solitary and deserted, and being in haste, they came not in, but one of them shot a bolt at a venture; but the knight, it seemed, must have stolen from his bed, and have been peeping through the shutters; for the knight's lady who sate below in sore shame and grief for her husband's cowardice, heard a cry, and coming up found him in his bedgown lying by the window, and a bolt sticking in his brain.

Her grief and misery were so sore at this, that she was for a time nearly mad; they buried the knight in secret in the churchyard; but the lady sate for many days speaking to no one, beating with her hand upon the table and eating little.

One day it seems that she had the thought to go herself to the Hill of Trouble, so she robed herself in haste, and went at early dawn; she went in secret, and came back at noon, smiling to herself, with all her grief gone; and she sate for three days thus with her hands folded, and from her face it was plain that there was joy in her heart; and on the third evening they found her cold and stiff in her chair, dead an hour since, but she was still smiling. And the lands passed to a distant kinsman. And since that day, said the old man, no one had ever set foot on the Hill, except a child not long since that strayed thither, and came back in a great fear, saying that he had seen and spoken with an old man, that had seemed to be angry, but that another person, all in white, had come between them, and had led him by the hand to the right road; it could not be known why the child was frightened, but he said that it was the way the old man looked, and the suddenness with which he came and went; but of the other he had no fear, though he knew him not. "And that, sir, is the tale."

Gilbert was very much astonished at the tale, and though he was not credulous, the story dwelt strongly in his mind. It was now too late to visit the Hill, even if he had wished; and he could not have so vexed the old man as to visit it from his house. He stood for awhile at the gate looking down at it. It was hot and still in the valley. The tide was out and the warm air quivered over the sandbanks. But the Hill had a stillness of its own, as though it guarded a secret, and lay looking out towards the sea. He could see the small crags upon it, in the calm air, and the bushes that grew plentifully all over it, with here and there a little green lawn, or a glade sloping down to the green fiat in which it stood. The old man was beside him and said in his shrill piping voice, "You are not thinking of going to the Hill, sir?" "Not now, at all events," said Gilbert, smiling. But the old man said, "Ah, sir, you will not go—there are other things in this world of ours, beside the hills and woods and farms; it would be strange if that were all. The spirits of the dead walk at noonday in the places they have loved; and I have thought that the souls of those who have done wickedness are sometimes bound to a place where they might have done good things, and while they are vexed at all the evil their hands have wrought, they are drawn by a kind of evil habit to do what they chose to do on earth. Perhaps those who are faithful can resist them—but it is ill to tempt them."

Gilbert was surprised at this wise talk from so simple a man; and he said, "How is it that these thoughts come into your mind?" "Oh, sir," said the other, "I am old and live much alone; and these are some of the thoughts that come into my head as I go about my work, but who sends them to me I cannot tell."

Then Gilbert said farewell, and would have paid for his meal, but the old man courteously refused, and said that it was a pleasure to see a stranger in that lonely place; and that it made him think more kindly of the world to talk so simply with one who was, he was sure, so great a gentleman.

Gilbert smiled, and said he was only a simple scholar; and then he went back to his vicarage house. He told the Vicar of his adventure, and the Vicar said he had heard of the Hill, and that there was something strange in the dread which the place inspired. Then Gilbert said, half impatiently, that it was a pity that people were so ridden by needless superstition, and made fears for themselves when there was so much in the world that it was well to fear. But the old Vicar shook his head. "They are children, it is true," he said, "but children, I often think, are nearer to heaven than ourselves, and perhaps have glimpses of things that it is harder for us to see as we get older and more dull."

But Gilbert made up his mind as they talked that he would see the place for himself; and that night he dreamed of wandering over lonely places with a fear upon him of he knew not what. And waking very early, after a restless night, and seeing the day freshly risen, and the dewy brightness of the valley, he put on his clothes in haste, and taking with him a slice of bread from the table, he set out blithely for the Hill, with an eagerness of spirit that he had been used to feel as a child.

He avoided the farm, and took a track that seemed to lead into the valley, which led him up and down through little nooks and pastures, till he came to the base of the Hill. It was all skirted by a low wall of piled stones covered with grey lichens, where the brambles grew freely; but the grass upon the Hill itself had a peculiar richness and luxuriance, as though it was never trodden or crushed underfoot. Gilbert climbed the wall, but the brambles clung to him as though to keep him back; he disentangled them one by one, and in a moment he found himself in a little green glade, among small crags, that seemed to lead to the top of the Hill. He had not gone more than a few paces when the pleasure and excitement died out of his mind, and left him feeling weary and dispirited. But he said to himself that it was his troubled night, and the walk at the unusual hour, and the lack of food; so he took out his bread and ate it as he walked, and presently he came to the top.

Then he suddenly saw that he was at the place described; in front of him stood a tall circle of stones, very grey with age. Some of them were flung down and were covered with bushes, but several of them stood upright. The place was strangely silent; he walked round the circle, and saw that it occupied the top of the Hill; below him were steep crags, and when he looked over he was surprised to see all down the rocks, on ledges, a number of crows that sate silent in the sun. At the motion he made, a number of them, as though surprised to be disturbed, floated off into the air, with loud jangling cries; and a hawk sailed out from the bushes and hung, a brown speck, with trembling wings. Gilbert saw the rich plain at his feet and the winding creek of the sea, and the great hills on left and right, in a blue haze. Then he stepped back, and though he had a feeling that it would be wiser not to go, he put it aside and went boldly into the circle of stones. He stood there for a moment, and then feeling very weary, sate down on the turf, leaning his back against a stone; then came upon him a great drowsiness. He was haunted by a sense that it was not well

to sleep there, and that the dreaming mind was an ill defence against the powers of the air—yet he put the thought aside with a certain shame and fell asleep.

He woke with a sudden start some time after; here was a chill in his limbs, not from the air which glowed bright in the steady sun, but a chill of the spirit that made his hair prickle in an unusual way. He raised himself up and looked round him, for he knew by a certain sense that he was not alone; and then he saw leaning against one of the stones and watching him intently, a very old and weary-looking man. The man was pale and troubled; he had a rough cloak such as the peasants wore, the hood of which was pulled over his head; his hair was white and hung about his ears; he had a staff in his hand. But there was a dark look about him, and Gilbert divined in some swift passage of the spirit that he did not wish him well. Gilbert rose to his feet, and at the same moment the old man drew near; and though he looked so old and feeble, Gilbert had the feeling that he was strong and even dangerous. But Gilbert showed no surprise; he doffed his hat to the old man, and said courteously that he hoped he had not wandered to some private place, where he ought not to be. "The heat was great, and I slept unawares," he said. The old man at first made no answer, and then said in a very low and yet clear voice, "Nay, sir, you are welcome. The Hill is free to all; but it has an evil name, I know, and I see but few upon it." Then Gilbert said courteously that he was but a passer-by, and that he must set off home again, before the sun was high. And at that the old man said, "Nay, sir, but as you have come, you will surely wait awhile and speak with me. I see," he added, "so few of humankind, that my mind and tongue are alike stiff with disuse; but you can tell me something of your world—and I," he added, "can tell you something of mine." Then there came suddenly on Gilbert a great fear, and he looked round on the tall stones of the circle that seemed to be like a prison. Then he said, "I am but a simple scholar from Cambridge, and my knowledge of the world is but small; we work," he said, "we write and read, we talk and eat together, and sometimes we pray." The old man looked at him with a sudden look, under his brows, as he said the words; and then he said, "So, sir, you are a priest; and your faith is a strong one and avails much; but there is a text about the strong man armed who is overcome of the stronger. And though the faith you teach is like a fort in an enemy's country, in which men may dwell safely, yet there is a land outside; and a fort cannot always hold its own." He said this in so evil and menacing a tone that Gilbert said, "Come, sir, these are wild words; would you speak scorn of the faith that is the light of God and the victory that overcometh?" Then the old man said, "Nay, I respect the faith—and fear it even," he added in a secret tone—"but I have grown up in a different belief, and the old is better—and this also is a little stronghold, which holds its own in the midst of foes; but I would not be disputing," he added—and then with a smile, "Nay, sir, I know what is in your mind; you like not this place—and you are right; it is not fit for you to set your holy feet in; but it is mine yet; and so you must even accept the hospitality of the place; you shall look thrice in my glass, and see if you like what you shall see." And he held out to Gilbert a small black shining thing. Gilbert would have wished to refuse it, but his courtesy bade him take it—and indeed he did not know if he could have refused the old man, who looked so sternly upon him. So he took it in his hand. It was a black polished stone like a sphere, and it was very cold to the touch—so cold that he would fain have thrown it down; but he dared not. So he said with such spirit as he could muster, "And what shall I see beside the stone?—it seems a fair and curious jewel—I cannot give it a name." "Nay," said the old man sharply, "it is not the stone; the stone is naught; but it hides a mystery. You shall see it in the stone."

And Gilbert said, "And what shall I see in the stone?" And the old man said, "What shall be."

So Gilbert looked upon the stone; the sun shone upon it in a bright point of light—and for an instant he saw nothing but the gleaming sides of the ball. But in a moment there came upon him a dizziness like that which comes upon a man who, walking on a hill-top, finds himself on the edge of a precipice. He seemed to look into a great depth, into the dark places of the earth—but in the depth there hung a mist like a curtain. Now while he looked at it he saw a commotion in the mist; and looking closer, he saw that it seemed to be something waving to and fro that drove the mist about; and presently he saw the two arms of a man; and then the mist parted, and he saw the figure of a man standing and waving with his arms, like a man who would fan smoke aside; and the smoke fled from the waving arms and rolled away; and the man stepped aside.

Then Gilbert looked beyond, and he saw a room with a low ceiling and a mullioned window; and he knew it at once for his room in St. Peter's College. There were books on the table; and he saw what seemed like himself, risen to his feet, as though at a sound; and then he saw the door open and a man come in who made an obeisance, and the two seemed to talk together, and presently Gilbert saw the other man pull something from a cloth and put it in his own hands. And the figure of himself seemed to draw near the window to look at the thing; and though it was all very small and distant, yet Gilbert could see that he held in his hands a little figure that seemed a statue. And then the mist rolled in again and all was hid.

He came to himself like a man out of a dream, he had been so intent on what appeared; and he saw the hill-top and the circle of stones, and the old man who stood watching him with a secret smile upon his face. Then Gilbert made as though he would give the stone back, but before he could speak, the old man pointed to the stone again—and Gilbert looked again and saw the deep place, and the cloud, and the man part the cloud.

Then he saw within a garden, and he knew it at once to be the garden of St. Peter's; it seemed to be summer, for the trees were in leaf. He saw himself stand, carrying something in his hand, and looking at a place in the garden wall. There was something on the wall, a patch of white, but he could not see what it was; and beneath it there stood a small group of men in scholars' dress who looked upon the wall, but he could not see their faces; but one whom he recognised as the Master of the College stood with a stick in his hand, and pointed to the white patch on the wall—and then something seemed to run by, a cat or dog, and all at once the cloud flowed in over the picture; and again he came to himself and saw the hill-top, and the stones, and the old man, who had drawn a little nearer, and looked at him with a strange smile. And again he pointed to the stone; and Gilbert looked again and saw the cloud work very swiftly and part, and the man who swept the clouds off came forth for an instant, and then was lost to view.

And Gilbert saw a very dark place, with something long and white, that glimmered faintly, lying in the midst; and he bent down to look at it, but could not discern what it was. Then he saw in the darkness which surrounded the glimmering thing some small threads of dusky white, and some small round things; and he looked at them long; and presently discerned that the round things were pebbles, and that the white threads were like the roots of trees; and then he perceived that he was looking into the earth; and then with a sickly chill of fear he saw that the long and glimmering thing was indeed the body of a man, wrapped in grave-clothes from head to foot. And he could now distinguish—for it grew more distinct—the sides of a coffin about it, and some worms that moved to and fro in their dark burrows; but the corpse seemed to shine with a faint light of its own—and then he could see the wasted feet, and the thin legs and arms of the body within; the hands were folded over the breast; and then he looked at the face; and he saw his own face, only greatly sunk and fallen, with a bandage that tied up the chin, and leaden eyes; and then the clouds swept in upon it; and he came to himself like a drowning man, and saw that

he was in the same place; and his first thought was a thrill of joy to know that he was alive; but then he groaned aloud, and he saw the old man stand beside him with a very terrible look upon his face, holding out his hand for the stone in silence; so Gilbert gave him back the stone, and then with a fierce anger said, "Why have you shown me this? for this is the trickery of hell." And the old man looked at him very sternly and said, "Why then did you come to this place? You were not called hither, and they that pry must be punished. A man who pulls open the door which leads from the present into the future must not be vexed if he sees the truth—and now, sir," he added very angrily, "depart hence in haste; you have seen what you have seen." So Gilbert went slowly from the circle, and very heavily, and as he stepped outside he looked back. But there was nothing there but the turf and the grey stones.

Gilbert went slowly down the Hill with a shadow upon him, like a man who has passed through a sudden danger, or who has had a sudden glimpse into the dark realities of life. But the whole experience was so strange and dreamlike, so apart from the wholesome current of his life, that his fears troubled him less than he had supposed; still, a kind of hatred for the quiet valley began to creep over him, and he found himself sitting long over his books, looking down among the hills, and making no progress. If he was not silent when in company with the old Vicar, it was because he made a strong effort, and because his courtesy came to his assistance. Indeed the old Vicar thought that he had never known Gilbert so tender or thoughtful as he had been in the last week of his visit. The truth was that it was an effort to Gilbert to talk about himself, and he therefore drew the old priest on to talk about the details of his own life and work. Thus, though Gilbert talked less himself, he was courteously attentive, so that the old man had a sense that there had been much pleasant interchange of feeling, whereas he had contributed the most of the talk himself. Gilbert, too, found a great comfort in the offices of the Church in these days, and prayed much that, whatever should befall him, he might learn to rest in the mighty will of God for himself, whatever that will might be.

Soon after this he went back to Cambridge, and there, among his old friends and in his accustomed haunts, the whole impression of the vision on the Hill of Trouble grew faint and indistinct, especially as no incident occurred to revive it. He threw himself into his work, and the book grew under his hands; and he seemed to be more eager to fill his hours than before, and avoided solitary meditation.

Some three years after the date of his vision, there was announced to him by letter the advent of a great scholar to Cambridge, who had read one of Gilbert's books, and was desirous to be introduced to him. Gilbert was sitting one day in his rooms, after a happy quiet morning, when the porter came to the door and announced the scholar. He was a tall eager man, who came forward with great friendliness, and said some courteous words about his pleasure at having met one whom he was so desirous to see. He carried something in his hand, and after the first compliments, said that he had ventured to bring Gilbert a little curiosity that had lately been dug up at Rome, and which he had been fortunate in securing. He drew off a wrapper, and held out to Gilbert a little figure of a Muse, finely sculptured, with an inscription on the pedestal. Gilbert stepped to the window to look at it, and as he did so it flashed across his mind that this was surely the scene that he had observed in the black stone. He stood for a moment with the statue in his hand, with such a strange look in his face, that the new-corner thought for an instant that his gift must have aroused some sad association. But Gilbert recovered himself in a moment and resolutely put the thought out of his mind, praised the statue, and thereupon entered into easy talk.

The great scholar spent some days at Cambridge, and Gilbert was much with him. They talked of learned matters together, but the great scholar said afterwards that though Gilbert was a man of high genius and of great insight into learning, yet he felt in talking with him as though he had some further and deeper preoccupation of thought.

Indeed when Gilbert, by laying of dates together, became aware that it was three years to a day since he had seen the vision in the stone, he was often haunted by the thought of his visit to the Hill. But this lasted only a few days; and he took comfort at the thought that he had seen a further vision in the stone which seemed at least to promise him three more peaceful years of unchanged work, before he need give way to the heaviness that the third vision had caused him. Yet it lay like a dark background in his thoughts.

He kept very much to his work after this event, and became graver and sterner in face, so that his friends thought that his application to study was harmful. But when they spoke of it to Gilbert, he used to say laughingly that nothing but work made life worthy, and that he was making haste; and indeed the great book grew so fast that he was within sight of the end. He had many wrestles within himself, about this time, as to the goodness and providence of God. He argued to himself that he had been led very tenderly beside the waters of comfort, that he had served God as faithfully as he could—and indeed he had little to reproach himself with, though he began to blame himself for living a life that pleased him, and for not going about more in the world helping weak brethren along the way, as the Lord Christ had done. Yet again he said to himself that the great doctors and fathers of the Church had deemed it praiseworthy that a man should devote all the power of his brain to making the divine oracle clear, and that the apostle Paul had spoken of a great diversity of gifts which could he used faithfully in the service of Christ. Still, he reflected that the truest glimpse into the unknown that he had ever received—for he doubted no longer of the truth of the vision—had come to him from one that was, he thought, outside the mercies of God, an unhallowed soul, shut off by his own will and by his wickedness from the fold; and this was a sore burden to him.

At last the book was done; and he went with it to a friend he had at Oxford, a mighty scholar, to talk over some difficult passages. The opinion of the scholar had been cordial and encouraging; he had said that the book was a very great and sound work, useful for doctrine and exhortation, and that many men had given their whole lives to work without achieving such a result. Gilbert had some of the happiness which comes to one who has completed a lengthy task; and though the time drew nigh at which he might expect a further fulfilment of the vision, he was so filled with gratitude at the thought of the great work he had done, that there was little fear or expectation in his mind.

He returned one summer afternoon to Cambridge, and the porter told him that the Master and several of the Fellows were in the garden, and would fain see him on his arrival. So Gilbert, carrying a little bundle which contained his precious book, went out there at once. The Master had caused to be made a new sundial, which he had affixed in such a way to the wall that those whose chambers gave on the garden could read the time of day without waiting to hear the bells.

When Gilbert came out he saw the little group of Fellows standing by the wall, while the Master with a staff pointed out the legend on the dial, which said that the only hours it told were the hours of sunshine. It came upon Gilbert in a moment that this was the second vision, and though two or three of the group saw him and turned to him with pleasant greetings, he stood for a moment lost in the strangeness of the thing. One of them said, "He stands amazed at the novelty of the design;" and as he said the words, an old gray cat that belonged to the College, and lodged somewhere in the roofs, sprang from a bush and ran past him. One of the Fellows

said, "Aha, cats do not love change!" and then Gilbert came forward, and greeted his friends; but there lay a cold and terrible thought in the background of his mind, and he could not keep it out of his face; so that one of the Fellows, drawing him aside, asked if he had a good verdict on the book, for he seemed as one that was ill-pleased. And the Master, fearing that Gilbert did not like the dial, came and said to him courteously that he knew it was a new-fangled thing, but that it was useful, and in itself not unpleasant, and that it would soon catch a grace of congruity from the venerable walls around. "But," he added, "if you do not like it, it shall be put in some other place." Then Gilbert bestirred himself and said that he liked the dial very well, so that the Master was content.

But Gilbert, as soon as he was by himself, delivered his mind up to heavy contemplation; the vision had twice fulfilled itself, and it was hardly to be hoped that it would fail the third time. He sent his book to be copied out fair, and when it was gone it was as though he had lost his companion. The hours passed very slowly and drearily; he wrote a paper, to fill the time, of his wishes with regard to what should be done with his books and little property after his death, and was half minded to tear it up again. And then after a few days of purposeless and irresolute waiting, he made up his mind that he must go again to the West, and see his friend the old priest. And though he did not say it to himself in words, yet a purpose slowly shaped itself in his mind that he must at all cost go to the Hill, and learn again what should be, and that thus alone could he break the spell.

He spent a morning in making his farewells; he tried to speak to his friends as usual, but they noticed long afterwards that he had used a special tenderness and wistfulness in all he said; he sate long in his own room, with a great love in his heart for the beautiful and holy peace of the place, and for all the happiness he had known there; and then he prayed very long and earnestly in the chapel, kneeling in his stall; and his heart was somewhat lightened.

Then he set off; but before he mounted his horse he looked very lovingly at the old front of the College, and his servant saw that his eyes were full of tears and that his lips moved; and so Gilbert rode along to the West.

His journey was very different from the same journey taken six years before; he spoke with none, and rode busily, like one who is anxious to see some sad errand through. He found the old Vicar still more infirm and somewhat blind but the Vicar said that he was very happy to see him, as he himself was near the end of life, and that he could hope for but few years,—adding that it was far different for Gilbert, who, he supposed, would very soon be a Dean with a Cathedral of his own, and would forget his humble friend the old Vicar. But Gilbert put the wit aside, and talked earnestly with the Vicar about the end of life and what might be hereafter. But the old Vicar said solemnly that he knew not, and indeed cared little. But that he would go into the dark like a child holding a loving hand, and would have no need to fear.

That night Gilbert lay in his bed awake, and very strange thoughts passed through his mind, which he strove to quiet by prayers; and so fell asleep; till at last in the dim dawn he awoke. Then after a moment's thought he took a paper and wrote on it, saying that he was gone out and knew not when he would return; but he prayed the Vicar that when he should find the paper, he should at once fall to prayer for him, for there was a sore conflict before him to fight out, both in soul and body, and what would be the issue he knew not. "And if," the end of the writing ran, "I must depart hence, then pray that my passage may be easy, and that I may find the valley bright." And he laid the paper upon the table. Then he dressed himself, and went out alone into the valley, walking swiftly and intently—so intently that when he passed the farm he marked not that

the old farmer was sitting in an arbour in the garden, who called shrilly to him; but Gilbert heard not, and the old farmer was too weak to follow; so Gilbert went down to the Hill of Trouble.

It lay, as it had lain six years before, very still and beautiful in the breathless sunshine. The water was in the creek, a streak of sapphire blue; the birds called in the crags, and the bushes and lawns glistened fresh with dew.

But Gilbert, very pale and with his heart beating fast, came to the wall and surmounted it, and went swiftly up the Hill, till he found himself near the stones; then he looked once round upon the hills and the sea, and then with a word of prayer he stepped within the circle.

This time he had not long to wait. As he entered the circle he saw the old man enter from the opposite side and come to meet him, with a strange light of triumph in his eyes. Then Gilbert looked him in the face with a rising horror, and said, "Sir, I have come again; and I doubt the truth of your vision no longer; I have done my work, and I have twice seen the fulfilment—now therefore tell me of my end—that I may be certified how long I have to live. For the shadow of the doubt I cannot bear."

And the old man looked at him with something of compassion and said, "You are young, and you fear the passage hence, knowing not what may be on the other side of the door; but you need not fear. Even I, who have small ground of hope, am ashamed that I feared it so much. But what will you give me if I grant your boon?"

Then Gilbert said, "I have nothing to give."

Then the old man said, "Think once more. Then was there a silence; and Gilbert said;

"Man, I know not what or who thou art; but I think that thou art a lost soul; one thing I can give thee. . . . I will myself intercede for thee before the Throne."

Then the old man looked at him for a moment, and said, "I have waited long . . . and have received no comfort till now;" and then he said, "Wilt thou promise?"

And Gilbert said, "In the name of God, Amen."

Then the old man stretched out his hand and said, "Art thou ready? for the time is come; and thou art called now;" and he touched Gilbert on the breast.

Gilbert looked into the old man's eyes, and seemed to see there an unfathomable sadness, such as he had never seen; but at the touch a pain so fierce and agonising passed through him, that he sank upon the ground and covered his face with his hands.

Just at this time the old priest found the paper; and he divined the truth. So he called his servant and bade him saddle his horse in haste; and then he fell to prayer.

Then he rode down the valley; and though he feared the place, yet he rode to the Hill of Trouble; and though his sight was dim and his limbs feeble, it seemed to him that some one walked beside the horse and guided him; and as he prayed he knew that all was over, and that Gilbert had peace.

He came soon to the place; and there he found Gilbert lying on the turf; and his sight was so dim that it seemed to him as though some one slipped away from Gilbert's side. He put Gilbert on his horse, and held the poor helpless body thereon, but there was so gentle a smile on the face of the dead that he could not fear.

The body of Gilbert lies in the little churchyard his great book keeps his memory bright; and on the top of the Hill of Trouble stands a little chapel, built out of the stones of the circle; and on the wall, painted at the old priest's charge, is a picture of the Lord Christ, with wounded hands and side, preaching to the disobedient spirits in prison; and they hear him and are glad.