

The Gates Between

By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

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If the narrative which I am about to recount perplex the reader, it can hardly do so more than it has perplexed the narrator. Explanations, let me say at the start, I have none to offer. That which took place I relate. I have had no special education or experience as a writer; both my nature and my avocation have led me in other directions. I can claim nothing more in the construction of these pages than the qualities of a faithful reporter. Such, I have tried to be.

It was on the twenty-fifth of November of the year 187—, that I, Esmerald Thorne, fell upon the event whose history and consequences I am about to describe.

Autobiographies I do not like. I should have been positive at any time during my life of forty-nine years that no temptation could drag me over that precipice of presumption and illusion which awaits the man who confides himself to the world. As it is the unexpected which happens, so it is the unwelcome which we choose. I do not tell this story for my own gratification. I tell it to fulfill the heaviest responsibility of my life. However I may present myself upon these pages is the least of my concern; whether well or ill, that is of the smallest possible consequence. Touching the manner of my telling the story, I have heavy thoughts; for I know that upon the manner of the telling will depend effects too far beyond the scope of any one human personality for me to regard them indifferently. I wish I could. I have reason to believe myself the bearer of a message to many men. This belief is in itself enough, one would say, to deplete a man of paltry purpose. I wish to be considered only as the messenger, who comes and departs, and is thought of no more. The message remains, and should remain, the only material of interest.

Owing to some peculiarities in the situation, I am unable to delegate, and do not see my way to defer, a duty—for I believe it to be a duty—which I shall therefore proceed to perform with as little apology as possible. I must trust to the gravity of my motive to overcome every trifling consideration in the mind of my readers; as it has solemnly done in my own.

In order to give force to my narrative, it will be necessary for me to be more personal in some particulars than I could have chosen, and to revert to certain details of my early history belonging to that category which people of my profession or temperament are wont to dismiss as “emotional.” I have had strange occasion to learn that this is a deep and delicate word, which can never be scientifically used, which cannot be so much as elementally understood, except by delicacy and by depth. These are precisely the qualities of which this is to be said,—he who most lacks them will be most unaware of the lack.

There is a further peculiarity about such unconsciousness; that it is not material for education. You can teach a man that he is not generous, or true, or able. You can never teach him that he is superficial, or that he is not fine.

I have been by profession a physician; the son of a chemist; the grandson of a surgeon; a man fairly illustrative of the subtler significance of these circumstances; born and bred, as the children of science are;—a physical fact in a world of physical facts; a man who rises, if ever, by miracle, to a higher set of facts; who thinks the thought of his father, who does the deed of his father’s father, who contests the heredity of his mother, who shuts the pressure of his special education like a clasp about his nature, and locks it down with the iron experience of his calling.

It was given to me, as it is not given to all men of my kind, to know a woman strong enough—and sweet enough—to fit a key unto this lock.

Strong enough *or* sweet enough, I should rather have said. The two are truly the same. The old Hebrew riddle read well, that “out of strength shall come forth sweetness.” There is the lioness behind the rarest honey.

Like others of my calling, I had seen the best and the worst and the most of women. The pathological view of that complex subject is the most unfortunate which a man can well have. The habit of classifying a woman as neuralgic, hysteric, dyspeptic, instead of unselfish, intellectual, high-minded, is not a wholesome one for the classifier. Something of the abnormal condition of the *clientele* extends to the adviser. A physician who has a healthy and natural view of women has the making of a great man in him.

I was not a great man. I was only a successful doctor; more conscious in those days of the latter fact, and less of the former, be it admitted, than I am now. A man’s avocation maybe at once his ruin and his exculpation. I do not know whether I was more self-confident or even more willful than other men to whom is given the autocracy of our profession, and the dependence of women which accompanies it. I should not wish to have the appearance of saying an unmanly thing, if I add that this dependence had wearied me.

It is more likely to be true that I differed from most other men in this: that in all my life I have known but one woman whom I loved, or wished to make my wife. I was forty-five years old before I saw her.

Who of us has not felt at the Play, the strong allegorical power in the coming of the first actress before the house? The hero may pose, the clown dance, the villain plot, the warrior, the king, the merchant, the page, fuddle the attention for the nonce: it is a dreary business; it is like parsing poetry; it is a grammatical duty; the Play could not, it seems, go on without these superfluties. We listen, weary, regret, find fault, and acquire an aversion, when lo! upon the monotonous, masculine scene, some slender creature, shining, all white gown and yellow hair and soft arms and sweet curves comes gliding—and, hush! with the Everwomanly, the Play begins.

I do not think this feeling is one peculiar to our sex alone; I have heard women express the same in the strongest terms.

So, I have sometimes thought it is with the coming of the Woman upon the stage of a man’s life. If the scenes have shifted for a while too long, monopolized by the old dismal male actors whose trick and pose and accent he knows so well and understands too easily,—and if, then, half-through the drama, late and longed-for, tardily and splendidly, comes the Star, and if she be a fine creature, of a high fame, and worthy of it,—ah, then look you to her spectator. Rapt and rapturous she will hold him till the Play is done.

So she found me—held me—holds me. The best of it, thank God, is the last of it. So, I can say, she holds me to this hour, where and as we are.

It was on this wise. On my short summer vacation of that year from which I date my happiness, and which I used to call The Year of my Lady, as others say The Year of Our Lord, I tarried for a time in a mountain village, unfashionable and beautiful, where my city patients were not likely to hunt me down. Fifty-three of them had followed me to the seashore the year before, and I went back to town a harder-worked man than I left it. Even a doctor has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of a vacation, and that time I struck out for my rights. I cut adrift—denied my addresses even to my partner—and set forth upon a walking tour alone, among the hills. Upon one point my mind was made up: I would not see a sick woman for two weeks.

I arrived at this little town of which I speak upon a Saturday evening. I remember that it was an extraordinary evening. Thunder came up, and clouds of colors such as I found remarkable. I am not an adept in describing these things, but I remember that they moved me. I went out and followed the trout-brook, which was a graceful little stream, and watched the pageant in the skies above the tops of the forest. The trees on either side of the tiny current had the look of souls regarding each other across a barrier, so solemn were they. They stood with their gaze upon the heavens and their feet rooted to the earth, and seemed like sentient creatures who know why this was as it was.

I, walking with my eyes upon them, feet unguarded, and fancy following a cloud or rose-color that hung fashioned in the outline of a mighty wing above me, caught my foot in a gnarled old hickory root and fell heavily. When I tried to rise I found that I was considerably hurt.

I was a well, vigorous man, not accustomed to pain, which took a vigorous form with me; and I was mortified to find myself quite faint, too much so even to disturb myself over the situation, or to wonder who would be likely to institute a searching-party for me,—a stranger, but an hour since, registered at the hotel.

With that ease which I condemned so hotly in my patients I abandoned myself to the physical pang, got back somehow against the hickory, and closed my eyes; devoid even of curiosity as to the consequences of the accident; only “attentive to my sensations,” as a great writer of my day put it. I had often quoted him to nervous people whom I considered as exaggerating their sufferings; I did not recall the quotation at that moment.

“Oh! you are hurt!” a low voice said.

I was a bit fastidious in voices at that time of my life. To say that this was the sweetest I had ever heard would not express what I mean. It was the *dearest* I had ever heard. From that first moment,—before I saw her face,—drowned as I was in that wave of mean physical agony, given over utterly to myself I knew; and to myself I said: “It is the dearest voice in all this world.”

A woman on the further side of the trout-brook stood uncertain, pitifully regarding me. She was not a girl,—quite a woman; ripe, and self-possessed in bearing. She had a beautiful head, and bright dark hair; her head was bare, and her straw mountain-hat hung across one arm by the strings. She had been bathing her face in the water, which was of a pink tint like the wing above it. As she stood there, she seemed to be shut in and guarded by, dripping with, that rose-color,—to inhale it, to exhale it, to be a part of it, to be it. She looked like a blossom of the live and wonderful evening.

“You are seriously hurt,” she repeated. “I must get to you. Have patience; I will find a way. I will help you.

The bridge was at some distance from us, and the little stream was brawling and strong.

“But it is not deep,” she said. “Do not feel any concern. It will do me no harm.” As she spoke, she swung herself lightly over into the brook, stepping from stone to stone, till these came to an abrupt end in the current. There, for an instant poised, but one could not say uncertain, she hung shining before me—for her dress was white, and it took and took and took the rose-color as if she were a white rose, blushing. She then plunged directly into the water, which was knee-deep at least, and waded straight across to me.

As she climbed the bank, her thick wet dress clinging to her lovely limbs, and her hands outstretched as if in hurrying pity, I closed my eyes again before her. I thought, as I did so, how much exquisite pleasure was like perfect pain.

She climbed the bank and stooped from her tall height to look at me; knelt upon the moss, and touched me impersonally, like the spirit that she seemed.

“You are very wet!” I cried. “The water is cold. I know these mountain brooks. You will be chilled through. Pray get home and send me—somebody.”

“Where are you hurt?” she answered, with a little authoritative wave of the hand, as if she waved my words away. She had firm, fine hands.

“I have injured the patella—I mean the knee-pan,” I replied. She smiled indulgently. She did not take the trouble to tell me that my lesson in elementary anatomy was at all superfluous. But when I saw her smile I said:—

“That was unconscious cerebration.”

“Why, of course,” she answered, nodding pleasantly.

“Go home,” I urged. “Go and get yourself out of these wet things. No lady can bear it; it will injure you.” She lifted her head,—I thought she carried it like a Greek,—and regarded me with her wide, grave eyes. I met hers firmly, and for a moment we considered each other.

“It is plain that you are a doctor,” she said lightly, with a second smile. “I presume you never see a well woman; at least—believe you see one now I shall mind this wetting no more than if I were a trout or a gray squirrel. I am perfectly able to give you whatever help you require. And by your leave, I shall not go home and get into a dry dress until I see you properly cared for. Now! Can you step? Or shall I get a wagon, and a farm-hand? I think we could back a horse down almost to this spot. But it would take time. So?—Will you try it? Gently. Slowly. Don’t *let* me hurt you, or blunder. I see that you are in great pain. Don’t be afraid to lean on me. I am quite strong. I am able. If you can crawl a few steps”—

Steps! I would have crawled a few miles. For she put her sweet arms about me as simply and nobly as if I had been a wounded child; and with such strength of the flesh and unconsciousness of the spirit as I had never beheld in any woman, she did indeed support me out of the forest in such wise that my poor pain of the body became a great and glorified fact, for the joy of soul that I had because of her.

It had begun to be easy, in my day, to make a mock at many dear and delicate beliefs; not those alone which pertain to the life eternal, but those belonging to the life below. The one followed from the other, perhaps. That which we have been accustomed to call love was an angel whose wings had been bruised by our unbelieving clutch. It was not the fashion to love greatly. One of the leading scientists of my time and of my profession had written: “There is nothing particularly holy about love.” So far as I had given thought to the subject, I had, perhaps, agreed with him. It is easy for a physician to agree to anything which emphasizes the visible, and erases the invisible fact. If there were any one form of the universal delusion more than all others “gone out” in the days of which I speak, it was the dear, old-fashioned delirium called loving at first sight. I was never exactly a scoffer; but I had mocked at this fable as other men of my sort mock,—a subject for prophylactics, like measles or scarlet fever; and when you said that, you had said the whole. Be it, then, recorded, be it admitted, without let or hindrance, that I, Esmerald Thorne, physician and surgeon, forty-five years old, and of sane mind, did love that one woman, and her only, and her always, from the moment that my unworthy eyes first looked into her own, as she knelt before me on the moss beside the mountain brook,—from that moment to this hour.

Thus half in perfect poetry, part in simplest prose, opened the first canto of that long song which has made music in me; which has made music of me, since that happy night. Of the countless words which we have exchanged together in times succeeding, these, the few of our first meeting are carved upon my brain as salutations are carved in stone above the doorways of mansions. He that has loved as I did, may say why this should be so, if he can. I cannot. Time and storm beat against these inscriptions, and give them other coloring,—the tints of years and

weather; but while the house lasts and the rock holds the salutation lives. In most other matters, the force of recurring experience weakens association. He who loves cherishes the first words of the beloved as he cherishes her last.

The situation was simple enough: an injured man and a lovely woman, guests of the same summer hotel; a slow recovery; a leisurely sweet acquaintance; the light that never was on hill or shore; and so the charm was wrought. My accident held me a prisoner for six weeks. But my love put me in chains in six minutes.

Her name was Helen; like her of old

“Who fired the topmost towers of Ilium.”

I liked the stately name for her, for she was of full womanhood,—thirty-three years old; the age at which the French connoisseur said that a charming woman charmed the most.

Upon the evening before we parted, I ventured—for we sat at the sheltered end of the piazza, away from the patterers and chatterers, a little by ourselves—to ask her a brave question. I had learned that one might ask her anything; she had originality; she was not of the feminine pattern; she had no paltriness nor pettiness in her thoughts; she looked *out*, as men do, upon a subject; not *down*, as women are wont. She was a woman with whom a man could converse. He need not adapt himself and conceal himself and play the part of a gallant at real matters which were above gallantry. He could confide in her. Now it was new to me to consider that I could confide in any person. In my calling, one becomes such a receptacle of human confidence,—once soaks up other people’s lives till one becomes a great sponge, absorptive and absorbing forever, as sponges should. Who notices when the useful thing gets too full? That is what it is there for. Pour on—scalding hot, or freezing cold, or pure or foul—pour away. If one day it refuses to absorb any more, and lies limp and valueless—why, the Doctor has broken down; or the Doctor is dead. Who ever thought anything could happen to the *Doctor*? One thing in the natural history of the sponge is apt to be overlooked. When the process of absorption reaches a certain point, let the true hand touch the wearied thing, and grasp it in the right way, and lo! back rushes the instinct of confidence, *out*, not in.

Something of this sort had happened to me. The novelty of real acquaintance with a woman who did not need me had an effect upon me which perhaps few outside of my profession can understand. This woman truly needed nothing of me. She had not so much as a toothache or a sore throat. If she had cares or troubles they were her own. She leaned upon me no more than the sunrise did upon the mountain. She was as radiant, as healthful, as vivid, and as calm; she surrounded me, she overflowed me like the color of the air. Nay, beyond this it was I who had need; it was she who ministered. It was I who suffered the whims and longings of weakness,—the thousand little cravings of the sick for the well. It was I who learned to know that I have never known the meaning of what is called “diversion.” I learned to suspect that I had yet to learn the true place of sympathy in therapeutics. I learned, in short, some serious professional lessons which were the simplest human ones.

But the question that I spoke of was on this wise. It did not indeed wear the form, but she gave it the hospitality, of a question.

“I wish I knew;” I said, “why you have not married. I wish you thought me worthy to know.”

“The whole world might know;” she answered, with her sweet straightforward look.

“And I, then, as the most unworthy part of it?” For my heart sank at the terms upon which I was admitted to the answer.

“I have never seen any man whom I wished to marry. I have no other reason.”

“Nor I,” I said, “a woman”—And there I paused. Yes, precisely there, where I had not meant to; for she gave me a large, grave look, upon which I could no more have intruded than I could have touched her.

This was in September. The year had made the longest circuit of my life before I gathered the courage to finish that sentence, broken by the weight of a delicate look; before I dared to say to her:—

“Nor I a woman—until now”

I hope I was what we call “above” the petty masculine instinct which values a woman who is hard to win chiefly for that circumstance. Perhaps I was not as I thought myself. But it seemed to me that the anguish of wooing in doubt overcame all paltry sense of pleasure in pursuit of my delight. My thoughts of her moved like slow travelers up the sides of a mountain of snow. That other feeling would have been a descent to me. So wholly did she rule my soul—how could I stoop to care the more for hers, because she was beyond my reach?

Be this as it flay, beyond my reach for yet another year she did remain. Gently as she inclined toward me, to love she made no haste. The force of my feeling was so great at times, it seemed incredible that hers did not rush to meet me like part of the same incoming wave broken by a coast island and joining—seemingly two, but in reality one—upon the shoreward side. For the first time in my life, in that rising tide of my great love, I truly knew humility. My unworthiness of her was more present with me even than my longing for her. If I could have scourged my soul clear of all unfitness for her as our Saviour was said to have scourged the tradesmen out of the Temple, I should have counted myself blessed, even though I never won her; though I beat out my last hope of her with the very blows which I inflicted upon myself.

In the vibrations of my strong emotion it used to surprise me that my will was such a cripple against the sensibilities of that delicate creature. I was a man of as much will as was naturally good for me; and my training had made it abnormal like a prize—fighter’s bicipital muscle. People of my profession need some counter-irritant, which they seldom get, to the habit of command. To be the ultimate control for a *clientèle* of a thousand people, to enforce the personal opinion in every matter from a broken constitution to a broken heart, deprives a man of the usual human challenges to an athletic will. In his case, if ever, motion follows least resistance. His will-power grows by a species of pommeling; not by the higher tactics of wrestling.

But I, who gave the fiat on which life or death hung poised as unhesitatingly as I controlled the fluctuations of an influenza; and I, to whom the pliability of the feminine will had long since become an accepted and somewhat elemental fact, like the nature of milk-toast; I, Dr. Thorne, who had the habit of success, who expected to make his point, who was accustomed to receive obedience, who fought death or hysteria, an opposing school or a tricky patient, with equal fidelity, as one who pursues the avocation of life,—I stood, conquered before this slender woman whose eyes, like the sword of flame, turned this way and that, guarding the barred gates of the only Eden I had ever chosen to enter.

In short, for the first time in my life I found myself a suppliant; and I found myself thus and there for the sake of a feeling.

It was not for science’ sake, it was not for the sake of personal fame, or for the glory of an idea, or for the promulgation of a discovery. I had not been overcome upon the intellectual side of my nature. I had been conquered by an emotion. I had been beaten by a thing for which, all my life, I had been prescribing as confidently as I would for a sprain. Medical men will understand me and some others may, when I say that I experienced surprise to come face to face at last, and in this

unanswerable personal way, with an invisible, intangible power of the soul and of the body, which could not be treated as “a symptom.”

I loved her. That was enough, and beyond. I loved her. That was the beginning and end. I loved her. I found nothing in the *Materia Medica* that could cure the fact. I loved her. Science gave me no explanation of the phenomenon. I did not love her scientifically. I loved her terribly.

I was a man of middle-age, and had called myself a scientist and philosopher. I had thought, if ever, to love soberly and philosophically. Instead of that, I loved as poets sing, as artists paint, as the statues look, as the great romances read, as ideals teach,—as the young love.

As the young do? Nay. What young creature ever loved like that?

They know not love who sip it at the spring.
Youth is a fragile child that plays at love,
Tosses a shell, and trims a little sail,
Mimics the passion of the gathered years,
And is a loiterer on the shallow bank
Of the great flood that we have waited for.

I do not think of any other thing which a man cannot do better at forty, than at twenty. Why, then, should he not the better love?

My lady had a stately soul; but she gave it sweet graciousness and little womanly appeals and curves, that were to my heart as the touch of her hand was to my pulse. I was so happy in her presence that I could not believe I had ever been sad; and I longed so for her in absence that I could scarcely believe I had become happy. She was to my thoughts as the light is to the crystal. She came into my life as the miracles came to the unbelieving. She moved through my days and through my dreams, as the rose-cloud moved upon the mountain sky. She floated between me and my sick. She hovered above me and my dying. She was a mist between me and my books. Once when I took the knife for a dangerous operation, the steel blade caught a sunbeam and flashed; and I looked at the flash—it seemed to contain a new world—and I thought: “She is my own. I am a happy man!” But I was sorry for my patient. I was not rough with him. And the operation succeeded.

What is to be said? I loved her. Love is like faith. He who has it understands before you speak. But to him who has it not, it cannot be explained.

A year from the time of my most blessed accident beside the trout-brook,—in one year and two months from that day, upon a warm and wonderful September afternoon, my lady and I were married, and I brought her from her mother’s house to the mountain village where first we saw each other, There we spent the first week of our happiness. It was as near to Eden as we could find. The village was left almost to its own rare resources; the summer tourists were well—nigh gone; the peaceful roads gave no stare of intrusion to our joy. The hills looked down upon us and made us feel how high love was. The forest inclosed us, and made us understand that love was large. The holiness of beauty was the hostess of our delight. Oh, I had won her! She was my wife. She was my own. She loved me.

If I cherished her as my own soul, what could I give her back, who had given herself to me?

I said, “I will make you the happiest woman who was ever beloved by man upon this earth.”

“But you *have*,” she whispered, lifting her dear face. “It is worth being alive for, if it came to an end to-morrow.”

“Love has no end,” I cried. “Happiness *is* life. It cannot die. It has an immortal soul. If ever I flake you sad, if I am untender to you,—may God strike me”—

“Hush,” she cried, clinging to me, and closing my lips with a kiss for which I would have died; “Hush, love! hush!”

It ought to be said, at this point in my story, that I had never been what would be called an even-tempered man. Truth to tell, I was a spoiled boy. My mother was a saint, but she was a soft-hearted one. My father was a scholar. Like many another boy of decided individuality, I came up anyhow. Nobody managed me. At an early age my profession made it my duty to manage everybody else. I had a nervous temperament to start on; neither my training nor my occupation had poised it. I do not think I was malicious nor even ill-natured. As men go, I was perhaps a kind man. The thing which I am trying to say is, that I was an irritable one.

As I look back upon the whole subject I can see, from my present point of view; that this irritability had seldom struck me as a personal disadvantage. I do not think it usually makes that impression upon temperaments similarly vitiated. As nearly as I can remember I thought of myself rather as the possessor of an eccentricity, than as the victim of a vice. My father was an overworked college professor,—a quick-tempered man; my mother,—so he told me with streaming tears, upon the day that he buried her,—my mother never spoke one irritated word to him in all her life: he had chafed and she had soothed, he had slashed and she had healed, from the beginning to the end of their days together. A boy imitates for so many years before he reflects, that the liberty to say what one felt like saying appeared to me a mere identification of sex long before it occurred to me that mine might not be the only sex endowed by nature with this form of expression. I regarded it as one regards a heard, or a waistcoat,—simple signs of the variation of species.

My mother—Heaven rest her sweet soul—did not, that I recall, obviously oppose me in this view. After the time of the first moustache she obeyed her son, as she had obeyed her husband.

As has been already said, the profession to which I felt heir failed to recommend to me a different personal attitude toward the will of others. My sick people were my pawns upon the chess-board of life. I played my game with humane intentions, not wholly, I believe, with selfish ones. But I suffered the military dangers of character, without the military apologies for them. He whose duty to God and men requires him to command all with whom he comes in contact should pray God, and not expect men, to have mercy on his soul.

It is possible, I do not deny, that I put this view of the case without what literary critics call “the light touch.” It is quite possible that I emphasize it. Circumstances have made this natural; and if I need any excuse for it I must seek it in them. Whether literary or not, it is not human to cherish a light view of a heavy experience.

I loved my wife. This I think, I have sufficiently made plain. I loved her as I might have discovered a new world; and I tried to express this fact, as I should have learned a new; unworldly language. I could no more have spoken unkindly to her than I could vivisect a humming-bird. I obeyed her lightest look as if she had given me an anesthetic. Her love intoxicated me. I seemed to be the first lover who had ever used this phrase. My heart originated it, with a sense of surprise at my own imaginative quality. I was chloroformed with joy. Oh, I loved her! I return to that. I find I can say nothing beyond it. I loved her as other people love,—patients, and uninstructed persons. I, Esmerald Thorne, President of the State Medical Society, and Foreign Correspondent of the National Evolutionary Association, forty-six years old, and a Darwinian,—I loved my wife like any common, ardent, unscientific fellow.

It is easy to toss words and a smile at it all, now, There have been times when either would have been impossible from very heartbreak. There, again, is another of the phrases to which experience has been my only vocabulary. My patients used to talk to me about their broken hearts. I took the temperature and wrote a prescription. I added that she would be better tomorrow; I would call again in a week. I assured her that I understood the case. I was as well fitted to diagnose the diseases of the Queen of some purple planet which the telescope has not yet given to astronomy.

I have said that I found it impossible to be irritable to my dear wife. I cannot tell the precise time when it became possible. When does the dawn become the day upon the summer sky? When does the high tide begin to turn beneath the August moon? Rather, I might say, when does the blue become the violet, within the prism? Did I love her the less, because the distance of the worshiper had dwindled to the lover's clasp?

I could have shot the scoffer who told me so. What then? What shall I call that difference with which the man's love differs when he has won the woman? Had the miracle gone out of it? God forbid.

It was no longer the marvel of the fire come down from heaven to smite the altar. It was the comfortable miracle of the daily manna. Had my goddess departed from her divinity, my queen from her throne, my star from her heaven? Rather, in becoming mine she had become myself and if there were a loss, that loss was in my own nature. I should have risen by reason of hers. If I descended, it was by force of my own gravitation. Her wing was too light to carry me.

It is easier to philosophize about these things than it is to record them in cold fact. With shame and sorrow do I say it, but say it I must: My love went the way of the love of other men who feel (this was and remains the truth) far less than I. I, who had believed myself to love like no other before me, and none to come after me, and I, who had won the dearest woman in all the world—I stooped to suffer myself to grow used to my blessedness, like any low man who was incapable of winning or of wearing it.

It cannot be said, it shall not be said, that I loved my wife less than the day I married her. It must be written that I became accustomed to my happiness.

That ideal of myself which my ideal of her created in me, and which no emergency of fate could have shaken, slipped in the old, fatal quicksand of use. Our ideal of ourselves is to our highest life like the heart to the pulsation. It is the divinest art of the love of woman for man that she clasps him to his vision of himself as breath and being are held together.

Until the time mentioned at the beginning of my narrative, I had in no sense appreciated the state of the case, as it lay between my ideal and my fact. That I had been more or less impatient of speech in my own home for some time past, is probably true. The ungoverned lip is a terrible master; and I had been a slave too long. I was in the habit of finding fault with my patients. I was accustomed to be what we call "quick" with servants. Neither had, I thought, as a rule, seemed to care the less for me on this account. If I lost a patient or a coachman now and then, I could afford to. The item did not trouble me. I was inconsiderate at times with personal friends. They said, It is his way, and bore with me. People usually bore with me; they always had. I looked upon this as one of the rights of temperament, so far as I looked upon it at all. I do not think this indulgence had occurred to me as other than a tribute. It is common enough in dealing with men of my sort. (And, alas, there are enough of my sort; I must be looked upon rather as a type than a specimen.) Such indulgence is a movement of self-defense, or else of philosophy, upon the part of those who come in contact with us. To this view of the subject I had given no attention.

I had lived to be almost fifty years old, and no person had ever said to me: 'Esmerald Thorne, you trust your attractive qualities too far. Power and charm do not give a man a permit to be disagreeable. Your temperament does not release you from the commonplace human duty of self-restraint. A gentleman has no more right to get uncontrollably angry than he has to get drunk. The patience with which others receive you is not a testimony to your strength; it is a concession to your weakness. You are living upon concessions like disease, or childhood, or age.

No one had said this—surely not my wife. I can recall an expression of bewilderment at times upon her beautiful face, which for the moment perplexed me. After I had gone out, I would remember that I had been nervous in my manner. I do not think I had ever spoken with actual roughness to her, until this day of which I write. That I had been sometimes cross enough, is undoubtedly the case.

On that November day I had been overworked. This was no novelty, and I offer it as no excuse. I had been up for two nights with a dangerous case. I had another in the suburbs, and a consultation out of town. There was a quarrel at the hospital, and a panic in Stock Street. I had seen sixty patients that day. I had been attacked in the "Therapeutic Quarterly" upon my famous theory of Antisepsis. Perhaps I may add the circumstance that my baby was teething.

This was, naturally, less important to me than to his mother, who thought the child was ill. I knew better, and it annoyed me that my knowledge did not remove her apprehension. In point of fact, he had cried at night for a week or two, more than he ought to have done. She could not understand why I denied him a Dover's powder. I needed sleep, and could not get it. We were both worn, and—I might fill my chapter to the brim with the little reasons for my great error. Let it suffice that they were small and that it was large.

We had been married three years, and our boy was a year old. He was a fine fellow Helen lost her Greek look and took on the Madonna expression after he was born. Any woman who is fit to be a mother gains that expression with her first child. My wife was a very happy mother.

She was sitting in the library when I came in that evening. It was a warm, red library, with heavy curtains and an open fire—a deep room that absorbed color. I fancied the room, and it was my wife's pleasure to await me in it with the child each evening at the earliest hour when I might by any chance be expected home. She possessed to the full the terrible power of waiting which women have. Although three years married, she could not read, or write, or play when she was listening for my step. I do not mean that she told me this. I found it out. She never called my attention to such little feminine weaknesses. She was never over-fond. My wife had a noble reserve. I had never seen the hour when I felt that her tenderness was a treasure to be lightly had, or indifferently treated.

It should be said that the library opened from the parlors, and was at that time separated from them by a heavy portière of crimson stuff, the doors not being drawn. This drapery she was in the habit of folding apart at the hours of my probable return, and as I came through the long parlors my eyes had the first greeting of her, before my voice or arms. Upon this evening, as upon others, I entered by the parlor door, and came—more quickly than usual—toward the library. I was in a great hurry; one of the acute attacks of the chronic condition which besets the busy doctor. As I crossed the length of the thick carpet, the rooms shook beneath my tread; I burst into, rather than entered, the library,—not seeing her, I think, or not pausing to see her, in the accustomed manner. When I had come to her I found that the child was not with her, as usual. She was sitting alone by the library table under the drop-light, which held a shade of red lace. She had a gown of white wool trimmed with ermine; a costume which gave me pleasure, and which she wore upon

cool evenings, not too often for me to weary of it. She regarded my taste in dress as delicately and as delightedly as she did every other wish or will of mine.

She had been trying to read; but the magazine lay closed upon her knee below her folded hands. Her face wore an anxious look as she turned the fine contours of her head toward me.

“Oh,” she cried, “at last!”

She moved to reach me, swiftly, murmuring something which I did not hear, or to which I did not attend; and under the crimson curtains met me, warm and dear and white, putting up her sweet arms.

I kissed her carelessly—would to God that I could forget it! I kissed her as if it did not matter much, and said:—

“Helen, I must have my dinner this instant!”

“Why, surely,” she said, retreating from me with a little shock of pained surprise. “It is all ready, Esmerald. I will ring.”

She melted from my arms. Oh, if I had known, if I had known! She stirred and slipped and was gone from me, and I stood stupidly looking at her; her figure, against the tall, full book—cases, shone mistily, while she touched the old-fashioned bell-rope of gold cord.

“Really, I hadn’t time to come home at all,” I added testily. “I am driven to death. I’ve got to go again in ten minutes. But I supposed you would worry if I didn’t show myself. It is a foolish waste of time. I don’t know how I am ever going to get through. I wish I hadn’t come.

4

She changed color—from fair to flush, from red to white again—and her hand upon the gold cord trembled. I remembered it afterward, though I was not conscious of noticing it at the time.

“You need not,” she replied, in her low; controlled voice, “on my account. You need never come again.”

“It is easier to come,” I answered, irritably, “than to know that you sit here making yourself miserable because I don’t.”

“Have I ever fretted you about coming, Esmerald? I did not know it.

“It would be easier if you did fret!” I cried crossly. “I’d rather you’d *say* a thing than look it. Any man would.”

Indeed, it would have been a paltry satisfaction to me just then if I could have found her to blame. Her blamelessness irritated my self-complacence as the light irritates defective eyes.

“I am due at the hospital in twenty-two minutes,” I went on, excitedly. “Chirurgeon is behaving like Apollyon. If I’m not there to handle him, nobody will. The whole staff are afraid of him—everybody but me. We shan’t get the new ward built these two years if he carries the day to-night. I’ve got a consultation at the Decker’s—the old lady is dying. It’s no sort of use dragging a tired man out there; I can’t do her any good; but they will have it. I’m at the beck and call of every whim. Isn’t that dinner ready? I wish I had time to change my boots! They are wet through. My head aches horribly. Brake telegraphed me to get down to Stock Street before two o’clock to save what is left of that Santa Ma stock. I couldn’t go. I had an enormous office—forty people. I’ve lost ten thousand dollars in this panic. I’ve got to see Brake on my way to Decker’s. I lost a patient this morning—that little girl of the Harrowhart’s. She was a poor little scrofulous thing. But they are terribly cut up about it.... Chowder? I wish you’d had a good clear soup. I don’t feel as if I could touch chowder. I hope you have some roast beef better than the last. You mustn’t let Parsnip cheat you. Quail? There’s no nourishment in a quail for a man in my state.

The gas leaks. Can't you have it attended to? Hurry up the coffee. I must swallow it and go. I've got more than ten men could do."

"It is more than one woman can do"—she began gently, when I came to the end of this outbreak and my breath together.

"What did you say? Do speak louder!"

"I said it seems to be more than one woman can do, to rest you.

"Yes," I said carelessly, "it is. You can't do the first thing for me, except to do me the goodness to ring for a decent cup of coffee. I can't drink this."

"Esmerald"—

"Oh, what? I can't stop to talk. There, I've burned my tongue, now. If there's anything I can't stand, it is going to a consultation with a burned tongue."

"How tired you are, Esmerald! I was only going to say that I am sorry. I can't *let* you go without saying that."

"I can't see that it helps it any. I am so tired I don't want to be touched. Never mind my coat. I'll put it on myself. Tell Joe—no. I left the horse standing. I don't want Joe. I suppose Donna is uneasy by this time. She won't stand at night—she's *got to*. I'll get that whim out of her. Now; don't look that way. The horse is safe enough. Don't you suppose I know how to drive? You're always having opinions of your own against mine. There. I must be off."

"Where's the baby, Helen?" I turned, with my hand upon the latch of my heavy oaken door, and jerked the question out, as cross men do.

"The baby isn't just right, somehow; Esmerald. I hated to bother you, for you never think it is anything. I dare say he will be better, but I thought I wouldn't let him come out of the nursery. Jane is with him. I've been a *little* troubled about him. He has cried all the afternoon:"

"He cries because you coddle him!" I exploded. "It is all nonsense, Helen. Nothing ails the child. I won't encourage this sort of thing. I'll see him when I come home. I can't possibly wait—I am driven to death—for every little whim"—

But at the door I stopped. If the baby had been a patient he would have seen no doctor that night. But the father in me got the better of me, and without a word further to my wife I ran up to the nursery.

She stayed below; she perceived (Helen was always quick), although I had not said so, that I did not wish her to follow me. I examined the child hastily. The little fellow stopped crying at the sight of me, and put up both arms to be taken. I said:—

"No, Boy. Papa can't stop now;" and put him gently back into his crib. When I had reached the nursery door I remember that I returned and kissed him. I was very angry, but I could not be angry with my baby. With the touch of his little lips dewy and sweet, upon mine, I rushed down to my wife and tempestuously began again:—

"Helen, I must have an end to this nonsense. Nothing ails the baby; he is only a trifle feverish with a new tooth. It really is very unpleasant to me that you make such a fuss over him. If you had married a greengrocer it might have been pardonable. Pray remember that you have married a physician who understands his business, and do leave me to manage it. Take the child out of the nursery. Carry him downstairs as usual for a few minutes. He will sleep better. There! I'm eight minutes behindhand already, all for this senseless anxiety of yours. It is a pity you can't trust me, like other men's wives! I wish I'd married a woman with a little wifely spirit!—or else not married at all."

I shut the door; I am afraid I slammed it. I cleared the steps at a bound, and ran fiercely out into the night air, The wind was rising, and the weather was growing sharp. It was frosty and noisy.

Donna, my chestnut mare, stood pawing the pavement in high temper, and called to me as she heard my step. She had dragged at her weight a little; she was thoroughly displeased with the delay. It occurred to me that she felt as I had acted. It even occurred to me to go back and tell my wife that I was ashamed of myself.

I turned and looked in through the parlor windows. The shades were up, and the gas was low. Dimly beyond, the bright panel of the lighted library arose between the crimson curtains. She stood against it, mid way between the two rooms. Her hands had dropped closed one into the other before her. Her face was toward the street. She seemed to be gazing at me, whom she could not see. Her white dress, which hung in thick folds, the pallor of her face and her delicate hands, gave her the look of a statue; its purity, and to my fancy at that moment its permanence. She seemed to be carved there, like something that must stay.

I turned to go back—yes, I would have gone. It is little enough for a man to say for himself under circumstances like these; but perhaps I may be allowed to say it, since to exculpate myself is the last of my motives. I had made a step or two up the flagging between the deep grass-plots that fronted the house, when the mare, disturbed beyond endurance at a movement of delay which she too well understood, gave a shrill whinny, and reared, pulling and dragging at her weight fiercely. She was a powerful creature, and the weight yielded, hitting at her heels. In an instant she had cramped the wheels, and I saw that the buggy would go over. To spring back, reach the bit, snatch the reins, leap over the wheel, and whirl away in the reeling carriage was the work of something less than a thought; it was the elemental instinct by which a man must manage his horse, come life or death.

Like most doctors, I was something of a horseman, and the ideal of being thwarted by any of Donna's whims had never occurred to me. I knew that the horse was pulling hard, but beyond that, I could not be said to have knowledge, much less fear; the mad conflict between the brute and the man possessed me to the exclusion of intelligence.

It was some moments before it struck me that my own horse was running away with me.

My first, perhaps I may say my only emotion at the discovery was one of overpowering rage.

I did not mean to strike her. No driver, even if an angry one, would have done that. But I had the whip in my hand, around which the reins were knotted for the struggle, and when the horse broke into a gallop the jerk gave her a flick. I was not in the habit of whipping her. She felt herself insulted. It was now her turn to be angry; and an angry runaway means a bad business. Donna put down her head, struck out viciously from behind, and kicked the dasher flat. From that moment I lost all control of her.

I thought:—

“She is headed down town. At this rate, in five minutes she will be in the thick of travel. I have so many minutes more.”

For how long I cannot tell, I had beyond this no other intelligent idea. Then I thought:—

“I should not like to be the man who has got to tell Helen.” This repeated itself dully: “I should not care to be the fellow who will be sent to tell Helen.”

I had ceased to call to the mare; it only made matters worse; but there was great hubbub in the streets as we leaped on. There were several attempts to head her off, I think. One man caught at her bridle. This frightened her; she threw him off, and threw him down. I think she must have hurt him. We were now well down town. Window lights and carriage lights flared by deliriously. The wind, which was high, at speed like that seemed something demoniac. I remember how much it added to my sense of danger. I remember that my favorite phrase occurred to me:—

“I am driven to death.”

Suddenly I saw approaching an open landau. The street was full of vehicles, some of which I was sure to run down; but none of them seemed to give me concern except this one carriage. It contained a lady and a little boy, patients of mine. I recognized them forty feet away. He was a pretty little fellow, and she was fond of me; sent for me for everything; trusted me beyond reason; could not live without her doctor—that kind of patient. She had been a great sufferer. It seemed infernal to me that it should be *they*.

I shouted to her coachman:—

“Henry! For God’s sake—to the left! To the *left!*”

But Henry stared at me like one struck dead. I thought I heard him say:—

“Marm, it’s the *doctor!*” and after that I heard no more. As the crash came, I saw the woman’s face. She had recognized me with her look of sweet trustfulness; it froze to mortal horror. She clasped the child. I saw his cap come off from his yellow curls, and one little hand tossed out as the landau went over.

The mare, now mad as any maniac, ran on.

Something had broken, but it mattered little what. I think we turned a corner. I think she struck a lamp-post or a tree. At all events, the buggy went over; and, scooped into the top, and dragged, and blinded, and stunned, I came to the ground.

As I went down, I uttered the two words of all that are human, most solemn; perhaps, one may add, most automatic. Believer or skeptic, saint or sinner, we find that mortal danger hurls them from us, as it wrests the soul from out our bodies.

I said, “*My God!*” precisely as I threw out my arms, to catch at whatever could hold me when I could no longer hold myself.

5

How long I had lain stunned upon the pavement I had no means of knowing; I thought not long. I was surprised, on coming to myself to find that my injuries were not more severe.

My head felt uncomfortable, and I had a certain numbness or stiffness, as one does from the first trial of long-disused limbs. I had always limped a trifle since that accident beside the trout—brook; and, as I staggered to my feet, I thought:—

“This will play the mischief with that old injury. I shouldn’t wonder if it came to crutches.”

On the contrary, when I had walked some dozen steps I found that an interesting thing had happened. The shock had dispersed the limp.

It was with a perfectly even and natural gait, although, as I say, rather a weak one, that I trod the pavement to try what manner of man the runaway had left me. I said:—“It is one of those cases of nervous rearrangement. The shock has acted like a battery upon the nerve—centres. Instead of a broken neck, I have a cured leg. I’m a lucky fellow.”

Having already, however, considered myself a lucky fellow for the greater part of my life, this conclusion did not impress me with the force which it might some other men; and, laughing lightly, as lucky people do, at fortune, I turned to examine the condition of my horse and carriage.

Donna was not to be seen. She had broken the traces, the breeching, the shafts, everything, in short, she could, and cleared herself. I had been unconscious long enough to give her time to flake herself invisible, and she had made the most of it; in what direction she had gone, it was impossible for me to tell. The buggy was a wreck. No one was in sight who seemed to have interest or anxiety in the matter. I wondered that I did not find myself the victim of a gaping

crowd. But I reflected that the mishap had taken place in a quiet dwelling street, not traveled at that hour, and that my fate, therefore, had attracted no attention. I remembered, too, my patient, Mrs. Faith, and her boy, and that dolt of a Henry's helpless face—the whole thing came to mind, vividly. It occurred to me that the crowd might be at the scene of an accident so terrible that no loafer was left to regard my lesser misfortune. It was they who had been sacrificed. It was I who escaped.

My first thought was to go at once and learn the worst; but I found myself a little out of my way. I really did not recognize the street in which I stood. I had been for so many years accustomed to driving everywhere that, like other doctors, I hardly knew my way back to the great thoroughfare where I had collided with Mrs. Faith's carriage, no trace of the tragedy was to be found; or at least I could not find any. After looking in vain, for a while, I stopped a man, and asked him if there had not been a carriage accident there within half an hour. He lifted his eyes to me stupidly, and went on. I put the same question to some one else—a lazy fellow; who was leaning against an iron railing and staring at me. But he shook his head decidedly.

A young priest passed by, at this moment, saying an Ave with moving lips and unworldly eyes, and I made inquiries of him whether a lady and a child had just been injured in that vicinity by a runaway.

“Nay,” he said, gazing at me with a luminous look. “Nay, I see nothing.”

After an instant's hesitation the priest made the sign of the cross both upon himself and me; and then stretched his hands in blessing over me, and silently went his way. I thought this very kind in him; and I bowed, as we parted, saying aloud:—“Thank you, Father,” for my heart was touched, despite myself at the manner of the young devotee.

It had surely been my intention, on failing to find any traces of the accident in the spot where I supposed that it had taken place, to go at once to the house of Mrs. Faith, and inquire for her welfare and the boy's. It was the least I could do, under the circumstances.

Apparently, however, I myself was more shaken than I had thought; for after my brief interview with the priest I speedily lost my way, and could not find my patient's street or number. I searched for it for some time confusedly; but the brain was clearly still affected by the concussion—so much so that it was not long before I forgot what I was searching for, and went my ways with a dim and idle purpose, such as must accompany much of the action of those in whom the relation between mind and body has become, for any cause, disarranged.

After an interval—how long I cannot tell—of this suspended intelligence, my brain grew more clear and natural, and I remembered that I was very late at the hospital, at the consultation, at Brake's, at every appointment of the evening; so late that my accustomed sense of haste now began to possess me to the exclusion of everything else. I remembered by wife, indeed, and wondered if I had better go back and tell her that I was not hurt. But it did not strike me as necessary. Donna, if she had not broken her neck somewhere, by this time, would run straight for the stable; she would not go home. The buggy was a wreck, and the police might clear it away. There was no reason to suppose that Helen would hear of the accident, that I could see, from any source. There would be no scare. I had better go about my business, and tell her when I got home. News like this would keep an hour or two, and everybody the better for the keeping.

Reasoning in this manner, if it can be said to be reasoning, I took my way to the hospital as fast as possible. I did not happen to find a cab; and I gave myself the unusual experience of hailing a horse-car. The car did not stop for my signal, and I flung myself aboard as best I might; for a man so recently shaken up, with creditable ease, I thought.

Trusting to this circumstance, when we reached the hospital I leaped from the car, which was going at full speed; it was not till I was well up the avenue that I recalled having forgotten to offer my fare, which the conductor had omitted to demand.

“My head is not straight yet,” I said. The little incident annoyed me. In the hospital I found, as I expected, a professional cyclone raging. The staff were all there, except myself and so hotly engaged in discussion that my arrival was treated with indifference. This was undoubtedly good for me, but it was not, therefore, agreeable to me; and I entered at once with some emphasis upon the dispute in hand.

“You are entirely wrong,” I began, turning upon my opponents. “This institution had seven hundred more applicants than it could accommodate last year. We are not chartered to turn away suffering. We exist to relieve it. It is our business to find the means to do so, as much as it is to find the true remedy for the individual case. It is”—

“It is an act of financial folly,” interrupted my most systematic professional enemy, a certain Dr. Gazell. He had a bland voice which irritated me like sugar sauce put upon horse-radish. “It cannot be done without mortgaging ourselves up to our ears—or our eaves. I maintain that the hospital can better bear to turn off patients than to turn on debt.”

“And I maintain,” I cried, tempestuously, “that this hospital cannot bear to do either! If the gentlemen gathered here to-night—the members of this staff representing as they do, the wealthiest and most influential *clientèles* in the city—if we cannot among us pledge from our patients the sum needed to put this thing through, I say it is a poor show for ourselves. I, for one, am ready to raise fifteen thousand dollars within three months. If the rest of you will do your share in proportion”—

“Dr. Thorne has always been a little too personal, in this matter,” said Gazell, reddening; he did not look at me, for embarrassment, but addressed the chairman of the meeting with a vague air of being in earnest, if any one could be got to believe it.

“No doubt about that,” said one of the staff in an undertone. “Thorne is”—I thought I caught the added words, “unreasonable fellow;” but I would not give myself the appearance of having done so.

“But we can’t afford to quarrel with him altogether,” suggested Chirurgeon, still in a tone not meant for me to overhear. And with this they went at it again, till the discussion reached such warmth, and the motion to leave the subject with the trustees such favor, that, in disgust, I seized my hat and strode out of the room.

Smarting, I rushed away from them, and angrily out-of-doors again. I was exceedingly angry; but this gave me no more, perhaps (though I thought, a little), than the usual discomfort.

From the hospital I hurried to the consultation; where I was now well over-due. I found the attendant physician about to leave; in fact, I met him on the stairs, up which I had run rapidly, as soon as my ring was answered in the familiar house. This man was followed by old Madam Decker’s daughter, who was weeping.

“She died at six o’clock, Dr. Halt,” Miss Decker sobbed, “at six precisely, for I noticed. We didn’t expect it so soon.”

“Nor I, either,” said Halt, soothingly. “I did not anticipate”—

“Dead!” I cried. “Mrs. Decker dead? I did my best—I have met with an accident. I could not come till now. Did she ask for me?”

“She talked of Dr. Thorne,” sobbed Miss Decker, “as long as she could talk of anything. She wondered if he knew; she said, how sick she was.”

I hastened to explain, to protest, to sympathize, to say the idle words with which we waste ourselves and weary mourners, at such times; but the daughter paid little attention to me. She was evidently hurt at my delay; and, thinking it best to spare her my presence, I bowed my head in silence, and left the house.

Halt followed me, and we stood together for a moment outside, where his carriage and driver awaited him.

“Was she conscious to the end?” I asked.

“Yes,” he murmured. “Yes, yes, yes. It is a pity. I’m sorry for that girl.”

Nodding shortly in my direction, he sprang into his coupé, and drove away.

I had now begun to be very restless to get home. It seemed suddenly important to see Helen. I felt, I knew not why, uneasy and impatient, and turned my steps toward town.

“But I must stop at Brake’s,” I thought. This seemed imperative; so much so that I went out of my course a little, to reach his house, a pretty, suburban place. I remember passing under trees; and the depth of their shadow; it seemed like a bay of blackness into which the night flowed. I looked up through it at the sky; stars showed through the massed clouds which the wind whipped along like a flock of titanic celestial creatures. I had not looked up before, since the accident. The act gave me strange sensations, as if the sky had lowered, or I had risen; the sense of having lost the usual scale of measurement. This reminded me that I was still not altogether right.

“I have really hurt my head,” I thought, “I ought to get home. I must hurry this business with Brake. I must get to Helen.”

But Brake was not at home. As I went up the steps, his servant was ushering out some one, to whom I heard the man say that Mr. Brake had left word not to expect him to-night.

“Does he ever stay late at the office?” I asked, thinking that the panic might render this possible.

The man turned the expressionless countenance of a well-trained servant upon me; and repeated:—

“Mr. Brake is not at home. I know nothing further about Mr. Brake’s movements.”

This reply settled the matter in my own mind, and I made my way to Stock Street as fast as I might. I could not make it seem unnecessary to see Brake. But Helen—Helen—The sooner this wretched detention was over, the sooner to see her. I had begun to be as nervous as a woman; and, I might add, as unreasonable as a sick one. I had got myself under the domination of one of those fixed ideas with which I had so little patience in the sick. I could not see Helen till I had seen Brake: this was the delusion. I succumbed to it, and knew that I succumbed to it, and could not help it, and knew that I could not help it, and did the deed it bade me. As I hurried on my way, I thought:—

“There has been considerable concussion. But Helen will take care of me. It’s a pity I spoke so to Helen.”

Stock Street, when I reached it, had a strange look to me. I was not used to being there at such an hour; few of us are. The relative silence, the few passers, the long empty spaces on the great thoroughfare, told me that the hour was later than I thought. This added to my restlessness, and I sought to look at my watch, for the first time since the accident; it was gone. I glanced at the high clock at the head of the street; but the light was imperfect, and with the vertigo which I had I did not make out the hour. It might, indeed, be really late. This troubled me, and I hastened my steps till I broke into a run.

It occurred to me, indeed, that I might be arrested for the suspicions under which such a pace, at such an hour and on such a street, would place me. But as I knew most of the members of the

force in that region more or less well, this did not trouble me. I ran on, undisturbed, passing a watchman or two, and came quickly to Brake's place. It was locked.

This distressed me. I think I had confidently expected to find him there. It did not seem to me possible to go home without seeing my broker. I stood, uncertain, rattling at the heavy door with imbecile impatience. This act brought the police to the spot in three minutes.

It was Inspector Drayton who came up, the well-known inspector, so long on duty in Stock Street; a man famed for his professional shrewdness and his gentlemanly manner.

"I wish," I said, "Mr. Inspector, that you would be good enough to let me in. I want to see Brake. I have reason to believe he is in his office. I must get in."

"It is very important," I added; for the inspector did not answer immediately, but looked at me searchingly.

"There was certainly some one meddling with this lock," he said, after a moment's hesitation, looking stealthily up and down and around the street.

"It was I," I replied, eagerly. "It was only I, Dr. Thorne. Come, Drayton, you know me. I want to see Brake. I must see Brake. It is a matter brought up by this panic—you know—the Santa Ma. He sent for me. I absolutely must see Brake. It is a matter of thousands to me. Let me in, Mr. Inspector."

"Come," for he still delayed and doubted, "let me in somehow. You fellows have a way. Communicate with his watchman—do the proper thing—anyhow—I don't care—only let me in.

"I will see," murmured the inspector, with a perplexed air; he had not his usual cordial manner with me, though he was still as polished as possible, and wore the best of kid gloves. I think the inspector touched one of their electric signals—I am not clear about this—but at any rate, a sleepy watchman came from within, holding a safety lantern before him, and gingerly opened the huge door an inch or two.

"Let me come in," said the inspector, decidedly. "It is I—Drayton. I have a reason. I wish to go to Mr. Brake's rooms, if you please."

The inspector slipped in like a ghost, and I followed him. Neither of us said anything further to the watchman; we went directly to Brake's place. He was not there.

"I will wait a few minutes," I said. "I think he will be here. I must see Brake."

The inspector glanced at me as one does at a fellow who is behaving a little out of the common course of human conduct; but he did not enter into conversation with me, seeing me averse to it. I sank down wearily upon Brake's biggest brown leather office chair, and put my head down upon his table. I was now thoroughly tired and confused. I wished with all my heart that I had gone straight home to Helen. The inspector and the watchman busied themselves in examining the building, for some purpose to which I paid no attention. They conversed in low tones. "I heard a noise at the door, sir, myself," the watchman said.

"Why don't you tell him it was I?" I called; but I did not lift my head. I was too tired to trouble myself I must have fallen into a kind of stupor.

I do not know how long I had remained in this position and condition, whether minutes or hours; but when at last I roused myself and looked about, a singular thing had happened.

The inspector had gone. The watchman had gone. I was alone in the broker's office. And I was locked in.

So often and so idly it is out custom to say, I shall never forget! that the words scarcely cause a ripple of comment in the mind; whereas, in fact, they are among the most audacious which we ever take upon our lips. How know we what law of selection our memories will obey in that system of mental relations which we call "forever"?

I, who believe myself to have obtained some especial knowledge upon this point, not possessed by all my readers, and to be more free than many another to use such language, still retreat before the phrase, and content myself with saying, "I have never forgotten." Up to this time I have never been able to forget the smallest detail of that night whose history I am now to record. It seems to me impossible in any set of conditions that memory could blot that experience from my being; but of that, what know I? No more than I know of the politics of a meteor.

Upon discovering my predicament I was, of course, greatly disturbed. I tried the door, and tried again; I urged the latch violently; I exerted myself till the mere moral sense of my helplessness overcame my strength. I called to the watchman, whose distant steps I heard, or fancied that I heard, pacing the corridors. There was a Safe Deposit in the basement, and the great building was heavily guarded. I shouted for my liberty, I pleaded for it, I demanded it; but I did not get it. No one answered me. I ran to the barred windows and shook the iron casement as prisoners and madmen do. Nobody heard me. I bethought me of the private telegraph which stood by Brake's desk, mute and mysterious, like a thing that waited an order to speak. I could not help wondering, with something like superstition, what would be the next words which would pass the lips of the silent metal. It occurred to me, of course, to telegraph for relief but I did not know how and a kind of respect for the intelligence and power of the instrument deterred me from meddling with it to no visible end. Suddenly I remembered the electric signal which so often communicates with watchman or police in places of this kind. This, after some search, I found in a corner, over the desk of Brake's assistant, and this I touched. My effort brought no reply. I pressed the button again with more force and more desperation; I might say, with more personality.

"Obey me!" I cried, setting my teeth, and addressing the electric influence as a man addresses a menial.

Instantly a thrill passed from the wire to the hand. A distant sound jarred upon the air. Steps shuffled somewhere beyond the massive walls. I even thought that I heard voices, as of the watchman and others in possible consultation. No one approached the broker's door. I urged the signal again and again. I became quite frantic, for I had now begun to think with dismay of the effect of all this upon my wife. I railed upon that signal like a delirious patient at the order of a physician. A commotion seemed to follow, in some distant part of the building. But no one came within hearing of my voice; the noise soon ceased, and my efforts at freedom with it.

It having now become evident that I must spend the night where I was, I proceeded to make the best of it; and a very bad best it was. I was exhausted, I was angry, and I was distressed.

The full force of the situation was beginning to fall upon me. The inspector had put a not unnatural interpretation upon my condition; he thought so little of a gentleman who had dined too freely; it was a perfectly normal incident in his experience. He had mistaken the character of the stupor caused by my accident, and left me in that office for a drunken man. The fact that he was not accustomed to view me in such a light in itself probably explained the originality of his method. We were on pleasant terms. Drayton was a good fellow Who knew better than he what would be the professional significance of the circumstance that Dr. Thorne was seen intoxicated

down town at midnight? The city would ring with it in twelve hours, and it would not be for me, though I had been the most popular doctor in town, to undo the deed of that slander, if once it so much as lifted its invisible hand against the proud and pure reputation in whose shelter I lived and labored, and had been suffered to become what we call "eminent." It was possible, too, that the inspector had some human regard for my family in this matter, and reasoned that to spare them the knowledge of my supposed disgrace was the truest kindness wherewith it was in his power to serve me. He meant to leave me where I was and as I was to sleep it off till morning. He would return in good season and release me quietly, and nobody the wiser but the watchman; who could be feed. This was plainly the purpose and the programme.

But Helen—

I returned to the table near which I had been sitting, and took the office chair again, and tried, like a reasonable creature, to calm myself. What would Helen think by this time? I looked about the office stupidly. At first the dreary scene presented few details to me; but after a time they took on the precision and permanence which trifles acquire in emergencies. The gas was not lighted, but I could see with considerable ease, owing to the overwrought brain condition. It occurred to me that I saw like a cat or a medium; I noted this, as indicative of a certain remedy; and then it further occurred to me that I might as well prescribe for myself having nothing better to do; and plainly there was something wrong. I therefore put my hand in my pocket for my case. It was gone.

Now; a physician of my sort is as ill at ease without his case as he would be without his body; and this little circumstance added disproportionately to my discomfort. With some irritable exclamation on my lips I leaned back in the chair, and once more regarded my environment. It was a rather large room, dim now; and as solitary as a graveyard after twilight. Before me stood the table, an oblong table covered with brown felt. A blue blotter, of huge dimensions, was spread from end to end; it was a new blotter, not much blurred. Ink-stand, pens, paper-weight, calendar, and other trifles of a strictly necessary nature stood upon the blotter. Letters on file, and brokers' memoranda neatly stabbed by the iron stiletto—I forget the name of the thing—for that purpose made and provided, attracted my sick attention. An advertisement from a Western mortgage firm had escaped the neat hand of the clerk who put the office in order for the night, and fell fluttering to my feet. It would be impossible to say how important this seemed to me. I picked it up conscientiously, and filed it, to the best of my remembrance, with an invitation to the Merchant's Banquet, and a subscription list in behalf of the blind man who sold tissue-paper roses at the head of the street.

In one corner of the room, as I have said, was the clerk's desk; the electric signal shone faintly above it; it had, to my eyes, a certain phosphorescent appearance. Opposite, the steam radiator stood like a skeleton, There was a grate in the room, with a Cumberland coal fire laid. On the wall hung a map of the State, and another setting forth the proportions of a great Western railroad. At the extreme end of the room stood chairs and settees provided for auctions. Between myself and these, the high, guarded public desk of the broker rose like a rampart.

In this sombre and severe place I now abandoned myself to my thoughts; and these gave me no mercy.

My wife was a reasonable woman; but she was a loving and sensitive one. I was accustomed to spare her all unnecessary uncertainty as to my movements—being more careful in this respect, perhaps, than most physicians would be; our profession covers a multitude of little domestic sins. I had not taken the ground that I was never to be expected till I came. A system of affectionate communication as to my whereabouts existed between us; it was one of the pleasant customs of

our honeymoon which had lasted over. The telegraph and the messenger boy we had always with us; it was a little matter for a man to take the trouble to tell his wife why and where he was kept away all night. I do not remember that I had ever failed to do so. It was a bother sometimes, I admit, but the pleasure it gave her usually repaid me; such is the small, sweet coin of daily love.

As I sat there at the broker's desk, like a creature in a trap, all that long and wretched night, the image of my wife seemed to devour my brain and my reason.

The great clock on the neighboring church struck one with a heavy and a solemn intonation, of which I can only say that it was to me unlike anything I had ever heard before, It gave me a shudder to hear it, as if I listened to some supernatural thing. The first hour of the new day rang like a long cry. Some freak of association brought to my mind that angel in the Apocalypse who proclaimed with a mighty voice that Time should be no more. I caught myself thinking this preposterous thing: Suppose it were all over? Suppose we never saw each other again? Suppose my wife were to die? To-night? Suppose some accident befell her? If she tripped upstairs? If the child's crib took fire and she put it out, and herself received one of those deadly shocks from burns not in themselves mortal?

Suppose—she herself opening the door to let in the messenger expected from me—that some drunken fellow; or some tramp—

“This,” I said aloud, “is the kind of thing *she* does when I am delayed. This is what it means to wait. Men don't do it often enough to know what it is. I wonder if we have any scale of measurement for what women suffer?”

What she, for instance, by that time was suffering, oh, who in the wide world else could guess or dream? There were such suffering cells in that exquisite nature! Who but me could understand?

I brought my clinched hand down upon the broker's blue blotting-paper, and laid my heavy head upon it.

Suppose somebody had got the news to her that the horse had been seen dashing free of the buggy, or had returned alone to the stable, panting and cut?

Suppose Helen thought that my unaccountable absence had something to do with that scene between us? Suppose she thought—or if she suspected—perhaps she imagined—I hid my face within my shaking hands and groaned. A curse upon the cruel words that I had spoken to the tenderest of souls, to the dearest and the gentlest of women! A curse upon the lawless temper that had fired them! Accursed the hot lips that had uttered them, the unmanly heart that could have let them slip!

I thought of her face—I really had not thought of her face before, that wretched night. I had not strictly dared. Now I found that daring had nothing to do with it. I thought because I had to think. I dwelt upon her expression when I spoke to her—God forgive me!—as I did; her attitude, the way her hands fell, her silence, the quiver in her delicate mouth. I saw the dim parlor, the lighted room beyond her, the scarlet shade upon the gas; she standing midway, tall and mute, like a statue carved by one stroke of a sword.

My own words came back to me; and I was not apt to remember things I said to people. So many impressions passed in and out of my mind in the course of one busy day, that I became their victim rather than their master. But now my language to my wife that unhappy evening returned to my consciousness with incredible vividness and minuteness. It will be seen from the precision with which I have already recorded it, how inexorable this minuteness was.

It occurred to me that I might as well have struck her.

In this kind of moral pommeling which sensitive women feel—as they do—how could I have indulged! I, who knew what a sensitive woman is, what fearful and wonderful nervous systems these delicate creatures have to manage; I, with what I was pleased to term my high organization and special training—I, like any brutal hind, had berated my wife. I, who was punctilious to draw the silken portière for her, who could not let her pick up so much as her own lace handkerchief nor allow her to fold a wrap of the weight of a curlew's feather about her own soft throat—I had belabored her with the bludgeons that bruise the life out of women's souls. I wondered, indeed, if I should have been a less amiable fellow if I had worn cowhide boots and kicked her.

My reproaches, my remorse, my distresses, it is now an idle tale to tell. That night passed like none before it, and none which have come after it. My mind moved with a piteous monotony over and over and about the aching thought: to see Helen—to see Helen—to be patient till morning, and tell Helen—Only to get through this horrible night, and hurry, rushing to the morning air, to the nearest cab dashing down the street, and flaking the mad haste of love and shame, to see my wife—to tell my wife—

As never in all our lives before, I should tell her how dear she was; how unworthy was I to love her; how I loved her just as much as if I were worthy, and could not help it though I tried—or (as we say) could not help it though I died! I should run up, ringing the bell, never waiting to find the latch-key—for I could wait for nothing. I should spring into the house, and find her upstairs, in our own room; it would be so early; she would be only half-dressed, yet, pale and lovely, looking like a spirit, far across the rich colors of the room, her long hair loose about her, I should gather her to my heart before she saw me; my arms and lips should speak before my breaking voice, I should kiss my soul out on her lifted face. I should love her so, she should forgive me before I could so much as say, Forgive! and when I had her—to myself again—when these arms were sure of their own, and these lips of hers, when her precious breath was on this cheek again, and I could say:—

“Helen, Helen, Helen”—

and could say no more, for love and shame and sorrow; but only—

“Helen, Helen”—

“Yes,” said the watchman's voice in the corridor. “It is all right, sir. Me and Inspector Drayton, we thought we heard a noise, last night, and we considered it safe to look about. We had a thorough search. We thought we'd better. But there wasn't nothing. It's all straight, sir.”

It was morning, and Brake's clerk was coming in. It was very early, earlier than he usually came, perhaps; but I could not tell, He did not notice me at first, and, remembering Drayton's hypothesis, I shrank behind the tall desk, and instinctively kept out of sight for a few uncertain minutes, wondering what I had better do. The clerk called the janitor, and scolded a little about the fire, which he ordered lighted in the grate. It was a cold morning. He said the room would chill a corpse. He had the morning papers in his hand. He unfolded the “Herald,” and laid it down upon his own desk, as if about to read it.

At that instant, the telegraph clicked, and he pushed the damp, fresh paper away from him, and went immediately to the wires. The young man listened to the message with an expression of great intentness, and wrote rapidly. Moved by some unaccountable impulse, I softly rose and glanced over his shoulder.

The dispatch was dated at midnight, and was addressed to Henry Brake. It said:

“*Have you seen my husband, to-night?*” and it was signed, “*Helen Thorne.*”

Oh, poor Helen! . . .

Now; maniac with haste to get to her, it occurred to me that the moment while the clerk was occupied in recording this message was as good a time as I could ask for in which to escape unobserved, as I greatly wished to do. As quietly as I could—and I succeeded in doing it very quietly—I therefore moved to leave the broker’s office. As I did so, my eye caught the heading, in large capitals, of the morning news in the open “Herald” which lay upon the desk behind the clerk. I stopped, and stooped, and read. This is what I read:—

SHOCKING ACCIDENT.
TERRIBLE TRAGEDY.
Runaway at the West End.
The eminent and popular physician,
Dr. Esmerald Thorne.
KILLED INSTANTLY

7

At this moment, the broker entered the office.

With the “Herald” in my hand, I made haste to meet him.

“Brake!” I cried, “Mr. Brake! Thank Heaven, you have come! I have passed such a night—and look here! Have you seen this abominable canard? This is what has come of my being locked into your”—

The broker regarded me with a strange look; so strange, that for very amazement I stood still before it. He did not advance to meet me; neither his hand nor his eyes gave me the human sign of welcome; he looked over me, he looked through me, as a man does at one whose acquaintance he has no desire to recognize.

I thought:—

“Drayton has crammed him. He too believes that I was shut in here to sleep it off, The story will get out in two hours. I am doomed in this town henceforth for a drunken doctor. I’d better have been killed instantly, as this infernal paper says.”

But I said,—

“Mr. Brake? You don’t recognize me, I think. It is I, Dr. Thorne, I couldn’t get here before two. I went to your house last evening. I got the impression you were here, so I came after you. I was locked in here by your confounded watchman, They have this minute let me free. I am in a great hurry to get home. Nice job this is going to be! Have you seen *that?*”

I put my shaking finger upon the “Herald’s” fiery capitals, and held the column folded towards him.

“Jason,” he said, after an instant’s pause, “pick up the ‘Herald,’ will you? A gust of wind has blown it from the table. There must be a draught. Please shut the door.”

To say that I know of no earthly language which can express the sensation that crawled over me as the broker uttered these words is to say little or nothing about it. I use the expression “crawled” with some faint effort to define the slowness and the repulsiveness with which the suspicion of that to which I dared not and did not give a name, made itself manifest to my mind.

“Excuse me, Brake,” I said with some agitation, “you did not hear what I said, I was locked in. I am in a hurry to get home, Ask Drayton. Drayton let me in. I must get home at once. I shall sue the ‘Herald’ for that outrageous piece of work—What do you suppose my wife—Good God! She must have read it by this time! Let me by, Brake!”

“Jason,” said the broker, “this is a terrible thing! I feel quite broken up about it.”

“Brake!” I cried, “Henry Brake! Let me pass you! Let me home to my wife! You’re in my way—don’t you see? You’re standing directly between me and the door. Let me pass!”

“There’s a private dispatch come,” said the clerk sadly. “It is for you, sir. It is from Mrs. Thorne herself”

“Brake!” I pleaded, “Brake, Brake!—Jason!—Mr. Brake! Don’t you hear me?”

“Give me the message, Jason,” said Brake, holding out his hand; he seated himself as he did so, at the office table, where I had sat the night out; he looked troubled and pale; he handled the message reluctantly, as people do in the certainty of bad news.

“In the name of mercy, Henry Brake!” I cried, “what is the meaning of this? Don’t you hear a word I say? Don’t you feel me?—There!” I gripped the broker by the shoulder, and clinched both hands upon him with all my might. “Don’t you *feel* me? God Almighty! don’t you *see* me, Brake?”

“When did this dispatch come, Jason?” said the broker. He laid Helen’s message gently down; he had tears in his eyes.

“Henry Brake,” I pleaded brokenly, for my heart failed me with a mighty fear, “answer me, in human pity’s name. Are you gone deaf and blind? Or am I struck dumb? Or am I”—

“It came ten minutes ago, sir,” replied Jason. “It is dated, I see, at midnight. They delivered it as soon as anybody was likely to be stirring, here; a bit before, too; considering the nature of the message, I suppose, sir.”

“It is a terrible affair!” repeated the broker nervously. “I have known the doctor a good many years. He had his peculiarities; but he was a good fellow. Say—Jason!”

“How does it happen that Mrs. Thorne—You say this message was dated at midnight?”

“At midnight, sir. 12.15.”

“How is it she didn’t *know* by that time? I pity the fellow who had to tell her, She’s a very attractive woman. . . . The ‘Herald’ says—Where is that paper?”

“The ‘Herald’ says,” answered Jason decorously, “that he was scooped into the buggy-top, and dragged, and dashed against—Here it is.”

He handed his employer the paper, as I had done, or had thought I did, with his finger on the folded column. The broker took the paper, and slowly put on his glasses, and slowly read aloud:—

“ ‘Dr. Thorne was dragged for some little distance, it is thought, before the horse broke free, He must have hit the lamp-post, or the pavement. He was found in the top of the buggy, which was a wreck. The robe was over him, and his face was hidden. His medicine case lay beneath him; the phials were crushed to splinters. Life was extinct when he was discovered. His watch had stopped at five minutes past seven o’clock. It so happened that he was not immediately identified, though our reporter could not learn the reason of this extraordinary mischance. By some unpardonable blunder, the body of the distinguished and favorite physician was taken to the Morgue’ ”—

“That accounts for it,” said Jason.

—“ ‘Was taken to the Morgue,’ ” read on Mr. Brake with agitated voice. “ ‘It was not until midnight that the mistake was discovered. A messenger was dispatched at twenty minutes after twelve o’clock to the elegant residence of the popular doctor, in Delight Street. The news was broken to the widow as agreeably as possible. Mrs. Thorne is a young and very beautiful woman, on whom this shocking blow falls with uncommon cruelty.

“ ‘The body was carried to Dr. Thorne’s house at one o’clock. The time of the funeral is not yet appointed. The ‘Herald’ will be informed as soon as a decision is reached.

“ ‘The death of Dr. Thorne is a loss to this community which it is impossible to,’—hm—m—
‘his distinguished talents’—hm—m—hm—m.”

The broker laid down the paper, and sighed.

“I sent for him yesterday, to consult about his affairs,” he observed gently. “It is a pity for her to lose that Santa Ma. She will need it now. I’m sorry for her. I don’t know how he left her, exactly. He did a tremendous business, but he spent as he went. He was a good fellow—I always liked the doctor! Terrible affair! Terrible affair! Jason! Where is that advertisement of Grope County Iowa Mortgage? You have filed it in the wrong place! Be more careful in future.”

. . . “*Mr. Brake!*” I tried once more; and my voice was the voice of mortal anguish to my own appalled and ringing ear.

“Do you not hear? Can you not see? Is there *no one* in this place who hears? Or sees me, *either?*”

An early customer had strayed in; Drayton was there; and the watchman had entered. The men (there were five in all) collected by the broker’s desk, around the morning papers, and spoke to each other with the familiarity which bad news of any public interest creates. They conversed in low tones. Their faces wore a shocked expression. They spoke of me; they asked for more particulars of the tragedy reported by the morning press; they mentioned my merits and defects, but said more about merits than defects, in the merciful, foolish way of people who discuss the newly dead.

“I’ve known him ten years,” said the broker.

“I’ve had the pleasure of the doctor’s acquaintance myself a good while,” said the inspector politely.

“Wasn’t he a quick-tempered man?” asked the customer.

“He cured a baby of mine of the croup,” said the watchman. “It was given up for dead. And he only charged me a dollar and a half. He was very kind to the little chap.”

“He set an ankle for me, once, after a football match,” suggested the clerk. “I wouldn’t ask to be better treated. He wasn’t a bit rough.”

. . . “Gentlemen,” I entreated, stretching out my hands toward the group, “there is some mistake—I must make it understood. I am here. It is I, Dr. Thorne; Dr. Esmerald Thorne. I am in this office. Gentlemen! Listen to me! Look at me! Look in this direction! For God’s sake, *try* to see me—some of you!” . . .

“He drove too fast a horse,” said the customer. “He always has.”

“I must answer Mrs. Thorne’s message,” said the broker sadly, rising and pushing back the office chair.

. . . I shrank, and tried no more. I bowed my head, and said no other word. The truth, incredible and terrible though it were, the truth which neither flesh nor spirit can escape, had now forced itself upon my consciousness.

I looked across the broker’s office at those five warm human beings as if I had looked across the width of the breathing world, Naught had I now to say to them; naught could they communicate to me. Language was not between us, nor speech, nor any sign. Need of mine could reach them not, nor any of their kind. For I was the dead, and they the living men.

. . . “Here is your dog, sir,” said Jason. “He has followed you in. He is trying to speak to you, in his way.”

The broker stooped and patted the dumb brute affectionately. “I understand, Lion,” he said. “Yes, I understand you.

The dog looked lovingly up into his master’s face, and whined for joy.

This incident, trifling as it was, I think, did more than anything which had preceded it to make me aware of the nature of that which had befallen me. The live brute could still communicate with the living man. Skill of scientist and philosopher was as naught to help the human spirit which had fled the body to make itself understood by one which occupied a body still. More blessed in that moment was Lion, the dog, than Esmerald Thorne, the dead man, I said to myself—"I am a desolate and an outcast creature. I am become a dumb thing in a deaf world."

I thrust my hands before me, and wrung them with a groan. It seemed incredible to me that I *could* die; that was more wonderful, even, than to know that I was already dead.

"It is all over," I moaned. "I have died. I am dead. I am what they call a dead man."

Now, at this instant, the dog turned his head. No human tympanum in the room vibrated to my cry. No human retina was recipient of my anguish. What fine, unclassified senses had the highly-organized animal by which he should become aware of me? The dog turned his noble head—he was a St. Bernard, with the moral qualities of the breed well marked upon his physiognomy; he lifted his eyes and solemnly regarded me.

After a moment's pause he gave vent to a long and mournful cry. "Don't, Lion," I said, "Keep quiet, sir. This is dreadful!" The dog ceased howling when I spoke to him; after a little hesitation he came slowly to the spot where I was standing, and looked earnestly into my face, as if he saw me. Whether he did, or how he did, or why he did, I knew not, and I know not now. The main business of this narrative will be the recording of facts. Explanations it is not mine to offer; and of speculations I have but few; either to give or to withhold.

A great wistfulness came into my soul, as I stood shut apart there from those living men, within reach of their hands, within range of their eyes, within the vibration of their human breath. I looked into the animal's eyes with the yearning of a sudden and an awful sense of desolation.

"Speak to me, Lion," I whispered. "Won't *you* speak to me?"

"What is that dog about?" asked the customer, staring. "He is standing in the middle of the room and wagging his tail as if he had met somebody."

The dog at this instant, with eager signs of pleasure or of pity—I could not, indeed, say which—put his beautiful face against my hand, and kissed, or seemed to kiss it, sympathetically.

"He has queer ways," observed Jason, the clerk, carelessly; "he knows more than most folks I know."

"True," said his master, laughing. "I don't feel that I am Lion's equal more than half the time, myself. He is a noble fellow. He has a very superior nature. My wife declares he is a poet, and that when he goes off by himself and gazes into vacancy with that sort of look, he is composing verses.

Another customer had strolled in by this time; he laughed at the broker's easy wit; the rest joined in the laugh; some one said something which I did not understand, and Drayton threw back his head and guffawed heartily. I think their laughter made me feel more isolated from them than anything had yet done.

"Why!" exclaimed the broker sharply, "what is this? Jason! What does this mean?"

His face, as he turned it over his shoulder to address the clerk, had changed color; he was indeed really pale. He held his fingers on the great sheet of blue blotting-paper, to which he pointed, unsteadily.

“Upon my soul, sir,” said Jason, flushing and then paling in his turn. “That is a queer thing! May I show it to Mr. Drayton?”

The inspector stepped forward, as the broker nodded; and examined the blotting-paper attentively.

“It is written over,” he said in a professional tone, “from end to end. I see that. It is written with one name. It is the name of”—

“*Helen!*” interrupted the broker.

“Yes,” replied the inspector. “Yes, it is: Helen; distinctly, Helen. Some one must have”—

But I stayed to hear no more. What some one must have done, I sprang and left the live men to decide—as live men do decide such things—among themselves. I sprang, and crying: “Helen! Helen! Helen!” with one bound I brushed them by, and fled the room, and reached the outer air and sought for her.

As nearly as one can characterize the emotion of such a moment, I should say that it was one of mortal intensity; perhaps of what in living men we should call maniac intensity. Up to this moment I could not be said to have comprehended the effect of what had taken place upon my wife.

The full force of her terrible position now struck me like the edge of a weapon with whose sheath I had been idling.

Hot in the flame of my anger I had gone from her; and cold indeed had I returned. Her I had left dumb before my cruel tongue, but dumb was that which had come back to her in my name.

I was a dead man. But like any living of them all—oh, more than any living—I loved my wife. I loved her more because I had been cruel to her than if I had been kind. I loved her more because we had parted so bitterly than if we had parted lovingly. I loved her more because I had died than if I had lived. I must see my wife! I must find my wife! I must say to her—I must tell her—Why, who in all the world but me could do *anything* for Helen now?

Out into the morning air I rushed, and got the breeze in my face, and up the thronging street, as spirits do, unnoted and unknown of men, I passed; solitary in the throng, silent in the outcry, un sentient in the press.

The sun was strong. The day was cool. The dome of the sky hung over me, too, as over those who raised their breathing faces to its beauty. I, too, saw; as I fled on, that the day was fair. I heard the human voices say:

“What a morning!”

“It puts the soul into you!” said a burly stock speculator to a railroad treasurer; they stood upon the steps of the Exchange, laughing, as I brushed by.

“It makes life worth while,” said a healthy elderly woman, merrily, making the crossing with the light foot that a light heart gives.

“It makes life possible,” replied a pale young girl beside her, coming slowly after.

“Poor fellow!” sighed a stranger whom I hit in hurrying on. “It was an ugly way to die. Nice air, this morning!”

“He will be a loss to the community,” replied this man’s companion. “There isn’t a doctor in town who has his luck with fevers. You can’t convince my wife he didn’t save her life last winter. Frost, last night, wasn’t there? Very invigorating morning!”

Now; at the head of the street some ladies were standing, waiting for a car, I was delayed in passing them, and as I stepped back to change my course I saw that one of them was speaking earnestly and that her eyes showed signs of weeping.

“He wouldn’t remember me,” she said; “it was eleven years ago. But sick women don’t forget their doctors. He was as *kind* to me”—

“*Oh, poor Mrs. Thorne!*” a soft voice answered, in the accented tone of an impulsive, tender-hearted woman. “It’s bad enough to be a patient. But, oh, his *wife!*”

“Let me pass, ladies!” I cried, or tried to cry, forgetting, in the anguish which their words fanned to its fiercest, that I could not be heard and might not be seen. “There seems to be some obstruction. Let me by, for I am in mortal haste!”

Obstruction there was, alas! but it was not in them whom I would have entreated. Obstruction there was, but of what nature I could not and I cannot testify. While I had the words upon my lips, even as the group of women broke and left a space about me while they scattered on their ways, there on the corner of the thoroughfare, in the heart of the town, by an invisible force, by an inexplicable barrier, I, the dead man fleeing to my living wife, was beaten back.

Whence came that awful order? How came it? And wherefore? I knew no more than the November wind that passed me by, and went upon its errand as it listed.

I was thrust back by a blast of Power Incalculable; it was like the current of an unknown natural force of infinite capability. Set the will of soul and body as I would, I could not pass the head of the street.

9

Struggling to bear the fate which I had met, I turned as manfully as I might, and retraced my steps down the thronging street, within whose limits I now learned that my freedom was confined. It was a sickening discovery. I had been a man of will so developed and freedom so sufficient that helplessness came upon me like a change of temperament; it took the form of hopelessness almost at once.

What was death? The secret of life. What knew I of the system of things on which a blow upon the head had ushered me all unready, reluctant, and uninstructed as I was? No more than the ruddiest live stockbroker on the street, whose blood went bounding, that fresh morning, to the antics of the Santa Ma. I was not accustomed to be uninformed; my ignorance appalled me. Even in the deeps of my misery, I found space for a sense of humiliation; I felt profoundly mortified. In that spot, in that way, of all others, why was I withheld? Was it the custom of the black country called Death, which we mark “Unexplored” upon the map of life,—was it the habit to tie a man to the place where he had died? But this was not the spot where I had died. It was the spot where I had learned that I had died. It was the place where the consciousness of death had wrought itself not upon the nerves of the body, but upon the faculties of the mind. I had been dead twelve hours before I found it out.

I looked up and down the street, where the living men scurried to and fro upon their little errands. These seemed immeasurably small. I looked upon them with disgust. Fettered to that pavement, like a convict to his ball-and-chain, I passed and repassed in wretchedness whose quality I cannot express, and would not if I could.

“I am punished,” I said; “I am punished for that which I have done. This is my doom. I am imprisoned here.”

Sometimes I broke into uncontrollable misery, crying upon my wife’s dear name. Then I would hush the outbreak, lest some one overhear me; and then I would remember that no one could over-hear. I looked into the faces of the people whom I met and passed, with such longings for one single sign of recognition as are not to be described. It even occurred to me that among them

all one might be found of whom my love and grief and will might make a messenger to Helen. But I found none such, or I gained no such power; and, sick at heart, I turned away.

Suddenly, as I threaded the thick of the press, beating to and fro, and up and down, as dead leaves move before the wind, some one softly touched my hand.

It was the St. Bernard, the broker's dog. This time, as before, he looked into my face with signs of pleasure or of pity, or of both, and made as if he would caress me.

"Lion!" I cried, "*you* know me, don't you? Bless you, Lion!"

Now, at the dumb thing's recognition, I could have wept for pleasure. The dog, when I spoke to him, followed me; and for some time walked up and down and athwart the street, beside me. This was a comfort to me. At last his master came out upon the sidewalk and looked for him. Brake whistled merrily, and the dog, at the first call, went bounding in.

Ordinary writers upon usual topics, addressing readers of their own condition, have their share of difficulties; at best one conquers the art of expression as a General conquers an enemy. But the obstacles which present themselves to the recorder of this narrative are such as will be seen at once to have peculiar force. Almost at the outset they dishearten me. How shall I tell the story unless I be understood? And how should I be understood if I told the story? Were it for me, a man miserable and erring, gone to his doom as untrained for its consequences, or for the use of them, as a drayman for the use of hypnotism in surgery,—were it for me to play the interpreter between life and death? Were it for me to expect to be successful in that solemn effort which is as old as time, and as hopeless as the eyes of mourners?

What shall I say? It is willed that I shall speak. The angel said unto me: Write. How shall I obey, who am the most unworthy of any soul upon whom has been laid the burden of the higher utterance? Sacred be the task. Would that its sacredness could sanctify the unfitness of him who here fulfills it.

The experience which I have already narrated was followed by an indefinite period of great misery. How long I remained a prisoner in that unwelcome spot I cannot accurately tell.

What are called by dwellers in the body days and nights, and dawns and darks, succeeded each other, little remarked by my wretchedness, or by the sense of remoteness from these things which now began to grow upon me. The life of what we call a spirit had begun for me in the form of a moral dislocation. The wrench, the agony, the process of setting the nature under its new conditions, took place in due order, but with bitter laggardness. The accident of death did not heal in my soul by what surgeons call "the first intention:" I retained for a long time the consciousness of being an injured creature.

As I paced and repaced the narrow street where the money-makers and money-lovers of the town jostled and thronged, a great disgust descended upon me. The place, the springs of conduct, wearied me, something in the manner that an educated person is wearied by low conversation. It seemed to be like this:—that the moral motives of the living created the atmosphere of the dead therein confined. It was as if I inhaled the coarse friction, the low aspiration, the feverishness, the selfishness, the dishonor, that the getting of gain, when it became the purpose of life, involved. I experienced a sense of being stifled, and breathed with difficulty; much as those live men would have done, if the gas-pipes had burst in the street.

It did not detract from this feeling of asphyxia that I was aware of having, to a certain extent, shared the set of moral compounds which I now found resolved to their elements, by the curious chemistry of death.

I had loved money and the getting of money, as men of the world, and of success in it, are apt to do. I was neither better nor worse than others of my sort. I had speculated with the profits of my profession, idly enough, but hotly, too, at times. I had told myself that I did this out of anxiety for the future of my family. I had viewed myself in the light of the model domestic man, who guards his household against an evil day. It had never occurred to me to classify myself with the mere money-changers, into whose atmosphere I had elected to put myself

Now as I glided in and out among them, unseen, unheard, unrecognized, a spirit among their flesh, there came upon me a humiliating sense of my true relation to them. Was it *thus*, I said, or *so*? Did I this or that? Was the balance of motives so disproportionate after all? Was there so little love of wife and child? So much of self and gain? Was the item of the true so small? The sum of the false so large? Had I been so much less that was noble, so much more that was low?

I mingled with the mass of haggard men at a large stock auction which half the street attended. The panic had spread. Sleeplessness and anxiety had carved the crowding faces with hard chisels. The shouts, the scramble, the oaths, the clinched hands, the pitiful pushing, affected me like a dismal spectacular play on some barbarian stage. How shall I express the sickening aspect of the scene to a man but newly dead?

The excitement waxed with the morning. The old and placid Santa Ma throbbed like any little road of yesterday. The stock had gained 32 points in ten minutes, and down again, and up again to Heaven knows what. Men ran from despair to elation, and behaved like maniacs in both. Men who were gentlemen at home turned savages here. Men who were honorable in society turned sharpers here. Madness had them, as I watched them. A kind of pity for them seized me. I glided in among them, and lifted my whole heart to stay them if I could. I stretched the hands that no one saw I raised the voice that none could hear.

“Gentlemen!” I cried, “count me the market value of it—on the margin of two lives! By the bonds wherewith you bind yourselves you shall be bound! . . . What is the sum of wealth represented within these walls to-day? Name it to me. . . . The whole of it, for the power to leave this place! The whole of it, the whole of it, for one half-hour in a dead man’s desolated home! A hundred-fold the whole of it for”—

But here I lost command of myself, and fleeing from the place where my presence and my misery and my entreaty alike were lost upon the attention of the living throng as were the elements of the air they breathed, I rushed into the outer world again; there to wander up and down the street, and hate the place, and hate myself for being there, and hate the greed of gain I used to love, and hate myself for having loved it; and yet to know that I was forced to act as if I loved it still, and to be the ghost before the ghost of a desire.

“It is my doom,” I said. “I am punished. I am fastened to this worldly spot, and to this awful way of being dead.”

Now, while I spoke these words, I came, in the stress of my wretchedness, fleeing to the head of the street; and there, I cannot tell you how I cannot answer why, as the arrow springs from the bow, or the conduct from the heart, or the spirit from the flesh,—in one blessed instant I knew that I was free to leave the spot, and crying, “Helen, Helen!” broke from it.

But no. Alas, no, no! I was and was not free. All my soul turned toward her, but something stronger than my soul constrained me. It seemed to me that I longed for her with such longing as might have killed a live man, or might have made a dead one live again. This emotion added

much to my suffering, but nothing to my power to turn one footstep toward her or to lift my helpless face in her direction. It was not permitted to me. It was not willed.

Now this, which might in another temperament have produced a sense of fear or of desire to placate the unknown Force which overruled me, created in me at first a stinging rage. This is the truth, and the truth I tell.

In my love and misery, and the shock of this disappointment—against the unknown opposition to my will, I turned and raved; even as when I was a man among men I should have raved at him who dared my purpose.

“You are playing with me!” I wailed. “You torture a miserable man. Who and what are you, that make of death a bitterer thing than life can guess? Show me what I have to fight, and let me wrestle for my liberty,—though I am a ghost, let me wrestle like a man! Let me to my wife! Give way, and let me seek her!”

Shocking and foreign as words like these must be to many of those who read these pages, it must be remembered that they were uttered by one to whom faith and the knowledge that comes by way of it were the leaves of an abandoned text-book. For so many years had the tenets of the Christian religion been put out of my practical life, even as I put aside the opinions of the laity concerning the treatment of disease, that I do not over-emphasize; I speak the simplest truth in saying that my first experience of death had not in any sense revived the vividness of lost belief to me. As the old life had ended had the new begun. Where the tree had fallen it did lie. What was habit before death was habit after. What was natural then was natural now. What I loved living I loved dead. That which interested Esmerald Thorne the man interested Esmerald Thorne the spirit. The incident of death had raised the temperature of intellect; it had, perhaps I may say, by this time quickened the pulse of conscience; but it had in no wise wrought any miracle upon me, nor created a religious believer out of a worldly and indifferent man of science. Dying had not forthwith made me a devout person. Incredible as it may seem, it is the truth that up to this time I had not, since the moment of dissolution, put to myself the solemn queries concerning my present state which occupy the imaginations of the living so much, while yet death is a fact remote from their experience.

It was the habit of long years with me, after the manner of my kind, to settle all hard questions by a few elastic phrases, which, once learned, are curiously pliable to the intellectual touch. “Phenomena,” for instance,—how plastic to cover whatever one does not understand! “Law,”—how ready to explain away the inexplicable! Up to this point death had struck me as a most unfortunate phenomenon. Its personal disabilities I found it easy to attribute to some natural law with which my previous education had left me unfamiliar. Now, standing baffled there in that incredible manner, half of tragedy, half of the absurd,—even the petty element of the undignified in the position adding to my distress,—a houseless, homeless, outcast spirit, struck still in the heart of that great town, where in hundreds of homes was weeping for me, where I was beloved and honored and bemoaned, and where my own wife at that hour broke her heart with sorrow for me and for the manner of my parting from her,—then and there to be beaten back, and battered down, and tossed like an atom in some primeval flood, whithersoever I would not,—what a situation was this!

Now indeed, I think for the first time, my soul lifted itself, as a sick man lifts himself upon his elbows, in his painful bed. Now, flashing straight back upon the outburst of my defiance and despair, like the reflex action of a strong muscle, there came into my mind, if not into my heart, these impulsive and entreating words:—“What art Thou, who dost withstand me? I am a dead

and helpless man. What wouldst Thou with me? Where gainest Thou Thy force upon me? Art Thou verily that ancient Myth which we were wont to call Almighty God?"

Simultaneously with the utterance of these words that blast of Will to which I have referred fell heavily upon me. A Power not myself overshadowed me and did environ me. Guided whithersoever I would not, I passed forth upon errands all unknown to me, rebelling and obeying as I went.

"I am become what we used to call a spirit," I thought, bitterly, "and this is what it means. Better might one become a molecule, for those, at least, obey the laws of the universe, and do not suffer."

Now; as I took my course, it being ordered on me, it led me past the door of a certain open church, whence the sound of singing issued. The finest choir in the city, famous far and near, were practicing for the Sunday service, and singing like the sons of God, indeed, as I passed by. With the love of the scientific temperament for harmony alert in me, I lingered to listen to the anthem which these singers were rendering in their customary great manner. With the instinct of the musically educated, I felt pleasure in this singing, and said:—"Magnificently done!" as I went on. It was some moments before the words which the choir sang assumed any vividness in my mind. When they did I found that they were these:—"For God is a Spirit. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit"—

Now it fell out that my steps were directed to the hospital; and to the hospital I straight—way went. I experienced some faint comfort at this improvement in my lot, and hurried up the avenue and up the steps and into the familiar wards with eagerness. All the impulses of the healer were alive in me. I felt it a mercy for my nature to be at its own again. I hastened in among my sick impetuously.

The hospital had been a favorite project of mine; from its start, unreasonably dear to me. Through the mounting difficulties which blockade such enterprises, I had hewn and hacked, I had fathered and doctored, I had trusteeed and collected, I had subscribed and directed and persisted and prophesied and fulfilled, as one ardent person must in most humanitarian successes; and I had loved the success accordingly. I do not think it had ever once occurred to me to question myself as to the chemical proportions of my motives in this great and popular charity. Now; as I entered the familiar place, some query of this nature did indeed occupy my mind; it had the strangeness of all mental experiences consequent upon my new condition, and somewhat, if I remember, puzzled me.

The love of healing? The relief of suffering? Sympathy with the wretched? Chivalry for the helpless? Generosity to the poor? Friendship to the friendless? Were these the motives, all the motives, the *whole* motives, of him who had in my name ministered in that place so long? Even the love of science? Devotion to a therapeutic creed? Sacrifice for a surgical doctrine? Enthusiasm for an important professional cause? Did these, and only these, sources of conduct *explain* the great hospital? Or the surgeon who had created and sustained it?

Where did the motive deteriorate? Where did the alloy come in? How did the sensitiveness to self, the passion for fame, the joy of power, amalgamate with all that noble feeling? How much residuum was there in the solution of that absorption which (outside of my own home) I had thought the purest and highest of my interests in life?

For the first of all the uncounted times that I had entered the hospital for now these many years, I crossed the threshold questioning myself in this manner, and doubting of my fitness to be there, or to be what I had been held to be in that place. Life had carried me gayly and swiftly, as

it carries successful men. I had found no time, or made none, to cross-question the sources of conduct. My success had been my religion.

I had the conviction of a prosperous person that the natural emotions of prosperity were about right. Added to this was something of the physician's respect for what was healthful in human life. Good luck, good looks, good nerves, a good income, an enviable reputation for professional skill, personal popularity, and private happiness,—these things had struck me as so wholesome that they must be admirable. Behind the painted screen which a useful and successful career sets before the souls of men I had been too busy or too light of heart to peer. Now it was as if, in the act or the fact of dying, I had moved a step or two, and looked over the edge of the bright shield.

Thoughts like these came to me so quietly and so naturally, now; that I wondered why I had not been familiar with them before; it even occurred to me that being very busy did not wholly excuse a live man for not thinking; and it was something in the softened spirit of this strange humility that I opened the noiseless door, and found myself among my old patients in the large ward.

Never before had I entered that sad place that the electric thrill of welcome, which only a physician knows, had not pulsed through it, preceding me, from end to end of the long room. The peculiar *lighting* of the ward that flashes with the presence of a favorite doctor; the sudden flexible smile on pain-pinched lips; the yearning motion of the dyes in some helpless body where only the eyes can stir; the swift stretching-out of wasted hands; the half-inaudible cry of welcome: "The doctor's come.¹" "Oh, there's the doctor!" "Why, it's the *doctor!*"—the loving murmur of my name; the low prayer of blessing on it,—oh, never before had I entered my hospital, and missed the least of these.

I thought I was prepared for this, but it was not without a shock that I stood among my old patients, mute and miserable, glancing piteously at them, as they had so often done at me; seeking for their recognition, which I might not have; longing for their welcome, which was not any more for me.

The moans of pain, the querulous replies to nurses, the weary cough or plethoric breathing, the feeble convalescent laughter,—these greeted me; and only these. Like the light that entered at the window; or the air that circulated through the ward, I passed unnoticed and unthanked. Some one called out petulantly that a door had got unfastened, and bade a nurse go shut it, for it blew on her. But when I came up to the bedside of this poor woman, I saw that she was crying.

"She's cried herself half-dead," a nurse said, complainingly. "Nobody can stop her. She's taking on so for Dr. Thorne."

"I don't blame her," said a little patient from a wheeled-chair. "Everybody knows what he did for her. She's got one of her attacks,—and look at her! There *can't* anybody but him stop it. Whatever we're going to do without the doctor"—

Her own lip quivered, though she was getting well. "I don't see how the doctor *could* die!" moaned the very sick woman, weeping afresh, "when there's those that nobody but him can keep alive. It hadn't oughter to be let to be. How are sick folks going to get along with out their doctor? It ain't *right!*"

"Lord have mercy on ye, poor creetur," said an old lady from the opposite cot. "Don't take on so. It don't *help* it any. It ain't agoing to bring the doctor back!"

Sobs arose at this. I could hear them from more beds than I cared to count. Sorrow sat heavily in the ward for my sake. It distressed me to think of the effect of all this depression upon the nervous systems of these poor people. I passed from case to case, and watched the ill-effects of

the general gloom with a sense of professional disappointment which only physicians will understand as coming uppermost in a man's mind under circumstances such as these.

My discomfort was increased by the evidences of what I considered mistakes in treatment on the part of my colleagues; some of which had peculiarly disagreed with certain patients since my death had thrown them into other hands. My helplessness before these facts chafed me sorely.

I made no futile effort to make myself known to any of the hospital patients. I had learned too well the limitations of my new condition now. I had in no wise learned to bear them. In truth, I think I bore them less well, for my knowledge that these poor creatures did truly love me, and leaned on me, and mourned for me; I found it hard. I think it even occurred to me that a dead man might not be able to bear it to see his wife and child.

"Doctor!" said a low; sweet voice, "Doctor?"

My heart leaped within me, as I turned. Where was the highly organized one of all my patients, who had baffled death for love of me? Who had the clairvoyance or clairaudience, or the wonderful *tip* in the scale of health and disease, which causes such phenomena?

With hungry eyes I gazed from cot to cot. No answering gaze returned to me. Craving their recognition more sorely than they had ever, in the old life, craved mine, in such need of their sympathy as never had the weakest of the whole of them for mine, I scanned them all. No—no. There was not a patient in the ward who knew me. No.

Stung with the disappointment, I sank into a chair beside the weeping woman's bed, and bowed my face upon my hands. At this instant I was touched upon the shoulder.

"Doctor? Why, Doctor!" said the voice again.

I sprang and caught the speaker by the hands. It was Mrs. Faith. She stood beside me, sweet and smiling.

"The carriage overturned," she said in her quiet way. "I was badly hurt. I only died an hour ago. I started out at once to find you. I want you to see Charley. Charley's still alive. Those doctors don't understand Charley. There's nobody I'd trust him to but you. *You* can save him. Come! You can't think how he asked for you, and cried for you. . . . I thought I should find you at the hospital. Come quickly, Doctor! Come!

Some homesick traveler in a foreign land, where he is known of none and can neither speak nor understand the language of the country; taken ill, let us say, at a remote inn, his strength and credit gone, and he, in pain and fever, hears, one blessed day, the voice of an old friend in the court below. Such a man may think he has—but I doubt if he have—some crude conception of the state of feeling in which I found myself when recognized in this touching manner by my old patient.

My emotion was so great that I could not conceal it; and she, in her own quick and delicate way, perceiving this almost before I did, myself made as if she saw it not, and lightly adding:

"Hurry, Doctor! I will go before you. Let us lose no time!" led me at once out of the hospital, and rapidly away.

In an incredibly, almost confusingly short space of time, we reached her house; this was done by some method of locomotion not hitherto experienced by me, and which I should, at that time, have found it difficult to describe, unless by saying that *she thought* us where we wished to be. Perhaps it would be more exact to say, *She felt us*. It was as if the great power of the mother's love in her, had become a new bodily faculty by which she was able, with extraordinary disre-

gard of the laws of distance, to move herself and to draw another to the suffering child. I should say that I perceived at once, in the presence of this sweet woman, that there were possibilities and privileges in the state immediately succeeding death, which had been utterly denied to me, and were still unknown to me. It was easy to see that her personal experience in the new condition differed as much from mine as our lives had differed in the time preceding death. She had been a patient, unworldly, and devout sufferer; a chronic invalid, who bore her lot divinely. Her soul had been as full of trust and gentleness, of the forgetting of self and the service of others, of the scorn of pain, and of what she called trust in Heaven, as any woman's soul could be.

I had never seen the moment when I could withhold my respect from the devout nature of Mrs. Faith, any more than I could from her manner of enduring suffering; or, I might add, if I could expect the remark to be properly understood,—from her strong and intelligent trust in me. Physicians know what sturdy qualities it takes to make a good patient. Perhaps they are, to some extent, the same which go to make a good believer; but in this direction I am less informed.

During our passage from the hospital to the house, Mrs. Faith had not spoken to me; her whole being seemed, so nearly as I could understand it, to be absorbed in the process of getting there. It struck me that she was still unpracticed in the use of a new and remarkable faculty, which required strict attention from her, like any other as yet unlearned art.

"*You* are not turned out of your own home it seems!" I exclaimed impulsively, as we entered the house together.

"Oh, no, *no!*" she cried. "Who is? Who could be? Why, Doctor, are *you?*"

"Death is a terrible respecter of persons," I answered drearily. I could not further explain myself at that moment.

"I have been away from Charley a good while," she anxiously replied; "it is the first time I have left him since I died. But I had to find you, Doctor. Charley should not die—I can't have Charley die—for his poor father's sake. But I feel quite safe about him, now I have got you.

She said these words in her old bright, trustful way. The thought of my helplessness to justify such trust smote me sorely; but I said nothing then to undeceive her,—how could I?—and we made haste together to the bedside of the injured child.

I saw at a glance that the child was in a bad case. Halt was there, and Dr. Gazell; they were consulting gloomily. The father, haggard with his first bereavement, seemed to have accepted the second as a foregone conclusion; he sat with his face in his hands, beside the little fellow's bed. The boy called for his mother at intervals. A nurse hung about weeping. It was a dismal scene; there was not a spark of hope, or energy, or fight in the whole room. I cried out immoderately that it was enough to kill the well, and protested against the management of the case with the ardent conviction to which my old patient was so used, and in which she believed more thoroughly than I did myself. "They are giving the wrong remedy," I hotly said. "This surgical fever could be controlled,—the boy need not die. But he will! You may as well make up your mind to it, Mrs. Faith. Gazell doesn't understand the little fellow's constitution, and Halt doesn't understand anything."

Now it was that, as I had expected, the mother turned upon me with all a mother's hopeless and heart-breaking want of logic. Surely, I, and only I, could save the boy. Why, I had always taken care of Charley! Was it possible that I could stand by and see Charley *die*? She should not have died herself if I had been there. She depended upon me to find some way—there must be a way. She never thought I was the kind of a man to be so changed by—by what had happened.

I used to be so full of hope and vigor, and so inventive in a sickroom. It was not reasonable! It was not possible that, just because I was a spirit, I could not control the minds or bodies of those live men who were so inferior to me. Why, she thought I could control anybody. She thought I could conquer anything.

“I don’t understand it, Doctor,” she said, with something like reproach. “You don’t seem to be able to do as much—you don’t even know as much as *I* do, now And you know what a sick and helpless little woman I’ve always been,—how ignorant, beside you! I thought you were so wise, so strong, so great. Where has it all gone to, Doctor? What has become of your wisdom and your power? Can’t you help me? Can’t you”—

“I can do nothing,” I interrupted her,—“nothing. I am shorn of it all. It has all gone from me, like the strength of Samson. Spare me, and torment me not. . . . I cannot heal your child. I am not like you. I was not prepared for—this condition of things. I did not expect to die. I never thought of becoming a spirit. I find myself extraordinarily embarrassed by it. It is the most unnatural state I ever was in.”

“Why, I find it as natural as life,” she said more gently. She had now moved to the bedside, and taken the little fellow in her arms.

“You are not as I,” I replied morosely. “We differed—and we differ. Truly, I believe that if there is anything to be done for your boy, it rests with you, and not with me.

Halt and Gazell were now consulting in an undertone, touching the selection of a certain remedy; no one noticed them, and they droned on.

The mother crooned over the child, and caressed him, and breathed upon his sunken little face, and poured her soul out over him in precious floods and wastes of tenderness as mothers do.

“Live, my little son!” she whispered. “Live, live!”

But I, meanwhile, was watching the two physicians miserably. “There!” I said, “they have dropped the phial on the floor. See, that is the one they ought to have. It rolled away. They don’t mean to take it. They will give him the wrong thing. Oh, how *can* they?”

But now the mother, when she heard me speak, swiftly and gently removed her arms from beneath the boy, and, advancing to the hesitating men, stood silently between them, and laid a hand upon the arm of each. While she stood there she had a rapt, high look of such sort that I could in no wise have addressed her.

“Are you *sure*, Dr. Gazell?” asked Halt.

“I *think* so,” said Gazell.

He stooped, after a moment’s hesitation, and picked up the phial from the floor, read its label; laid it down, looked at the child, and hesitated again.

The mother at this juncture sunk upon her knees and bowed her shining face. I thought she seemed to be at prayer. I too bowed my head; but it was for reverence at the sight of her. It was long since I had prayed. I did not find it natural to do so. A strange discontent, something almost like an inclination to prayer, came upon me. But that was all. I would rather have had the power to turn those two men out of the room, and pour the saving remedy upon my little patient’s burning tongue with my own flesh-and-blood fingers, and a hearty objurgation on the professional blunder which I had come in time to rectify.

“Dr. Halt,” said Dr. Gazell slowly, “with your approval I think I will change my mind. On the whole, the indications point to—this. I trust it is the appropriate remedy.”

He removed the cork from the phial as he spoke, and, rising, passed quickly to the bedside of the child.

The mother had now arisen from her knees, and followed him, and got her arms about the boy again, and set her soul to brooding over him in the way that loving women have. I was of no further service to her, and I had vanished from her thought, which had no more room at that moment for anything except the child than the arms with which she clasped him.

It amazed me—I was going to say it appalled me—that no person in the room should seem to have consciousness of her presence. She was like an invisible star. How incredible that love like that, and the power of it, could be dependent upon the paltry senses of what are called live people for so much as the proofs of its existence.

“It is not scientific,” I caught myself saying, as I turned away, “there is a flaw in the logic somewhere. There seems to be a snapped link between two sets of facts. There is no deficiency of data; the difficulty lies wholly in collating them.”

How; indeed, should I—how did I but a few days since—myself regard such “data” as presumed to indicate the continuance of human life beyond the point of physical decay!

“After all,” I thought, as I wandered from the house in which I felt myself forgotten and superfluous, and pursued my lonely way, I knew not whither and I knew not why,—“after all, there *is* another life. I really did not think it.”

It seemed now to have been an extraordinary narrowness of intellect in me that I had not at least attached more weight to the universal human hypothesis. I did not precisely wonder from a personal point of view that I had not definitely believed it; but I wondered that I had not given the possibility the sort of attention which a view of so much dignity deserved. It really annoyed me that I had made that kind of mistake.

We, at least, were alive,—my old patient and I. Whether others, or how many, or of what sort, I could not tell; I had yet seen no other spirit. What was the life-force in this new condition of things? Where was the central cell? What *made* us go on living? Habit? Or selection? Thought? Emotion? Vigor? If the last, what species of vigor? What was that in the individual which gave it strength to stay? Whence came the reproductive power which was able to carry on the species under such terrible antagonism as the fact of death? If in the body, where was the common element between that attenuated invalid and my robust organization? If in the soul, between the suffering saint and the joyous man of the world, where again was our common moral protoplasm?

Nothing occurred to me at the time, at least, as offering any spiritual likeness between myself and Mrs. Faith, but the fact that we were both people of strong affections which had been highly cultivated. Might not a woman *love* herself into continued existence who felt for any creature what she did for that child?

And I—God knew; if there were a God, how it was with me. If I had never done anything, if I had never been anything, if I had never felt anything else in all my life, that was fit to *last*, I had loved one woman, and her only, and had thought high thoughts for her, and felt great emotions for her, and forgotten self for her sake, and thought it sweet to suffer for her, and been a better man for love of her. And I had loved her,—oh, I had so loved her, that I knew in my soul ten thousand deaths could not murder that living love.

And I had spoken to her—I had said to her—like any low and brutal fellow; any common wife-tormentor—I had gone from her dear presence to this mute life wherein there was neither speech nor language; where neither earth, nor heaven, nor my love, nor my remorse, nor all my anguish, nor my shame, could give my sealed lips the power to say, Forgive.

Now; while I was cast thus abroad upon the night,—for it was night,—sorely shaken and groaning in spirit, taking no care where my homeless feet should lead me, I lifted my eyes

suddenly, and looked straight on before me, and behold! shining afar, fair and sweet and clear, I saw and recognized the lights of my own home.

I was still at some distance from the spot, and, beside myself with joy, I started to run unto it. With the swift motions which spirits make, and which I was beginning to master in a clumsy manner and low degree, I came, compassing the space between myself and all I loved or longed for, and so brought myself tumultuously into the street where the house stood; there, at a stone's throw from it, I felt myself suddenly stifled with my haste, or from some cause, and, pausing (as we used to say) to gather breath, I found that I was stricken back, and fettered to the ground.

There was no wind. The night was perfectly still. Not a leaf quivered on the top-most branch of the linden which tapped our chamber-window. Yet a Power like a mighty rushing blast gainsaid me and smote me where I was.

Not a step, though I writhed for it, not a breath nearer, though my heart should break for it, could I take or make to reach her. This was my doom. Almost within clasp of her dear arms, within sight of her sweet face,—for there! while I stood struggling, I saw a woman's shadow rise and stir upon the dimly lighted wall,—thus to be denied and bidden back from her seemed to me more than heart could bear.

While I stood, quite unmanned by what had happened, incredulous of my punishment, and yearning to her through the little distance, and stretching out my hands toward her, and brokenly babbling her dear name, she moved, and I saw her distinctly, even as I had seen her that last time. She stood midway between the unlighted parlor and the lighted library beyond. The drop-light with the scarlet shade blazed behind her.

I noticed that to-night, as on that other night, the baby was not with her; and I wondered why. She stood alone. She moved up and down the room; she had a weary step. Her dress, I saw; was black, dead black. Her white hands, clasped before her, shone with startling brilliancy upon the sombre stuff she wore. Her lovely head was bent a little, and she seemed to be gazing at me whom she could not see. Then I cried with such a cry, it seemed as if the very living must needs hear:—

“Helen! Helen! *Helen!*”

But she stood quite still; leaning her pale face toward me, like some listening creature that was stricken deaf.

The sight was more sorrowful than I could brave; for the first time since I had died I succumbed into something like a swoon, and lost my miserable consciousness in the street before her door.

When I came again to myself I found that what I should once have called a “phenomenon” had taken place. The city, the dim street, the familiar architecture of my home, the streams of light from the long windows, the leaves of the linden tapping on the glass, the woman's shadow on the wall, and the stirring toward me of the form and face I loved,—these had vanished.

I was in a strange place; and I was a stranger in it. It seemed rather a lonely place at first, though it was not unpleasing to me as I looked abroad, The scenery was mountainous and solemn, but it was therefore on a large scale and restful to the eye. It had more grandeur than beauty, to my first impression; but I remembered that I was not in a condition of mind to be receptive of the merely beautiful, which might exist for me without my perception of it, even as the life of the dead existed without the perception of the living. Death, if it had taught me less up

to that time than it might have done to nobler men, had at least done so much as this: it had accustomed me to respect the unseen, and to regard its possible action upon the seen as a matter of import. As I looked forth upon the hills and skies, the plains and forests, and on to the distant signs of human habitation in the scenery about me, I thought:—

“I am in a world where it is probable that there exist a thousand things which I cannot understand to one which I can.”

It seemed to me a very uncomfortable state of affairs, whatever it was. I felt estranged from this place, even before I was acquainted with it. Nothing in my nature responded to its atmosphere; or, if so, petulantly and with a kind of helpless antagonism, like the first cry of the new-born infant in the old life.

As I got myself languidly to my feet, and idly trod the path which lay before me, for lack of knowing any better thing to do, I began to perceive that others moved about the scene; that I was not, as I had thought, alone, but one of a company, each going on his errand as he would. I only seemed to have no errand; and I was at a great distance from these people, whose presence, however, though so remote, gave me something of the sense of companionship which one whose home is in a lonely spot upon a harbor coast has in watching the head-lights of anchored ships upon dark nights. Communication there is none, but desolation is less for knowing that there could be, or for fancying that there might.

Across the space between us, I looked upon my fellow-citizens in this new country, with a dull emotion not unlike gratitude for their existence; but I felt little curiosity about them. I was too unhappy to be so easily diverted. It seemed to me that the memory of my wife would become a mania to me, if I could in no way make known to her how utterly I loved her and how I scorned myself I cannot say that I felt much definite interest in the novel circumstances surrounding me, except as possible resources for some escape from the situation, as it stood between herself and me. If I could compass any means of communicating with her, I believed that I could accept my doom, let it take me where it might or make of me what it would.

Walking thus drearily, alone, and not sorry to be alone in that unfamiliar company, lost in the fixed idea of my own misery, I suddenly heard light footsteps hurrying behind me. I thought:—
“There is another spirit; one more of the newly dead, come to this strange place.”

But I did not find it worth my while to turn and greet him, being so wrapt in my own fate; and when a soft hand touched my arm, I moved from it with something like dismay.

“Why, Doctor!” said the gentle voice of Mrs. Faith, “did I startle you? I have been hunting for you everywhere,” she added, laughing lightly. “I was afraid you would feel rather desolate. It is a pity. Now; I am as *happy!*”

“Did Charley live?” I asked immediately.

“Oh yes, Charley lived; what we used to call living, when we were there. Poor Charley! I keep thinking how he would enjoy everything if he were here with me. But his father needed him. It makes me so happy! I am very happy! Tell me, Doctor, what do you think of this place? How does it strike you?”

“It is a foreign country,” I said sadly.

“Is it, Doctor? Poor Doctor! Why, I feel so much at *home!*”

She lifted a radiant face to me; it was touching to see her expression, and marvelous to behold the idealization of health on features for so many years adjusted to pain and patience.

“Dear Doctor!” she cried joyously, “you never thought to see me *well!* They call this death. Why, I never knew what it was to be *alive* before!”

“I must make you acquainted with some of the people who live here,” she added, quickly recalling herself from her own interests to mine, with her natural unselfishness, “it is pitiful to come into this place—as you have done. You always knew so many people. You had such friends about you. I never saw you walk alone in all your life before.”

“I wish to be alone,” I answered moodily. “I care nothing for this place, or for the men who live here. It is all unfamiliar to me. I am not happy in it. I am afraid I have not been educated for it. It is the most unhomelike place I ever saw

Her eyes filled; she did not answer me at once; when she did it was to say:

“It will be better. It will be better by and by. Have you seen?”—

She stopped and hesitated.

“Have you seen the Lord?” she asked, in a low voice. She was wont, I remember, to use this word in a way peculiarly her own; as if she were referring to some personal acquaintance, near to her heart. I shook my head, looking drearily upon her.

“Don’t you *want* to see Him?”

“I want to see my wife!”

“Oh, I am sorry for you,” she said, with forbearing gentleness. “It is pretty hard. But I wish you *wanted* Him.”

“I want to see my wife! I want to see my wife!” I interrupted bitterly. And with this I turned away from her and hid my face, for I could speak no more. When I lifted my eyes, she had gone from me, and I was again alone. When it was thus too late, it occurred to me that I had lost an opportunity which might not easily return to me, and I sought far and wide for Mrs. Faith. I did not find her, though I aroused myself to the point of accosting some of the inhabitants of the country, and making definite inquiries for her. I was answered with great courtesy and uncommon warmth of manner, as if it were the custom of this place to take a genuine interest in the affairs of strangers; but I was not able, by any effort on my part, to bring myself in proximity to her. This trifling disappointment added to my sense of helplessness in the new life on which I had entered; and I was still as incredulous of helplessness and as galled by it as I should have been by the very world of woe which had formed so irritating a dogma to me in the theology of my day on earth, and which I had regarded as I did the nightmares of a dyspeptic patient.

In this state of feeling, it was the greatest comfort to me when, at some period of time which I have no means of defining, but which could not have been long afterward, Mrs. Faith came suddenly again across my path. She radiated happiness and health and beauty, and when she held out both her hands to me in greeting they seemed to glitter, as if she had stepped from a bath of delight.

“Oh,” she said joyously, “have you seen Him *yet*?” It embarrassed me to be forced to answer in the negative; it gave me a strange feeling, as if I had been a convict in the country, and denied the passport of honorable men. I therefore waived her question as well as I might, and proceeded to make known to her the thought which had been occupying me.

“*You* have the *entrée* of the dear earth,” I said sadly. “They do not treat you in the—in the very singular manner with which I am treated. It is important beyond explanation that I get a message to my wife. A beggar in the street may be admitted to her charity,—I saw one at the door the night I stood there. I, only I, am forbidden to enter. Whatever may be the natural laws which are set in opposition to me, they have extraordinary force; I can do nothing against them. I suppose I do not understand them. If I had an opportunity to study them—but I have no opportunities at anything. It is a new experience to me to be so—so disregarded by the general scheme of things. I seem to be of no more consequence in this place than a bootblack was in the world; or a

paralytic person. It seems useless for me to fly in the face of fate, since this is fate. I have no hope of being able to reach my wife. You have privileges in this condition which are evidently far superior to mine. I have been thinking that possibly you may be able—and willing—to approach her for me?”

“I don’t think it would succeed, Doctor,” replied my old patient quickly. “I’d *do* it! You know I would! But if I were Helen—She is a very reserved person; she never talks about her husband, as different women do; her feeling is of such a sort; I do not think she would *understand*, if another woman were to speak from you to her.”

“Perhaps not,” I sighed.

“I am afraid it would be the most hopeless experiment you could make,” said Mrs. Faith. “She loves you too much for it,” she added, with the divination of her sex. Comforted a little by Mrs. Faith, I quickly abandoned this project; indeed, I soon abandoned every other which concerned itself with Helen, and yielded myself with a kind of desperate lethargy, if I may be allowed the expression, to the fate which separated me from her. Of resignation I knew nothing. Peace was the coldest stranger in that strange land to me. I yielded because I could not help it, not because I would have willed it; and with that dull strength which grows into the sinews of the soul from necessity, sought to adjust myself in such fashion as I might to my new conditions. It occurred to me from time to time that it would have been an advantage if I had felt more interest in the conditions themselves; that it would even have spared me something if I had ever cultivated any familiarity with the possibilities of such a state of existence. I could not remember that I had in the old life satisfactorily proved that another *could* not follow it. It seemed to me that if I had only so much as exercised my imagination upon the possible course of events in case another *did*, it would have been of some practical service to me now I was in the position of a man who is become the victim of a discovery whose rationality he has contemptuously denied. It was like being struck by a projectile while one is engaged in disproving the existence of gunpowder.

If a soul may properly be said to be stunned, mine, at this time, was that soul.

In this condition solitude was still so natural to me that I made no effort to approach the people of the place, and contented myself with observing them and their affairs from a distance. They seemed a very happy people. There could be no mistake about that. I did not see a clouded countenance; nor did I hear an accent of discomfort, or of pain. I wondered at their joyousness, which I found it as impossible to share as the sick find it impossible to share what has been called “the insolence of health.” It did, indeed, appear to me as something almost impertinent, as possession always appears to denial. But I had never been denied before. I perceived, also, that the inhabitants of this country were a busy people. They came and went, they met and parted, with the eagerness of occupation; though there was a conspicuous absence of the fretful haste to which I had been used in the conduct of business. I looked upon the avocations of this strange land, and wondered at them. I could not see with what they were occupied, or why, or to what end. They affected me perhaps something as the concerns of the human race may affect the higher animals. I looked on with an unintelligent envy.

One day, as I was strolling miserably about, a child came up and spoke to me. He, like myself was alone. He was a beautiful child, a little boy; he seemed scarcely more than an infant, He appeared to be in search of some one or of something; his brilliant eyes roved everywhere; he had a noble little head, and carried himself courageously. He gave no evidence of fear or sadness at his isolated position, but ran right on,—for he was running when I saw him,—as if he had gone forth upon some happy, childish errand.

But at sight of me he paused; regarded me a moment with the piercing candor of childhood, as if he took my moral measure after some inexplicable personal scale of his own; then came directly and put his hand into my own.

I grasped it heartily,—who could have helped it?—and lifting the little fellow in my arms kissed him affectionately, as one does a pretty stranger child. This seemed to gratify him rather than to satisfy him; he nestled in my neck, but moved restlessly, slipping to the ground, and back again into my arms; jabbering incoherently and pleasantly; seeming to be diverted rather than comforted; ready to stay, but alert to go; in short, behaving like a baby on a visit. After awhile the child adjusted himself to the situation; grew quiet, and clung to me; and at last, putting both his arms about my neck, he gave the long, sweet sigh of healthy infant weariness, and babbling something to the general effect that Boy was tired, he dropped into a sound and happy sleep.

Here, indeed, was a situation! It drew from me the first smile which had crossed my lips since I had died. What, pray, was I, who seemed to be of no consequence whatever' in this amazing country, and who had more than I knew how to do in looking after myself under its mysterious conditions,—what was I to do with a spirit-baby gone to sleep upon my neck?

“I must go and find the Orphan Asylum,” I thought; “doubtless they have them in this extraordinary civilization, I must take the little fellow to some women as soon as possible.” At this juncture, my friend Mrs. Faith appeared, making a mock of being out of breath, and laughing heartily.

“He ran away from me,” she merrily explained. “I had the care of him, and he ran on; he came straight to you. I couldn't hold him. What a comfort he will be to you! . . . Why Doctor! Do you mean to say you don't know who the child *is*?”

“It seems to me,” she added, with a mother's sublime superiority, “I should know my own baby! If I were so fortunate as to find one here!—How much less you know;” she proceeded naively, “than I used to think you did!”

“Did the child *die*?” I asked, trembling so that I had to put the little fellow down lest he should fall from my startled arms, “did something really ail him that night when his mother—that miserable night?”

“The child died,” she answered gravely. “Dear little Boy! Take him up again, Doctor. Don't you see? He is uneasy unless you hold him fast.”

I took Boy up; I held him close; I kissed him, and I clung to him and melted into unintelligible cries above him, never minding Mrs. Faith, for I quite forgot her.

But what I felt was for my child's poor mother, and all my thought was for her, and my heart broke for her, that she should be so bereft.

“I should like to know if you supposed for one minute that she wouldn't *rather* you would have the little fellow; if he is the least bit of comfort to you in the world?”

Mrs. Faith said this; she spoke with a kind of lofty, feminine scorn.

“Why, Helen *loves* you!” she said, superbly.

“I believe,” said my old patient, “I believe that was the highest moment of your life.”

A man of my sort seldom comprehends a woman of hers, I did not understand her, and I told her so, looking at her across the clinging child.

“There was no self *in* it!” she answered eagerly.

“Oh,” I said indifferently, “is that all?”

“It is everything” replied the wiser spirit, “in the place that we have come to. It is like a birth. Such a moment has to go on living. One is never the same after as one was before it. Changes follow. May the Lord be in them!”

“But stay!” I cried, as she made a signal of farewell, “are you not going to help me—is nobody going to help me take care of this child?”

She shook her head, smiling; then laughed outright at my perplexity; and with a merry air of enjoyment in my extraordinary position, she went her ways and left me.

There now began for me a singular life. Changes followed, as Mrs. Faith had said. The pains and the privileges of isolation were possible to me no longer. Action of some sort, communion of some kind with the world in which I lived, became one of the imperative necessities about which men do not philosophize. For there was the boy! Whatever my views about a spiritual state of existence, there always was the boy. No matter how I had demonstrated the unreasonableness of living after death, the child was alive. However I might personally object to my own share of immortality, I was a living father, with my motherless baby in my arms.

Up to this time I had lived in an indifferent fashion; in the old world, we should have called it “anyhow.” Food I scarcely took, or if at all, it was to snatch at such wild fruits as grew directly before me, without regard to their fitness or palatableness; paying, in short, as little attention to the subject as possible. Home I had none. I wandered till I was weary of wandering, and rested till I could rest no more; seeking such shelter as the country afforded me in lonely and beautiful spots; discontented with what I had, but desiring nothing further; with my own miserable thoughts for housemates and for neighbors, and the absence of hope forbidding the presence of energy. Nothing that I could see interested me. Much or most that I took the trouble to observe, I should have been frankly obliged to admit that I did not understand.

The customs of the people bewildered me. Their evident happiness irritated me. Their activity produced in me only the desire to get out of sight of it. Their personal health and beauty—for they were a very comely people—gave me something the kind of nervous shrinking that I had so often witnessed in the sick, when some buoyant, inconsiderate, bubbling young creature burst into the room of pain. I felt in the presence of the universal blessedness about me like some hurt animal, who cares only to crawl in somewhere and be forgotten. If I drew near, as I had on several occasions done, to give some attention to the occupations of the inhabitants, all these feelings were accentuated so much that I was fain to withdraw before I had studied the subject.

Study there was in that country, and art and industry; even traffic, if traffic it might be called; it seemed to be an interchange of possessions, conducted upon principles of the purest consideration for the public, as opposed to personal welfare.

Homes there were, and the construction of them, and the happiest natural absorption in their arrangement and management. There were families and household devotion; parents, children, lovers, neighbors, friends. I saw schools and other resorts of learning, and what seemed to be institutions of benevolence and places of worship, a series of familiar and yet wholly unfamiliar sights. In them all existed a spirit, even as the spirit of man exists in his earthly body, which was and willed and acted as that does, and which, like that, defied analysis. I could perceive at the hastiest glance that these people conducted themselves upon a set of motives entirely strange to me. What they were doing—what they were doing it for—I simply did not know. A great central purpose controlled them, such as controls masses of men in battle or at public prayer; a powerful and universal Law had hold of them; they treated it as if they loved it. They seemed to feel affectionately toward the whole system of things. They loved, and thought, and wrought straight

onward with it; no one put the impediment of a criticism against it,—no one that I could see or suspect, in all the place, except my isolated self. They had the air of those engaged in some sweet and solemn object, common to them all; an object, evidently set above rather than upon the general level. Their faces shone with pleasure and with peace. Often they wore a high, devout book. They never showed an irritated expression, never an anxious nor that I could see a sad one. It was impossible to deny the marked nobility of their appearance.

“If this,” I thought, “be what is called a spiritual life, I was not ready to become a spirit.”

Now; when my child awakened and called me, as he had begun, in the dear old days on earth, to learn to do, and like any live human baby proceeded to give vent to a series of incoherent remarks bearing upon the fact that Boy would like his supper, I was fain to perceive that being a spirit did not materially change the relation of a man to the plainer human duties; and that, whether personally agreeable or no, I must needs bring myself into some sort of connection with the civilization about me. I might be a homesick fellow; but the baby was hungry. I might be at odds with the whole scheme of things, but the child must have a shelter. I might be a spiritual outcast, but what was to become of Boy? The heart of the father arose in me; and, gathering the little fellow to my breast, I set forth quickly to the nearest town.

Here, after some hesitation, I accosted a stranger, whose appearance pleased me, and besought his assistance in my perplexity. He was a man of lofty bearing; his countenance was strong and benign as the western wind; he had a gentle smile, but eyes which piercingly regarded me. He was of superior beauty, and conducted himself as one having authority. He was much occupied, and hastening upon some evidently important errand; but he stopped at once, and gave his attention to me with the hearty interest in others characteristic of the people.

“Are you a stranger in the country—but newly come to us?”

“A stranger, sir, but not newly arrived.”

“And the child?”

“The child ran into my arms about an hour ago.”

“Is the boy yours?”

“He is my only child.”

“What do you desire for him?”

“I would fain provide for him those things which a father must desire. I seek food and shelter. I wish a home, and means of subsistence, and neighborhood, and the matters which are necessary to the care and comfort of an infant. Pray, counsel me. I do not understand the conditions of life in this remarkable place.”

“I do not know that it is of consequence that I should,” I added, less courteously, “but I cannot see the boy deprived. He must be made comfortable as speedily as possible. I shall be obliged to you for some suggestion in the matter.”

“Come hither,” replied the stranger, laconically. Forthwith, he led me, saying nothing further, and I followed, asking nothing more.

This embarrassed me somewhat, and it was with some discomfort that I entered the house of entertainment to which I was directed, and asked for those things which were needful for my child. These were at once and lavishly provided. It soon proved that I had come to a luxurious and hospitable place. The people were most sympathetic in their manner. Boy especially excited the kindest of attention; some women fondled him, and all the inmates of the house interested themselves in the little motherless spirit.

In spite of myself this touched me, and my heart warmed toward my entertainers.

“Tell me,” I said, turning toward him who had brought me thither, “how shall I make compensation for my entertainment? What is the custom of the country? I—what we used to call property—you will understand that I necessarily left behind me. I am accustomed to the use of it. I hardly know what to do without it. I am accustomed to—some abundance. I wish to remunerate the people of this house.”

“What *did* you bring with you?” asked my new acquaintance, with a half-sorrowful look, as if he would have helped me out of an unpleasant position if he could.

“Nothing,” I replied, after some thought, “nothing but my misery. That does not seem to be a marketable commodity in this happy place. I could spare some, if it were.”

“What had you?” pursued my questioner, without noticing my ill-timed satire. “What were your possessions in the life yonder?”

“Health. Love. Happiness. Home. Prosperity. Work. Fame. Wealth. Ambition.” I numbered these things slowly and bitterly “None of them did I bring with me. I have lost them all upon the way. They do not serve me in this differing civilization.”

“Was there by chance nothing more?”

“Nothing more. Unless you count a little incidental usefulness.”

“And that?” he queried eagerly.

I therefore explained to him that I had been a very busy doctor; that I used to think I took pleasure in relieving the misery of the sick, but that it seemed a mixed matter now; as I looked back upon it,—so much love of fame, love of power, love of love itself,—and that I did not put forth my life’s work as of importance in his scale of value.

“That would not lessen its value,” replied my friend. “I myself was a healer of the sick. Your case appeals to me. I was know as”—He whispered a name which gave me a start of pleasure. It was a name famous in its day, and that a day long before my own; a name immortal in medical history. Few men in the world had done as much as this one to lessen the sum of human suffering. It excited me greatly to meet him.

“But you,” I cried, “you were not like the rest of us or the most of us. *You* believed in these—invisible things. You were a man of what is called faith, I have often thought of that. I never laid down a biography of you without wondering that a man of your intelligence should retain that superstitious element of character. I ought to beg your pardon for the adjective. I speak as I have been in the habit of speaking.”

“Do you wonder now?” asked the great surgeon, smiling benignly. I shook my head. I wondered at nothing now.

But I felt myself incapable of discussing a set of subjects upon which, for the first time in my life, I now knew myself to be really uninformed.

I took the pains to explain to my new friend that in matters of what he would call spiritual import I was, for aught I knew to the contrary, the most ignorant person in the community. I added that I supposed he would expect me to feel humiliated by this.

“Do you?” he asked, abruptly.

“It makes me uncomfortable,” I replied, candidly. “I don’t know that I can say more than that. I find it embarrassing.”

“That is straightforward,” said the great physician. “There is at least no diseased casuistry about you. I do not regard the indications as unfavorable.”

He said this with something of the professional matter; it amused me, and I smiled. “Take the case, Doctor, if you will,” I humbly said. “I could not have happened on any person to whom I would have been so willing to intrust it.”

“We will consider the question,” he said gravely.

In this remarkable community, and under the guidance of this remarkable man, I now began a difficult and to me astonishing life. The first thing which happened was not calculated to soothe my personal feeling: this was no less than the discovery that I really had nothing wherewith to compensate the citizens who had provided for the comfort of my child and of myself in short, that I was no more nor less than an object of charity at their hands. I writhed under this, as may be well imagined; and with more impatience than humility urged that I be permitted to perform some service which at least would bring me into relation with the commercial system of the country. I was silenced by being gently asked: What could I do?

“But have you no sick here?” I pleaded, “no hospitals or places of need? I am not without experience, I may say that I am even not without attainment, in my profession. Is there no use for it all, in this state of being which I have come to?”

“Sick we have,” replied the surgeon, “and hospitals. I myself am much occupied in one of these. But the diseases that men bring here are not of the body. Our patients are chiefly from among the newly arrived, like yourself they are those who are at odds with the spirit of the place; hence they suffer discomfort.”

“They do not harmonize with the environment, I suppose,” I interrupted eagerly. I was conscious of a wish to turn the great man’s thought from a personal to a scientific direction. It occurred to me with dismay that I might be selected yet to become a patient under this extraordinary system of things. That would be horrible. I could think of nothing worse.

I proceeded to suggest that if anything could be found for me to do, in this superior art of healing, or if, indeed, I could study and perfect myself in it, I was more than willing to learn, or to perform.

“Canst thou heal a sick spirit?” inquired my friend, solemnly. “Canst thou administer holiness to a sinful soul?”

I bowed my head before him; for I had naught to say. Alas, what art had I, in that high science so far above me, that my earth-bound gaze had never reached unto it?

I was not like my friend, who seemed to have carried on the whole range of his great earthly attainments, by force of what I supposed would have to be called his spiritual education. Here in this world of spirits I was an unscientific, uninstructed fellow.

“Give me” I said brokenly, “but the lowliest chance to make an honorable provision for the comfort of my child in your community. I ask no more.”

The boy ran chattering to me as I said these words; he sprang and clasped my knees, and clasped my neck, and put his little lips to mine, and rubbed his warm, moist curbs across my cheek, and asked me where his mother was. And then he crooned my own name over and again, and kissed and kissed me, and did stroke me with such pretty excesses of his little tenderness that I took heart and held him fast, and loved him and blessed fate for him, as much as if I had not been a spirit; more than any but a lonely and remorseful spirit could.

In consequence, as I suspected, of some private influence on the part of my famous friend, whose importance in this strange world seemed scarcely below that which he held in the other,—a marked contrast to my own lot, which has been thus far in utter reversal of every law and every fact of my earthly life,—a humble position was found for me, connected with the great institution of healing which he superintended; and here, for an indefinite time, I worked and

served. I found myself of scarcely more social importance than, let us say, the janitor or steward in my old hospital at home. This circumstance, however galling, could no longer surprise me. I had become familiar enough with the economy of my new surroundings now thoroughly to understand that I was destitute of the attainments which gave men eminence in them. I was conscious that I had become an obscure person; nay, more than this, that I had barely brought with me the requisites for being tolerated at all in the community. It had begun to be evident to me that I was fortunate in obtaining any kind of admission to citizenship. This alone was an experience so novel to me that it was an occupation in itself, for a time, to adjust myself to it.

I now established myself with my boy in such a home as could be made for us, under the circumstances. It was far inferior to most of the homes which I observed about me; but the child lacked no necessary comfort, and the luxuries of a spiritual civilization I did not personally crave; they had a foreign air to me, as the customs of the Tuileries might have had to Pocahontas.

With dull gratitude for such plain possessions as now were granted to me, I set myself to my daily tasks, and to the care and rearing of my child.

Work I found an unqualified mercy. It even occurred to me to be thankful for it, and to desire to express what I felt about it to the unknown Fate or Force which was controlling my history. I had been all my life such a busy man that the vacuity of my first experience after dying had chafed me terribly. To be of no consequence; not to be in demand; not to be depended upon by a thousand people, and for a thousand things; not to dash somewhere upon important errands; not to feel that a minute was a treasure, and that mine were valued as hid treasures; not to know that my services were superior; to feel the canker of idleness eat upon me like one of the diseases which I had considered impossible to my organization; to observe the hours, which had hitherto been invisible, like rear forces pushing me to the front; to watch the crippled moments, which had always flown past me like mocking-birds; to know to the full the absence of movement in life; to feel deficiency of purpose like paralysis stiffen me; to have no hope of anything better, and not to know what worse might be before me,—such had been my first experience of the new life. It had done as much as this for me: it had fitted me for the humblest form of activity which my qualifications made possible; it had taught me the elements of gratitude for an improved condition, as suffering, when it vibrates to the intermission of relief teaches cheerfulness to the sick.

An appreciable sense of gratification, which, if it could not be called pleasure, was at least a diminution of pain, came to me from the society of my friend, the distinguished man and powerful spirit who had so befriended me. I admit that I was glad to have a man to deal with; though I did not therefore feel the less a loyalty to my dear and faithful patient, whose services to me had been so true and tender. I missed her. I needed her counsel about the child. I would fain have spoken to her of many little matters. I watched for her, and wondered that she came no more to us. Although so new a comer, Mrs. Faith proved to be a person of position in the place; her name was well and honorably known about the neighborhood; and I therefore easily learned that she was absent on a journey. It was understood that she had been called to her old home, where for some reason her husband and her child had need of her. It was her precious privilege to minister to them, I knew not how; it was left to me to imagine why. Bitterly I thought of Helen. Between herself and me the awful gates of death had shut; to pass them, though I would have died again for it,—to pass them, for one hour, for one moment, for love's sake, for grief's sake, or for shame's, or for pity's own,—I was forbidden.

I had confided the circumstances of my parting from my wife to no one of my new acquaintances. In the high order of character pervading these happy people, such a confession would have borne the proportions that a crime might in the world below Bearing my secret in my

own heart, I felt like a felon in this holier society. I cherished it guiltily and miserably, as solitary people do such things; it seemed to me like an ache which I should go on bearing forever. I remembered how men on earth used to trifle with a phrase called endless punishment. What worse punishment were there, verily, than the consciousness of having done the sort of deed that I had? It seemed to me, as I brooded over it, one of the saddest in the universe. I became what I should once have readily called "morbid" over this thought. There seemed to me nothing in the nature of remorse itself which should, if let alone, ever come to a visible end. My longing for the forgiveness of my wife gnawed upon me.

Sometimes I tried to remind myself that I was as sure of her love and of her mercy as the sun was of arising beyond the linden that tapped the chamber window in my dear lost honie; that her unfathomable tenderness, so far passing the tenderness of women, leaned out, as ready to take me back to itself as her white arms used to be to take me to her heart, when I came later than usual, after a hard day's work, tired and weather-beaten, into the house, hurrying and calling to her.

"Helen? Helen?"

But the anguish of the thought blotted the comfort out of it, till, for very longing for her, I would fain almost have forgotten her; and then I would pray never to forget her before I had forgotten, for I loved her so that I would rather think of her and suffer because of her than not to think of her at all. In all this memorable and unhappy period, my boy was the solace of my soul. I gave myself to the care of him lovingly, and as nearly as I can recollect I did not chafe against the narrow limits of my lot in that respect.

It occurred to me sometimes that I should once have called this a humble service to be the visible boundary of a man's life. To what had all those old attainments come? Command of science? Developed skill? Public power? Extended fame? All those forms of personality which go with intellectual position and the use of it? Verily, I was brought to lowly tasks; we left them to women in the world below. But really, I think this troubled me less than it might have done; perhaps less than it should have done. I accepted the strange reversal of my fate as one accepts any turn of affairs which, he is convinced, is better than he might have expected. It had begun to be evident to me that it was better than I had deserved. If I am exceptional in being forced to admit that this consciousness was a novelty in my experience, the admission is none the less necessary for that. I had been in the habit of considering myself rather a good fellow, as a man with no vices in particular is apt to. I had possessed no standards of life below which my own fell to an embarrassing point. The situation to which I was now brought, was not unlike that of one who finds himself in a land where there are new and delicate instruments for indicating the state of the weather. I was aware, and knew that my neighbors were, of fluctuations in the moral atmosphere which had never before come under my attention. The whole subtle and tremendous force of public sentiment now bore upon me to make me uneasy before achievements with which I had hitherto been complacent. It had inconceivable effects to live in a community where spiritual character formed the sole scale of social position.

I, who had been always socially distinguished, found myself now exposed to incessant mortifications, such as spring from the fact that one is of no consequence.

I should say, however, that I felt this much less for myself than for my child; indeed, that it was because of Boy that I first felt the fact at all, or brooded over it after I had begun to feel it.

The little fellow developed rapidly, much faster than children of his age do in the human life; he ceased to be a baby, and was a little boy while I was yet wondering what I should do with him when he had outgrown his infancy. His intellect, his character, his physique, lifted themselves

with a kind of luxuriance of growth, such as plants show in tropical countries; he blossomed as a thing does which has every advantage and no hindrance; nature moved magnificently to her ends in him; it was a delight to watch such vigorous processes; he was a rich, unthwarted little creature. With all a father's heart and a physician's sensibility, I was proud of him.

I was proud of him, alas! until I began to perceive that, as matters were working, the boy was morally certain to be ashamed of me. This was a hard discovery; and it went hard with me after I had made it. But nothing could reduce the poignancy of the inquiry with which I had first gathered him to my heart, in the solitudes where he had found me lurking: "If I were a spiritual outcast, what would become of Boy?"

As the child waxed in knowledge and in strength, questions like these dropped from his lips so frequently that they distressed me:—

"Papa, what is God?"

"Papa, who is worship?"

"Tell me how boys pray."

"Is it a kind of game?"

"What is Christ, papa? Is it people's Mother? What is it for?"

My friend, the eminent surgeon, left me much to myself in these perplexities; regarding my natural reserve, and trusting, I thought, to nature, or to some Power beyond nature, to assist me. But on one occasion, happening to be present when the child interrogated me in this manner, he bent a piercing gaze upon me.

"Why do you not answer the child, Esmerald Thorne?" he asked me in a voice of authority.

"Alas," I said, "I have no answer. I know nothing of these matters. They have been so foreign to my temperament, that—I"—

But here I faltered. I felt ashamed of my excuse, and of myself for offering it.

"It is a trying position for a man to be put in," I ventured to add, putting an arm about my boy; "naturally, I wish my child to develop in accordance with the social and educational system of the place."

"Naturally, I should suppose," replied he, dryly. He offered me no further suggestion on the subject, and with some severity of manner moved to leave me. Now it happened to be the vesper hour in the hospital, and my visitor was going to his patients, the "sick of soul," with whom he was wont to join in the evening chant which, at a certain hour, daily arose from every roof in the wide city, and waxed mightily to the skies. It was music of a high order, and I always enjoyed it; no person of any musical taste could have done otherwise.

"Listen!" said my friend, as he turned to depart from me. I had only to glance at his rapt and noble countenance to perceive the high acoustic laws which separated his sensibility to the vesper from my own. To him it was religious expression. To me it was classical music.

While I was thus thinking, from the great wards of the Home of Healing the prayer went up. The sinful, the sorely stricken, the ungodly, the ignorant of heavenly mercy, all the diseased of spirit who were gathered there in search of the soul's health, sang together: not as the morning-stars which shouted for joy, but like the living hearts that cried for purity; yea, like hearts that so desired it, they would have broken for it, and blessed God.

"God is a Spirit. God is a Spirit. We would worship Him. We would worship Him in spirit. Yea, in spirit. And in truth."

My little boy was playing in the garden, decking himself with the strange and beautiful flowers which luxuriated in the spot. I remember that he had tall white lilies and scarlet passion flowers, or something like them, held above one shoulder, and floating like a banner in the bright, white air. He was absorbed in his sport, and had the sweet intentness of expression between the eyes that his mother used to wear. When the vesper anthems sounded out, the child stopped, and turned his nobly moulded head toward the unseen singers. A puzzled and afterward a saddened look clouded his countenance; he listened for a moment, and then walked slowly to me, trailing the white and scarlet flowers in the grass behind him as he came.

“Father, teach me how to sing! The other children do. I’m the only little boy I know that can’t sing that nice song. Teach me it!” he demanded.

“Alas, my son!” I answered, “how can I teach you that which I myself know not?”

“I thought boys’ fathers knew everything,” objected the child, bending his brows severely on me.

A certain constraint, a something not unlike distrust, a subtle barrier which one could not define, but which one felt the more uncomfortably for this very reason, after this incident, seemed to arise in the child’s consciousness between himself and me. As docile, as dutiful, as beautiful as ever, as loving and as lovable, yet the little fellow would at times withdraw from me and stand off; as if he looked on at me, and criticised me, and kept his criticism to himself. Verily the child was growing. He had become a separate soul. In a world of souls, what was mine—miserable, ignorant, half-developed, wholly unfit—what was mine to do with his? How was I to foster him?

When I came face to face with the problem of Boy’s general education, this question pressed upon me bitterly. Looking abroad upon the people and their principles of life, the more I studied them, the more did I stand perplexed before them. I was in the centre of a vast Theocracy. Plainly, our community was but one of who knew how many?—governed by an unseen Being, upon laws of which I knew nothing. The service of this invisible Monarch vied only with the universal affection for Him. So far as I could understand the spiritual life at all, it seemed to be the highest possible development and expression of love. What these people did that was noble, pure, and fine, they did, not because they must, but because they would. They believed because they chose. They were devout because they wished to be. They were unselfish and true, and what below we should have called “unworldly” because it was the most natural thing in the world. They seemed so happy, they had such content in life, that I could have envied them from my soul.

How; now; was I to compass this national kind of happiness for my son? Misery I could bear; I was sick and sore with it, but I was used to it. My child must never suffer. Passed beyond the old system of suffering, why should he? Joy was his birthright in this blessed place.

How was I, being at discord from it, to bring my child into harmony with it? I was at odds, to start on, with the whole system of education. The letters, art, science, industry, of the country were of a sort that I knew not. They were consecrated to ends with which I was unfamiliar. They were pursued in a spirit incomprehensible to me. They were dedicated to the interests of a Being, Himself a stranger to me. Proficiency, superiority, were rated on a scale quite out of my experience. To be distinguished was to possess high spiritual traits, Deep at the root of every public custom, of every private deed, there hid the seed of one universal emotion,—the love of a living soul for the Being who had created it.

I, who knew not of this feeling, I, who was as a savage among this intelligence, who was no more than an object of charity at the hands of this community,—what had I to offer to my son?

A father's personal position? Loving influence? Power to push the little fellow to the front? A chance to endow him with every social opportunity, every educational privilege, such as it is a father's pride to enrich his child wherewith?

Nay, verily. An obscure man ignorant of the learning of the land, destitute of its wealth, unacquainted among its magnates, and without a share in its public interests—nothing was I; nothing had I; nothing could I hope to do, or be, for which my motherless boy should live to bless his father's name. Stung by such thoughts as these, which rankled the more in me the longer I cherished them, I betook myself to brooding and to solitary strolling in quiet places, where I could ponder on my situation undisturbed.

I was in great intellectual and spiritual stress, less for myself than for the child; not more for him, than because of his mother. What would Helen say? How would she hold me to account for him? How should I meet her—if I ever saw her face again—to own myself scarcely other than a pauper in this spiritual kingdom; our child an untaught, unimportant little fellow; of no more consequence in this place than the *gamins* of the street before her door?

In these cold and solitary experiences which many a man has known before me, and many more will follow after me, the soul is like a skater, separated from his fellows upon a field of ice. Every movement that he makes seems to be bearing him farther from the society and the sympathy of his kind. Too benumbed, perhaps, to turn, he glides on, helpless as an ice-boat before the wind. Conscious of his mistake, of his danger, and knowing not how to retract the one or avoid the other, his helpless motions, seemingly guided by idleness, by madness, or by folly, lead him to the last place whither he would have led himself,—the weak spot in the ice.

Suddenly, he falls crashing, and sinks. Then lo! as he goes under, crying out that he is lost because no man is with him, hands are down—stretched, swimmers plunge, the crowd gathers, and it seems the whole world stoops to save him. The sympathy of his kind wanted nothing but a chance to reach him.

I cannot tell; no man can tell such things; I cannot explain how I came to do it, or even why I came to do it. But it was on this wise with me, Being alone one evening in a forest, at twilight, taking counsel with myself and pondering upon the mystery from which I could not gather light, these words came into my heart; and when I had cherished them in my heart for a certain time, I uttered them aloud:

“Thou great God! If there be a God. Reveal Thyself unto my immortal soul! If I have a soul immortal.”

My little boy came flying to me one fair day; he cried out that he had news for me, that great things were going on in the town. A visitor was expected, whose promised arrival had set the whole place astir with joy. The child knew nothing of what or whom he spoke, but I gathered the impression that some distinguished guest was about to reach us, to whom the honors of the city would be extended. The matter did not interest me; I had so little in common with the people; and I was about to dismiss it idly, when Boy posed me by demanding that I should personally conduct him through the events of the gala day. He was unusually insistent about this; for he was

a docile little fellow; who seldom urged his will uncomfortably against my own. But in this case I could not compromise with him, and half reluctantly I yielded. I had no sooner done so than an urgent message to the same effect reached me from my friend the surgeon.

“Go with the current to-day,” he wrote; “it sets strongly. Question it not. Resist it not. Follow and be swept.”

Immediately upon this some neighbors came hurriedly in, and spoke with me of the same matter eagerly. They pleaded with me on no account to miss the event of the day, upon whose specific nature they were somewhat reticent. They evinced the warmest possible interest in my personal relation to it; as people do who possess a happy secret that they wish, but may not feel at liberty, fully to share with another.

They were excited, and overflowed with happiness. Their very presence raised my spirits. I could not remember when I had received precisely this sort of attention from my neighbors; and it was, somehow; a comfort to me. I should not have supposed that I should value being made of consequence in this trifling way; yet it warmed my heart. I felt less desolate than usual, when I took the hand of my happy boy, and set forth,

The whole vicinity was aroused. Everybody moved in one direction, like “a current,” as my friend had said. Shining, solemn, and joyous faces filled the streets and fields. The voices of the people were subdued and sweet. There was no laughter, only smiles, and gentle expectation, and low consulting together, and some there were who mused apart. The “sick of soul” were present with the happier fold: these first had a wistful look, as one of those not certain of themselves or of their welcome; but I saw that they were tenderly regarded by the more fortunate. I myself was most gently treated; many persons spoke with me, and I heard expressions of pleasure at my presence. In the crowd, as we moved on, I began to recognize here and there a face; acquaintances, whom I had known in the lower life, became visible to me. Now and then, some one, hastening by, said:—

“Why, Doctor!” and then I would perceive some old patients; the look which only loving patients wear was on their faces, the old impulse of trust and gratitude; they would grasp me heartily by the hand; this touched me; I began to feel a stir of sympathy with the general excitement; I was glad that I had joined the people.

I pressed the hand of my little boy, who was running and leaping at my side. He looked confidently up into my face, and asked me questions about the day’s event; but these I could not answer.

“God knows, my child,” I said. “Your father is not a learned man,” As we swept on, the crowd thickened visibly. The current from the city met streams from the fields, the hills, the forests; all the distance overflowed; the concourse began to become imposing. Here and there I observed still other faces that were not strange to me; flashes of recognition passed between us; some also of my own kin, dead years ago, I saw; far off, and I felt drawn to them. In the distance, not near enough to speak with her, shining and smiling, I thought that I perceived Mrs. Faith, once more. My boy threw kisses to her and laughed merrily; he was electric with the universal joy; he seemed to dance upon the air like a tuft of thistle-down; to be “light-hearted” was to be light-bodied; the little fellow’s frame seemed to exist only as the expression of his soul. I thought:—

“If he is properly educated in this place, what a spirit he will make!”

I was amazed to see his capacity for happiness. I thought of his mother. I wished to be happy, too,

Now; as we moved on toward the plain, the sound of low chanting began to swell from the crowd. The strain gained in distinctness; power gathered on it; passion grew in it; prayer

ascended from it. I could not help being moved by this billow of sweet sound. The forms and faces of the people melted together before my eyes; their outlines seemed to quiver in the flood of song; it was as if their manifold personalities blurred in the unity of their feeling; they seemed to me, as I regarded them, like the presence of one great, glad, loving human soul. This was their supplication. Thus arose the heavenly song:—

“Thou that takest away
The sins of the world!
Whosoever believeth
Shall have life.
Whosoever believeth on Thee
Shall have eternal life.
Thou that takest away
The sins of the world!
And givest—and givest
Eternal life!”

“I cannot sing that pretty song,” said my boy sadly. “There is nobody to teach me. Father, I wish you *were* a learned man!”

Now; this smote me to the heart, so that I would even have lifted my voice and sought to join the chant, for the child’s sake, and to comfort him; but when I would have done so, behold, I could not lift my soul; it resisted me like a weight too heavy for my lips; for, in this land, song never rises higher than the level of the soul; there are fine laws governing this fact whose nature I may not explain, and could not at that time even understand, but of the fact itself I testify.

“Alas, alas, my son!” I said, “would God I were!”

Now suddenly, while I was conversing with my child, I perceived a stir among the people, as if they moved to greet some person who was advancing toward them. I looked in the direction whither all eyes were turned; but I saw nothing to account for the excitement. While I stood gazing and wondering, at one movement, as if it were by one heart—beat, the great throng bowed their heads. Some object, some Presence of which I could not catch a glimpse, had entered among them. Whispers ran from lip to lip. I heard men say that He was here, that He was there, that He was yonder, that He had passed them, that He touched them.

“He blesseth me!” they murmured.

“And me! And me!”

“Oh, even me!”

I heard low cries of delight and sobs of moving tenderness. I heard strange, wistful words from the disabled of soul who were among us,—pleadings for I knew not what, offered to I knew not whom. I heard words of sorrow and words of utter love, and I saw signs of shame, and looks of rapture, and attitudes of peace and eager hope. I saw men kneeling in reverence. I saw them prostrate in petition. I saw them as if they were clinging affectionately to hands that they kissed and wept upon. I saw them bowed as one bows before the act of benediction.

These things I perceived, but alas, I could perceive no more. What went I out, with the heavenly, happy people, for to see?

Naught, God help me, worse than naught; for mine eyes were holden.

Dark amid that spiritual vision, I stood stricken. Alone in all that blessedness, was I bereft?

Whom, for very rapture, did they melt to welcome? Whom greeted they, with that great wave of love, so annihilating to their consciousness of themselves that I knew when I beheld it, I had never seen the face of Love before?

Among them all, I stood alone-blind, blind. Them I saw; and their blessedness, till I was filled with such a sacred envy of it that I would have suffered some new misery to share it. But He who did move among them thus royally and thus benignly, who passed from each man to each man, like the highest longing and the dearest wish of his own heart, who was to them one knew not whether the more of Master or of chosen Friend,—Him, alas, I saw not. To me He was denied. No spiritual optic nerve in me announced His presence. I was blind,—I was blind.

Overcome by this discovery, I did not notice that my boy had loosened his hold upon my hand until his little fingers were quite disengaged from my clasp; and then, turning to speak to him, I found that he had slipped from me in the crowd. This was so great and the absorption so universal that no one noticed the mishap; and grateful, indeed, at that miserable moment, to be unobserved, I went in search of him.

Now; I did not find the child, though I sought long and patiently; and when I was beginning to feel perplexed, and to wonder what chance could have befallen him, I turned, and behold, while I had been searching, the throng had dispersed.

Night was coming on. All the citizens were strolling to their homes. On street, and plain, and hill stirred the shadows of the departing people. They passed quietly. Every voice was hushed. All the world was as still as a heart is after prayer.

In the silent purple plain, only I was left alone. Moved by solitude, which is the soul's sincerity, I yielded myself to strange impulses, and turning to the spot, where He who was invisible had passed or seemed to pass, I sought to find upon the ground and in the dusk some chance imprint of His steps. To do this, it was necessary for me to stoop; and while I was bowed, searching for some least sign of Him, in the dew and dark, I knew not what wave of shame and sorrow came upon me, but I fell upon my knees. There was no creature to hear me, and I spoke aloud, and said:—

“Thou departest from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” .

“Lord,” I said, *“that I may receive my sight!”*

I thought I had more to say than this, but when I had uttered these words no more did follow them. They seemed to fill my soul and flood it till it overflowed,

And when I had lifted up my eyes, the first sight which did meet them was the face of my own child. I saw at once that he was quite safe and happy. But I saw that he was not alone.

One towered above me, strange and dim, who held the little fellow in His arms. When I cried out to Him, He smiled. And He did give the child to me, and spoke with me.

The natural step to knowledge is through faith. Even human science teaches as much as this. The faith of the scholar in the theoretic value of his facts precedes his intelligent use of them. Invention dreams before it does. Discovery believes before it finds. Creation imagines before it achieves.

Spiritual intelligence, when it came at last, to me, came with something of the jar of all abnormal processes. The wholesome movements of trust I had omitted from my soul's economy. The function of faith was a disused thing in me. Truth had to treat me as an undeveloped mind,

In the depth of my consciousness, I knew that, come what might, I had forever lost the chance to be a symmetrical, healthy human creature, whose spiritual faculties are exercised like his brain or muscle; who has lived upon the earth, and loved it, and gathered its wealth and sweetness and love of living into his being, as visible good whereby to create invisible stature; whose earthly

experience has carried him on, as Nature carries growth,—unconsciously, powerfully, perfectly, into a diviner life, Forever it must remain with me that I had missed the natural step.

If I say that the realization of knowledge was the first thing to teach me the value of faith, I shall be understood by those who may have read this narrative with any sort of sympathy to the present point; and for the rest, some wiser, better man than I must write.

I do not address those who follow these pages as I myself should once have done. I do not hope to make myself intelligible to you, as I would to God I could! Personal misery is intelligible, and the shock of belated discovery. But the experience of another in matters of this kind has not a “scientific” character.

No one can know better than I how my story will be dismissed as something which is not “a fact.”

In the times to be, it is my belief that there shall yet arise a soul, worthier of the sacred task than I, to which shall be given the perilous and precious commission of interpreter between the visible life and the life invisible, On this soul high privilege will be bestowed, and awful opportunity. Through it the deaf shall hear, the dumb shall speak. The bereaved shall bless it, and the faint of heart shall lean on it, and those who know not God shall listen to it, and the power of God shall be upon it. But mine is not that soul.

Even as One who was above man did elect to experience the earthly lot of man to save him; so one who is a man among men may yet be permitted to use the heavenly lot in such wise as to comfort them. The first mission called for superhuman power. The second may need only human purity.

I now enter upon a turn in my narrative, where my vehicle of communication begins to fail me. Human language, as employed upon the earth, has served me to some extent to express those phases of celestial fact upon which I still looked with earth-blind eyes. With spiritual vision comes the immediate need of a spiritual vocabulary. Like most men of my temperament and training, I have been accustomed to some caution in the use of words. I know not any, which would be intelligible to the readers of this record, that can serve to express my experiences onward from this point.

“A man becomes *terrestrialized* as he grows older,” said an unbeliever of our day, once, to me.

It is at least true that the terrestrial intellect celestializes by the hardest; and it remains obvious, as it was written, that the things which are prepared may not enter into the heart of man.

This is only another way of saying that my life from the solemn hour which I have recorded underwent revolutions too profound for me to desire to utter them, and that most of my experiences were of a nature which I lack the means to report. My story draws to a stop, as a cry of anguish comes to a hush of peace. What word is there to say?

There is, indeed, one. With lips that tremble and praise God, I add it.

At a period not immediately following the event which I have described, yet not so far beyond it that the time, as I recall it, seemed wearisome to me, I received a summons to go upon an errand to a distant place. It was the first time that I had been intrusted with any business of a wider nature than the care of my own affairs or the immediate offices of neighborhood, and I was gratified thereby. I had, indeed, longed to be counted worthy to perform some special service at the will of Him who guided all our service, and had cherished in my secret heart some project of praying that I might be elected to a special task which had grown, from much musing, dear to me. I did most deeply desire to become worthy to wear the seal of a commission to the earth; but I had ceased to urge the selfish cry of my personal heart-break. I did not pray now for the

precious right to visit my own home, nor weary the Will in which I had learned to confide with passionate demands for my beloved. I may rather say that I had come almost to feel that when I was worthy to see Helen I should be worthy of life eternal; and that I had dropped my love and my longings and my shame into the Hands of Infinite Love, and seen them close over these, as over a trust.

The special matter to which I refer was this: I desired to be permitted to visit human homes, and set myself as well as I might, to the effort of cultivating their kindness. I longed to cherish the sacred graces of human speech. I wished to emphasize the opportunity of those who love each other. I groaned within me, till I might teach the preciousness and the poignancy of *words*. It seemed to me that if I might but set the whole force of a man's experience and a spirit's power to make an irritable scene in loving homes held as degrading as a blow; that I could say what no man ever said before, and do what no spirit would ever do again.

If this be called an exaggerated view of a specific case, I can only say that every human life learns one lesson perfectly, and is qualified to teach that, and that alone, as no other can. This was mine.

When, therefore, I received the summons to which I have alluded, I inferred that the wish of my heart had been heard, and I set forth joyfully, expecting to be sent upon some service of the nature at which I have hinted. My soul was full of it, and I made haste to depart, putting no question in the way of my obedience. No information, indeed, was granted to me beyond the fact that I should follow a certain course until I came to its apparent end, and there await what should occur, and act as my heart prompted. The vagueness of this command stirred my curiosity a little, I confess; but that only added to the pleasure of the undertaking. It would be difficult to say how much relief I found in being occupied once again to some purpose, like a man. But it would be impossible to tell the solemn happiness I had in being counted fit humbly to fulfill the smallest trust placed in me by Him who was revealed, at this late, last moment, after all, to me, unworthy.

I set forth alone. The child was left behind me with a neighbor, for so I thought the way of wisdom in this matter. Following only the general directions which I had received, I found myself soon within the open country toward the region of the hills. As I advanced, the scenery became familiar to me, and I was not slow to recognize the path as the one which I myself had trodden on my first entrance to the city wherein of recent days I had found my home, I stopped to consider this fact, and to gather landmarks, gazing about me diligently and musing on my unknown course; for the ways divided before me as foot-paths do in fields, each looking like all and all like each, While I stood uncertain, and sensitively anxious to make no mistake, I heard the hit! hit! of light feet patting the grass behind me, and, turning, saw a little fellow coming like the morning wind across the plain. His bright hair blew straight before him, from his forehead. He ran sturdily. How beautiful he was!

He did not call me nor show the slightest fear lest he should fail to overtake me. He had already learned that love always overtakes the beloved in that blessed land.

"You forgot your little boy," he said reproachfully, and put his hand quietly within mine and walked on beside me, and forgot that he had been forgotten immediately, and looked upward at me radiantly.

Remembering the command to await what should occur, and do as my heart prompted, I accepted this accident as part of a purpose wiser than my own, and kissed the little fellow; and we traveled on together.

As we came into the hill country, our way grew wilder and more desolate. The last of the stray travelers whom we chanced to meet was now well behind us. In the wide spaces we were quite alone. Behind us, dim and distant, shimmering like an opal in the haze of fair half-tints, the city shone. On either side of us, the forest trees began to tread solemnly, like a vast procession which no man could number, keeping step to some inaudible march. Before us, the great crest of the mountains towered dark as death against the upper sky. As we drew near, the loneliness of these hills was to me as something of which I had never conceived before. Earth did not hold their likeness, and my heart had never held their meaning. I could almost have dreaded them, as we came nearer to them; but the deviation of the paths had long since ceased. In the desolate country which we were now crossing choice was removed from conduct. There was but one course for me to take; I took it unhesitatingly and without fear, which belongs wholly to the lower life.

As we advanced, the great mountain barrier rose high and higher before us, till it seemed to shut out the very sky from our sight, and to crush us apart from all the world,—nay, from either world or any, I could have thought, so desolate and so awful was the spot. But when we had entered the shadow formed by the mighty range, and had accustomed our eyes to it for a time, I perceived, not far ahead of me, but in fact quite near and sudden to the view; a long, dark, sharp defile cut far into the heart of the hills. The place had an unpleasant look, and I stopped before it to regard it. It was so grim of aspect and so assured of outline, like a trap for travelers which had hung there from all eternity, that I liked it not, and would not that the child should enter till I had first inspected it. Therefore, I bade him sit and rest upon a bed of crimson mosses which grew at the feet of a great rock, and to remain until he saw me turn to him again; and with many cautions and the most minute directions for his obedience and his comfort, I left him, and advanced alone.

My way had now grown quite or almost dark. The light of heaven and earth alike seemed banished from the dreadful spot. As it narrowed, the footing grew uncertain and slippery, and the air dense and damp. I had to remind myself that I was now become a being for whom physical danger had ceased forever,

“What a place,” I thought, “for one less fortunate!”

As these words were in my mind, I lifted my eyes and looked, and saw that I was not alone in the dark defile. A figure was coming toward me, slight of build and delicate; yet it had a firm tread, and moved well-nigh the balance of a spirit over the rough and giddy way. As I watched it, I saw that it was a woman. Uncertain for the moment what to do, I remembered the command,

“Await what shall occur, and do as thy heart prompteth.” And therefore—for my heart prompted me, as a man’s must, to be of service to the woman—I hastened, and advanced, and midway of the place I met her.

It was now perfectly dark. I could not see her face. When I would have spoken with her, and given her good cheer, I could not find my voice. If she said aught to me, I could not hear her. But I gathered her hands, and held her, and led her on, and shielded her, and gave her such comfort as a man by strength and silence may give a woman when she has need of him; and, as I supported her and aided her, I thought of my dear wife, and prayed God that there might be found some soul of fire and snow—since to me it was denied—to do as much as this for her, in some hour of her unknown need.

But when I had led the woman out into the lighter space, and turned to look upon her, lo, it was none other. It was she herself. It was my wife. It was no man’s beloved but my own.

So, then, crying, “*Helen!*”

And, "Forgive me, Helen!" till the dark place rang with her dear name, I bowed myself and sunk before her, and could not put forth my hand to touch her, for I thought of how we parted, and it seemed my heart would break.

But she said,

"Why, my dear Love! Oh, my poor Love! Did you think I would remember *that?*"

And I felt her sacred tears upon my face, and she crept to me,—oh, not royally, not royally, like a wife who was wronged, but like the sweetest woman in the world, who clung to me because she could not help it, and would not if she could. . . .

But when we turned our footsteps toward the light, and came out together, hand in hand, there was our little boy, at play upon the bed of crimson moss, and smiling like the face of joy eternal.

So his mother held out her arms, and the child ran into them. And when we came to ourselves, we blessed Almighty God.