

# DEEP WATERS, —OR A— STRANGE STORY

BY

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"When through the Deep Waters I call thee to go."

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# DEEP WATERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### THE YOUNG GRADUATE.

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In the latter part of June 18—the little city of Oxford, Miss., was teeming with visitors, not only from various portions of the State, but from the adjoining States of Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Louisiana. This concourse of people was no unusual spectacle to the citizens of Oxford; for it was but the gathering that occurred regularly once a year. The center of attraction to this fashionable, well-dressed assemblage was the University of Mississippi, which has sent forth hundreds of young men intellectually equipped for the stern struggle for existence—a struggle, the contemplation and investigation of which gave birth to Mr. Darwin's doctrine of "The survival of the fittest." What was the meaning of this concourse? It was *Commencement*

*day.* The University would again dismiss another class of her children to assume the grave responsibilities of citizenship, and to enter into the new and strange relations for which they had been preparing by years of diligent study. At last, they were to lay aside the *toga virilis trita*, and don the *toga pexa* of manhood. It was the last day, and the exercises of the graduating class were to close the week's programme.

At an early hour the crowd of visitors and the citizens of Oxford began to fill up the chapel, and by the time the speaking was to begin, the large and commodious structure was packed with a dense mass of eager, intelligent humanity ; for it was generally the *elite* of the country that gathered here on these interesting occasions. The class of this year was unusually large, and was distinguished for intellectual attainments. Sitting in the long row of chairs in front of the *rostrum*, they constituted as fine a body of young men as could be collected from the South. What a variety of destinies lay before them ! How many would ever rise to eminence in any department of human activity ! How many would go down to pre-

mature graves without any opportunity of justifying the fond anticipations of their friends! How many would disappoint the expectations of their affectionate parents, many of whom proudly gazed upon them as they performed their parts in the programme! There was much speculation that day as to what these young men would achieve upon the arena of active life. It would be, no doubt, very interesting if we could trace the subsequent history of each and all, but our present undertaking will compel us to confine our attention to only one of the class, whose career was sufficiently remarkable to be rescued from the darkness of that obscurity in which the large majority of his mates have disappeared.

At length the speaking began. The first speaker was listened to with attention which novelty secures. The next found a difficulty in making himself heard in the remoter parts of the building, the consequence of which was considerable whispering in the seats that were beyond the compass of his voice. The next four or five speakers labored under the disadvantage of trying to overcome that buzz and hum of conversation, *sotto voce*, which is generally a disturbing element when the orator

cannot reach the whole of his audience. But a wonderful change was soon to come over this congregation, now becoming rapidly demoralized by forgetting or ignoring the demands of etiquette. For when the next speaker was called, a young man responded whose pale cast of countenance indicated the world's ideal student. His splendid *physique* at once arrested the attention of the entire assembly, and there was a strange, sudden lull, for which no one could account. Those in the rear of the chapel straightened themselves, and leaned forward, as if fearful that they would lose the first words of the orator. The ladies ceased fanning, and fastened their eyes upon the elegant form now standing in graceful attitude on the crowded rostrum. It was evident that something unusual was expected. Would the assembly be disappointed and disgusted? Would the external marks of genius prove fallacious? The young man bowed gracefully, straightened himself, paused for an instant, and gazed modestly, but in perfect self-possession, at the sea of upturned, eager faces. Slowly came forth the first sentences flowing on a voice as clear as a silver trumpet, and yet as soft as the breeze which was at that

moment soughing through the broad oaks of the surrounding forest. The tones, and, in fact, everything else about the young man appeared to be in consonance with his subject, which the audience saw, on glancing at the programme, was "Man was made to mourn." It was a theme which, of course, admitted of no profound reasoning, and no startling argument. None was attempted, and none was expected. The auditors tacitly offered their emotions to be swayed as the orator willed. The people made no resistance, but seemed to yield at once to the strange, subtile influence which was stealing over them, and insinuating itself into their hearts like an invisible current of electricity. The smiles vanished from every face as the youthful speaker, in a slightly quivering voice, portrayed scenes of human sorrow and suffering, in order to establish his proposition. In a little while tears were seen rolling down grave cheeks. Young ladies endeavored to laugh at the "ridiculous scene," as some called it, but the crystal drops glistened in their eyes. At last, when the young man sat down, nothing was heard but suppressed sobs and efforts to clear the nasal duct of its liquid obstruc-

tions. At first there was no applause : people seemed unwilling that the spell should be broken. But presently, seeming to realize that the effort deserved more than the silent attestation of the lachrymal gland, they suddenly burst forth into thunders of applause, such as had never before awoke echoes in the classic grove that sheltered the chapel. Those who had printed programmes again looked at the name of this young man. It was Ernest Edgefield.

Who was he? Whence did he come? Such were the questions which immediately followed this effort, the most remarkable that had ever been witnessed in the University of Mississippi. It was ascertained that day, that there was nothing very eventful or wonderful in his history. His parents had died when he was small, leaving, however, sufficient means to support him till he could obtain a collegiate education. Such was his brief history. But what would be his future? Everybody felt that his career would be brilliant ; that the young man must achieve a degree of success commensurate with his wonderful oratory. We will at once follow up his footsteps.

Ernest determined to adopt the law as his

profession. He now had barely funds to defray his expenses through the Law School, but as he did not wish to lose time, he resolved to exhaust his entire means in the completion of his legal education. At the expiration of two years he was graduated with distinction ; but he was penniless, and had to begin the battle with nothing but his education and energy. His guardian, with whom our reader will soon become better acquainted, agreed to board him without pay till the young man's efforts should be crowned with that material success, which the Reverend gentleman thought must attend the exercise of such talents as his young ward possessed. When the parents of Ernest died, he was left to the care of a minister of the Baptist denomination, in whom they had unbounded confidence. His name was Joseph Hillston. He at once took the boy to his house, and made no difference between him and his own children. By a judicious management of the small property left in his hands, Mr. Hillston kept the youth in college till his education was completed, at which time Ernest had attained his majority. Mr. Hillston then turned over to him the remainder of his property, which, as stated,

was entirely absorbed by his two year's course at the Law School. And now he had no money, but he was animated by a lofty purpose, and a determination to conquer, before which he felt that difficulties must vanish. No one seemed to doubt that the brilliant young lawyer, with his splendid accomplishments, would subordinate destiny to his will, and would soon stand at the head of the legal fraternity. Indeed, some predicted that he would, at last, reach the highest office that the people could bestow. And why should he not? Not a single element of success was lacking, so far as his friends could see. His attainments appeared to be equal to the demands of the most vaulting ambition. What, then, should he care for difficulties, except as a stimulus to arouse his energies?

But what little, insignificant trifles turn the barque of destiny into channels of which the pilot never dreamed! It is not violent storms that change the course of this allegorical barque; because the pilot is prepared for great disturbances and obstacles. It was a moment of sleep that caused Palinurus to fall over-board into the sea: a hurricane could not have produced the same disastrous result. It

is the little things that change the current of human life. A spider's web sometimes turns the vessel's helm : the echo of a word destroys the equilibrium of circumstances. Late in life man finds himself driven into a port which had never entered into the programme of possibilities. All this will be illustrated in the progress of the present story.

A few days after Ernest returned from the Law School, there was seen on the door of an unpretending office, in his native town, a square piece of metal, exhibiting in gilded letters, "*Ernest Edgefield, Attorney at Law.*"

Our young lawyer had not the most remote idea of settling permanently in this little town, where he would have to fritter away his energies and cramp his mind in such narrow litigation as must arise in rural courts, but he fully intended, after a while, to seek a field of broader dimensions, which would call forth all his legal lore, and cause him to put forth all the strength of which he was capable. His present location was only the stepping-stone to his loftier aspirations, and which, he thought, would detain him only till he could acquire sufficient means to justify his removal

to some city where his talents could find room for development.

It was not long before Ernest's fond hopes and the justifiable expectations of his friends began to emerge from the shade of possibilities into the sunshine of realities. Legal business flowed in, and Ernest, at the very outset of his career, found himself entrusted with the management of as important cases as ever require judicial investigation in a provincial court.

But Ernest could not thus go on forever, thinking of nothing but the immediate object of his ambition, and dreaming only of deeds and legal parchments and bags of gold. At an early day in his career a path of destiny began to open in the misty future, different from that which he had at first marked out for himself. In the town there lived a young lady whom he had known from childhood. For several years, however, she had occupied scarcely a single thought of his, attributable to the fact that both had been absent at school. Both returned home the same month to enter upon their respective careers, which seemed to be as far apart as zenith and nadir, since the charming, gilded path of ease,

leisure and idleness lay before the one, and the path of work, diligence, and activity lay before the other.

Clara Vanclure was the only child of a wealthy merchant. Her prospects were regarded as very brilliant, since the probability was, she would inherit all her father's property, consisting of lands and plantations as well as stores, and estimated at not less than two millions of dollars. As might be expected, she was a "spoiled child," yet, she was beautiful, and accomplished to the full extent of her capacities, which, strict truth compels us to say, were not, by any means, of the highest order. But the dazzling mantle of vast wealth hides a mighty multitude of faults. There is a confusing glamour about "great possessions," which so fascinates and bewitches, that the judgment of men cannot be properly exercised. The sneering cynic, like growling Diogenes, may affect to despise wealth, but in his heart he respects the owner, who controls such a source of commercial power and social influence. We may have a contempt for the rich man's character, but in spite of ourselves, we stand in awe of the Magician's mysterious ring which he wears on his finger.

It was wealth that gave an additional luster to Miss Vanclure's accomplishments.

When Ernest again met the young lady, after a separation of several years, both were changed by the uncontrollable vicissitudes of time. She especially had developed from an awkward Miss of fifteen, into a symmetrically-proportioned woman. In the catalogue of her recommendations, her physical attractions were certainly well calculated to make an impression upon any susceptible heart. Ernest was not insensible to the charms of beauty, and he at once acknowledged Clara's claims to the highest order of corporeal graces. He immediately renewed his acquaintance with his *quondam* school-fellow, (for both had attended the same school when they were children) to which she was, by no means averse. Our reader will be afflicted with no long story of love and courtship. It is always very entertaining to a certain class of young people to read the entire history of two lovers —their honeyed utterances, poetical effusions, delightful promenades by moonlight—their petty jealousies, sad misunderstandings, little quarrels, succeeded by reconciliation that only places mutual rehabilitation upon a

firmer basis—all this might be highly interesting, but we must hasten on to the narration of more important events. It is sufficient to say that as soon as Ernest's success became an assured fact, he proposed to the fair Clara, and was accepted. Old Mr. Vanclure was secretly delighted at the prospect of such an alliance, for he was not one of those simpletons who would have their children sacrifice their temporal happiness upon the the altar of Mammon. Clara would have a large estate, and only needed a hnsband who had the ability to manage it. Mr. Vanclure, now advanced in years, had felt considerable anxiety in regard to his daughter's future, but the perplexing problem seemed about to end in a felicitous solution, and a great burden was lifted from his mind, when one day Ernest called for the purpose of asking his consent to a closer relationship between Miss Vanclure and himself. He had been among the first to discover the excellency and solidity of the young man's moral character, and he was not so blinded by parental love that he could not easily perceive the moral infirmities of his own child. He knew that she would need a protector and a guardian as long as she

should live. Therefore, having been fearful that Clara would become the prey of some worthless adventurer, he could scarcely conceal his joy when Ernest approached him upon this delicate subject. However, the old gentleman seemed to think it advisable to mask his happy feelings under the guise of a little opposition, and he said :

“ Ah? I was hardly expecting this—at least so soon—yes, so soon.”

“ Why not, Mr. Vanclure ?”

“ Why not? Why because you ar’n’t settled in life—yes, settled in life.”

“ I have now a respectable income,” said Ernest, “ if you are alluding to that, and it is increasing gradually, but surely.”

“ I have no doubt, Ernest,” replied Mr. Vanclure, with more tenderness than he wished to manifest, “ that you will succeed—yes, you will succeed. But still, both of you are rather young to marry.”

“ We think differently,” answered Ernest, with a smile, “ I am nearly twenty five.”

“ Ah? are you that old? Well, bless me, I believe you are, since I come to think about it. Dear me! how time does fly—yes, how time does fly. You have got to be a man before I

thought about it. Young people do grow up so fast—so fast—and Clara is a grown woman, too. Well; well."

"Since you have discovered that we are both grown," said Ernest with a smile, "may I hope that you will not oppose our wishes?"

"And if I did," answered Mr. Vanclure, not knowing what he ought to say, "What would you do—yes, what would you do?"

"I should endeavor to overcome your opposition."

"And I guess you think you'd succeed with your eloquence. You lawyers are cunning dogs," said the old gentleman, breaking into a laugh, which, rather than otherwise, indicated approval of this feature of the legal character, "yes, cunning dogs. If I give you a chance to argue the case, I'm satisfied I'll lose; for you'll convince me that Clara will land in eternal perdition unless she marries you—yes marries you—and nobody else. I don't want to get into an argument with you lawyers. So if the arrangement suits Clara, I'll have nothing more to say. It will take a lawyer anyhow to manage the estate to which she will fall heir some of these days. The thing is now getting beyond my comprehension, and I will soon

have to get a lawyer to untangle some of my affairs—yes, some of my affairs."

In this way the old man gave his consent.

Here we must say that the reader would do Ernest the grossest injustice to suppose that the metallic virtue of the young lady was the chief consideration that influenced his affections. Clara appeared lovely in his eyes, and he would have been willing to enter into the matrimonial relation without any prospect of dower. Nearly every one in the community believed that Ernest was governed in this *affaire du cœur* by mercenary considerations. There is nothing more certain than that an impecunious man who pays his addresses to a wealthy woman, will incur the imputation of improper motives. It is a sad fact, that the world is envious. People, in their secret souls, dislike to see their neighbors lifted by sudden prosperity to an elevation above their own level. Why should not such good fortune have happened to themselves? is the galling, latent thought of their hearts, to which they would be ashamed to give audible expression. The thought lurks in the darkest recesses of the breast like a slimy viper, and well de-

serves a place in the horrid abode of that fearful envy, so graphically described by Ovid :

*Pallor in ore sedet, macies in corpore toto,  
Nusquam recta acies; livent rubigine dentes,  
Pectora felle virent, lingua est suffusa veneno.\**

But Ernest truly loved Clara, though he might not himself have been able to explain the source of attraction, as love is not a passion subject to the human will. Mr. Hillston at an early period of the courtship, perceived his infatuation, and as he took a deep interest in the welfare of his ward, he could not but feel some misgivings as to the propriety of the union. One day Ernest informed him of his engagement, and the old man shook his head unconsciously in an ominous manner, which did not escape Ernest's observation.

" You do not seem to approve of my selection ? " said Ernest inquiringly. Mr. Hillston had made no remark after this communication, but sat still with an ambiguous expression upon his face.

" It is not for me to approve or disapprove in matters of this kind," was Mr. Hillston's

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\*A paleness rests on her face, leanness in the whole body, Never looks direct; her teeth are black with rust: Her breast green with gall; her tongue is dripping with venom.

reply, which was not very satisfactory to his ward, who was looking at the old minister in surprise.

"I thought surely you would congratulate me," said Ernest, with a faint, forced smile.

"The ides of March have come, but not gone," answered Mr. Hillston, shaking his head.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Hillston."

"How can I congratulate you, my dear boy, when I cannot foresee the end?"

"Can you do that in any case, sir?"

"True enough: but sometimes, and in some cases, we fear the termination."

"Please do not speak in riddles, Mr. Hillston. Is not the prospect flattering?"

"In one sense, yes. So far as material prosperity is concerned, I can see no possible objection. But money, my dear Ernest, does not always bring happiness."

"Do you suppose I am base enough to marry for money?" interrupted Ernest with an angry flush.

"No, no," hastily answered Mr. Hillston. "I have a better opinion of you than that. But the world judges of marriages by outward circumstances. If both parties start out in

life with great wealth, people generally think they are happy matches. But there are other things to be considered in a woman besides wealth, beauty and external accomplishments. A good, solid moral character is of far more value than a great fortune. A woman's character is the first thing to be considered. Sometimes young people hurry into marriage without ever pausing to ascertain whether there may not be incompatibilities and incongruities that will forever exclude happiness from their abode. Now, my dear boy, have you thought of all this?"

"Certainly I have," replied Ernest, impatiently. "Do you mean to insinuate that Miss Vanclure is destitute of moral worth?"

"I did not say that. I only asked if you had thought about, as I should have said, the dissimilarity of your characters." But, noticing Ernest's expression of dissatisfaction, "I have not intimated that Miss Clara is morally deficient. I would only advise you to be cautious. In such matters, young people should 'make haste slowly.' However, I do not presume to give you advice on this subject. Every man must choose to suit himself."

"The choice I have made," said Ernest quickly, "suits me."

"Then there is nothing more to be said," replied Mr. Hillston coolly.

"But you do not seem to like it."

"That has nothing to do with it. It is your affair, and if you are pleased, no one else has the right to say a word."

"Mr. Hillston," said Ernest, suddenly lowering his voice from the high key of self-sufficiency and independence to a subdued tone. "you have been a father to me, and you know I have been guided by you. I have confidence in your judgment; and now if you see me about to commit an error, one that may wreck my happiness, ought not common charity, to say nothing of the relation you sustain to me, induce you to kindly point out my mistake? I can see clearly that you are not pleased at my prospective marriage. Now tell me plainly what is the matter?"

"My dear Ernest," said the old man, with the tenderness of a parent, "you know that I have ever treated you as one of my own children, and have ever consulted your interest. I would not hesitate to give you advice in this

important matter if I knew how. I will only say this, if you will take no offence—”

“No, no,” interrupted Ernest eagerly, “I will not. Go on, say what you please.”

“Well, then, I fear that the great dissimilarity between your characters may prove a source of annoyance, if not trouble. You are grave and serious in your disposition, while Miss Clara is the very opposite.”

“That may be true,” replied Ernest, “but might not this very dissimilarity be an advantage to both of us?”

“It might, and then it might not. At any rate, therein lies the danger I apprehend. You ought to pray to God to direct you in so serious a business as this.”

“But I am not a churchman, Mr. Hillston.”

“You cannot regard God then as your friend?”

“O yes, I suppose He is; but I do not know that God would concern Himself with so small an affair as my marriage.”

“What! if God takes note of the flight of the sparrow, and the flower of the field, think you He will totally overlook the welfare of His intelligent creatures? Do you not believe

the Lord has something to do with everything that happens?"

"I do not know, sir. I am no Presbyterian. I understand they hold to some such doctrine as that. But I have never had any special liking for that denomination."

"Neither am I a Presbyterian. I am a Baptist, as you know. But do you suppose that Presbyterians are the only people who advocate the doctrine of special providence?"

"I do not know that they are, but from all that I can learn, they push it to extremes."

"I believe it," said Mr. Hillston, emphatically, "as firmly as any Presbyterian I ever saw, and I believe it to its fullest extent, and in all its bearings. I am not willing that the Presbyterians shall claim as a distinctive dogma of theirs a doctrine to which the Baptist Church holds with as much tenacity as they do."

"Do you believe, then, that God would concern Himself with so small a matter as the marriage of two human beings?"

"I certainly do."

"Do you believe, then, that God is a match-maker?" asked Ernest, with a laugh.

"I believe God will direct His people in all their affairs, when they ask Him in faith."

"But suppose I am not one of His people?"

"If you are not," said Mr. Hillston, with deep solemnity, "I am very sorry for you. It is your own fault, if you are not."

"Would it be of any avail for me to ask God's direction, when I am not one of His people, as you call them?"

"Not if you are determined to go on in your sins. If you make a full surrender of yourself to Him, I have no doubt He will assist and guide you. However, in that case you would be one of His people. But how could you expect God's favor and friendship, if you stand to Him in the relation of an enemy?"

"I do not know," answered Ernest thoughtfully, and then after a moment he added, "I suppose I will have to look out for myself."

"I dislike to hear you talk that way, my dear boy," said Mr. Hillston kindly, "for if you proclaim your independence of the Divine Being, you will lead a most wretched life."

"I did not mean that in any spirit of irreverence," quickly answered Ernest. "All I meant was that, if I was not one of God's people, I would have to take care of myself. I

have the utmost respect for the Christian religion. My conduct, as you know, has proved that I have."

"Yes, I know you are a moralist, and you may be one of God's children, notwithstanding the fact that you are living in sin."

"I do not understand you," said Ernest.

"I know you do not, but the time may come when you will. I will pray God to direct you, since you cannot do so for yourself. His will, no doubt, will be accomplished. You have not married Clara yet, and perhaps you may never do so."

"But I rather think I will," said Ernest with considerable energy.

"My boy, do not speak so positively. If God does not intend that it shall be so, you will never marry her."

"I should like to know what is to prevent it?"

"I know not. But remember, 'Man proposes, but God disposes.' You cannot overcome your Maker."

"I do not propose to enter into any contest with God; because I do not think He cares whether I do this thing or that thing. Therefore I repeat that I will marry Clara."

"When it happens," said Mr. Hillston, smiling, "we will talk more about it. Do not be too confident, my boy."

Ernest went to his office, wondering what in the world the old preacher could mean. Did he intend to predict that the "consummation to be devoutly wished," at least by himself, would, at last, prove only an idle dream? What would be the use, he thought, of asking God to direct him in so simple an affair as a marriage? Besides, it was too late now. Like Cæsar, he had crossed the Rubicon, and he must go on. He loved Clara with all his heart—why, then, should he not fulfill his engagement? He would do it.

Alas! how short-sighted is man? How quickly are his deep-laid schemes, his skillfully-concocted plans, suddenly overthrown by some unforeseen circumstance which had never entered as a factor into his calculations? Man is frequently standing on the very verge of a volcano, and knows it not till the soil crumbles beneath his feet.

## CHAPTER II.

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### A GREAT CHANGE.

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It is sometimes the case that we have premonitions that vaguely forewarn us of approaching ill fortune. Not a cloud appears above the horizon of our life, and yet we instinctively shrink from an undefinable something that seems to reach far out in advance of the shadow of coming events. Probably there are powers in the human mind whose development has been prevented by the dread of superstition. The animal seeks shelter from the approaching storm before man has discovered the slightest indication of atmospheric disturbance, or whatever it may be that warns the unreasoning brute of impending danger. May there not be some similar delicate instinct in man that perceives the advancing peril while it is still below the horizon of reality? Who knows? Or discarding human philosophy as insufficient to furnish a solution, may we not regard this

shadowy *mene tekel upharsin* as an emanation from a supernatural source? Men are so skeptical and incredulous and so afraid of "superstition" that they will attribute incomprehensible events to any cause rather than divine interposition. Some assume that miracles never have been performed; and others, that the days of miracles have passed away, and in consequence of this assumption, they ascribe nothing to the hand of Omnipotence. Evolution, correlated forces, natural selection, origin of species, and such terms have left no place in the nomenclature of science for the recognition of the hand of Deity. Unholy skepticism declares that divine direction in the affairs of men is but the unfounded fancy of religious fanaticism. But we do know that in ancient times the Lord sent warnings through the medium of dreams and visions. By what authority do we assume that such means of communication have been abolished? At any rate, such a feeling, a feeling of vague uneasiness, mingled with the thoughts of Ernest Edgefield. He was engaged to be married, and had the utmost confidence in the fidelity and stability of his affianced; and yet he was disturbed by a dim, indistinct sense

of unrest, which defied all efforts of analysis. It was like trying to follow an obscure mist by the uncertain light of the moon. He endeavored to reason himself out of his foolish apprehensions. What had he to fear? The course of his own true love seemed to be running smooth. In a few weeks the engagement would be consummated. Then, why this dread? Was it not, after all, produced by Mr. Hillston's ambiguous innuendoes? But what made the old preacher disbelieve, or at least doubt, that his marriage with Miss Van-clure would ever take place? There was no rival in the case to awaken his jealousy. Indeed, he felt a little vexed at his kind guardian for throwing out such insinuations. Then he would endeavor to banish the indefinable dread which had seized upon him. We who have passed through the scenes of youth, know something of the petty follies, the disquiet, the foolish *ennui* at times, which distinguish the young man whose heart has been lacerated by the golden arrow of the mischievous little son of Venus. Ernest rarely failed to call once a day at the enchanting domicile of his intended, and if he failed, he frequently made atonement for his negli-

gence by two visits on the next day. While he was in this state of cardiac effervescence, the wheels of time rolled on, unfolding events which had slumbered so long in the bosom of the future. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? Amid the multitudinous events that are continually rushing into reality, like the soldiers of an army in the charge, who can make provision against those unforeseen contingencies which are forever arising? Who can control the chariot of destiny?

Perhaps no event was so little expected as that which seemed to change the current of Ernest's destiny, a few weeks antecedent to his contemplated marriage. Not to delay with moralizing, an Evangelist by the name of Coyt made his advent into the quiet town where Ernest lived, on the invitation of the Presbyterian church. Great expectations had been formed by many of the more pious brethren, who had read accounts of Dr. Coyt's wonderful success at other places. His services were eagerly desired and sought all over the country.

At last he entered the little town of — and began a series of earnest, soul-search-

ing sermons, which he had repeated so often that he could frequently predict what result would follow the delivery of each. Large, expectant congregations attended his meetings from the very outset, since his evangelistic fame had preceded him. For several days the preacher produced no great visible effects, and there were scarcely any signs of spiritual life, except such as were discernible in the numerous petitions sent in by anxious brethren, requesting prayer for sons, daughters, wives, or other relatives and friends. At length this request was read out to the congregation :

“Please pray for a young lawyer, who is moral and worthy in every respect, but is lacking the one thing needful.”

Ernest was present, and heard the reading of this petition. Who could it be but himself? At first, a flash of displeasure, to call it by the mildest name, passed over his handsome face. Who was the person that had the impudence to direct attention to him? But all harsh thoughts soon passed away, when he reflected that the petitioner, whoever it might be, desired only his good. The process of rigid introspection succeeded his first un-

pleasant thoughts, and he at once gave attention to the contest between conscience and passion that had mysteriously begun. He seemed to be only a spectator of the conflict of antagonistic forces in his soul. There are times, says one of the most profound and philosophical women of the nineteenth century, when our passions speak for us, and we stand by and look on in astonishment. There is something similar to this in the process of spiritual regeneration. Questions and answers suddenly arise in the mind, as of concealed beings in whispered consultation, and we appear to ourselves to be listening to the mysterious dialogue. So it was with Ernest Edgefield, as he sat in the church engaged in self-examination. It appeared to him that he had suddenly awakened out of an alarming dream. He had been in a moral sleep all his life, and had never reflected seriously upon the unknown eternity which was distant but a single step. A "still small voice" seemed to come on the very breeze, and whispered: "What folly this young man has displayed in thinking of nothing but the things of time and sense." Ernest almost started. "What am I living for?" he asked himself. "In a

few weeks I shall be married, and will give renewed attention to business. But time will flow on : and if I live, I will soon be an old man, and I must die, and then—and then—what?" Ernest was neither infidel nor sceptic: indeed, he only needed that his fears should be aroused as a precedent condition to becoming an active Christian. After prayer had been offered up for the "young lawyer," and while thoughts, conclusions and convictions were all mingling together in the mind of Ernest, he looked at Clara, who was sitting where he could see her face. Their eyes met. She was gazing at him with an expression which he could easily interpret, and if she had spoken in an audible voice, he could not more clearly have understood her to say: "Isn't it ridiculous?" The young man almost shuddered. Why did a great yawning abyss seem to open suddenly between them? The depression which had for some days weighed down his spirits, all at once appeared like a heavy rock upon his breast, causing something like a sickening sensation to creep through his troubled heart. However, in his present state of newly aroused emotions, to which he had been such an utter stranger all his life, he felt

that a subject of more vital importance than even his marriage deserved his immediate attention. Accordingly he turned his gaze upon the preacher, who announced his text : "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Dr. Coyt, in the progress of his discourse, drew a word-picture, upon which his audience gazed in profound, breathless silence. No one looked upon this picture more intently than Ernest. He saw himself alone with his Creator and the balances which were to determine his everlasting destiny. Never before had Ernest's relations to time and eternity appeared in so vivid a light. The next morning after this, as the sun kissed the glowing horizon, darkness and doubt were dispelled from the soul of Ernest by the enlightening beams of the Sun of Righteousness. He had found that "peace which passeth all understanding," and he was strangely happy.

That day, without saying a word to any one upon the subject, he went forward to indicate his purpose of joining the church.

"Which church do you desire to join?" asked Dr. Coyt.

"I have not yet determined," replied Ernest. "I only wish now to let it be known that I

have come out upon the Lord's side. I intend to investigate the doctrines of the different denominations, and I shall join that one I like best."

"That is right," replied the Doctor. "Take time for reflection, so that you will have no trouble in the future. Select that church in which you think you can be the happiest."

Those who feel any interest in this story will, of course, desire to know what effect the meeting had upon Clara. Ernest had been so absorbed in his own spiritual troubles that he had had no conversation with her since the hour when he had become interested upon the subject of his personal salvation. But that evening, after he had signified his intention of attaching himself to the church, he paid her a visit. She was not present at the morning service, and knew nothing of the step he had taken. After the exchange of ordinary civilities, she said with a significant flippancy which was chilling to Ernest's heart:

"How have you enjoyed the show?"

"Show!" exclaimed Ernest, bestowing upon her a solemn look of inquiry.

"Yes," said Clara, not seeming to notice

his serious air. "It is as good as any show. Wasn't it funny to have them all praying for you?"

"I do not see where there was any fun," said Ernest with an expression of disappointment upon his face, "and I am truly sorry to hear you talk so lightly about such solemn things. They are too sacred to admit of sport."

"So, they have got you, too, have they?" asked Clara, breaking into a merry laugh. "Well, I confess I am astonished."

"Why should you be?" I cannot see that it is a matter of such profound amazement for a man to join the church."

"Have you really joined the church?"

"I have, or at least gave notice this morning that I would do so, and I earnestly wish, my dear Clara, that you would make up your mind to the same thing. That is needed to complete our happiness."

She made no reply, but laughed in a tone which it would have required no expert physiognomist to pronounce one of derision.

"What is it that is so amusing?" asked Ernest in vexation. "I had hoped that you would talk seriously about this matter of such vital importance."

"The idea of my joining the church, and giving up my dancing and all other amusements, is simply preposterous. It is funny."

"But suppose you were to die," said Ernest, "what would become of you? Are you willing to sacrifice your soul for a few worldly pleasures which, after all, add nothing to your happiness?"

"Why, are you going to turn preacher, too?" said Clara with an amused expression. "That's just the way Dr. Coyt has been preaching for the last five or six days."

"I am no preacher, and never expect to be," replied Ernest, "but that is no reason why I should not want my friends saved, especially such a friend as you will be."

Clara bit her cherry nether lip, and laying aside her mood of levity, said :

"I should like to know what we are to do in this world, if we are forbidden to enjoy life. That is what I dislike about religious people. They are so gloomy, and can talk about nothing but death. I hate to be with them."

This was spoken in such a way as to cause Ernest to see again the yawning chasm gaping between them.

"O, my dear Clara!" he exclaimed with

trembling tenderness, "how you are mistaken!"

"Why, how do you know?" she asked in surprise. "You have not been one of them long enough to find out, I should think. How did you become so wise, all of a sudden?"

Ernest was not at all pleased with the manner in which she addressed him, but he durst not manifest the least vexation in the critical juncture of his amatory affairs. He felt that a quarrel might terminate in a final overthrow of the fond hopes upon which his heart had fed for months past. He, therefore, spoke as mildly and affectionately as possible:

"I have learned something about it even in the last few hours. I have never experienced such a sense of love, joy and peace in all my previous life. I am astonished at myself for never having turned my attention sooner to eternal things. All these years, since I reached the line of moral responsibility, have been almost wasted, or, at least, the spiritual enjoyments of all this time have been lost to me; and how I regret it!"

"How you do talk?" exclaimed Clara. "Do you expect to keep up such lecturing all our lives? If you do, we may as well—"

"May as well what?" asked Ernest with a sinking heart.

"May as well follow divergent paths," she said with a timidity which implied that she, by no means, desired the proposition to be accepted.

"No, my dear Clara, I shall not mention it again if it is unpleasant to you. I shall leave you in the hands of God and continue to pray for you. I think you will take a different view of the matter after a while."

"But I would as soon you would talk to me as to look at me as if I were a criminal."

"I do not think," said Ernest, "that religion will convert me into a long-faced monk. On the contrary, I expect to be more cheerful and happy than I could be otherwise. You are the one to look solemn and gloomy."

"You expect," said Clara, not appearing to notice the last remark, "you expect to give up dancing, as most church people do."

"Certainly. I cannot do violence to my conscience by indulging in an amusement which I regard as of doubtful propriety, to say the least of it."

"Where is the harm in dancing? Church people condemn it, but I never could see any sin in it—not the least."

“But there would be sin in it to me with my present views,” said Ernest.

“You used to like it as well as I did.”

“Yes, that is true; but the time has come when I must and will renounce it.”

“You expect me to give it up, too?”

“That is a matter to be determined by your own conscience. I shall not interfere.”

“There is the theatre—you will give that up too?”

“I feel that I must do that, too.”

“Then,” said Clara with a slight frown, “what congeniality of taste and pursuits is there between us?”

“Why, my loved one,” said Ernest with a smile, “fortunately theatres and dances occupy but a small portion of our time.”

“Who will escort me when I want to go?”

Ernest loved his affianced with such an intensity that he dreaded to get into an unpleasant controversy that might culminate fatally to his hopes. If he were too puritanical and inflexible, he thought, she might sever all the ties between them—an event which made him shudder to contemplate; so he replied:

“All congeniality of taste between us need not be destroyed because you may fancy some

amusements which I do not. It could scarcely be expected that two human beings should think exactly alike. With regard to your dancing, I leave it to your conscience and to time which usually destroys our relish for most of the sports and enjoyments of youth. I have strong hopes that you will sooner or later perceive the necessity of leaving the paths of moral ruin and renouncing the pleasures of sin for the more solid and substantial pleasures of religion."

Clara said nothing, but sat still gazing into the forest which spread out in the distance—gazing with that vacant air which indicates the absence of attention to any object upon which her eyes might be fixed. Ernest could form no idea as to the character of her thoughts from the expression of her fair countenance, and he began to fear that he had said too much, and thought that perhaps he would better endeavor to remove every difficulty that might prove an obstacle to their union. He did not want to leave any grounds for one of those unfortunate misunderstandings between lovers which so frequently grow out of nothing. He therefore said with an air of cheerfulness and tenderness ;

“ You need not suppose, my loved one, that I will be forever preaching to you. That is not my calling. Have I given you offence by anything I have said? I mean by all I have said only that there is a time for all things—a time to dance and a time to give religion a prominent place in our thoughts.”

“ O, no ; I’m not offended, but you make me feel gloomy. It is bad enough to hear these things about death at church, where we expect it. I didn’t know that we had to make religion a topic of private conversation.”

“ No, we are not forced to do so ; but I thought it a suitable time to talk about it now when the subject is occupying the attention of the whole community.”

“ I candidly confess I don’t like to talk about such things,” said Clara with a serious air. “ I have always had a sort of horror of religion. In my mind it is associated with death and other disagreeable things.”

“ But these disagreeable things,” said Ernest, “ as you call them, are stubborn realities which we cannot avoid. Sooner or later, we must face them, whether we like or not. Would we not, then, better regulate our lives so that these very gloomy things shall become sources of pleasure?”

"O, I suppose so," said Clara dryly, "if death could ever be a pleasant subject of conversation."

"Not long since," replied Ernest with the deepest solemnity, "I entertained the very same views which you do. I would not think about death when I could possibly banish it from my mind, and I contemplated it for an instant as some horrible monster which I must face after a while. I regarded it with as much dread as ever the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson did. But now," and as he spoke an expression of deep joy flashed over his features, "I do not dread the event as such an awful calamity. I even love to think about it."

"What! do you want to die?" cried Clara.

"No: I did not say that," calmly replied Ernest.

"No man in the enjoyment of health really desires to die; for in some respects, it is a terrible ordeal from which poor, weak human nature shrinks. I have no disposition to court death: I want to live for your sake, for you know with what depth and intensity I love you, and loving you thus, I should like, above all things, to see you in a condition that

would enable you to exclaim with rapture, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ What a happy thought to me that we should be one on earth, and then when we cross over the dark river, our purified souls should be knit together in the bonds of a higher, nobler affection than is possible here; and then that we should stroll hand-in-hand in the heavenly groves, along the banks of the crystal river, under the fruit trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, never more to be disturbed by any misapprehensions, nor even by a discordant word or thought. We shall be one in heart, soul and mind. This is what I call true marriage. It is a contract not to end with time, but it goes on through the numberless ages of eternity. O, what a glorious prospect!” he exclaimed with features lit up with pure, holy joy; and then he paused for an instant as if overwhelmed and lost in the contemplation of indescribable scenes which “eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.” After a moment he continued: “On the other hand, what an awful thought! It makes me shudder. O, if you remain as you now are, we shall be separated forever,

when we part at the grave. Then where will you go? If you miss the glory-land, there is only one more place—the lake that burns with fire and brimstone—a place where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. If there is no fire there, as some contend, then it is a place of black, thick darkness. The lost soul, cast out into the illimitable regions of uninhabited space, away beyond the last star that glitters on the outskirts of visible creation, will go wandering round and round, or if too weary to make an effort, it will begin falling, like a bird with folded wings, and keep on falling, falling, down and down, forever down—no company but your own thoughts—no sound heard but your own breathing—no sweet music—no voice of friend—no light—nothing but the horrors of eternal, impenetrable darkness. You may suppose you will have companions—but what will be their character? Not kind friends, to speak words of consolation, but malevolent fiends whose delight it will be to torment. All the horrors so graphically described by Dante may be awful realities. Can you blame me, then, for feeling the deepest anxiety on your account? I should be the happiest man in

town if you could make up your mind to join the church."

"O, I could not think of such a thing!" exclaimed Clara. "You have already given me the blues. I fear you will never be yourself again. You are so changed. But reading that awful old Dante is enough to frighten any one out of his senses. I tried to read it not long since, but it was so foolish and absurd, I dropped it in disgust. But haven't you preached long enough? I do believe you will be a preacher yet."

"No; I have no such idea as that. But I should be sorry to think that preachers are the only persons to whom it is allowable to talk about religion. However, I am a changed man, and I am glad you can perceive it. I hope I may never again be the wicked man I have been. But I shall not further press the subject upon your attention, and I promise not to mention it again till you are in the proper mood to talk about it."

The foregoing conversation is no integral part of the present story, and might have been omitted entirely, but we have recorded it at length to show what different views young people entertain in regard to the highest

destiny a human being can achieve. What makes such a vast difference, when there are precisely the same incentives to action in both? Some quickly cut the Gordian knot by attributing it to the difference in their wills, which, we may bring this chapter to an end by saying, is quite a convenient way of avoiding *Deep Waters*.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

The protracted meeting, which had continued fourteen days, was ended. Dr. Coyt, the Evangelist, took his leave in order to carry blessings to other places. No one could deny that a wonderful change had taken place in the moral aspect of the town. Some, who had been regarded as the worst characters in the community, astonished their neighbors by an immediate reformation. Saloon-keepers joined the church. Gamblers forsook their evil ways. Lukewarm church members were fired with renewed zeal. The whole town seemed to be animated by one impulse and one purpose. But such a great disturbance of public thought could not in the nature of things be maintained for any lengthy period. Public feeling, like water, seeks its level. A state of effervescence is not its normal condition. Consequently the foam-crested waves must soon subside into customary tranquillity. Men return to their vocations, and their thoughts

revert to trade and traffic. The things of eternity which had so recently absorbed attention, must now be partly laid aside.

Ernest was not different from other men in the general aspect of human nature. He too had to resume his books and legal documents. Judging from his outward conduct, no one could have imagined the depth of the work of grace in his heart. But internally, he was leading a quite different life. His energies were put forth for the accomplishment of one object—his personal salvation. In the short space of a week he had lost that ambition whose only object is self-gratification. It is not meant that he had no desire to excel and to rise to a high position in his profession, for religion does not require the suppression of every impulse of this character, but Ernest had no disposition to gain victories merely to elicit the admiration and applause of his fellow men. After the meeting, he endeavored to apply himself to business with his former diligence. But there was one peculiarity in his efforts for which he could not account, and which he did not understand clearly till some years afterwards. He could not and did not feel the same interest in his profession,

for which so lately he had a most enthusiastic love. Try never so hard to confine his attention to his law books, his mind would wander off to very unsecular affairs. Endeavoring to plunge into the profundities of Kent's Commentaries, he would meet with a sentence or a word which would remind him of some theological commentary. Ernest, in a short time after his conversion, had become so much interested in the study of the Holy Scriptures that he had added to his library the commentaries of Henry, Clarke and Scott. He found himself more frequently pondering over the signification of passages of holy writ than paragraphs of law. He spent much time in reading and searching the Scriptures—like the Bereans—time, which the spirit of the world said should have been given to the duties of his calling. This internal conflict threw Ernest into a state of perplexity. He was becoming an enigma to himself. He could not imagine why his vocation should become distasteful. The finger of destiny was pointing in a new direction, but it was concealed by the mists of the future. For some wise reason the path of duty is not always clearly indicated. The divine economy is so inwrought with human

affairs that no man can determine the extent of the supernatural guidance that may be furnished.

While in this state of mind, Ernest went to church one Sabbath. The minister, who was a stranger, read the fourteenth chapter of John as his lesson, and at the proper time announced as his text the first and second verses—"Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me," etc. Ernest assumed a comfortable physical posture in the expectation of hearing a soul-thrilling sermon—an expectation justified by the abundant consolation which can be legitimately drawn from the entire chapter. There was a large congregation and all seemed to be eager to catch every word that should be uttered. The preacher began in a rather low nasal "whine," as the people called it--a not very classical term to be sure, but very expressive and generally understood, if nothing else could be said in its favor. His manner was cold and not at all *en rapport* with his environments, but Ernest thought and hoped that he would "warm up" with his subject as he proceeded. He was doomed to disappointment: for the preacher kept on with the same whine, with no more

variation than there is in the ringing of a bell. The vocal part was utterly incongruous with the theme. The preacher stood stone still, nothing moving but his lips, and looking like a talking statue. His hands were gently folded on his breast and his eyes were fixed with immovable rigidity upon something on the floor immediately in front of the pulpit. His whole manner was the best imaginable remedy for insomnia, which was soon proved by the state of delightful unconsciousness into which many of the audience had fallen at the expiration of the first half-hour. Ernest made brave and persistent efforts to confine his attention to the minister's monotonous sentences and to resist the feeling of somnolence which was quietly and gradually creeping over him. When the service finally ended, Ernest left the church with a feeling of spiritual lassitude —a consciousness that the hour had been unprofitable, not to say that he was a little vexed, too.

“Why does the Church send out such men to preach?” he asked himself as he walked slowly homeward. “This man’s intentions, no doubt, are good, but his education is wofully deficient, and he does not seem to

understand the first rudiment of oratory. The ecclesiastical body that put him in this responsible position are more censurable than he is. What a grand text he had! If a man could preach at all, it does seem that he could get a splendid sermon out of that passage. I believe I could do it myself. Let me see. There is that old college speech of mine—Man was made to mourn,—it would apply admirably to the first head. Look abroad over the world. How many things there are which are calculated to trouble the heart. Of all this the preacher never said a word. I moved an audience to tears with the same subject when there was nothing but human sympathy to which I could appeal. But with the precious hopes and promises of the gospel in his hands, he put a portion of his congregation to sleep. Then there are the blessed mansions which the Savior promised to His true followers. ‘I go to prepare a place for you,’ said our Lord. Why there is a grand sermon in that one brief sentence. ‘I go,’ said Christ. Where did He go? Why did He go? Why did He not remain forever on earth? The answer is, that He might send the Comforter. Then, for what purpose did He go? To pre-

pare mansions for all true believers. What a glorious thought! What does He prepare? A place. Then the conclusion is, that heaven is a tangible locality. For whom is He preparing a place? ‘For you.’ But the disciples stood there as the representatives of all true believers for all time. So I should have said, had I been in that preacher’s place to-day: ‘Brethren, Jesus says I am preparing a place for you.’ Then I would go on to describe this blessed place from intimations thrown out in the Bible itself. There are the shining city, the jasper walls, the golden streets, the crystal river, the Trees of Life, the Great White Throne, and the mighty multitude which no man can number. With these grand and sublime thoughts in easy reach, the preacher never said one word to brighten our hopes and strengthen our faith. But instead of producing such an effect, he threw us into a state of stupid, half-unconsciousness. What a failure!”

Presently, while Ernest was musing in this loose, random way, a voice—a “still, small voice,” as it were, seemed to come out of the atmosphere, and ask: “*Why not then preach yourself?*” It was the fiery finger of destiny

flashing before him, and Ernest was startled. He answered, almost speaking in audible tones : " Because I am not qualified. I have no call to such work. I am a lawyer. I do not know how to preach."

" But you have just preached a sermon," quickly answered the voice. " I only *thought* what the preacher might have said," replied Ernest.

" Then why not speak your thoughts to a congregation ? " asked the mysterious voice.

We do not wish, by any means, to make the impression that this was an actual supernatural dialogue. It was probably subjective. We use the word " probably," because we have no right to affirm that God, even in this age of skepticism, never addresses men in audible tones ; or what amounts to the same thing. He, no doubt, so operates upon the human conscience as to make subjective mental processes appear objective. At any rate, Ernest was a little startled by this colloquy, which had the appearance of reality. He was so absorbed that he did not notice where he was. He was slowly walking with his head bowed down, and ran against some one soon after the voice appeared to utter the

last words. It was Mr. Hillston, at whose house Ernest was still boarding. The collision occurred at the gate. Ernest sprang back, and looked in surprise.

"O, Mr. Hillston," he cried, "I beg your pardon, sir. I was not looking up. I was thinking, yea, almost talking."

"And to whom were you talking, my young friend?" asked the old gentleman.

"I scarcely know, sir, that is, I can hardly determine whether it was to myself, or some invisible being in the air?"

"That is a little strange; but what was the subject of your conversation?"

"I will tell you how it was."

Ernest then related what had occurred. When he had finished, he could not fail to notice the serious expression of Mr. Hillston's face.

"What do you think about it?" asked Ernest.

"Do you think the circumstance needs interpretation?" asked Mr. Hillston. "Do you not perceive the meaning?"

"I do not know that it has any particular meaning," answered Ernest.

"My boy," spoke the old man with deep

solemnity, "does it not occur to you that it is God's call to the ministry?"

"No sir," quickly replied Ernest. "Do not tell me that. I cannot believe it. I will not think it upon such evidence?"

"Yes, you will think it, and believe it, too. You may decline, if you will; you may offer resistance, but that voice will follow you up, and haunt you like a ghost. If you will not go into the work willingly, God will drive you into it, as he did Paul."

"What! smite me with blindness?"

"I do not say that," answered Mr. Hillston slowly, "but He will so shape and direct circumstances as to force you to do His bidding. You may flee like Jonah, but events, possibly misfortunes, will be the 'great fish' to swallow you up, and cast you out where you will be glad to cry aloud to men to repent."

"You almost frighten me," exclaimed Ernest. "I cannot regard what I have told you as constituting a call from God to preach. I am not superstitious. I do not believe as you do, anyhow."

"What do you mean, my boy?" asked the old man, looking at him in surprise.

"Do you not remember what you said the

other day about election and free agency. I believe in free agency. I do not think that God forces men to do things. But you," continued Ernest with a laugh, "are a regular old blue-stocking Presbyterian."

"I cannot suffer you, my young friend, to give up to the Presbyterians exclusively the most precious doctrines of the Bible. You are very much mistaken if you think that Presbyterians are the only people who believe in election and the final perseverance of the saints."

"Do you believe that other horrid doctrine of Predestination? No; surely not."

"You have asked me a direct question," said Mr. Hillston, and have presumed to answer for me. But your answer is incorrect: for as much as you may be surprised, I tell you that I do believe the 'horrid doctrine' of Predestination."

"Well, I am surprised to hear you say so. For I thought that even Presbyterians shrank from averring it openly."

"You may be surprised now; but when you investigate more closely, you may be a Predestinarian yourself, if you will lay aside prejudice."

"I do not see how I ever can be, with all deference to you, sir; for the doctrine is horrible to me."

"What is so horrible, my boy?" asked the old man kindly. "But let us go into the house. Now," continued Mr. Hillston, as they both seated themselves, "tell me what is so horrible?"

"Why, that God should condemn men to eternal torment even before they are born. What can be more cruel and unjust?"

"That would be 'horrible' if God were blind, as men are. But let us look at this 'horrible doctrine' from other standpoints. You probably know that some people, in order to avoid the difficulties of Divine sovereignty, strip God of one of His attributes by saying that the Lord does not choose to foreknow human destiny, that is, individual destiny. Now if that were true, man would be a perfect free moral agent, would he?"

"Undoubtedly, he would, sir."

"That is what a great many people say," answered Mr. Hillston, "in the very face of Scriptures to the contrary. But never mind: for the present, we will assume that God does not choose to exercise His foreknowledge.

Well, men follow the bent of their own wills, and shape their own destinies. At last the world comes to an end. God opens the Books—that is, He looks back over the past, and discovers what men have done, and settles their doom according to their deeds, do you think that would be right?"

"O, yes," said Ernest, "that would certainly be just, according to my ideas."

"Very well. In looking back, the mere knowledge which God acquires does not affect men's conduct, does it?"

"What do you mean by 'affect'?"

"I mean His knowledge would not change their deeds, one way or the other?"

"No: of course, His knowledge would have no effect upon their past conduct."

"Then, if you please, tell me what is the difference between God's looking back over the past and looking forward over the future. How would His knowledge affect human destinies in the one case more than in the other?"

Ernest thought for a moment, and then said:

"Why, there is this difference: whatever God foreknows must take place."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Hillston, "but does God's after-knowledge affect the conduct of men?"

"No, sir."

"Then how does God's foreknowledge differ from his after-knowledge—that is the question. Is there any difference?"

"Just at this moment," replied Ernest in some confusion, "I am not prepared to say; but it does seem to me unjust in God to sentence men to torment before they are born."

"But if the condemnation is for the same sins, why not condemn before they are born as well as after?"

"You have taken a turn that I was not expecting," answered Ernest. "I confess I had never thought of it in that way."

"No, and that is what is the matter with the most of those who oppose the doctrine of predestination. They even deny fore-knowledge to God, not pausing to reflect that mere knowledge has no effect upon the destinies of men. They represent God as in the attitude of a human judge. But we must never forget that His ways are not as our ways, and His thoughts, not as our thoughts. Predestination is a mysterious doctrine, and there is

something about it which no man can understand. And yet, when we investigate it in the light of the Holy Scriptures, and study the examples illustrating it, there is not as much difficulty as some people imagine. I do not think you have investigated in this way."

"No, sir; but I intend to do so."

"That is right. Study your Bible closely; honestly mark all the passages that teach this 'horrid doctrine,' and let us talk about it again. I have no doubt that you will study the Bible more closely than you have ever done, since you are going to be a minister of the gospel."

"There, you are reckoning without your host," said Ernest. "I have no idea of ever being a preacher. I am not qualified. Why, it would be presumption in me to think about it."

"Mark my words, Ernest," said Mr. Hillston solemnly, "you will be a preacher or a ruined man. The Holy Spirit, if I am not very greatly mistaken, is opening the way, and showing you the path. I beg you, do not neglect and disregard plain indications. I cannot help thinking that you are a chosen

vessel for some great purpose, and if so, you will see no peace till you obey the voice of God. If you are in doubt, pray to the Lord for light, and it will be given. The Master will certainly make clear the path of duty."

Ernest was silent, and Mr. Hillston concluded it would be prudent to say nothing more at that time. The young man went to his office soon after, and fell into deep thought. Was it possible, he asked himself, that he was destined to become a preacher? The thought became more intolerable as he reflected upon it. He wished that he had not tried his power of sermonizing, for it was this that had given origin to what Mr. Hillston had the boldness to pronounce a call to the ministry. Was it in this way that God chose his ministers? But suppose this was a divine call, how could he refuse to obey? Would he rebel against God's expressed will? But surely this was no call, at least it was not sufficient. There certainly was no voice. He would wait, and pray for more light. Would he not lose Clara Vanclure? Would she ever consent to be a preacher's wife?

This latter question, propounded to himself, had some influence, probably in causing him to come to the conclusion not to rush hastily into the ministry upon an invitation which existed, he thought, only in his imagination. Accordingly, he endeavored to dismiss the perplexing subject from his mind. To his great relief, he found no difficulty in losing himself in the pages of a volume which he took from one of the shelves of his library. It was Dr. Dick's "Philosophy of a Future State." For pleasant and profitable Sunday reading, no better books can be found than Dick's several volumes on moral and religious subjects. Ernest was so absorbed in his book that he thought no more about the "call to preach" for the remainder of the Sabbath evening.

The next morning when he returned to his office as usual and began reading Blackstone, the words of the preacher's text on the previous day suddenly flashed into his mind. He quickly dropped his book and began thinking. Presently he almost sprang from his seat, for on the opposite side of the table, on which his head had been resting, there sat a visitor, who was curiously gazing at him.

"Ah! been asleep, have you?" said Mr. Vanclure, for it was he.

"No, sir," said Ernest confusedly, "I was in a sort of reverie."

"Things of that sort don't pay much—no, sir, don't pay much: I have been too busy all my life for anything of that kind. People must keep wide awake in this world to succeed—yes, sir, to succeed."

"My vocation is different from yours, Mr. Vanclure, you know. When we lawyers meet with a knotty problem sometimes, we stop to think, and occasionally we get to dreaming: it is not unnatural."

"Well," said the old merchant abruptly, "I have come to say something about a delicate matter—a delicate matter. If it was ordinary business, I'd know how to begin—how to begin. But it's another sort of affair."

"Just suppose it to be business of an ordinary character, Mr. Vanclure, and begin at once," said Ernest with a feeling of dread.

"Well," said the merchant in a fidgety manner, "I thought you and Clara were engaged to be married—engaged to be married pretty soon, and things were floating along smoothly, you know. Yes, sir, and I

had given my consent, you remember, at your solicitation, and I was making my arrangements accordingly, for you see I had confidence in you, Ernest, since I have known you from a child—yes from a child. I told you, don't you remember, that I had some business affairs which I could not manage—could not manage, because I'm no lawyer."

"Well," interrupted Ernest, "you can tell me what the business is, and I will do the best I can with it."

"But you don't understand, Ernest—you don't understand. It wouldn't be proper just yet to tell you. I said it was a delicate matter—a delicate matter, just as things now are. You see I thought everything was working well. I thought this contract between you and Clara would soon be executed—would soon be executed, and then I could with propriety put this business in your hands—in your hands, Ernest, because you would, you would sustain a closer relation to me than you do now, and then I could let you know all my plans—know all my plans, which wouldn't be proper just yet—just yet, you know. You understand how I am situated."

"I cannot say that I do," replied Ernest

with a smile, "for you have told me nothing in regard to your situation."

"I have told you all I can, Ernest—all I can till that affair comes off—comes off."

"What affair, Mr. Vanclure?"

"The engagement between you and Clara, of course, of course. I thought all would be over in a few weeks—yes, in a few weeks. But I fear there is a misunderstanding somewhere, and I thought there'd be no harm in finding out—in finding out, you see."

"What is it you wish to find out, Mr. Vanclure?"

"Well, you see, I got a hint from Clara, a hint from Clara, and I thought I'd better find out,—better find out."

"I am perfectly willing to give you any information in my possesion," said Ernest.

"I thought so, I thought so, and I'll come to the point at once. You see it was a lawyer I wanted. A preacher and a lawyer are very different people. I could make no use of a preacher—no, sir, no use of a preacher, you understand?"

"I do not understand, Mr. Vanclure."

"I got a hint from Clara—a hint from Clara, and I thought I'd better come, and find out about it, before it's too late."

“What is it you wish to find out, Mr. Vanclure?” interrupted Ernest.

“Why, I thought you’d see at once—yes, at once, after my explanation.”

Ernest smiled internally.

“I confess, Mr. Vanclure, that I am so obtuse mentally, that I have failed to understand your explanation.”

“What? can’t you see—can’t you see that a lawyer and a preacher are two different people—two different people?”

“Yes, sir; I see that clearly.”

“Well, I gave you to understand that a lawyer would suit me—would suit me, and I thought you were a lawyer.”

“So I am.”

“But are you going to give up law, and be a preacher—be a preacher?”

“Who said I was, Mr. Vanclure?”

“I told you I got a hint from Clara—a hint from Clara, you understand?”

“I believe I do,” said Ernest thoughtfully. It seems that Miss Clara has thrown out a hint that I would be a preacher?”

“Precisely, precisely.”

“And suppose I should be, Mr. Vanclure, how could it affect present relations?”

" Why, you see, a preacher is not the sort of man, the sort of man, that would suit my purposes. A preacher is no business man, Ernest—no business man. This thing of going over the country, with your ward-robe in a pair of saddle-bags—yes, in a pair of saddle-bags, and living from hand to mouth—well, I can't see the necessity of it in this case, in this case. Although Clara gave me a hint, I didn't much believe it—I didn't much believe it—because, Ernest, there is no necessity for it, no earthly necessity for it. You will not be forced to go into that poor business—that poor business; but don't misunderstand; I'm not opposed to the Church—it's a very good thing in its place—a very good thing, and I pay my part to keep it going. But, as I said, a preacher is not the sort of man I bargained for—it was a lawyer I wanted, and I had my heart set on this matter, and I expected to put the business in your hands—in your hands."

" Why are you opposed to preachers, Mr. Vanclure?"

" You misunderstand, Ernest, you misunderstand. I haven't said I was opposed to them. I have nothing against them, nothing against them. They are useful men, in some

respects, in some respects; but they are not business men, not business men. How could a preacher attend to my business? I don't see why you should want to quit your profession, quit your profession, and be a preacher; you understand, don't you?"

"I gather from your remarks, Mr. Vanclure, that if it is my intention to be a preacher, you would oppose the marriage of Miss Clara and myself—is that your meaning?"

"Well, I didn't say that I'd oppose it: I only said that a preacher wouldn't suit me; no, wouldn't suit me. A preacher wouldn't have time to attend to business, even if he were a business man, and I never saw one that was—one that was."

"I have no idea of ever being a preacher, Mr. Vanclure, and I cannot imagine why Miss Clara should have drawn such an inference from anything I said."

"I told Clara that she must be mistaken, must be mistaken. Then I understand that you never will be a preacher?"

"I have no such intention, sir."

"Well, that's enough said; I'll go now, and I'd advise you to see Clara about this affair,

and give her the assurance you have given me.” Mr. Vanclure left hurriedly.

Ernest had an interview with Clara that evening, which terminated in the assurance, on her part, that if he ever became a preacher, she would at once file an application for a divorce.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A RIVAL.

An event soon occurred in the town which aroused feelings and emotions in the breast of Ernest, the statical condition of which had never before been disturbed. A family moved into the town, among whose members was a young man about the age of Ernest. A few days after their arrival, a sign was seen over a store-door in large black letters—A. J. Comston & Son. The “son” belonging to this firm is the only one of the family whose life projects into the present history. Xerxes Comston was the equal of Ernest in physical attractions, and his superior in almost everything pertaining to the elegant frivolities and conventional refinements of fashionable society. He was emphatically a man of the world—a disciple of Chesterfield, who had made social etiquette a special study. He had no depth of intellect and no solid education, but was master of that small talk, silvery nonsense, so delight-

ful to vacuous minds. It is a well-known fact that truly educated men, who have "drunk deep of the Pierian spring," rarely ever shine in promiscuous society. They appear timid and destitute of ideas, while men who have collected only the scum of ephemeral literature, and studied terpsichorean gymnastics, and committed to memory a stock of witticisms pleasing to light-headed women, pass in society at a value far more than their real worth. Xerxes was a man of this description. He had studied dinner-table etiquette and ball-room dynamics more than any other branch of human literature. The comparison between Ernest and Xerxes in regard to moral excellences would be like that of Brobdingnag and Liliputian. Yet in fashionable assemblies, where Ernest would sit in embarrassed silence, Xerxes would rattle away with astonishing and entertaining volubility—a volubility without ideas, but still, necessary to preserve the regular flow of the stream of conversation. Men like Ernest are frequently voted "stupid" by the gilded butterflies of society, when the truth is, they can scarcely ever find a "pleasure-party" that can appreciate the subjects with

which they are familiar. They are not unsocial, as is generally supposed, but they dwell in a world of thought, a world which is so sparsely settled that they necessarily spend much or most of their time in solitude. This class is quite small. Hence, speaking metaphorically, they live in a wilderness in which there is here and there a house inhabited by a literary recluse.

Ernest and Xerxes were, as to moral character, like Zenith and Nadir.

Not many days elapsed before Xerxes sought and formed the acquaintance of Clara Vanclure. Her prospective fortune made a deep impression upon his heart. He had heard of the relation between Ernest and the young lady, but he acted toward her as though he were perfectly ignorant of the ties which bound her to another. The civil law had given no validity to this gossamer tenure, and till that should be done, the conscience of Xerxes stood not in the way of his endeavoring to produce an alienation between the engaged lovers. However, he never intimated to any one that he entertained such a purpose.

At length there was to be a grand ball in the

town, and the young people generally were filled with delightful expectations. A few days before it occurred, Ernest called upon his intended. He had visited her regularly three or four times a week since his profession of religion, and had not once alluded to the subject which was so repulsive to her. When there was a pause in the conversation on the evening just referred to, she suddenly said :

“Are you going to the ball, next Tuesday evening?”

He looked earnestly at her, while a shade of sorrow and disappointment passed over his face.

“My dear Clara,” he said in a subdued tone, “how can you ask me such a question, after the conversation we once had on this subject?”

“I didn’t know but that you might have changed your notion,” she replied.

“I thought you would give me credit for more stability of purpose than that.”

“Well, I’m sure I can see no harm in going to a ball,” was her rejoinder.

“That means you are going, does it?” asked Ernest.

“I rather think I shall,” she replied with an

air of firmness, indicating expectancy of opposition.

"Well, do as you please," he said.

"I am sorry you cannot go," she remarked, after a brief pause, "because I shall be forced to accept another escort."

"Who?" asked Ernest with an air of indifference that nettled Clara's feelings.

"Mr. Comston."

Ernest made a sudden movement which she noticed with pleasure. The first pang of jealousy had shot through his heart, stinging, tearing, sickening, shocking like a barbed arrow. It had not seriously occurred to him before, that there might be a rupture of the engagement into which she had so solemnly entered. He had regarded her as his wife, or at least, so near to that relation that the possibility of losing her, had not disturbed his thoughts. Suddenly this peril flashed into his mind, accompanied by a feeling of strong dislike toward the young man, whose name she had just pronounced with alarming tenderness. He tried to re-assure himself. Why should he for a moment doubt her constancy? How could she possibly prefer this *dude* to himself? No, no; how could she? And yet—.

He dreaded to give definite shape to the vague thought confusedly working to the surface. Clara perceived her advantage.

"You would not go," she said, "what then, was I to do? I'm bound to have an escort."

"I have offered no objection," Ernest replied in a sorrowful tone, "and yet," he continued timidly, "might you not have accepted an escort with more congeniality than exists between you and that one?"

"I don't see the necessity of so much congeniality in a dancing companion," she answered. "Besides, Mr. Comston is a nice, elegant gentleman, and is, by no means, dull."

The last remark was like gall to Ernest, and he felt strongly tempted to express his opinion about the moral character of his rival: but on second thought, he concluded that silence on that head would be prudent. He at once changed the subject of conversation, and nothing more was said about the dance.

At the time appointed, Xerxes called to escort Clara to the ball. That evening he paid her very marked attention, and endeavored in every possible way, except the

agency of the tongue, to convey to her the knowledge that she occupied a conspicuous place in his affections. Clara was at no loss to interpret his look and manners. She understood that earnest, inquiring gaze which seemed to be searching into the depths of her soul. It was not the bold, impudent stare of the accomplished libertine, but the skillful maneuvering of a man who knew how to express tender feelings silently, whether they had real existence or not. He gazed, it is true, but in such a way as to make the impression upon the young lady that it was the timid, stealthy act of a despairing lover. He acted as though he had unintentionally betrayed the state of his affections, and yet he was well aware that this betrayal had not escaped the observation of the young lady; for we sometimes seem to know that certain persons are looking at us, when we do not see them. If Xerxes had gazed boldly at Clara, she would have taken offence; but his appeared to be stolen glances, and she felt flattered.

As they returned late from the ball-room, he said to her as soon as they were in the open air:

"Well, how have you enjoyed the evening?"

"Very much, indeed," she said, "how has it been with yourself?"

"I do not know why it was," he answered, "but I never enjoyed an evening so much in my life. I wish we could have a dance every week, or even oftener."

"I say 'Amen' to that," exclaimed Clara, "for this is an awful dull town."

"I find it so myself," replied Xerxes. "There are so few young ladies here."

"So few?" answered Clara in surprise. "I thought there were a great many."

"Yes, but I mean congenial spirits. They make no impression upon me. The fault, however, may be mine. I may not know how to entertain them. I have not been accustomed to a great deal of female society."

"You dance beautifully, which made me conclude that you were a great lady's man."

"I am at a loss to imagine upon what you could base such a conclusion."

"Is not dancing associated with ladies? You said you had enjoyed the evening. I was simple enough to think that it was the presence of ladies that caused the time to pass off so agreeably."

"I am indebted to you for that," he answered quickly. "If you will allow me to say it, you are so different from the rest."

"If you really believe that, I must thank you for the compliment you intend."

Thus they chatted till they reached Clara's home. As he was taking his leave, Xerxes said in an earnest, appealing tone:

"If you will allow me to call occasionally, it would be a great favor, and enable me to kill at least some of the time that hangs so heavily upon my hands?"

"Certainly: I would be pleased to have you call, for I'm frequently afflicted with dreadful *ennui* myself," was the imprudent permission of this betrothed young lady. When they separated, Clara said to herself:

"What a pleasant man he is. I do believe he is more entertaining than Ernest, who, with his religion and his great education, is so solemn. He doesn't act like a young man at all. But he is so smart, and I can always be proud of him. Besides, papa has so much confidence in him. But I do wish he were just a little more like Mr. Comston."

And Xerxes thought as he went away:

"She is very beautiful. This, with her

thousands, makes her a prize worth winning. She has not yet mentioned the name of that religious lawyer. Look sharp, my zealous friend ! if you don't mind, I'll play you a trick yet. You may be engaged to her, but 'there's many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip.' ”

And here we leave them in darkness.

The next evening Ernest called again, and found Clara in the parlor. She had slept till noon.

“I hope you are feeling well after your last evening's dissipation,” he said pleasantly, as he seated himself.

“I never felt better,” she answered. “I believe the exercise was an advantage to me. I don't see why you should call it dissipation.”

“Dissipation it is when compared with some other things, especially those more solid pursuits which improve the mind.”

“Do you think of nothing but improving the mind ? ” asked Clara. “Don't you believe in any recreation at all ? ”

“Certainly, but different people have different kinds of recreation.”

“What is your kind ? I should like to know.”

"I will tell you," answered Ernest. "I take a walk or ride every day for the benefit of my physical organization. To rest my mind I read light literature."

"And is that the way you propose to spend your life?" inquired Clara looking at him anxiously.

"Why should I not?"

"Of course, you can do as you please," said Clara, showing some signs of vexation. "But isn't it rather selfish?"

"It may appear so at present, because I am alone a great deal. But ere long I shall have a lovable companion who can share these pleasures with me."

Clara could not fail to understand his meaning, and now, for the first time, it occurred to her what a gloomy life she must lead with this solemn man of books. She had no great taste for literature : Ernest, on the other hand, was a thorough bibliophilist. He would, no doubt, want her to read to him what he called light literature, which would prove rather heavy to her ; and he would expect her to be deeply interested in it. Xerxes, on the contrary, would be a gay companion, and would take her to balls, theaters, and other places

of amusement. This comparison passed rapidly through her mind.

"Do you not think that will be a pleasant way to spend life?" asked Ernest, after the pause that followed his last remark.

"It may be for those who like it," she answered very dryly.

"Don't you think," asked Ernest, "that intellectual pleasures are the most solid and substantial of all? I take the view that we are put here to cultivate our minds and hearts, and not to be creatures of mere sensuality. How much better are we than the brutes, if our whole aim is only to 'eat, drink, and be merry.' That is the way they spend the golden hours of life."

"I suppose you mean, then, to call me a brute," said Clara, inclined to pout.

"No, no," cried Ernest quickly, "I had no such meaning."

"But I cannot enjoy books like you. You know that," she said peevishly.

"You will learn, though, I trust."

"I don't think I ever will," she replied.

"What do you like, then?" inquired Ernest, trying to smile.

"Things that you don't, it seems. I like theaters and dances."

"But in the course of time you will desire pleasures more substantial than these."

"I don't know that I will."

Clara seemed to be out of humor all that evening, and when Ernest left his heart was filled with misgivings. He thought and feared that he had discovered a change in her manner toward him. She was evidently more distant than she had been since their engagement. He was melancholy. But what could he do to put an end to this dreadful suspense? He determined that he would persuade Clara to appoint an earlier day for their marriage.

Availing himself of the privilege allowed him, Xerxes called the next evening. This young man had traveled considerably, and had lived in the city of New York for several years. He had not been seated long before he gave Clara an animated description of the theaters of Paris. She listened like one entranced. Perceiving her profound interest, he soon discovered how to entertain her.

"How I should like to travel," said Clara, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Yes, it is very pleasant to make the tour of the world with a congenial companion."

"I should think so," she said. "Which city do you like best?"

"Paris, undoubtedly. You can spend a life there, looking at the curiosities. There is the Louvre, the Tuilleries, the bridges, the arcs and a thousand other things that I cannot think of now. I read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* while I was there, and went to the streets and other places he mentions. It made the story much more interesting. Did you ever read that work?"

"No, sir, I never did."

"I have a copy, and will bring it to you if you would like to read it."

"Indeed, I should like to do so. We can get no books in this dull town."

"Well may you call it dull," said Xerxes. "I told my father the other day that I felt that I would have to dissolve our partnership. I don't believe I can stand the country much longer. Father came here to have a quiet time, but it is almost too quiet for me."

These two talked about nothing but parties, dances, shows and the like the remainder of the evening, and the young lady thought she had been highly entertained. Xerxes had

touched responsive chords in her nature whose very existence Ernest had ignored. After his departure, she, at first timidly asked herself the question if she really had any true affection for Ernest. Was he a suitable companion for her? After their marriage, was it not evident that he would expect her to take a deep interest in the stupid books to which he was devoted. Xerxes was like herself and she thought how happy she could be with an elegant gentleman who would take delight in the things of which she was so fond.

With such communings as these she fell asleep. She dreamed that she was wandering in a wide plain, and that she was weary and sad on account of a great sorrow which had come over her, which was the loss of her parents. She sat down on a stone, covered her face with her hands, and wept. Hearing a deep-drawn sigh at her side, she looked around, and beheld Ernest. He mingled his tears with hers, and pointed upward. Suddenly he disappeared. Again she bowed her head, and wept afresh. Then she heard a joyous laugh, and rising up, she saw Xerxes standing before her. "Why weep?" he said. "Enjoy life. Come with me to yon throng of

dancers, and drown your sorrow.” She cast her eyes in the direction in which he was pointing, and beheld a company gayly dressed, whirling amid gorgeous flowers under gigantic oaks. She gave her hand to the smiling Xerxes, and they were soon mingling with the giddy pleasure-seekers.

When Clara awoke, the superstition of her nature, more or less of which all of us have, inclined her to put an interpretation upon her dream which was decidedly unfavorable to Ernest. Did not the dream foreshadow a fearful destiny, if she married him? All that day she was in a state of perplexing indecision. But circumstances soon enabled her to reach a conclusion; for Xerxes, to her surprise, called that very evening. He looked sad, and seemed to be greatly embarrassed.

“I cannot stay long,” he said as soon as they were seated. “I have come to bid you adieu.”

“What!” exclaimed Clara in unfeigned astonishment, but suddenly restraining her emotion, she said:

“O, you are going off on business?”

“No: I don’t expect to return.”

“Why—is—it—is it not a sudden conclusion?”

"It is, said Xerxes. "I reached it on leaving you yesterday evening. I learned something that at once decided me."

"It seems that it was something disagreeable, judging by your looks?"

"Yes, the most disagreeable news I ever heard in my life," exclaimed Xerxes. "I cannot remain here any longer. I wish I had known it sooner. I should have controlled my foolish heart, and saved myself a world of sorrow."

"I don't understand you," said Clara.

"I know you don't, but to be plain, you are the cause of my trouble."

"I? How can I be?"

"I will tell you," said Xerxes, speaking as if he were in the deepest distress. "I heard of your engagement yesterday evening. I had permitted myself to entertain hopes in regard to you, not dreaming that I had a rival. I do think you ought to have informed me of this fact, in common charity."

"You never asked me, Mr. Comston."

"No: but when you saw my infatuation, you might have thrown out a hint, that your heart was pre-occupied. But you allowed me to go on in my blindness till I have become

hopelessly entangled in the web of Cupid. I love you to madness. O, why did you not warn me?" exclaimed Xerxes in a voice of such exquisite anguish that Clara felt sorry, and yet glad.

"I think it would have been presumptuous in me to have done so. I did not know that you cared anything for me."

"Well, it is useless to talk about it, I suppose. I go with a great wound in my heart which nothing on earth can cure. You are lost to me forever. The thought drives me mad. I cannot remain here."

"Why should you go?" asked Clara timidly.

"Do you suppose I could stay here, and see you the bride of another? No, no, never."

"Another? whom do you mean?"

"Why, you know—Mr. Edgefield."

"I don't think I will ever be his bride," replied Clara in a low, hesitating tone.

"Are you not engaged to him?" asked Xerxes eagerly.

"Yes: but since he has joined the Christians, I have been thinking of breaking it off. He has become too solemn to suit me."

"O, if you will only give me the slightest

grounds for hope, this town would be the dearest spot on earth to me. Tell me that I may try to win you, and I will be raised at once from the very depths of despair to the pinnacle of felicity."

Xerxes had used this very expression at least a dozen times to different damsels, but he now spoke it with all the freshness of a first utterance, and it had the same effect upon Clara as if it had been the spontaneous outgush of a sentiment struggling to find vent in suitable language. Subsequent events will show what reply Clara made.

Ernest could not be blind to the frequency of Xerxes' visits, and he determined to put an end to them by a marriage at an early day as he could prevail upon Clara to appoint. He had not doubted her constancy, but since the ball he dreaded the consequences of the comparisons between himself and his rival, which it was but natural the young lady should institute. Accordingly, the next time he called, he directed the conversation to their engagement, and said earnestly :

"I hope, my dear Clara, you will appoint the day for our union. This you have not yet done. You have only said it would be in the

next few weeks, which is indefinite. I can see no use in waiting longer. Please make the day as near in the future as possible."

Clara's beautiful face at once assumed an expression of ominous seriousness but she spoke promptly and directly :

"I am thinking of asking you to release me from that hasty engagement."

Ernest turned pale. He made no attempt to conceal his amazement and anguish. For a moment he sat as if petrified, or as if he did not clearly understand her. Surely she could not mean what these words signified : he could not believe it, for did she not love him ? Why break the engagement? O, she must be tantalizing him for sport—yes, that was all. He would humor this pleasantry. Then he tried to smile, but it was an expressionless distortion of his face. "You want a divorce, do you?" he asked in a husky voice. "Well, that will be hard to get."

"I said nothing about a divorce," she replied in a cold manner.

" You did not use that word, I know, but an engagement, Clara, solemnly entered into is equivalent to marriage in the sight of God. You are mine ; how can I release you ?"

"I see no difficulty in the way whatever. I'm not yours: I only promised to be."

"Well, are you going to deliberately violate your promise, your solemn vow, which God witnessed? How can you do such a thing? Did you mean what you said?"

"Certainly, I did, but I have changed my mind: I don't want to marry you."

"O, Clara, Clara," he cried in agony, "you crush me into the dust! You do not mean what you say—tell me, you do not mean it. You merely want to tantalize me. Well, dear, do you not see that I cannot endure it? I never could appreciate jokes. Come, you have had enough sport. Be serious, and appoint the day for our marriage."

"Mr. Edgefield," she said firmly, "I'm not joking; I'm in earnest, and I ask you to release me from the engagement."

"Ask God to release you," cried Ernest wildly, and see if He will do it. You are mine, Clara. How can I give you up? It would be a sin."

"O, pshaw!" said Clara contemptuously, "I see no sin in it. I'll never marry you. Don't you understand that?"

"I see how it is," suddenly cried Ernest

"that tippling fop has deceived you. You surely would not think of rejecting me for a stranger whose moral character is bad? You are too wise for that. Your father will not permit you to be so foolish."

"I give you to understand, sir," said Clara reddening with anger, "my father will not compel me to marry any one against my will. You have insulted me. Leave me, and never speak to me again."

"O, Clara, Clara," cried Ernest, wringing his hands in anguish, "do not drive me from you in this cruel way. I beg your pardon. I scarcely knew what I was saying. Forgive me, if I said anything offensive."

"I'll forgive you, if you will leave me, and promise never again to call, except as a friend."

Ernest fixed his eyes upon her face, and gazed so strangely that she shrank, and hung her head. He was trembling like the wind-shaken aspen. He was standing on the verge of an abyss of darkness, and felt the ground giving way under his feet. He felt as if the foundations of his being were breaking up, and drifting off, leaving him to sink down into the horrid blackness. How could he cry to God

to sustain him in this supreme hour of distress ! The chilling waves were rolling over him : a great suffocating lump seemed to be forming in his heart. His soul reeled. He looked up to the ceiling of the room, and seemed to be trying to see through it, and beyond it. His lips worked and twitched convulsively. O, it is pitiable to see a strong man suddenly hurled from his normal tranquillity down to the dust of abject despair, at the feet of an unworthy woman !

Clara gazed at him with feelings of mingled compassion and alarm. She was still more astonished, when he suddenly rose to his feet, and, without appearing to see her, walked out of the parlor. She noticed that his face was bloodless, and his lips were firmly compressed as though he were holding back some terrible thought which was struggling to find egress. In a few moments his rapid footsteps had died away.

“ What a strange man ! ” she said. I wonder what he is going to do ? I didn’t think he would take it so hard as that. But marriage would have made us both miserable.”

Thus there was a sudden divergence of the path of destiny. There is nothing more com-

mon in the affairs of this life than these unexpected transitions from one condition to another. We may carefully spread the warp on the loom, but the shuttle which holds the woof, is projected by an unseen hand. Our well-settled purposes, our deep-laid schemes, are thwarted, and scattered to the winds. We stand astounded and appalled in the wreck of our hopes and plans, not knowing what to do, when presently we turn, and behold a new path opened, and uncontrollable circumstances force us to pursue it.



## CHAPTER V.

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### DEEP WATERS.

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It was a bright moon-lit night, and the town of — showed dimly in the silvery sheen which vaguely illuminated the half of every object. It was calm and quiet. The people were sitting in groups on the galleries, porticoes and piazzas of their respective residences, enjoying the cooling breezes that stole out of the circumjacent forests and crept gently along the deserted streets.

“ ‘Twas one of those delicious nights,  
So common in the climes of Greece,  
When day withdraws but half his lights,  
And all is moonshine, balm and peace.”

Ernest and Mr. Hillston were sitting in the gallery of the preacher’s residence. The young man was sad and silent.

“ Ernest,” said Mr. Hillston kindly, “ what is the matter with you? You have not been like yourself for two or three days. You seem to be in deep trouble.”

“ So I am, Mr. Hillston. I am wading

through the ‘deep waters’ about which you sing.”

“I knew there was something the matter. Is it anything you can tell? Sometimes it is a great relief to unbosom ourselves to a kind friend, who can sympathize with us, if nothing more.”

“I do not mind telling you, Mr. Hillston, though I cannot see that it will do any good.”

“You do not know that. I have lived a long time in this world, and have, at least, tried to comfort a great many people under clouds of sorrow. Probably I might be able to give you some advice which would be useful.”

“Well, you know I was engaged to be married to Clara Vanclure?”

“Yes; you told me that.”

“She has broken the engagement.”

“For what reason?”

“I suspect that Comston has deceived her.”

“Did you have no quarrel with her? Frequently young people fall out about trifles, and soon become reconciled.”

“No; we had no quarrel. She discarded me coolly and deliberately.”

“Well, my dear boy,” said Mr. Hillston, with tenderness, “it is no more than I expected.”

"Why?" asked Ernest.

"Do you not remember some weeks ago, when you told me about the affair, that you thought I did not approve your choice?"

"Yes, sir, distinctly."

"I did not think you had made a wise selection, and as I did not congratulate you then, I now congratulate you on the happy termination of the affair."

"You are cruel, Mr. Hillston," said Ernest, in a tone of bitterness.

"Far from it, my boy. I know you must suffer for a while. But mark what I say : you will, no doubt, see the day when you will regard it as the best that could have happened to you. I was surprised at your choice, but as the poet says :

'Lovers are blind, and cannot see  
The petty faults themselves commit.'

But I could see that Miss Clara would not suit you at all. She has as few qualifications for a minister's wife as any lady of my acquaintance."

"Minister's wife!" exclaimed Ernest. "She would not have been a minister's wife."

"I see you are still disposed to disobey the Divine call ; but you would better yield, or

your present trouble will be only the beginning of sorrows. I have no doubt that it is foreordained that you shall be a preacher of the gospel."

"Look here, Mr. Hillston," cried Ernest suddenly, "I have been reading my Bible to discover if that doctrine of predestination is taught."

"Well, do you find it in God's Word?" quietly asked Mr. Hillston.

"I think not, sir. On the contrary, I find all through it that man is a free agent."

"My dear boy, who denies that man is a free agent? I am sure that I will endorse every passage which you can cite that teaches human responsibility."

"Why, I do not see, Mr. Hillston, how you can possibly reconcile predestination with man's free moral agency."

"I do not pretend to do so, Ernest. You are like a good many people I know, who think that predestination is not taught in God's Word, because they cannot make it harmonize with free agency. I have frequently been amused at some ministers who undertook to show that there is no such doctrine as fore-ordination in the Bible. They quoted

those passages which prove that man is a free agent, and then at once jumped to the conclusion that God could not shape or control human destiny. We must accept both doctrines, for both are clearly taught in the Scriptures. You cannot understand the Trinity, but your failure to comprehend it is no proof of its falsity, is it?"

"No, sir, of course not. But I did not think you could hold to predestination and free agency at the same time. What do you do with the passage of Scripture which says that 'Christ tasted death for every man?'"

"Do with it? I accept it without hesitation as a precious truth."

"Well, well, well," said Ernest, as though greatly perplexed, "and yet you say that some men were condemned from all eternity. How in the world can that be? 'Whosoever will,' says the Scripture, 'let him take the water of life freely.'"

"Certainly," answered the preacher, gently. I quote that in every sermon I preach, and urge sinners to avail themselves of the world-embracing invitation."

"But if their destiny is already determined,

what is the use of your preaching to them and urging them?"

"Now, my boy, don't begin at the roof to build your house, but commence at the foundation, and work upward. Suppose I show that this 'horrid doctrine,' as some people call it, is contained in God's Word?"

"Well, I wish you would," said Ernest. "I am open to conviction."

"Then let us go into my study, and appeal to the Blessed Book itself; for it should be final in every theological controversy."

They were soon seated, and the old man arranged his spectacles, and opened the Bible.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Hillston, "that the eighth and ninth chapters of the epistle to the Romans ought to remove every doubt on this subject. You have surely noticed the celebrated passage, Romans 8:29. Now here it is: 'Whom He did fore-know, He did *predestinate*.' What does predestinate mean? It has only one meaning."

"That is true," said Ernest, "but might it not refer to the righteous *character*? He did fore-know and predestinate the righteous character. I can admit that."

"How will you separate a man from his character?" asked Mr. Hillston. "You might just as well talk of separating sugar from its sweetness. What is the character of sugar? It is sweet. Can you deprive it of this attribute without utterly destroying it? Certain qualities and attributes constitute character, and make the man. If a man has no character, he is a brute. Godliness, holiness, etc., are nothing till they become concrete by entering into the moral constitution of an individual. It is in vain, then, to talk about God's saving the 'righteous character,' because that is nothing but an abstraction. Besides, Paul says, 'whom' He did fore-know, not 'what.'

"I will take back the word 'character,' if you will allow me," said Ernest, "and say that God predestinates the righteous *man*."

"Very well," replied Mr. Hillston. "We agree, then, it is the *individual* that is fore-ordained to salvation. All denominations are agreed that there is an election of some sort. Let me ask upon what principle you think God elects men to salvation?"

"Why, sir, God elects those to salvation who He fore-saw would repent of their sins."

"That view," said Mr. Hillston, "is a flat contradiction of what Paul says. The apostle describes the several steps or processes in the believer's salvation. He does not say that God predestinated those who would repent, but those 'whom He did predestinate He *called*, and them that He called He *justified*.' According to your view, the passage ought to say: 'Them whom He justified, on account of their repentance, He predestinated.' The plain meaning of the passage is, that God predestinated some men to salvation, and in consequence of that election, He *called* them and *justified* them. The apostle reiterates this view in some of the other epistles. Here is Eph. 1:3, 4, 5: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will.' Now," continued Mr. Hillston, "ought not this passage to put an end to all controversy? The apostle

declares there was an election. When? He says ‘before the foundation of the world.’ Why did He choose us? Was it because we were righteous? No. Was it because God fore-saw that we would repent? No. He chose us that ‘we *should become holy and without blame.*’ Now what do you say?”

“I confess,” said Ernest, “that such passages puzzle me no little. Why does God choose some men to salvation, and pass by others, when all are guilty alike?”

“Ah! there’s the difficulty,” said Mr. Hillston. “The good Lord has not informed us on what principle He makes the choice. If we knew that, there would be an end of all discussion. All we know about it is, that it is ‘according to the good pleasure of His will.’ Is not that a sufficient reason?”

“Somehow, this doctrine of predestination appears to me to be unjust,” said Ernest, looking confused. “You say that God passes by some men without giving them an opportunity to be saved.”

“I did not say that, Ernest.”

“Well, it amounts to that.”

“On the contrary, they do have an opportunity to be saved. The invitations of the

gospel are extended to all alike, and all could be saved, if they would. No man ever was lost simply on account of the ‘eternal decrees.’”

“Why, how can they be saved,” asked Ernest, “if it is predestinated that they shall not accept the invitations offered to them?”

“But, my young friend, the Bible does not say that they *shall* not accept, but that they *will* not. ‘Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life,’ said our Lord. The greatest obstacle in the way of human salvation is found in the perversity of the *will*. If men only *willed* to be saved, they could be. How, then, is there injustice in predestination?”

“Well,” said Ernest, “if some men are fore-ordained to eternal death, I should like to know what is the use of your preaching to them?”

“When you get to be a minister, if you discard predestination and election, I want to ask you a question or two,” said Mr. Hillston. “Assuming that you are a preacher, I will ask you these questions now.”

“Very well; proceed.”

“You believe in God’s fore-knowledge?”

“Certainly.”

"Do you believe that all men will be saved?"

"No, sir; some will be lost," answered Ernest.

"That is certain, is it?"

"Of course, it is."

"Then," said Mr. Hillston, "what is the use of your preaching to certain men that God knows will be lost? Will not the same result follow in both instances?"

"Yes, sir; but I throw the responsibility of refusing upon themselves."

"Let us settle one thing at a time, if you please," said Mr. Hillston. "We are not talking about where the responsibility belongs; but, at present, we want to get at the facts. I ask you, if God fore-knows that some men will be lost, is not their destiny as much fixed as if it had been decreed? Answer that."

"I suppose it would be," replied Ernest hesitatingly, as though he were fearful of admitting too much, "but God's fore-knowledge has no effect upon human destiny."

"It does not matter about that just now. People," continued Mr. Hillston, "frequently ask me the question which you have pro-

pounded. What is the use of preaching to men that are certain to be lost? You must not try to make me remove an objection which applies with as much force to your system as to mine. God commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, and that is reason enough. You remember that God commanded Ezekiel to preach to the dry bones in the valley. The prophet might have said, ‘What is the use? These bones have no life and no sense. They cannot hear: it is foolish to talk to them.’ But God said, ‘Preach to them.’ Sinners are in the condition of those dry bones; but God tells me to preach to them. I obey; I know not who are to be lost: my duty is to preach, and God quickens whom He will.”

“I see the unfairness of my question,” said Ernest honestly. “But there is an absurdity in the doctrine of predestination, if I only knew how to point it out.”

“Look here, my boy,” said Mr. Hillston kindly, “how can you call that an ‘absurdity’ which the Bible so clearly teaches?”

“I beg pardon, Mr. Hillston; I will recall the offensive word. I will substitute the word injustice for absurdity.”

“Your apology does not mend the matter,”

answered Mr. Hillston, "for are you going to accuse God of injustice?"

"No, sir; but the question is whether it is a doctrine of the Bible."

"Exactly. We agreed to let the Bible settle it," said Mr. Hillston. "I have already called your attention to several passages which undoubtedly teach it. I can refer to instances and passages almost without number in the Scriptures. The Bible certainly is not silent on the subject, whether we can understand it or not."

"I cannot understand," said Ernest, "how a man can be a free agent, and yet his destiny is already fixed."

"And yet, the Bible is full of instances which prove clearly that predestination and free agency operate in perfect harmony."

"Name one," said Ernest.

"Well, take the case of Judas Iscariot: it was predicted by Isaiah that the Lord Jesus should be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Will you not admit that God had Judas in His mind, when this prophecy was made?"

"Certainly," replied Ernest, "for a betrayal necessarily implies a betrayer."

"Undoubtedly, because God could not fore-

see a betrayal disconnected entirely from any individual. You will also admit that after the prediction was made, it must be fulfilled, and Judas must betray Christ?"

"I do not see that I must admit that."

"But you must, though," said Mr. Hillston.

"Why must I?" asked Ernest.

"Well, suppose Judas had not betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, what would have become of Isaiah's prophecy? Would it not have been falsified?"

"I suppose so," said Ernest a little doggedly.

"Suppose so!" cried Mr. Hillston. "How can there possibly be any doubt about it? After a prophesy is uttered, and even written down, it must be fulfilled, or God's word is falsified."

"Yes; I admit that, for the sake of argument."

"Well, when the proper time arrived, Judas betrayed the Lord. He evidently performed a part which was predestinated. Was he not a free agent?"

"Not if he was compelled to do as he did," answered Ernest.

"No, if he was compelled," replied Mr. Hill-

ston, “but where was the compulsion? He was carrying out his own will and if he was, that makes him a free agent. His conduct afterwards proves that he never felt that he was constrained by any extraneous influence. The crucifixion was foretold with all its attendant prominent circumstances, and to prove that it was predestinated, let us turn to Acts 2:23. ‘*Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*’

“Here it is emphatically declared that Jesus was delivered by the determinate counsel of God. To show that the actors in the disgraceful tragedy were free agents, it is said that they crucified Him with *wicked* hands. But to put it beyond all dispute, that it was all predestinated, let us turn to Acts 4:27-28: ‘*For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*’

“Here, the actors are all clearly specified. They met at a certain place. For what? To

do whatsoever God had determined before should be done. You can get no other meaning out of it. Dr. Adam Clarke saw a difficulty here, and he took the liberty to transpose the passage so as to make it read thus : ‘*For a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*’

“Dr. Clarke thus makes the predestination clause apply to Jesus, instead of Herod, and the others. It seems the Doctor did not mind stripping Jesus of free agency, just so he could preserve it to men. But Mr. Benson, who had no leaning towards predestination, says that such a transposition as Clarke makes is unauthorized and unnecessary.”

“Do you think,” asked Ernest, “that Dr. Clarke was insincere? I mean, do you believe he discovered the doctrine of predestination in that passage, and then deliberately tried to eliminate it?”

“O, no,” replied Mr. Hillston, “I think he honestly believed that the doctrine of predestination, as taught by most Baptist ministers and especially by the Presbyterian Church, has no foundation in the Scriptures, and thus

believing, he could not admit the plain meaning of what seems to me a plain passage. He, no doubt, thought by transposing a clause, he would make the Bible say what was intended. But what does the Doctor gain by this transposition? If Jesus was not a free agent, we are under no obligation to Him for fulfilling the law in our stead and suffering for us. He was merely undergoing a penalty which He could not avoid. Was it not necessary that Jesus should be a free agent as well as that men should?"

"But according to your view," said Ernest, "He could be a free agent, and yet His career be fore-ordained."

"Exactly, but according to Dr. Clarke's view, if His career was foreordained, He could not be a free agent; that is the difference. These men, Herod, Pilate, and the others, carried out their own will and the Divine will at the same time, and I see no difficulty in it. That is the great advantage the predestinarian has. When he meets with a passage that teaches predestination, he admits it; and when he meets with another that teaches free agency, he admits it. He makes no pause to try to reconcile them, because he

sees no inconsistency. But when Dr. Clarke, and those who believe like him, come to one of these passages, 'hard to be understood,' as Peter says, they halt and endeavor to harmonize it with their belief. When the Bible, in speaking of Pharaoh, says, "For this purpose have I raised thee up," we predestinarians at once acknowledge God's hand, and we read on without stopping to explain. But Dr. Clarke comes to it and finds an obstacle. He must pause and try to determine what is meant by 'raising up,' and must explain it so as not to interfere with man's free agency. We read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and in the next passage we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. We predestinarians find no difficulty here, for we see the two doctrines working together in perfect harmony, but Dr. Clarke becomes puzzled. 'How is this?' he says. 'If God hardened Pharaoh's heart, how could Pharaoh have hardened his own heart?' So the good Doctor must enter into a long explanation of this hardening process."

"One of the passages you have quoted," said Ernest, who appeared to be confused by perplexing thoughts, "says, 'according to the fore-knowledge.' Could it not have been that

God merely fore-saw what Judas and others would do and based the prophecy upon fore-knowledge?"

"That only removes the difficulty one step," replied Mr. Hillston. "For whatever God fore-saw, must take place. But the passage says also 'determinate counsels.' What does that mean?"

"I know you think it means predestination."

"I certainly do," replied Mr. Hillston. "But I think we have found predestination in at least two instances which prove that there is no conflict between the two principles we are discussing. If fore-ordination and free agency could work in harmony in the case of Judas, why not in the case of every human being. I want to ask you a question right here."

"I will answer it, if I can," said Ernest.

"You have already acknowledged that God fore-knows all things, 'every deed which men will perform and even every thought which will pass through their minds. Now suppose God should order some Jeremiah to write out the history of every human being: we would have a tremendous book of prophecy which would include every individual of the human

race. You will admit that all these prophecies would have to be accomplished or God's word would be falsified. You will admit, also, that if no one knew anything about this great and enormous book except the writer, men would be free agents? How could merely recording their actions without their knowledge affect their conduct?"

"It could not," said Ernest.

"Well, then, are men's actions any the less uncertain because they are not written out in a book? The history of every human being is written out in the Divine Mind. Is that history any the less uncertain because it is not published in a tangible volume? God's not fore-telling what He fore-knows, does not leave men at liberty to change their conduct. If it did, the Lord could fore-know nothing with certainty. If then God could write out the history of every human being without doing the least violence to his free agency, how can you object to predestination? My history is fixed, and so is yours and every other man's, and that is predestination."

Ernest said nothing, and Mr. Hillston continued :

"But let us turn to the Scriptures again.

Here is John 15 : 16: ‘*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*’ Again, 1 Cor. 1 : 26: ‘*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called,*’ etc. I could refer to a great many passages of similar import. Is not election clearly taught in such Scriptures? Then it is said that God did not choose His people on account of their righteous character, but that He might make them righteous. When they were chosen, they were children of wrath even as others. This is proved in the 15th chapter of John, where Jesus, speaking of His people under the similitude of sheep, says: “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold”—that is they were in the world out of the fold; they were sinners and yet were God’s people, to be brought in, when it should please God.

“I do no see how anyone can read the eighth and ninth chapters of Romans without believing in the doctrine of predestination and election. Paul there answers the very objections which are to this day urged against divine fore-ordination. Peter certainly understood Paul to advocate this ‘horrid doctrine,’ for he says it is ‘hard to be understood.’ If Paul

was writing about free agency, there was no need to say it was hard to be understood."

"I have read these chapters," said Ernest, "and I confess they are mysterious."

"What makes them mysterious?" asked Mr. Hillston. "Don't you see if you can eliminate predestination and election out of them, they would not be mysterious? Why do so many people stumble over these chapters especially? It is because their foot strikes against these two hard doctrines."

"You have used the word 'election,'" said Ernest, "but do not some people say that it applies only to the election of classes or nations to temporal privileges, and not to the election of individuals to eternal salvation?"

"Yes; but let us settle that point by the Scriptures. Turn to Acts 13: 48: '*And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*' Some people have wished that the last clause could be transposed so as to read: '*As many as believed were ordained to eternal life.*' But it is too plain to be tampered with in this way. Again, in second Thessalonians 2: 13: '*But we are bound to give thanks al-*

*ways to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.’ Again, Hebrews 12:23: ‘To the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven.’ Again, Philippians 4:3: ‘Whose names are in the book of life.’ I could go on, and cite I know not how many more passages, all proving that there is an election of individuals unto eternal salvation.”*

“There is evidently an election of individuals,” said Ernest, “but why could it not be based upon men’s foreseen repentance and faith. I could accept that doctrine.”

“No doubt,” answered the preacher, “for that is more agreeable to the carnal heart. Men like so much to deserve salvation by their own works—their own faith and repentance. According to the Scriptures, this election is based upon God’s will. But if you will modify your position a little, I think we can agree. If you will say that this election is based upon faith and repentance brought about by the Holy Spirit, we need not have any further discussion.”

"But I do not mean that. I mean that men perceive the truth and act upon it."

"Of themselves, do you mean?"

"Well, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

"But men," said Mr. Hillston, "are represented in the Scriptures as dead in trespasses and sins. Lazarus is a fit type of the sinner. Could Lazarus have raised himself from the grave without the assistance of the Lord? Is it not evident that he could do nothing till he was actually restored to life? So it was with the man who had the diseased arm. He could not make an effort till the limb was healed. 'By grace are ye saved,' says the Scripture, 'through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' Are not all these passages sufficient to convince and satisfy you?"

"Of course, I must believe what the Bible says," replied Ernest, "but it does appear strange to me how a man can be a free agent, and yet his destiny is fixed."

"No one ever denied that it is strange. Indeed, it is incomprehensible; but we are not to reject it on that account. All we have to do is to ascertain whether it is contained in God's Word or not. But after all, what do we

mean by predestination? Why just this, that God had a purpose in view in the creation of the world. He surely was not trying experiments. He did not put men in the world, and turn them loose, to see what they would do. You will not deny that He fore-knew who would be saved and who would be lost?"

"No, I do not deny that."

"Well, there is no power in mere fore knowledge. Would not God, then, have to exercise power in order to accomplish what He fore-knew?"

"It seems that He would, sir."

"Well, that is predestination. It is the execution of the divine purpose. So you see that, without predestination, God could not have made the world—could not have created man. Notwithstanding that He fore-saw some would be lost, He determined to create them, and that determination on the part of God, is predestination. Then, eliminate predestination, and you represent God in the attitude of a sort of empiricist. He creates men without any particular purpose in view. Besides, there is another difficulty. When there was nothing in existence, how could God foresee anything except what He had determined upon? Would

not God have to determine that things should be, before He could fore-see them? I cannot imagine how the Lord could have made the world without predestination. Man, with His limited wisdom, never undertakes enterprises without determining something in regard to them. Do you suppose that God put men here without any purpose?"

"No, sir; of course, He had a purpose."

"Really, when you admit that, there is no use of discussion, for that purpose is predestination. We can ascertain what God's purposes are, only by what takes place. We see that some men are lost and some are saved, and all this must be in accordance with God's purpose, and that is what we mean by predestination."

"You can beat me in argument," suddenly exclaimed Ernest. "I have not studied the question sufficiently."

"The more you study it," said Mr. Hillston, "the more you will be convinced that it is the doctrine of the Bible."

"Whenever I am convinced," replied Ernest, "you may rest assured that I will accept it. But I am not satisfied. What you have said appears reasonable; but I know there is some-

thing to be said on the other side, if I knew how to get at it."

"I don't know," answered Mr. Hillston; "you have mentioned the usual objections that men urge against it. But when you find any good argument on your side, let me know what it is. Let me caution you on one point, though. Do not seek out those passages of Scripture which teach free agency, and put them against the passages that favor predestination. For that is only fighting Scripture with Scripture. You must not make the Bible contradict itself, but you must try to reconcile these seemingly antagonistic passages. In the meantime, try to apply this doctrine to your own case. Your steps are ordered by the Lord. Recognize God's hand in your affairs, and thus predestination becomes a practical, comforting doctrine, instead of that 'horrid thing' which some people call it."

Ernest took his leave. He was almost convinced by the arguments of Mr. Hillston, but he was not yet prepared to acknowledge it.

Men pride themselves upon consistency, and some will even cling to an error rather than appear fickle-minded. Away, we say, with such absurd and false consistency! It is morally degrading.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### MANASSAS.

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While the never-ceasing march of time was unfolding the events which have been narrated, others of a more startling and melancholy character were evolving from the womb of the future. We have now reached the historical year of 1861, which has already taken its place along with other famous periods that have marked the turning points in humanity's progress. The reader, in order fully to understand the present story, must again gaze in imagination at the gloomy clouds of war, and listen to the awful earthquake of battle, the sharp rattle of musketry, varied with the deep bass of cannon, the thundering tramp of cavalry, the deafening shouts of the victor, and the piteous groans of the wounded and dying.

On the morning of the 21st July 1861, at early dawn, the boom of a single cannon broke the solemn stillness and sacred silence of the Lord's day. It was the signal gun of Manassas,

fired by the Federal troops opposite the stone bridge which spans the now celebrated rivulet known as Bull Run. It was thirty minutes past six o'clock when this gun awoke the first echoes of the initial battle of the so-called great "Rebellion."

General McDowell, as rapidly as possible, pushed forward his forces to the main point of attack, which was the left wing of the Confederate army, resting at the stone bridge. It appears that it was General Beauregard's intention to make an aggressive movement by attacking the enemy's left wing, but suddenly his plan was turned against himself, and he was forced to act upon the defensive. General Hunter threw his command forward, and crossed Bull Run some distance above the stone bridge. The extreme Confederate left was held by Evans who had only fifteen companies of infantry and Latham's battery of six-pounders. A demonstration was made in his front at stone bridge while Hunter was crossing at Suddle ford. As soon as this movement of Hunter's was reported to Evans, he took eleven companies, leaving four to guard the bridge, and with this small force rapidly went forward to sustain the shock of 30,000 men. It

seemed impossible that this little Spartan band could stand before the impetuous onset of an enthusiastic army, outnumbering them by twenty to one. But Beauregard and Johnson were several miles off, and Evans must assume the responsibility of giving shape to the battle. History hardly gives this man the praise which is due, who, without any authority to order up reinforcements, had to initiate a movement of his own in the very face of the defeated plans of the commanding General. Had it not been for Evan's prompt action and his quick comprehension of the critical situation, the whole Confederate army might soon have been thrown into inextricable confusion. But Evans, at once, perceived the necessity of checking McDowell's army till Beauregard could form a new line of battle, and send forward the necessary reinforcements. The struggle that took place was bitter and determined, for both parties were in a state of military effervescence. The Northern army especially was drunk with enthusiasm, and anticipated an easy victory over the poorly-equipped "rebels." Many Congressmen and citizens, including elegant ladies, had come from Washington to participate in the celebra-

tion of the grand victory which they had no doubt would be achieved. They had sent to Centerville all kinds of delicacies, fine wines and the like, with which they expected to have a splendid collation as soon as the battle should be ended. We may here mention a fact, to which Northern historians have never given much prominence, if they have not deliberately suppressed it: Several wagons were loaded with hand-cuffs, with which to manacle the captured "rebels" and lead them along the streets of Washington in triumph. The Federals were, therefore, much enraged when they found their march checked by this handfull of "rebels"—a single regiment from South Carolina and a company from Wheat's battalion. It could not be expected that Evans could hold his position for any great length of time against such terrible odds. He was gradually driven back. But the gallant Bee soon came up. His arrival was most timely, for the whole Southern line was now giving way, reeling, staggering under the hot, concentrated fire of McDowell's army. Bee rapidly advanced with four regiments, and the battle was, at once, renewed with additional fury. For an hour, this brigade, with the few bleed-

ing companies of Evans, decimated by their heroic effort to check the advance of a whole army, stood their ground, and fought with a desperation born of pride and patriotism. It seems that Beauregard had made no preparations for an attack at this point.

Twelve o'clock arrived, and found the little army of Bee and Evans in a most critical condition. It was slowly falling back. There would soon have been a panic, had not Bee discovered the famous brigade of the immortal "Stonewall" Jackson, coming to his relief. "General," groaned Bee, as he galloped back, begrimed with the smoke and dust of battle, "they are beating us back." "Sir, we will give them the bayonet," calmly and curtly replied the Man of Iron. Bee immediately rushed back to his disordered and disheartened soldiers, and pointing with his sword, cried out: "Look at Jackson, men, standing like a *stone wall*." And thus on that bloody field, amid the roar of battle and the groans of the dying, the hero was christened with a name which has superseded that given by his parents.

Again the battle was renewed. Jackson held his position for an hour, which enabled

Beauregard to hurry forward troops from the lower fords of Bull Run. When Beauregard and Johnson arrived on the field about twelve o'clock, the day was going against the Confederates. But fortunately, while the "rebels" were wavering, and would in a short time have been utterly defeated, there was an inexplicable lull in the fight. The Federals had halted. At that time they were novices in the art of war, and did not appreciate the importance of those critical junctures when the fortunes of both parties are trembling in the balance, or when nothing is needed but a vigorous movement to secure a decided victory. But in half an hour, Beauregard had re-established his lines, and the contest was again renewed. Fresh troops were arriving on both sides.

From one till after three o'clock, the historian is unable to follow the cloud of this battle. This period was what an elegant writer calls the *quid obscurum* of battle. The war-cloud was broken up, and floated about in uncertainty. Victory, trembling in doubt, hovered over one party and then the other. Nobody can tell what was done. Tactics had become useless. Each individual soldier was his own

commander. It was a wild sozze—an enormous street *melee*. Batteries were charged and captured, and in a moment afterwards, re-captured. There was no base anywhere; everything was shifting. Volumes of smoke rolled up; cannon roared; muskets rattled; shouts and groans—all mingled together in one horrid bedlam of confusion. For two hours there was this irregular contest, in which men fought more as individuals than as companies.

Three o'clock came. The fortunes of the Confederates were extremely dark. They had lost some of their best and bravest officers. Hampton was shot while leading on his men in desperation. The noble Bee, who had baptized Jackson with blood, fell mortally wounded at the head of the Alabamians in the thickest of the fray, grasping his sword and urging on his men with his dying breath. The magnanimous Barton, while rallying the seventh Georgia, was shot through the head, and as he fell, exclaimed: "They have killed me, but never give up the field," and his pure, brave spirit winged its flight away from this awful scene of carnage, confusion and death. Fisher, of the "old North State," was killed;

Colonels Gartrell and Falkner were *hors de combat*. Many officers of lower grade, whose names will never be known, lay stretched upon the ground, never to rise again.

But the supreme moment had come. Both parties now prepared for the final blow. It was four o'clock, and the evening was hot and sultry. The Federal army was drawn up in the form of a crescent. They begin to advance. They expect, it seems, to flank the left wing of the Confederate army. What was their amazement to find themselves suddenly confronted and flanked on their right wing by 1700 fresh troops. It was the army of Kirby Smith, for which Johnson had been so anxiously looking for several hours. Indeed, he had gone back to hasten forward these troops, who came on the railroad; but as there was not a moment to lose, the cars were stopped, and the troops were hastily hurried from the train in the forest. This arrival added another feature to Bull Run that made up its similarity to the battle of Waterloo in 1815. If the reader will take the trouble to compare these two battles, he will discover that there was a striking resemblance between them, in several respects. Hugo's

letter A, with some slight modifications, will apply to Bull Run. The whole fight of Waterloo was for the plateau of Mont St. Jean : the whole fight of Bull Run was for a plateau, where the battle began and ended. In the afternoon, there was the same irregular contest. Toward nightfall Blucher burst upon the field like a terrible avalanche, before which the dismayed French fled in terror. About four o'clock in the evening of that Sabbath day, just as Beauregard gave the order to his entire line to advance, Kirby Smith, like Blucher, suddenly emerged from the woods, and burst like a thunder-clap upon the scene. This, at once, changed the whole aspect of the fight. The disheartened Federals gave way on the right, and fled before the intrepid soldiers of Kirby Smith. At the same time, the entire "rebel" army charged with reviving hopes and renewed energy. The Federals disappeared like phantoms from the gory scene, leaving clouds of smoke, abandoned wagons, wounded and dead men, to mark the spot where they had so lately fought with a courage and desperation worthy of their blood. Kirby Smith had saved the day.

Soon the roar of battle ceased, and the "rebel

yell" announced to those in the distance that the first important battle of the war had terminated in favor of the "Great Rebellion." The "Grand Army," which had, that Sabbath morning, marched out with so firm a step, rolled back upon Washington in broken fragments. It may appear a strange fact in history, but that one battle terminated the whole campaign of the year 1861.

The enemy has gone, and the storm of battle has subsided. We can now quietly walk over the terrible field, and examine its gory wake. In the final charge, the second Mississippi, with the exception of one regiment, was on the extreme left wing of the Confederate army. Just at the time that Kirby Smith's bayonet flashed like lightning into the cloud of battle, a young officer was seen to wave his sword, and fall to the earth with a groan. It was Ernest Edgefield.



## CHAPTER VII.

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### AFTER THE BATTLE.

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Sometimes in battle a soldier suddenly finds himself prostrated to the earth. He knows not what has happened. A dizziness comes over him. Then he glances down at his limbs, and discovers that he is bleeding. He knows he is wounded, but he cannot tell to what extent. It may be a fearful shot which will end his mortal existence the next moment, or it may be only a severe shock that has touched no vital part. When Ernest fell, it was a moment before he could clearly comprehend what had occurred. One of his company ran to him, and asked:

“Are you much hurt?”

“Yes; I fear I have received a long furlough.”

The soldier tore off some of his clothing, and, after a brief examination, said:

“It is a severe wound, Captain, but I don’t think it is fatal. Shall I stay with you?”

"No, no, go on with the boys. Never mind me. We have whipped them, thank God, and I can die, if it is His will, with a clear conscience. Go on with the boys."

The soldier gathered up his military implements, and pushed on with his comrades in pursuit of the flying foe, and Ernest was left alone with the wounded, dead and dying. Presently he fell into a train of thought as follows:

"Perhaps this is another warning. I have totally disregarded what Mr. Hillston says is my call to the ministry. Shall I now promise God, as I lie here, that I will yield to the call, if He will spare my life? No; for I cannot believe that I am called of God. Why does not God give me some reliable evidence, if He really wants me to be a minister? I shall wait a while yet. But suppose I die?" He could not make up his mind to preach.

At six o'clock, an elderly gentleman, with an honest, open, benevolent countenance came to the spot where Ernest was lying. He was the first wounded soldier the gentleman reached.

"What is your condition, my young friend?" he asked in a kindly voice.

"I am wounded here in the side," said Ernest.

"Could you travel in a buggy a few miles?"

"I think I could, sir."

"Then, if you can, I would be pleased to take you to my house, where you can have proper attention and good nursing. Will you go? I will assist you into the buggy."

"Yes, sir; I will accept your kind offer. How far do you have to go?"

"About six miles; but it is a good road, and we can make the drive in an hour. I could hear the fighting all day from my house. At noon, during the lull, I supposed the battle might be over, and I started to the scene of action. But when I had driven three miles, I discovered that the fight was renewed with redoubled fury. When it ended, I learned from a courier how the day had gone, and I came on to do what I could for our wounded. It will afford me pleasure to take care of you till you are again ready for duty?"

"I shall be under lasting obligations, sir," replied Ernest.

At once, Ernest was assisted into the buggy, and driven along at a slow pace till they reached the gentleman's residence at eight

o'clock in the evening. This gentleman was a Presbyterian minister, by name Dr. Arrington. His family consisted of a wife and three daughters, the elder of whom was about twenty years of age—an intelligent, well educated young lady. She had completed her education the previous year at one of the best female colleges of Virginia. We cannot say that she was perfectly beautiful, for, though her features seemed faultless when contemplated singly, yet the grouping was somehow a little defective. No one could tell what was lacking, but there was something. But the perfection of her features enabled her to bear a most rigid inspection, and she improved greatly on acquaintance. She had a decidedly classical cast of countenance. In conversation her face beamed with intelligence and sympathy, which made her appear handsome and lovely. She belonged, in a word, to that class, who attract more by their moral excellencies than their physical graces. Mildred Arrington, however, possessed a symmetrical figure, and her every movement betrayed elegance of manners and refinement of taste and intellectual culture. All who were intimately acquainted with her, thought her beautiful.

With this kind family Ernest remained for many days, while his wound was slowly healing. Dr. Arrington had an excellent library, in which he and his family spent much of their time. They were an intellectual family. Ernest here spent some of the happiest hours of his life, in the company of the three girls, especially Mildred. The Doctor was also a congenial companion, and loved to talk. He was an earnest Christian, who believed, though, in getting as much legitimate happiness out of this mortal life as possible. There was none of the Pharisee in his composition. He received the gospel with the simple faith of a child, and so preached it. He believed in providing innocent amusements for his family. The consequence was, there was no nicer place to visit and no happier home in all the country than Dr. Arrington's. His residence was full of sunshine, and no discordant sound was ever heard beneath that roof.

It will not appear wonderful, then, that the days passed rapidly away in the consciousness of Ernest, who felt loth to put an end to the period of his convalescence. But at last he began to painfully realize that he could not remain much longer, with propriety, beneath

this hospitable roof. When he thought of leaving Mildred he discovered that it filled him with the keenest pain. But why should it? If he really loved her, why not propose, at once, and bind her to him by a tie which nothing but death could sever? He must go back to the army in a few days, and the probability was, he could never see her again.

It was hardly reasonable to suppose that he could go through many such scenes as those of Bull Run, and escape with his life. But he felt that he could not bid farewell to this happy family without the prospect of a closer relationship with them in the future. He believed that he had endeared himself to them; but one thing was certain, they had so wound themselves around his heart that the thought of never seeing them again was intolerable.

One day about a week before his departure, he was walking in the lawn in company with Mildred. Presently Ernest fell into a reverie that made his face appear more solemn than usual. He was aroused by a soft voice at his side :

“ You appear to be in a profound study.”

“ So I was,” replied Ernest, heaving a deep sigh.

"It was something unpleasant, was it not?"

"What makes you think so?"

"I noticed your countenance," answered Mildred, "just now, which was expressive of pain."

"You are a good physiognomist," replied Ernest. "I was just thinking that in a few days more I must return to my command."

"And is it so painful to fight for your country?" quickly asked Mildred.

"You misunderstand me," said Ernest. "It is no reluctance to serve my country: for God knows that I am willing to die for the independence of the Confederate States, if necessary. But there are things to me more bitter than death itself."

"You talk in riddles, Captain."

"Yes; because I was talking to myself partly. It is due to you that I should explain myself." After a pause, he continued: "I have had few associates in my life. My father and mother left me a lonely orphan when I was a small boy. From various causes, which I need not weary you by relating, my life has not been very happy. I have found very few congenial companions among either sex. I have now prepared your mind for the recep-

tion of the fact, that the time spent beneath your father's roof, is the happiest portion of my existence. I was thinking just now, that I must soon leave, and the probability is, I shall never again see you and the family till we shall all meet in the eternal world."

"Why should you take such a gloomy view, Captain?" asked Mildred, slightly coloring. "We destroy our happiness by anticipating misfortunes that may never befall us. You may go through the war, and come out with honors budding thick upon your brow. Why not look forward to promotion? Who knows," she continued, trying to smile, "but that you may be a General?"

"No; I have no ambition in that way. I do not want any greater responsibility than the command of a single company involves."

There was a pause, which was broken by Mildred suddenly saying:

"What foolish thoughts will sometimes flash into our minds."

"What mean you?" asked Ernest.

"I was just thinking what an astounding victory you could gain, if you had control of that one force, from which all the forces of nature, I think, are derived."

This idea of Mildred's was fully elaborated by Lord Lytton, some few years afterwards, and the force was called *vrill*. But as we are not writing a treatise on science, we will proceed with our story.

"O," she continued gaily, "do you not wish you had something of that sort?"

"I have had such foolish thoughts a thousand times," replied Ernest, breaking into a laugh, "but I did not know that anybody else had such absurd fancies. I found myself wishing for miraculous powers on the battle field of Bull Run a short time since. When our soldiers were about to retreat in a wild panic in the evening, I almost cried aloud for a cyclone to hurl upon those dark columns. How quickly I thought I would annihilate them. Was it not preposterous?"

And they both laughed.

"I should be ashamed," said Mildred, "to let any one know what wild fancies pass through this dwarfish brain of mine. The truth is, I live in an ideal world. I often find myself wishing that I could visit some 'New Utopia.'"

"What a coincidence," said Ernest, looking at the young lady in surprise.

"What is?" she asked.

"That you and I should be dreaming about the same absurdities."

"Well, I do not know," replied Mildred. "I have never cared to mention my silly reveries to any one. Indeed, it is the first time in my life that I have alluded to them."

"May you not be wrong to call them 'silly'? Some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent in this way. I frequently discover myself traveling about in some of Munchausen's wonderful vehicles, and I become so absorbed that my imaginings appear as realities."

"I, too, do the same thing," said Mildred, turning her blue eyes upon him in surprise.

"Miss Mildred," spoke up Ernest after a brief pause, "our minds seem to have been constructed in the same molds. Henceforth I shall be forever meeting you in my psychological peregrinations. I have no doubt that I shall often rove back to this beautiful yard and these grand oaks, when I am sitting around the bivouac fire or meditating in my tent."

Mildred began to look serious, and to turn her face in order to conceal the treacherous blushes which, she felt, must be mantling her cheeks.

"I am glad to think," she answered in a low, hesitating tone, "that your imprisonment here has been rendered tolerable."

"Tolerable!" cried Ernest. "I wish such imprisonment could last forever!"

"What!" exclaimed Mildred, feigning not to understand, "would you be willing to be cooped up while your comrades are fighting the battles of liberty? Sometimes I wish I could go myself, and that I were an Amazon stout enough to shoulder a cannon. The poor South needs every soldier she can get. You must, therefore, dismiss your Utopian dreams and enter into gory and awful realities."

"If I know myself," said Ernest, "I do not shrink from those realities. But I need something to inflame my zeal."

"What do you need?" she asked, wishing after the inquiry had been made, that she had propounded some other question.

"I have told you," he replied, "that I have no intimate friends. My affections are roving around like the 'wondering Jew,' seeking some object upon which to concentrate. The object that comes within their focus will find no reason to complain of their lack of intensity. Do you understand me?"

“I cannot say that I do,” answered Mildred, “but I should think that the goddess of Liberty would be sufficient to elicit all the better feelings and aspirations of your soul.”

“The goddess of Liberty may call forth a certain class of affections, but there is another group which requires a more substantial being.” Mildred said nothing, but looked thoughtful. She understood what Ernest meant, yet he had spoken so vaguely that she was reminded of the amiable Pickwick and the widow Bardell, which association of ideas caused her to laugh out-right. Ernest gazed at her in amazement and pain.

“What is it that amuses you so?” he asked in a tone indicative of displeasure.

“Please excuse me, Captain,” she said deprecatingly. “I was not, I assure you, laughing at anything you said. It was only a foolish and ridiculous thought that suddenly came into my mind. I beg your pardon,” she said earnestly.

“Granted,” he replied, “if you will only be serious for a moment.”

“Certainly, I will.”

“I will speak plainly so that you cannot misunderstand me. The truth is, I love you.”

"O, Captain," she exclaimed with solemn earnestness, "what a time for such a declaration!"

"Why?" asked Ernest.

"Why, we are on the threshold of a terrible war which will end, we know not when."

"That is the very reason I want a love to sustain me under the trials which await me. My nature demands love. I am gloomy and wretched without it."

"How have you managed this long, Captain?"

"I will tell you all about it." And he gave her a full account of all the circumstances of his past life, after which Mildred with a cunning smile, said:

"It seems, then, I am second choice."

"You are mistaken. I did not know my own heart then. I never had for her the deep, ineffable affection I have for you. After this honest explanation must I leave you without hope? If I do, it matters little to me what shall become of me. I shall consider that ball from the enemy's gun a mercy that shall put an end to my misery. But with your love, I shall be the happiest soldier in the army. I shall have an object for which to live. Can you, will you give me any hope?"

Ernest perceived that Mildred was violently agitated, and he felt encouraged.

"Tell me," he urged, "that you will be mine, when this cruel war is over, if I come out the fiery crucible alive."

"I am glad you have given me time to reflect about the matter," she said at last. "I will candidly say this: if you are alive and I am, when the war ends, and the feelings of neither undergo any change, it shall be as you wish. Is that sufficient?"

So these two young people, with that pure affection, glowing in their hearts, which is sanctioned by the Allwise God, standing under the broad-spreading oaks, agreed to enter into the sacred relation which constitutes the very foundation of human society. Why should older persons, who have lost the ardor, aspirations and hopes of youth, sneer at what they are pleased to call "sickly love stories?" God implanted these sacred affections in the human heart to bind society together, and it is these which make man a gregarious animal. Is that pure love which leads to the marriage relation only evidence of a kind of folly that deserves to be ridiculed? Why do prudish, righteous-over-much people, calling themselves critics,

cry out against stories which illustrate social realities, and which seek to inspire the youth of our country with proper respect and reverence for a heaven-sanctioned institution? Why is it that extremely pious people profess such an aversion to "love scenes"—scenes that are every day realities in the ranks of the purest and most refined society? Such scenes as we have described, call them "love-sick," who will, actually transpired during the war, and many a soldier found a God-sent wife in the hospitals. These love affairs mingle with the gravest concerns of human life. Why, then, omit them from the pages of a story which is intended to be a true picture? There is nothing startling or sensational in them. Indeed, they are so old, common and customary that they derive any interest they may possess from new combinations of circumstances. Eliminate these circumstances, and nothing is left but an occurrence that transpires every hour of the day. We may here say that there is nothing in this volume that should prevent it from occupying a place on the shelves of any Sabbath-school library.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### HARD TRUTHS.

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During the time that Ernest was confined in the house of Dr. Arrington, he had had several discussions with that gentleman, of doctrines which are regarded by the world as distinctive dogmas of the Presbyterian Church. They were conducted on both sides with the utmost calmness, politeness and good-will. It is a fact that generally men cannot engage in discussions of religious questions with moderation. They are often more acrimonious than politicians. But the Doctor was naturally calm and tranquil, and Ernest found that his first belief was beginning to totter on its foundation. Mildred, too, believed this "horrid doctrine of predestination," which, in the mind of Ernest, had a tendency to strip it of its forbidding aspects. But still he was not perfectly satisfied. The discussions which he had with Dr. Arrington, were, on his part, designed more to elicit information and proof

than sustain his own assumed position; in different language, Ernest took the “wrong side” in order that the Doctor might overturn it.

Two or three days before Ernest was to start to his command, he was sitting in the Doctor’s study looking over the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Doctor, glancing up presently, and seeing how the young man was employed, said pleasantly :

“ You have tackled what the world calls a ‘hard book,’ Captain.”

“ The world, in my opinion,” answered Ernest, with a smile, “ is not much to blame for taking that view of it.”

“ No doubt,” said the Doctor, “ the doctrines which it proclaims are ‘ hard to be understood,’ as Paul himself declared.”

“ You will have it that Paul was speaking of predestination, will you, Doctor ? ”

“ He certainly must have been. Of what else could he have been speaking ? If he was discussing free agency, I am sure there is no difficulty in that. What is there in free agency to make Paul say, ‘ The Lord will have mercy on whom He will have mercy ’ ? What is there in free agency to make Peter open his

eyes and wonder, and declare that it was ‘hard to be understood?’ What is there in free agency that people could ‘wrest to their own destruction?’”

“What is there in predestination that people can wrest to their destruction?” asked Ernest.

“Why just this,” replied the Doctor: “Men said, and say it to this day, ‘Well, if my destiny is fixed, I shall make no effort to be saved, for I cannot change my destiny; I intend to take my fill of sin.’ That is the way they wrest it to their destruction. Any one who really believes the doctrine of predestination never talks in that way. On the contrary, if he believes that he is one of the elect, he will be the more earnest and diligent in making that election sure.”

“But,” said Ernest, “what is the use of his diligence, if he is one of the elect? He will be saved anyhow.”

“That is the way people talked in Paul’s day,” replied the Doctor, “but I will answer you. Do you not remember that the Lord promised Gideon he should gain the victory with his three hundred men? Why did not Gideon say, ‘if that is so, I shall do nothing;

I shall employ no strategy, but I shall wait for the Lord to conquer His enemies.' When God told Paul, as he was tossed in a frail vessel on the storm-lashed sea, that he and all on board should certainly be saved, why did not the apostle tell the sailors to sit down quietly, and they should all reach the land in safety? Why, the knowledge that they should be saved inspired the crew with hope, and courage to renewed efforts to work out their salvation. This doctrine arouses the believer's energies, instead of begetting a spirit of indolence and rebellion."

While the Doctor was speaking, Ernest was slowly turning the pages of the Confession of Faith, as if looking for some particular passage, and at the same time as if paying strict attention to what was said. Just as the preacher closed his last remark, Ernest came to the third chapter and said :

"What does this mean, Doctor?"

"What is it?"

"God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."

"Now," continued Ernest quickly closing

the book with his thumb between the leaves, “there it is—‘God ordains whatsoever comes to pass.’ It seems there is no exception, murder, sin, robberies and all. Whatever I do, then, good or bad, God ordained it. How am I responsible? If that clause does not destroy man’s free agency, I cannot understand the meaning of words. Surely, Doctor, you do not endorse this book? You do not believe that God is the author of sin?

The Doctor looked at Ernest in astonishment, smiled, and said:

“Are you certain it says just exactly that?”

“If I can read, it says that.”

“You are like a great many other people,” said the Doctor, “who find fault with the Confession, and jump to conclusions, without really knowing what it does say. Now, if you please, open the book, and read on—read it all—that is the whole paragraph; for you paused in the middle of a sentence.”

Ernest read:

“God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the

author of sin ; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

“ Now, that makes a considerable difference, does it not ? ” asked the Doctor.

“ But it does say, Doctor, that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass. The exceptional clause does not deny this, but simply affirms that God is not the author of sin. But does it not say that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass ? ”

“ Certainly, it does.”

“ Every event ? ”

“ Undoubtedly. There is no exception.”

“ Well,” said Ernest with a triumphant air, “ last week Mr. Jones killed Tom Smith in cold blood. It was deliberate assassination—murder in the first degree. Now, did God ordain that or not ? ”

“ God ordained it in this way : He did not decree that Jones should kill Smith without any connection with other events. But He fore-saw that certain causes would operate so as to culminate in the murder ; yet He permitted those causes to operate, for the accomplishment of some wise purpose. The difficulty

is, we cannot see things as God does. We consider it as an awful calamity that Jones should kill Smith, when we have no idea what the divine purpose is. The murder was not an isolated circumstance, but it was the legitimate result of certain other causes which the two men themselves might have controlled, so far as their own free agency was concerned. But Jones had murder in his heart, and the Lord permitted him to follow his own inclinations. Now, God fore-saw, from all eternity, that this murder would grow out of other events, yet He determined to permit those events to occur, and in that sense He ordained it. But you, surely, cannot infer that God is the author of the murder. God is not the author of men's actions. He did not force Jones to kill Smith. But let me ask you a question. Suppose lightning had killed Mr. Smith, instead of Jone's knife, would you say that God had anything to do with it, or was it a pure accident?"

"It was not an accident," said Ernest, "in the usual acceptation of the word."

"You are correct, because with God there is no accident. Well, if the Lord chose to destroy Smith by a knife in the hands of a

wicked man, instead of lightning, what right have we to cry out, ‘horrible! horrible!’. God sends diseases upon men, and innocent babes and women, and good men are swept off by thousands ; shall we accuse the Lord of cruelty and injustice ?”

“No ; He has the right to do that.”

“And so He has the right to remove His creatures in whatever way He may please,” said the Doctor. “I firmly believe that God ordained the present war—not arbitrarily, though,—not as an isolated circumstance; but it has legitimately grown out of causes that have been working together for years. Men, goaded on to desperation by their own evil passions, meet upon the field and destroy each other. They are conscious that they are acting as free agents. We have no more right then, to impeach divine goodness for permitting this wholesale butchery, than we have for allowing Jones to kill Smith, or some disease to destroy the innocent babe. We make a great mistake by supposing that there ought not to be violent deaths ; they are the necessary concomitants of sin, and must ever result from the inexorable law of cause and effect.”

“Well,” said Ernest, “if it was ordained

that Jones should kill Smith, Jones ought not to be punished for the deed."

"My dear Captain," said the Doctor good humoredly, "a lawyer like you, ought not to quibble in that way. The mere fact that God permits crime does not destroy human responsibility. You might just as well say that Judas ought not to have been punished for betraying the Savior. Undoubtedly it was ordained that he should perform that deed of shame; because it was foretold centuries before our Lord's advent."

Ernest knew not what reply to make. The Doctor had answered his objections. So he turned the leaves of the book, and said:

"Here is another passage which seems to me to need explanation."

"What is it?"

Ernest read as follows:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

"These men and angels, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed and their number is so certain that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

"That reads rather harsh, does it not?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, sir; it does."

"And yet it is what the Bible says."

"Where will I find that?"

"Turn to Romans 9:22-25: 'What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?'"

"That does seem to teach that there are two classes," said Ernest.

"Undoubtedly, it does."

"But it says," continued Ernest, "that this number is so fixed and certain that it can neither be increased nor diminished."

"There is surely no difficulty in that," said the Doctor. "It is a mathematical fact, and would be true, if the Scriptures said nothing about it. Leaving predestination entirely out of the question, that would be true. For on the Day of Judgment, when the destiny of every human being is settled, there will be a certain number saved, and a certain number lost. Now, can the number be increased or

diminished? I never could see why anybody should object to that clause, when it is true according to the doctrine of every religious denomination in the world."

"Well," said Ernest laughing, "here is more of this hard doctrine."

"Let us hear it," said the Doctor.

Ernest read as follows :

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works—"

"Yes," exclaimed Ernest, breaking off suddenly, "there it is—without any foresight of faith or good works—saved arbitrarily."

Again the Doctor gazed at Ernest in surprise. "My young friend," said the Doctor, with an amused expression, "you do not pause, for a moment, to reflect what the paragraph does really mean, but you at once jump to unauthorized conclusions."

"I have read it *verbatim*," replied Ernest.

"But you did not read it all. You have read just as our opposers do who give garbled

extracts from the Confession, and then draw the most absurd inferences. You stopped in the middle of the sentence. Read it all."

Ernest read :

"Without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto."

"The meaning," said the Doctor, "is that God did not choose His people on account of their faith and good works. Faith itself is the gift of God. All men are in a state of guilt by nature. How, then, could the Lord fore-see faith and good works in any of them, growing out of their evil natures? How could they possibly perform good works without a regenerated heart?"

"For what did He choose them, then?"

"I can answer you only in the language of His own Word, which says, it was 'according to the good pleasure of His will.' Certainly, the Lord has some good reason for saving a portion of the human race and rejecting, or rather passing by the rest, but He has nowhere acquainted us with that reason. If election is such a 'hard' doctrine, what would have been the result, if God had not made

any choice at all, but left men to follow the bent of their own wills, how many do you suppose would have been saved? The carnal heart is enmity against God. Could men, then have chosen God? Verily not. Christ Himself declares, ‘No man can come unto me, except the Father, which sent me, draw him.’ Do you not see clearly, then, that, without this much-abused doctrine of election, no human being could possibly be saved? It is a doctrine which the Church cannot afford to give up, and it is a doctrine to which every denomination holds in some form. We differ only as to the principle upon which the election is based. We Presbyterians, adhere rigidly to the Bible, and say that God’s choice grows out of His own will and pleasure, while our opposers affirm that it is founded upon the good works of the creature, and thus make salvation a matter of debt, and not of pure, free grace. That is the difference between us, and I leave it to you, with the Bible as your guide, to determine which view is the more Scriptural.”

“There is another thing I should like to ask you about,” said Ernest, feeling that he could produce no further objections.

"What is it?" I will answer to the best of my knowledge and ability."

"I have heard it said that some Presbyterian preachers hold to the view that there are infants in hell 'not a span long.' "

"Did you ever hear one say such a thing?" asked the Doctor.

"No sir; I never did."

"And did you ever see anybody that heard a Presbyterian minister preach it?"

"No, sir."

"No; and you never will," said the Doctor with emphasis. "That is an old slander without the slightest foundation. We would instantly depose any Presbyterian minister who would dare to make such an assertion. The truth is, we believe that all infants that die are saved."

"Your Confession says something about infants, does it not, Doctor?"

"O, yes. Give me the book, and I will find it for you. Here it is. Chapter X: 'Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth.'

"Elect infants, Doctor? Does not that imply that there are non-elect infants?"

" You can put that construction upon it, if you wish," said the Doctor ; " but the term is explained in several ways. I really do not know which view the framers of the Confession intended we should take. So we are at liberty to construe it in that way which appears most consistent to us."

" What is your construction ?

" It is this : all mankind are evidently divided into two classes—the elect and the non-elect—the saved and the lost. You believe that, do you not ? "

" O, yes ; that is true."

" Well, of course, the non-elect are sinners in their infancy as well as in after life. In that sense there are non-elect infants ; but we do not believe that any of them die in infancy."

" But how do you know that they do not ? "

" Because Christ says, that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' "

" According to your view, then," said Ernest, " there are non-elect infants, but they do not die in infancy ? "

" Exactly," replied the Doctor. " But there is another explanation. Some say the framers of the Confession put in the word

'elect' not to divide infants into two classes, but to show upon what principle they are saved; they are *elected* to salvation. You know, John uses the expression, 'the elect lady' and her sister. This certainly would not mean that there was a non-elect lady. Again, in the form for the baptism of infants in the Methodist Discipline, the minister prays that '*this child may be numbered among the elect children of God.*' We would not, of course, insist that the Methodists believe that there are *non-elect* children. Some say that the Confession means by 'elect infants,' just what the Methodists do in their form of baptism. But after all, the Presbyterian Church is the only one probably whose doctrine does consistently save infants. We declare they are saved by *election*. If not, tell me how they can be saved? They cannot repent and believe as adults do. Then do you not see, if they are not *elected* by a merciful Father, they must be lost forever?"

"Upon my word," quickly and honestly exclaimed Ernest, "I had never looked at the subject in that light. You have taught me something I never knew before."

"I am glad," replied the Doctor, "if I have helped you out of any difficulty."

"I candidly acknowledge, Doctor, that the more I study this deep subject, the more reasonable and Scriptural it seems."

And here the discussion ended for that day. Ernest, seeing Mildred walking in the yard and clipping flowers, vacated his seat and joined her. The Doctor looked at him, as he left, and a perceptible smile stole over his benevolent face.



## CHAPTER IX.

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### “OFF TO THE WARS.”

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The next day Ernest and the Doctor were alone in the study. The former seemed to be a little restless, like a man who wishes to say something, but knows not how to begin: the latter was tranquil as usual, poring over his theological books. Ernest would try to read, and then glance up uneasily at the calm old man upon whose open face God had put the seal of honesty. Ernest became fidgety. But presently he spoke:

“Will you give me your attention just a moment, Doctor?”

“Certainly; I am at your service,” replied the Doctor, laying his open book on the table.

“You believe the Confession of Faith?” asked Ernest with a merry twinkle, which escaped the preacher’s notice.

“Undoubtedly, I do.”

“Yesterday you said you believed that God ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

“ Yes, I believe that, too.”

“ Without exception ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the Doctor, unsuspiciously.

“ Well, then,” said Ernest, casting his eyes to the floor, “ Miss Mildred has agreed to become Mrs. Edgefield, when this ‘cruel war is over.’ If the Lord has ordained that, you will, of course, offer no objection.”

The old minister broke out into a hearty laugh in which he was joined by Ernest.

“ That is a clever turning of the table, my young friend,” said the Doctor pleasantly. “ But all that is really ordained is that she has agreed to the arrangement.”

“ Yes sir, that is all.”

“ I mean so far as we actually know. We know not what God has in store for any of us. I believe that the Lord directs every Christian in his affairs. If you have won Mildred’s heart, I shall offer no objection to your union whenever it may please her to consummate it. These are very uncertain times, and the good Lord only knows what may become of any of us.”

“ We can but hope, sir,” said Ernest.

“ Hope and pray,” replied the Doctor.

Ernest was now happy and unhappy—a thrilling contradiction which all will under-

stand who have been in the same condition. He must leave in a few hours. Would he ever return? There lay before him the prospect of a long and bloody war. How many battles like that of Bull Run could he go through, and escape with his life? He had already been severely wounded in the first fight in which he had been engaged. The chances seemed to be against him. Yet did not God control the events of battle? Could He not save and protect whom He would? Something similar to this the Doctor said to Ernest the morning he was to rejoin his command.

"The doctrine which we have several times discussed," said the Doctor, "has always proved to be a source of great comfort to me, and it will be to you, if you can believe it. Just think that your destiny is in God's hands, and what need you fear? It is this that makes Jackson the *Stonewall* that the lamented Bee called him with his dying breath. I am told that Jackson is almost a fatalist. But, whatever may be his doctrinal errors, he is a firm believer in God's sovereignty. The consequence is, he is afraid of nothing."

"But are there not men as brave as he is, who do not believe this doctrine?" asked Ernest.

“Yes, in one sense. I do not mean to say that men are lacking in courage who reject the doctrine which we have discussed. But there is something in Jackson which is more than courage. It is his sublime, inflexible faith. There are numbers of men who will go unflinchingly into any of the dangers of battle, but they are animated by a spirit of desperation, by human feelings, such as pride, ambition, and the like. But Jackson puts himself unreservedly in the hands of God, and accepts whatever comes without a murmur. He knows that he can never be killed till God speaks the word, and it is this firm belief that gives such adamantine solidity to his grand and exalted character.”

That morning when all knelt around the family altar, it was a most solemn and affecting scene. Ernest was now regarded as one of the family. The Doctor read a portion of Scripture suitable to the occasion, and they sang with quivering voices three or four stanzas of that familiar old hymn, which seems destined to go sounding down through all the ages till the last of the redeemed are gathered home:

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word.”

Then all knelt down to pray. Ernest had the feeling of Jacob when, alone at Bethel, his head pillow'd upon rock the patriarch said, "surely the Lord is in this place." A holy influence gently stole over his soul, as the Doctor, in a husky voice, prayed for their guest. All arose in tears. Ernest shed tears too, but they were strange tears. His faith was firmer, and he felt that he could trust himself in the hands of God.

Alas! those were days that tried men's souls! When the "soldier boy" went from his home, it was like shaking hands over the grave. The mother drew her darling son to her breast and imprinted burning kisses upon his brow. He broke loose from her frantic embrace, and in a few days afterwards, the news was brought that he was sleeping in the soldier's bloody grave. Young husbands and wives parted to meet no more till the last trump shall call them up on the resurrection morn. No pen can describe the awful scenes of those four years of patricidal strife. Sad! sad! sad!

Ernest was accompanied by Mildred to the depot. They rode in a buggy while Dr. Arrington came on horse-back in the rear. The

young man endeavored to be lively and cheerful, and this humor was encouraged by Mildred. Yet both could see through this disguised mutual gaiety. It was not natural. Frequently there were long pauses in their conversation. Such is generally the case with two friends, about to part in a very short time, who feel that they ought to talk, but can think of no topic suitable to the occasion. I have seen two brothers, one of whom was condemned to be shot for a military offence, hold their last interview; it was a *silent* meeting. So when Ernest and Mildred *tried* to keep up a cheerful conversation, they would often relapse into silence.

“O, my Mildred,” cried Ernest with deep emotion, as they neared the depot, “I can keep up this false show no longer. I am not cheerful. The thought of leaving you is as bitter as death, and I may as well give vent to my real feelings. I could almost wish that I had never met you. My thoughts will all run out to you. O, I fear we shall never meet again.”

“Why should we look on the dark side of the picture?” asked Mildred, in low, sweet tones. “There is a kind Father above who

rules in the affairs of men. Whatever may happen, be assured the Judge of all the earth will do right. ‘Our times are in His hands.’ He will do that which is best for us. He can throw His everlasting arms around you, and shield you in the terrors of the hottest battle. The Mighty God controls all things.”

“I see,” said Ernest, trying to smile, “that you too, endeavor to comfort yourself with that ‘horrid’ Presbyterian doctrine. You rely on that on all occasions.”

“Certainly I do,” replied Mildred. “I get as much comfort from it as from any truth taught in God’s Holy Word.”

“I am almost convinced,” said Ernest, “that predestination is a doctrine of the Bible, but I wish I could bring it into practical affairs, as you do.”

“It is easy to do,” replied Mildred. “Just put yourself unreservedly into the hands of God, and go out boldly in the discharge of duty. Of what should you be afraid?”

“Sometimes,” said Ernest, “I think perhaps it is predestinated that I shall be lost.”

“If you have that fear, it is an evidence that you are not so predestinated. If you were a reprobate, you would have no such fear. You would be indifferent.”

“If I am one of the elect,” asked Ernest, “how may I know it with certainty?”

“God does not leave us to grope in doubt and darkness,” replied Mildred. “If you love the people of God, love the Church and its services, love religion, love to meditate upon heavenly things, and love to read your Bible, you know that you love the Lord Jesus. That is a certain indication that the heart has been renewed. God has said that His people shall never perish. They were chosen before the foundation of the world. If then, I was chosen from all eternity, how happy I ought to feel; and I will add, how happy I do feel. This doctrine of election and predestination, which is so horrible to some people, is the greatest source of comfort to me.”

“You ought to be the wife of a minister,” said Ernest, thoughtfully.

“I would ask no higher destiny in this world,” modestly replied Mildred.

“There is a Baptist preacher in my town,” said Ernest, “who has tried to make me believe that I am called to preach.”

“What made him think so?”

Ernest then briefly related the circumstances in regard to the matter, with which the reader

is acquainted. Mildred listened with the most intense interest, and a flash of joy suddenly illuminated her face.

"I am glad you told me that," she said, "for now I cannot but believe that God is preparing you for His work just as He did Moses in the land of Midian. Go on, then; do your duty, and have faith in God. I will try to believe that you will be brought through all dangers in safety. God has something for you to do. Are you willing to walk in the path which providence points out?"

"I am."

"Then have no fears."

And from that moment she appeared so cheerful and confident, and seemed to have such strong faith in the divine goodness, love and care, that Ernest caught her spirit. By the time they arrived at the depot he was in much better spirits.

"I am now satisfied," he said, as they were about to part, "that there is something more practical in the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church than I had ever dreamed of. Henceforth I shall try to bring them into my life as you do. But I am very skeptical by

nature, and when I leave you I may again fall into doubt. God bless you, my dear Mildred, for helping to lift the clouds from my soul. I feel hopeful. But pray for me, that my faith fail not.”

Mildred tried hard to restrain her tears, but it was in vain. They were tears of joy mingled with tears of sadness. The train was heard rumbling in the distance, and Mildred said : “I hope you will not regard me as a Cassandra, if I prophesy that you will at last return to us in safety ?”

“ You shall be as a Deborah to me,” replied Ernest. “ You must write to me every day.”

“ Every day ?”

“ What I mean is, keep a sort of daily journal, and send it to me once a week, if possible. I will do the same, and it will be a source of pleasure to us.”

The foregoing is no fancy-sketch, but an actual occurrence, and shows how the dearest friends separated during the terrible, uncertain days of the Great Rebellion.

Presently the train came dashing in, and Ernest stepped on the platform, waved his hand to Mildred, and entered the coach. The conductor shouted “ All aboard.” The bell

rang: sizz—sizz—click—click -- and a moment after, a young lady with a solemn face was seen in a buggy, driving slowly and thoughtfully from the depot. Her thoughts followed the train whose roaring she could hear in the distance. When she reached home, how sad all nature appeared! She went to her room, locked the door, fell upon her knees, and prayed God, with all the earnestness of her soul, to shield and protect him upon whom her temporal happiness depended. Hers was a sacred love which God sanctioned.

Ernest, as the train went dashing along through forest and fields, sank down into a seat, and without effort directed his imagination to the residence of the good Doctor Arrington. He thanked God in his heart for sending him to that house. Suppose he had not been wounded, he thought, or suppose he had fallen upon some other part of the field, the probability was, Dr. Arrington would not have found him. How could he fail to recognize the hand of God in all these little circumstances? Then, he prayed the Lord still to be with him, and direct all his footsteps.

In connection with such thoughts as these,

his memory revived scenes which had transpired the previous year. He recalled the agony of his unrequited love for Clara Vanclure. He had thought that he never could recover from the wound which she had so ruthlessly inflicted. Three months, or less, after his rejection, she had married his rival, contrary to the wishes of her father. He became enraged when she informed him that she had discarded Ernest Edgefield.

“ You have acted like a—a—simpleton,” he exclaimed, suppressing with difficulty a much harsher appellation. “ Whom do you expect to marry, I should like to know ? ”

“ Mr. Comston,” she answered hesitatingly.

“ Well, well, that surpasses my comprehension—surpasses my comprehension,” he cried. “ I should like to know what you fancy in him—yes, fancy in him. Ernest is worth a thousand such cinnamon-scented popinjays—yes, cinnamon-scented popinjays.”

“ Mr. Comston does not use cinnamon,” Clara ventured to say apologetically.

“ If he don’t,” exclaimed the irritated parent, “ he uses musk which is worse, and bear’s oil, and such other tomfoolery—other tomfoolery.”

Clara blushed, but said nothing more, wisely allowing her provoked progenitor to give vent to his indignation till the storm of wrath should subside. Resistance would only increase its fury.

But she married, and Ernest saw her become the bride of his rival; for she had sent him a card to her wedding, and Ernest went, to show her how little he cared.

All this now appeared like some dim dream that flitted through his mind years ago. How thankful he now felt that Comston had removed to the town of —— in time to prevent a complicated involution of the threads of destiny. If that young man had made his advent a few weeks later, the conjugal infelicity of Ernest would have been an assured fact—at least he felt so now. What an insignificant being Clara now appeared when put in contrast with the intelligent, accomplished and pious Mildred Arrington. He almost shuddered as he thought of the narrow escape he had made. And the question came up in his mind, did God have nothing to do with this? If the sparrow does not escape the beneficent observation of the Supreme Being, surely His intelligent creatures will receive a

due share of the divine watchfulness and loving care.

Again, while the train was thundering along its iron track, sad and gloomy thoughts and doubts, calculated to banish all cheerfulness, would suddenly spring up in his mind, and the trembling light of hope would almost disappear in the darkness. He recalled the old adage, “Man proposes, God disposes.” Suppose his intended union, after all, with Mildred should not be in accord with the Divine purpose? Could he give her up? Would he not rebel, and murmur against God’s will? Alas! how hard it is for a human being to tread the appointed path of destiny with his will in complete subjection to that of the Heavenly Father! At times, man cannot but think that his own chosen way is best. The retrospective view convinces him of his folly and infirmity.

“While I mused, the fire burned,” said the Psalmist. While the train rattled along, Ernest thought and mused. Presently a brakesman cried out, “— Station.” Ernest gathered up his baggage, and in a short time was shaking hands with his comrades-in-arms.

## CHAPTER X.

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### A DANGEROUS MISSION.

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In the progress of the present story we have now come to some of those strange, startling, and almost incredible events which prove the truth of the old proverb, “Truth is stranger than Fiction,” and which could occur only in those times when the foundations of society are shaken by martial upheavals and commotions.

We stop at a small farm-house a few miles from Manassas, and not far from the residence of Dr. Arrington. It is in the afternoon of a beautiful day. We open the door of one room of the little farm-house, and find ourselves in the presence of two Confederate officers, of high rank, who are engaged in an earnest conversation. Both have long since passed into history, and are inseparably connected with the “Great Rebellion.” The whole history of any war is, in fact, comprised in the biographies of a few individuals. The

lives of Lee, Grant, Jackson, Sherman, and a few others that could be readily named, cover the entire field of the War of Secession.

It is not essential to our story that we should give the names of the two Generals to whom reference has just been made. For reasons which are clear to the author, it is deemed advisable to leave our reader the pleasure of identifying them, if he can. Merely for the sake of convenience we will designate one as General A. and the other as General B. As we stand in one corner of the room, eaves-dropping, as is the privilege of the Novelist, we hear the following colloquy:

"It will require a peculiar person for the business," said Gen. A. in a rather low tone. "It must be a woman—and a woman of intelligence, discretion and courage."

"I know just such a one," replied Gen. B., "but I should dislike to ask her to run the risk that must be incurred."

"These are times," answered Gen. A., "which demand sacrifices. Our Southern men and women should be willing to incur danger for the sake of their country. Cannot the South furnish an Iphigenia if one is necessary to the success of our arms?"

"No doubt, many can be found," replied Gen. B., "but I should dislike to sacrifice any of our noble women, if it could possibly be avoided."

"Would it not be better," coolly asked Gen. A., "to sacrifice a woman in the prosecution of this business than a good soldier? But who is the lady you mentioned? We can discuss the ethics of the case at some other time."

"It is the daughter of Dr. Arrington," answered Gen. B. "I dined with his family last Sabbath, and I was impressed with the idea that the young lady is just such a woman as you have described."

"I am willing," said Gen. A., "to take your judgment in this case. When can we have an interview with her, do you suppose?"

"Any time we may call, I think."

"Suppose we go at once, then," said Gen. A. "The business is urgent."

Accordingly the two officers mounted their horses. Half an hour later they alighted at Dr. Arrington's residence. They were met by the Doctor, and shown into the parlor. After talking a short time upon general topics, Gen. B. broached the particular subject that had caused the visit.

"Dr. Arrington," said he, "Gen. A. is in search of a person to perform a delicate and hazardous duty. The service is of such a nature that no one but a lady can perform it well, and it must be a lady of bravery, discretion and intelligence."

"I do not know where you can find one in this community who will fulfill such requirements," said the Doctor.

"I have taken the liberty," said Gen. B., without seeming to have noticed the Doctor's remark, "to suggest your daughter, Miss Mildred."

"I doubt," replied the Doctor, "that she possesses the qualifications you have named—at least, I do not know that she is brave."

"Probably," suggested Gen. A., "you have never seen her courage put to the test."

"No, I cannot say that I have."

"However," continued Gen. A., "the business I have in hand requires more tact than courage."

"Is it a perilous business, General?"

"Perilous in case of detection; yes, sir."

"I profess to love my country," said the Doctor, "and I am willing to make sacrifices for it, but I cannot speak for my daughter. I

will call her, if you wish, and let her speak for herself."

"If you please," said Gen. A. "We mentioned the matter to you first in order to get your consent to an interview with her."

The Doctor went out of the room, and in a few moments returned with Mildred, introducing her to Gen. A., who had never seen her before. An explanation of how and why Gen. B. had formed the acquaintance of this family would, no doubt, lead at once to his personal identification.

"Shall I remain in the room?" asked the Doctor, after Mildred was seated.

"Certainly; we expected you to do so," replied Gen. A.

The true, actual history of the war of 1861 will never be written. It cannot be. It is only general events that the dignity of history will condescend to record. Take the battle of Bull Run, which has been so briefly described in previous pages of our story. Scarcely anything more than the events which we have outlined will go down to future generations. The thousand little incidents which constituted the very *essence* of the fight, and give to it a coloring which the historical brush must ever

miss, will never be known. The history of a battle is nothing more than a picture of it: three-fourths of the scenes are left out.

From one till three o'clock who can tell what occurred on the field of Bull Run? The war-cloud floated in fragments: it was like a fog. The contest seemed to dwindle almost into individual combats. The grim warriors were mixed up in a dense cloud of smoke, through which the historian cannot see clearly. It was not till after three o'clock that the battle presented an aspect that comes within the scope of history. To get the correct history of those two or three hours, each individual like Ernest would have to tell what occurred within his sight. Little incidents, though thrilling, such as we are about to relate, are rejected from the domain of sober history. Individual deeds of daring and heroism, necessity demands shall find their place in the province of biography. Accordingly that which Mildred performed will be found recorded nowhere except in the pages of this story.

"We have a mission," said Gen. A. presently, "which only a lady can accomplish, and Gen. B. has suggested you as a person who would

be likely to undertake it ; and this is the object of our present visit."

Mildred looked surprised.

"If it is anything I can do, General," she said, "I think I have sufficient patriotism to undertake it."

"I have no doubt of that. But, to make a long story short, we want a lady to go into the capital—Washington City, I mean."

Gen. A. watched her face closely and critically as he said this. Mildred did not appear to be amazed at this information, but she quietly said :

"Will that be easy to do ? "

"I do not know ; it depends upon the tact of the person that tries it," answered Gen. A.

"I infer, then," she said, "that I would have to avoid the pickets and sentinels ? "

"Not so much that as other things which I will explain to you. But I shall not conceal the fact from you, that if you are detected, the consequences will be enough to terrify not only a lady, but a desperate man."

"Death, would it be ? " she asked in a firm, but gentle tone which convinced Gen. A. that Gen. B. was not mistaken in his estimate of her character.

"Death, and 'death by hanging,'" answered Gen. A. with an emphasis designed to test her nerves.

"O, General!" exclaimed the Doctor in some alarm, "that is asking too much of my child. She is too delicate and timid to take such a risk."

"I shall not insist upon anyone's undertaking it," replied Gen. A. with a disappointed look. "Gen. B. here suggested that your daughter would be the kind of person we need, but if you object we will say no more about it."

"My kind father has spoken hastily," said Mildred with dignity. "I do not know why the women of our country should not sometimes risk their lives as well as the soldiers. Suppose I should lose my life, it is no more than hundreds have already done. I am not afraid. I will go, General, unless my father positively forbids it."

"There will be no very great risk, though, after all," said Gen. A., "especially after you are in the city. I have a paper to be delivered to a certain person in Washington. If you were caught with that paper, you would no doubt be treated as a spy, but a lady of intelligence and tact can conceal it."

"Could I not commit the contents to memory and write them out after I get into the city?" asked Mildred.

"No; the person who is to receive it must have the original paper."

Mildred reflected for a moment, and turning to the Doctor said:

"Father, I am willing to do this small service for the General."

"It is no small service, I should think," interrupted the Doctor.

"No," replied the General, "it is a very great service, one which will bring your country under obligations."

"What do you say, father?" asked Mildred.

"My child," said the doctor with some emotion, "I cannot encourage you to do it. I will leave it to your own judgment. I, however, would prefer to undertake the mission myself, if that would answer."

"If the business," answered Gen. A., "could be accomplished by a man, we have any number of soldiers in camp who would cheerfully volunteer, but no person will answer but an intelligent lady. You will see that when I enter into fuller explanations."

"If this be so, father, it seems to me that I

ought to perform this service for the country. The enemy can but destroy this body, if I should be detected. Suppose, General," turning to him, "you can find no lady who will undertake the affair, what will be the consequence?"

"That will be difficult to foretell or foresee," replied Gen. A. "It might cause the loss of a great battle. On the other hand, her going might result in achieving the independence of the Confederate States. Very little affairs of this kind frequently result in great things."

"Then, father," said Mildred with firmness, "I can no longer hesitate. We helpless women ought to serve our country in some way in the hour of need. Will you give your consent, father?"

"I can not tell you either to go or to stay," answered the Doctor. "Do as you please."

"Then, General, I will go and do the best I can for you. What is it you wish me to do?"

"When can you start?" asked Gen. A.

"To-morrow, if you desire it."

"Very well: now give me your attention and I will tell you what is to be done. The paper of which I spoke is this," taking a folded document from his pocket. "You see this is a map."

It is not necessary to enter into details in regard to this map. Besides it might not be advisable to unfold any portion of the secret history of the "Great Rebellion" at this time when some of the actors in the scenes we are now describing are yet living.

"This," continued the General, "is to be delivered to a gentleman by the name of Beall."

"What is his address?" asked Mildred.

"That I am not able to give you at present," responded Gen. A. "He changes his quarters frequently; but there are five hotels at which he stops, and you will find him registered in one of them." The General here informed her how she could identify Beall, with whose melancholy history our reader is probably acquainted. "This paper must be put into the hands of Captain Beall," continued Gen. A., "and no one else."

"Yes, I understand," said Mildred.

"The principal danger," the General went on, "lies in this. If you should be arrested with this paper on your person or in your possession, your fidelity to your country will cost you very dearly, you understand."

"Yes, sir, my life will be the price."

"When you meet Beall," coolly resumed

Gen. A., "he will give you another paper which you are to bring to me. Of course I will have to leave some of the details to your own good sense and tact. If you should get into any difficulty, do not lose your presence of mind and self-possession. Keep cool under all circumstances, and I think you will soon come back to us in safety."

After some further directions and explanations, which can be omitted without detriment to our story, the General said :

"Now, you fully understand what is to be done; are you still willing to go?"

Mildred looked appealingly at her father, but he said not a word.

"What do you say, father?" she again asked.

"I candidly confess," he replied at last "that I dislike to see my daughter subjected to exposure of this sort. Probably the result may be such as makes me shudder to think about it, and then my gray hairs would be brought in sorrow to my grave. In that case, I never could forgive myself for not having forbidden her to go."

"Well," said Gen. A., "I shall not even now insist upon her going. She can still de-

cline if she wish. The danger is just what I have represented it. If," turning to Mildred, "you shrink from it, you would better decline at once."

"It is not the danger I dread," answered Mildred. "I am willing to serve my country in any way I can, even to the extent of shedding my blood, but I dislike to do anything that will cause my father to suffer. But I have already told you I would go, and so I will unless my father sees proper to exercise his parental authority and forbids it."

"I shall not forbid," said the Doctor. "I want you to consult your own feelings and judgment and act accordingly."

"Then General," said Mildred with firmness, "I shall start in the morning. There is no use of any further discussion."

"God bless you!" exclaimed General B., who had not taken any part in the conversation. "I thought I could not be mistaken in your character. I knew your religious training had developed those very traits which peculiarly qualify you for this perilous undertaking. May God protect and crown the undertaking with deserved success."

As the officers were riding away, Gen. B. said:

"What a pity it would be if that noble girl should be arrested and —"

"Hanged?" spoke up Gen. A., finishing the uncompleted sentence.

"Yes; it would be terrible," answered Gen. B.

"Well," said Gen. A. deliberately, "war signifies bloodshed. If the young lady falls a victim, does not the occasion demand the sacrifice."

And the two officers rode on.



## CHAPTER XI.

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### A BRAVE GIRL.

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It might seem strange to the reader who is unacquainted with the nature of war, that a young, intelligent, and accomplished lady should have undertaken such an enterprise as that partly described in the previous chapter. But it must be remembered that war introduces customs and modes of thought which would be subversive of our notions of propriety in times of peace. The women of the South were frequently thrown by the force of circumstances into strange and unusual situations during the dark and stormy days of the "Great Rebellion." They had to perform many duties which would have been palpable violations of the laws of etiquette under different circumstances. Besides, we are all creatures of habit, and our character depends upon our education. This fact is our authority for the assertion, that in our social relations there is scarcely anything, if there is really anything, proper or improper

*per se*—anything inherently absolute. Many of our terms are merely relative : they have no fixed definition. No absolute rules can be laid down that shall determine whether a given line of conduct is modest or immodest. Circumstances only can determine. An angel, for instance could use language in the pulpit which ordinary ministers of the Gospel would not dare to employ. One nation regards a thing as proper, which another considers improper. Hence, there can be no fixed code of propriety.

Bearing these facts in mind, we can understand why it was that Mildred could see no impropriety in undertaking to make her way alone into Washington—which she did in less than forty-eight hours after the interview with the two Confederate Generals. The statement of this fact is sufficient, without entering into particulars in regard to the difficulties which she encountered. She remained in the city three days till she found the unfortunate Captain Beall, to whom she delivered the papers, and from whom she received others for Gen. A. Her mission having been successfully accomplished, she returned, and reported to the Confederate officer. His rather stern face

assumed a smile, as he took her by the hand and congratulated her upon her success.

"Here is a check for a thousand dollars," he said as she finished her report.

"But I did not expect to be paid, General," she said. "I undertook the mission because I love my country, and desire to do something in the struggle for independence."

"You are not a soldier," replied Gen. A. "We have no right to your services without compensation. This is only a partial reward for what you have done."

"I do not ask any remuneration."

"You have been in danger," said Gen. A. "Besides, I will want you to go on a similar mission in a few days, and I have no right to your time. I am aware that the salary of ministers is small, and funds do not come amiss. You have earned this money, and I insist upon your taking it. It is yours."

"I can do with it as I please?" asked Mildred after a short pause.

"Certainly you can."

"Then," said Mildred, "I will take it. I know how I can use it to good purpose."

"Well," said the General, handing her the check, "can you go on a similar mission?"

"To the same place?"

“ Yes.”

“ Yes, sir ; I will go.”

“ When can you start ?”

“ To-morrow, if necessary.”

“ I am truly glad,” said Gen. A. “ for I have another paper which ought to be in Washington now. I was afraid to entrust it to you till you had proved that it was practicable to go in and out of the city. But since you know now exactly what to do, I feel that there will be little risk.”

“ It, too, is a dangerous paper, is it ?”

“ It is, and if you are detected with it, the death of another party will be the consequence. If you can manage to give it to Capt. Beall there will be no danger to you.”

“ I can do that,” replied Mildred. “ I know how to find him.”

“ You see,” said Gen. A. “ I have written the message on this pocket handkerchief so that you can conceal it in your clothing.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Mildred, taking the handkerchief, “ I can conceal this so that it will escape the most rigid search.”

“ I can trust you for that,” said the General.

“ If nothing providential interferes,” said Mildred, “ I shall start in the morning.”

"Thank you," answered Gen. A. "When you return, you shall receive your reward."

"We will talk about that when I get back," she said, as she took her leave.

Accordingly, the next morning she again started for the city of Washington, without the slightest misgiving or premonition of evil. Indeed what had she to fear? She knew exactly how to proceed. She, therefore, boldly entered the city, after having complied with such military requisitions as were necessary in those days. It was frequently the case that the most elegant ladies of the South, mounted upon bales of cotton in an ox-wagon, went shopping in cities that were under Federal jurisdiction. Some had to take the oath of allegiance to the U. S. Government, and others, by their extreme cleverness, managed to "get through the lines" without compromising their fealty to the Confederacy. It is not necessary to describe Mildred's military maneuvers in order to secure both ingress and egress. But more light will be thrown on this subject as the story proceeds.

Again Mildred was in Washington. She registered at the very same hotel at which she had put up before. This was the first mistake

that she had made. For even her first visit had aroused the suspicions of the head clerk. However, without manifesting the least surprise, he assigned her to a room, remarking that it would be half an hour before the chamber would be ready for occupancy.

"You can sit in the parlor for that length of time?" he asked with a bland smile.

"Certainly," replied Mildred.

"Thanks," he said, bowing politely.  
"Please step this way."

Mildred followed him to the elegant parlor, and seated herself on one of the luxurious sofas.

"I will return in a short time," said the urbane clerk, "and have you shown to your room. Please make yourself comfortable."

He bowed himself out of the apartment, and was gone about twenty minutes. Seating himself, he manifested a disposition to engage in conversation—at which Mildred exhibited surprise as well as aversion.

"You have no friends in the city, lady?" he said half inquiringly and half declaratively. She could construe it either way.

"Sir?" said Mildred in a tone that plainly indicated disinclination to talk.

"I made a remark about your friends," said the clerk, "but it does not matter. You have been to the city before have you not?"

"I have, sir," answered Mildred in a frigid tone. "Is my room ready?"

"Not quite, ma'am. The chambermaid will be in presently. How long will you want the room?" asked the clerk.

"Why do you wish to know?"

"O, merely to know. Sometimes we like to know how long our guests will remain—it is a matter of—of—convenience."

"I will notify you when I am ready to vacate it," said Mildred coldly.

"O, yes, of course, you can retain it as long as you wish. I meant no offence. Have you heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Mildred.

"Why, a terrible battle has been fought—it was on yesterday at —: an awful fight."

"No, sir, I have not heard of it," answered Mildred changing to a more gentle tone, yet expressive of indifference.

"You do not seem to take much interest in military affairs?" remarked the clerk. "I thought everybody was eager to hear of the success of our arms. The Rebels received a fearful chastisement yesterday."

"They did?" asked Mildred, trying to appear indifferent under the searching gaze of this impudent clerk.

"Indeed, they did. You will hear the guns booming presently in honor of the great victory. There were ten thousand rebels killed, yes, left dead on the field. Wasn't it glorious? Wasn't it glorious?" he exclaimed rubbing his hands in glee.

"I see nothing glorious in shedding human blood," replied Mildred.

"Don't you rejoice at hearing of the defeat of the rebels, and that so many thousands were killed?" inquired the clerk.

"God forbid," exclaimed Mildred with more warmth than she intended to manifest, "that I should rejoice at the death of any human being."

"But the rebels have got to be killed. you know, in order to bring the war to an end and to restore the Union."

"That may be so," answered Mildred, drawn into a conversation in spite of herself, "but I dislike to hear of wholesale murder. The great God did not put His intelligent creatures here to butcher each other. I cannot, therefore, but think that war is a sin."

"No doubt, the aggressive party is guilty,'

answered the clerk. "The rebels brought on the war. Don't you think, then, that the rebels are responsible for all the blood that has been, and may be shed?"

"I was speaking on general principles," answered Mildred. "It does not become me to measure the degree of guilt that may attach to either party. It is a sin to commit murder; it is a violation of God's commandment."

"Is it, when done in self-defence?"

"I suppose," replied Mildred, "that if homicide is absolutely necessary to the preservation of one's life, it would be justifiable. But in the case of war, who is to determine which party is fighting purely in self-defence?"

"In the present war," said the clerk, "I don't see how there can be any doubt about it. The rebels fired the first gun, and dishonored the flag of our country."

"Yet," said Mildred, "the rebels claim that they are fighting in self-defence."

"Do you sympathize with the rebels?" asked the clerk, looking narrowly into her face, as though he would read her thoughts. "Probably you may be a Copper-head?"

"I did not say I sympathized with either party," answered Mildred quietly.

"No; but one would infer that you leaned toward the rebels."

"I do not know upon what you could base such an inference," rejoined Mildred, "for I have not used an expression that could be construed into sympathy for either side. I told you I was speaking only on general principles."

"Do you mind telling with which party you do sympathize?" quoth the clerk.

"I am neither politician, nor soldier, nor am I regarded as a citizen by the law," answered Mildred. "You will, therefore, please excuse me from any expression of opinion on this subject. Why should you wish to know?"

"Why should you mind expressing an opinion?"

"It is not necessary, is it?" asked Mildred.

"No, ma'am; it is not a matter of life or death," replied the smiling clerk, "but I can imagine no good reason why you should be so extremely cautious—that is, unless you have come upon some illegal business."

For an instant Mildred seemed startled at this insinuation.

"I'm sure I asked a civil question," said the clerk.

"Certainly," answered Mildred with a little birdlike laugh, intended to ward off suspicion, "but I should like to know by what authority you propound questions to me."

"O," said the clerk, breaking into a laugh, "I am no court of inquisition. I questioned you only by the authority of social etiquette. It is no breach of politeness, I hope, to ask ordinary questions in a common conversation. We sometimes ask questions merely for the sake of vivifying conversation."

"The authority of social etiquette," replied Mildred, "is sometimes insolent, and even ordinary questions may in times of public disturbance lead to grave consequences."

"I had no intention of making so serious a matter of it," said the clerk. "I asked the question more for the sake of saying something than anything else. Certainly, if you wish to conceal your opinions and sentiments, I'm no inquisitor to try to force you to reveal them. I, however, admire your prudence, since you are a stranger in the city."

Mildred suddenly laughed outright.

"What do you see in my remark," inquired the clerk very soberly, "to excite your risibility?"

"I was laughing at your making so serious

a matter out of nothing," answered Mildred. " You speak of my prudence, as if I were some astute diplomatist who had come to Washington to negotiate a treaty of peace, or some other important business. The whole of my prudence consists in not directly answering questions that might lead to the discussion of unpleasant topics."

" Why is the war such an unpleasant subject?" asked the clerk. " It ought to be agreeable to all loyal people to hear about the destruction of rebels. I wish I could kill some of them myself."

" If you have such a blood-thirsty disposition," said Mildred a little contemptuously, " I think you could easily find opportunities to gratify it."

" You may be sure, if I could stand the exposure which camp-life involves, I should have gone out at the first tap of the drum. Besides, I have a family."

" There are soldiers on both sides who have families," said Mildred.

" I only wish I had physical strength," said the clerk. " Nothing would delight me more than to kill rebels."

Mildred could not suppress a smile of derision, for the clerk was a large, well-developed

man, presenting every aspect of perfect health. This exhibition of contempt did not escape his notice, since he closely watched her throughout the entire interview. He felt provoked at her insinuations, but he was too polite to manifest his vexation.

"But here comes the chamber-maid," he said, "who will show you to your room. I hope you may have a pleasant time in the city, if the business upon which you have come will permit you to seek pleasure."

"How do you know that I have come upon any business?" asked Mildred.

"Strangers generally have business, when they visit the city," said the clerk significantly, as Mildred thought. But she concluded that she would say nothing more. Rising, she silently followed the chamber-maid. The clerk walked back to his desk in a thoughtful mood; and this is what was passing through his mind:

"That is one of those proud Southern women, and she is bent upon mischief. Well, if she is not very cautious, I shall trap her as I have done others. She seems to be an intelligent, accomplished woman, but what is she doing here alone? If she is a spy, as I begin to suspect, and is detected, what a fate awaits her!"

## CHAPTER XII.

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### IN PRISON.

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As soon as the chamber-maid's footsteps had died away, Mildred locked the door, and sat down to think. Suffering herself to be drawn into an interview with a stranger was her second blunder, as she now perceived. Why had the clerk manifested such a sudden interest in her affairs? Did he not suspect her? What made her so foolish as to engage in a conversation with him? She could not but feel a little uneasy and anxious, and she determined to transact her business as quickly as possible, and leave the city. As soon as she would rid herself of Gen. A.'s message she would be out of danger. She must find Beall at once.

She then rose from her seat, and looked around the room, and even under the bed. She cast her eyes up to the ceiling, and as she did so imagined that she heard a sudden, but slight movement overhead. A small bit of

plaster dropped to the floor. She at once made the discovery that about two feet square of the plaster had fallen off, or at least was gone. This fact, under ordinary circumstances, would have made no impression upon her mind, but now it awakened her suspicions, and she narrowly examined the unsightly blemish. Why should it not have been repaired? But it may have been recently done. To discover whether this might be so, she examined the carpet immediately under it, but she saw only a few grains of sand, and the little lump that had just fallen. Perhaps Sir Isaac, in the same length of time, did not study more profoundly in regard to the descent of that famous apple which revolutionized philosophy, than Mildred did about that insignificant bit of rubbish. Was its fall, too, due simply to the law of gravitation, or was it caused by some eavesdropper? After reflecting for some moments, a new thought seemed suddenly to flash into her mind, for she partially disrobed herself, as if to rest, and lay upon the bed, pretending to fall into a deep sleep. She was, in fact, wide awake, listening with all her ears. An hour passed away, and she arose. Taking a pair of small scissors

from her pocket, she cut a small aperture in the lining of her dress so that she could secure easy access to the General's manuscript pocket-handkerchief. This done, she drew her chair to the window where she could look down upon the busy street. She gazed at the crowds rushing along in pursuit of the varied objects that occupy the attention of the inhabitants of a gay city, like the capital of the United States. She beheld officers of every grade walking among the throng with proud, military step, who appeared to glory more in their magnificent *physique* and splendid, spotless uniform, than in the deeds of valor they had performed on the field of battle. In this gay, beautiful city, she felt a keen sense of loneliness. There was, so far as she knew, only one person in all the place, whose sympathies were like her own, and she had no intimate acquaintance with him. This person was Capt. Beall. She now determined to find him at once, deliver the General's document, and immediately start homeward. Accordingly, she rose from her chair, donned her cephalic attire, and opened the door. She started back in amazement and horror! There stood before her a policeman, a woman, and

the head-clerk with whom she had conversed not more than two hours since. What awful thoughts now came crowding into her mind ! It is impossible to describe them. Persons who have been in similar situations remember how active is the mind in the first moment of surprise. The sense of danger, the line of defence, the means of escape, all are discussed in a few seconds. Thoughts such as these, and a hundred others of a different character, flashed in the most rapid succession through Mildred's mind. Among other things Gen. A.'s cautions came vividly to her memory. He had told her how necessary is self-possession, and she was now making the most desperate efforts to be calm. The trio stood watching her face, as she gazed steadily at them. As they said nothing, she presently, in a quiet tone broke the silence.

"I am patiently waiting to learn the object of this intrusion," she said with dignity.

"We are not guilty of intrusion," replied the clerk, "we are merely standing before the door."

"If that is all," said Mildred calmly, "please let me pass, and you can enjoy your harmless pleasure to your heart's content."

"Not so fast, sarcastic lady," spoke the clerk. "You must give a better account of yourself than you did a while ago. I suspected your disloyalty to the Federal Government sufficiently to induce me to make an effort to ascertain if my suspicions were correct."

"What effort do you propose to make?"

"Would you object to being searched?"

"For what?" asked Mildred with inward trepidation, as she perceived treachery gradually unfolding. For one moment the most bitter hatred toward that deceptive clerk sprang up in her heart, and she felt that she could have taken his life. But it was only for a moment.

"We wish to see if you have anything contraband," replied the clerk.

"I suppose you intend to search me anyhow, whether I consent or not?"

"We don't like to resort to force," answered the clerk, "and we hope you'll readily give your consent. Indeed, a willingness on your part to submit will be taken as evidence of your loyalty to the government."

"I do not see it in that light," said Mildred as quietly as possible. "What have I done to arouse your suspicions?"

"That does not matter, lady," replied the clerk. "I have no feeling of malice toward you. I sincerely hope that I am mistaken, and that you may prove as innocent of any sinister intentions towards the government as the angels of heaven. I was prepossessed in your favor by your general appearance and your conversation. But if you have come to the city with any dark purpose, it is but natural that you should oppose being searched."

"Can you not see," asked Mildred, speaking slowly, "that it is a personal indignity to be subjected to a search?"

"Not in such times as these," said the clerk. "It is generally the case, that, when innocent people are suspected, they demand an investigation, instead of shrinking from it."

"That depends upon circumstances," replied Mildred coolly. She was endeavoring to prolong the conversation as much as possible in order to think what was best to be done. If she could avoid this search, she would be safe. A score of schemes rapidly presented themselves during these few moments. She thought of bribery; but that would be an acknowledgment of guilt. If there had been a fire in the room, she would

have hastily thrown the dangerous kerchief into it; in that case all that the authorities could do would be to imprison her for a while as a suspicious character. But there was no fire, and she did not have even a match. If Mildred had only known it, all her scheming was to no purpose, for she had been watched. That wiry, pert little woman, one of the trio had been in the room over-head, which had been prepared for suspicious characters. When Mildred had suddenly looked up to the ceiling, in her examination of the room, the woman involuntarily drew back, and in so doing had caused the lump of loose plaster to fall. She saw Mildred make the rent in the dress, and that was enough. Mildred at last came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to submit with the best grace possible, and trust to Providence for protection. Sending up a silent, but earnest prayer, she said :

“I suppose you have brought this lady to do the work? If so, it is useless to discuss the matter. So proceed.”

“That is right,” said the clerk. “You can both go into the room, and close the door. This officer and myself will await the result in the hall, here.”

Accordingly the little woman, with eyes, as Mildred thought, keen enough to see through a mill-stone, entered the apartment, and closed the door.

"Well, what do you wish," asked Mildred.

"Let me have your dress first, please."

"You wish me to take it off?"

"Yes, take it off."

"What do you expect to find?" asked Mildred. "You can feel the dress anywhere, and you will discover no papers."

"Take it off, said the woman sharply. "I don't know what I will find. I'll show you when I am through searching."

Mildred deliberately removed the garment, and while so doing, made two or three unsuccessful attempts to withdraw the treacherous kerchief unobserved; but the diminutive woman was watching with an Argus-eyed vigilance that would have instantly detected any suspicious manipulation. The little lady took it, turned it inside out, and stretched it upon the bed. In an instant her keen eyes fell upon the fatal rent. Mildred felt a choking sensation when she perceived the nimble fingers deftly close upon the General's handkerchief.

"O, heaven! what shall I do?" was her inward exclamation as she saw the kerchief quickly jerked out. She felt a sickening sensation creeping over her. She tried hard to preserve her equanimity. Would falsehood avail in this instance? or should she tell the truth, and meet death with Christian resignation?

"Ah! what is this?" exclaimed the little woman, holding up the kerchief by two corners, and gazing at it with a most provoking air of triumph.

Mildred's first impulse was to snatch the terrible document from her hands, and thrust it in the fire, but alas! there was no fire in the room.

"It may be some old rag," said Mildred in a hoarse, trembling voice, "put in to thicken the lining." It was the first time in her life that she had practiced prevarication, and the words seemed to blister her tongue.

"Hardly probable," said the Lilliputian lady with an ironical smile. "Hardly probable; it is almost new, don't you see? But I will give it to Mr. Twombly, and let him examine it while I continue the work."

Accordingly, she opened the door, gave the

kerchief to the clerk, and resumed the search. But a half hour's further investigation revealed nothing else of a suspicious character. The woman said :

“ Well, unless that handkerchief contains evidences of disloyalty you will go free. Put on your clothing. I will assist you.”

In a little time Mildred was again presentable, and the door being re-opened, the two men entered without ceremony. The little woman was the first to speak.

“ That's the only suspicious article I've been able to discover.”

“ And that is enough,” said the clerk. “ Alas ! young lady, we are forced to arrest you as a spy. I am sorry for you.”

“ I do not need your sympathy,” said Mildred indignantly. “ I would rather be anything than a detestable informer, showing a ‘ Devil’s purpose with an angel’s face’—sneaking among your unsuspecting guests, smiling and fawning upon them in order to convert their blood into gold. ‘ I’d rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman.’ Yes, I’d rather die a thousand times than act the base part of a contemptible hypocrite.”

“ High ! wrathful lady,” exclaimed the

clerk without betraying any symptoms of vexation and annoyance, "how can you blame me for discharging my duty to my country?"

"Don't you remember that King Philip said he loved the treason, but despised the traitor? That is the case with your masters; they love your treachery, but they hate you. Every honest man heartily execrates a cold-blooded, villainous informer," cried the enraged Mildred.

"Nevertheless, young lady," coolly said the clerk, "it is our duty to arrest you as a spy."

"I am no spy," exclaimed Mildred. "I have not come to Washington to find out anything of a military character. I call God to witness that I have not come here for any such purpose."

"Why, don't you know the contents of this document?" asked the clerk.

"God in heaven, who sees me, knows that I never read a single word, or syllable of it."

"Then," said the clerk in surprise, "you know not what a dangerous handkerchief you have been carrying."

"Yes, sir; I knew it was attended with some sort of danger, but I do emphatically deny

being a spy. All I had to do was to deliver the handkerchief to a certain person, and go back home."

"And that person is named here," replied the clerk. "I wouldn't give a snap of my finger for his life."

Mildred turned pale on hearing this, and on re-calling the fact that General A. had told her that if she were detected, a third party would be compromised.

"Notwithstanding your unnecessary abuse of myself," said the clerk, "I hope your excuse will be considered sufficient to procure your release. Your friends have made a mere tool of you for the accomplishment of their own purpose. But I must take you to headquarters. If you will promise to go along quietly, I will accompany you myself; if you are not, I will turn you over to the police."

"I will go with you," said Mildred, who was now ready almost to faint.

The clerk and Mildred descended to the street, and entered a passing hack. In a few moments they alighted at the head-quarters of Gen. ——, to whom the clerk delivered the handkerchief. He read it over twice and said:

"A pretty kettle of fish is this! Are you the bearer of this, young lady?"

"I am, sir."

"She had it carefully concealed in her clothing, General," spoke up the clerk. "I suspected her, and had her watched."

"You have done your country a great service," replied the General. "Have you arrested the other party?"

"No, sir, I thought it best to deliver that article to you first."

"Very well," answered the General. "I thank you heartily for what you have done. Now, young lady," continued the General, turning his attention to Mildred who was pale but calm, "how came you with this document?"

Mildred had concocted a falsehood which might have obscured her connection with the affair with a shadow of dubitation. But in early life the little story of George Washington and the cherry tree had made a deep, ineffaceable impression upon her mind, and neither could she "tell a lie." If she spoke at all, she determined to tell the truth, let the consequences be what they might. So she answered :

"I brought it to a certain person in this city."

"What is his name?"

"I cannot tell," she replied. "You can do as you please with me, but I shall not compromise others."

"It does not matter," replied the General. "His name is Beall. I shall have him arrested in an hour or so. He is an important character, it seems. Do you not know, lady, that you are acting the spy?"

"No, sir. I deny being a spy."

"I pity your ignorance," replied the officer. "You are exactly in the attitude of a spy. The penalty—do you know what it is?"

"Death, is it not?" replied Mildred calmly.

"Death, and death by hanging."

"O, General!" exclaimed Mildred, whose feelings were alternating between trepidation and tranquility. "Can you not pardon me when I was ignorant that I was acting in such a capacity?"

"I never knew a spy to be pardoned," said the General thoughtfully. "There was universal sympathy for the unfortunate Major Andre, and Washington would have saved him, if possible. But the law is inexorable. I have no power to do anything. You will have to be tried by a military court, and you

can easily imagine what will be the result. A spy always takes his life in his hands, well knowing the consequences of detection. If you are ignorant of these consequences, I am truly sorry for you. You will," he continued, turning to the clerk, "give the lady a room in your hotel, and I will send a guard to stand at the door to prevent escape. I do not care to send so elegant a lady to a common prison. Give her a room from which there is no practicable egress except through the door."

"I understand, General," replied the clerk. "The corner room of the fourth story is perfectly safe."

"General," said Mildred who had been trying to be brave, "may I write to my parents?"

If the officer had spoken harshly, she could have borne her misfortune more courageously, but he spoke kindly, and the womanish heart would betray itself. Under such circumstances, without tears, she would have been untrue to her sex. The General was touched, as nearly all men are, by the sight of a beautiful woman down whose cheeks are flowing the evidences of her distress. When the grim old General looked at the innocent truth-telling face of this magnanimous girl, upon whose features God

had stamped the seal of honesty, and especially when she broke down at the thought of the distress of her parents, and Ernest, all the better feelings of his heart were touched. His chivalry prompted him to release her, but the claims of duty were paramount. He, at the time, thought that surely no court-martial would deal with her as with one of the "rougher sex." Her innocence, beauty, and intelligence would be her defense, and, under all circumstances, would be a greater protection than a Roman shield. He, therefore, replied :

" Certainly, you may. This gentleman," turning to the clerk, " will see that you have everything that you want. Remember, sir, she is a lady, and treat her accordingly."

" She herself will testify, General, that I have extended to her the treatment which every lady deserves, notwithstanding the fact, that she abused me roundly for simply discharging my duty."

When they again entered the hack, such a sense of the awfulness of her situation came over Mildred that she covered her face, and sobbed audibly. Her woman nature strongly asserted itself, and she yielded. For the first

time a sense of shame reddened the cheeks of the clerk, sitting silent in front of her.

"Confound it," said he to himself, "what great deed have I done? She is nothing but an innocent girl, ignorant of her own danger. If it were some sharp man, I might feel self-complacent. The man to whom she was to deliver that handkerchief is really the guilty party. But it is too late now. I must obey orders."

They soon reached the hotel, and in ten minutes Mildred found herself in the corner room of the fourth story. And she sat down, and wept bitterly.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

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### A DESPERATE MAN.

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The army to which Ernest belonged was encamped on the banks of the historical river ——. The year was drawing to a close. To Ernest the days dragged heavily by, as there are few amusements in military camps that are sufficient to divert one's mind from introspectional processes. It was this prolonged subjectivity—this constant brooding over one's own thoughts, inseparable from camp life, that produced *ennui*, or more frequently, that exquisite *nostalgia*, which often terminated in death. Ernest had kept up a regular correspondence with Mildred, which occupied much of his time, and made his own thoughts pleasant companions. She had not written a word in regard to her visits to Washington, and he, of course, supposed that she was at home.

One morning a letter was delivered to him. post-marked from Mildred's office, but directed

in a chirography which was not hers. This circumstance at once aroused, in his mind, the most fearful apprehensions. He thought of a hundred calamities, in a few moments, that might have overtaken her—probably she had suddenly died—she might be sick—she had married some one—the enemy had made a raid and carried off the whole family, and this thought made him clench his hand and grind his teeth. Why did he not open the epistle at once, and end his suspense? Because he was endeavoring to prepare his mind for the reception of distressing news, like a man who sees the avalanche coming, and braces himself against the nearest rock that promises to offer successful resistance against the coming shock. The first Lieutenant of his company was in the tent, to whom Ernest, holding up the letter, said :

“ I fear this will put an end to all my fondly cherished hopes.”

“ Is it from *her*? ” inquired the Lieutenant.

“ No, not from her,” said Ernest, “ but it bears the post-mark of her office.”

“ Well, why don’t you open it? ”

“ Because it appears to me like a Pandora’s box, and I dread the evils it contains.”

"Hope was left behind, you know."

"Yes; but I fear that hope, in this instance, will be the first to wing her flight away from me," said Ernest.

"Never climb the hill till you get to it," said the Lieutenant. "Why allow yourself to suffer the pangs of imaginary evils?"

"It is foolish, Lieutenant."

Ernest slowly opened the envelope, took out the folded sheet, and glanced at the subscriber's signature. It was from Dr. Arrington. The Lieutenant noticed that a deathly pallor spread over his face, and his hands trembled violently, but he said nothing till Ernest had finished the letter. He was transformed into the very embodiment of despair.

"What is the matter?" kindly and anxiously asked the Lieutenant, his personal friend.

"I cannot tell," Ernest almost groaned out. "There, read for yourself."

The Lieutenant carefully read Dr. Arrington's account of the arrest and imprisonment of his daughter.

"It is terrible news," said the Lieutenant, "and there is no use disguising it. Yet as long as there is life, there is hope."

"Oh! Great Heavens!" exclaimed Ernest,

springing to his feet, “the villains may have already executed her! You know how hurriedly they do these things. If they have —,” shaking his head and grinding his teeth—“If they have, I will be avenged. Yes, they shall pay for her blood. I shall have only one object to live for—to avenge her death. In the next battle, Lieutenant, I desire you to command the company. I want a gun—I must have a gun. I cannot stand still while there will be such opportunities for spilling their blood. Yes, sir, I will make them pay dearly for such shameful, diabolical murder.”

“Now, come, my friend,” said the Lieutenant, “you will try to ascend the mountain before you reach it. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. You have no proof whatever that the execution has taken place, and your surmises may be without the shadow of foundation. Besides, you are a Christian—a follower of the meek and lowly Lamb, who when He was reviled, reviled not again. Does it become you to be talking of revenge? ‘Vengeance is mine,’ saith the Lord. You must not murmur at the dispensations of divine providence.”

“What!” interrupted Ernest, “do you call

this a dispensation of providence? Do you believe that God would deliberately bring about such a dreadful event as that?"

"Why not that as well as any other event? Don't you believe that God has something to do with this war?"

"Yes, I suppose He has, in a sort of general way."

"General way?" exclaimed the Lieutenant. "Why, generalities are made up of particulars. How can there be a general providence, as some people call it, without special acts? Well, this misfortune of yours, as you regard it, is one of the events of the war. It is not a mere accident."

"Do you pretend to say," asked Ernest in an agitated manner, "that God selected my loved one especially for the purpose of being sacrificed? Do you say that?"

"Why not her as well as anybody else, granting your premises? But you are a little too fast, my friend. You have no reliable information that she has been sacrificed. You're assuming too much."

"She will be treated as a spy," said Ernest, "and you know what that means. I can never forgive Gen. A. for inveigling her into such an

affair. Why did he not get me, or some other man to go?"

"You do not know what Gen. A.'s reasons were," said the Lieutenant. "Captain, you need to be taught a lesson of humility, if you will pardon me for saying it. God says, 'love your enemies,' and here you are, wishing to murder yours, and are manifesting an unforgetting spirit even toward your friends. I believe you are a Christian, but I fear you will have to be chastened by sorrow and suffering. You would better ask God to give you meekness of spirit and resignation to His will, before you are made to bow by calamities. Your rebellion will be punished. The Scripture says, '(Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.) Submit, before a 'worse thing happen unto thee.'"

"It is difficult for me to believe just as you do," answered Ernest in a gentler tone. "You belong to the Presbyterian Church that holds to the doctrine that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass. I confess that I am disposed to believe the theory, but somehow I cannot bring it into the practical affairs of life."

"You remember what Nebuchadnezzar was punished for?" asked the Lieutenant. "It

was for denying the Divine Sovereignty. God punishes men for the same offence now. He tells us He is a jealous God ; He demands that we shall recognize His hand in all our affairs."

"I wish I could fully and firmly believe as you do," said Ernest thoughtfully. "I can see that the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are better adapted to the necessities of man's nature than those of any other Church. I notice too, that Presbyterians seem to bear up under misfortunes better than other people. And this I must attribute to the comfort they find in their doctrines."

"There is much truth in what you say," replied the Lieutenant. "I was not reared a Presbyterian, but after I was grown, I was particularly struck with their quiet way of doing things—a way destitute of boisterous zeal and ostentatious fussiness. Then when I investigated their doctrines, I found them Scriptural. I confess I do not see how any man can fail to believe these doctrines, with the Bible in his hands. Do you not think that the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty is taught in the Bible ?"

"It does seem to be," said Ernest; "but this doctrine of election does not, at times, appear to be consistent with justice."

"Where is the inconsistency?"

"Why, that Jesus died for some men, and left the rest of mankind to perish in their sins, and then to hold these men responsible for what they could not help."

"Who advocates such a view as that?" asked the Lieutenant, who was a pious and intelligent member of the Presbyterian Church.

"Why, do not you Presbyterians believe that?"

"No, sir; we believe that Christ tasted death for every man, as the Scriptures declare. He made an atonement sufficient to save every son and daughter of Adam. No man is lost on account of any limitation or defect in the atonement, nor on account of an eternal decree. All could be saved, if they only had the will. It is nothing but the perverse will in men that prevents their salvation. But I should like to ask what you believe in regard to the atonement? You may as well be thinking about this as brooding over your troubles."

"Yes; let us have a discussion—anything to keep my mind off this misfortune till I am prepared to think calmly about it. In reply, then, to your inquiry, I say I scarcely know what to think. It would seem reasonable to

me, though, that Christ died for all precisely alike—for one just as much as another. All were on the same level. By His death He removed the obstacles placed in the way by original sin or Adam's transgression. He thus made salvation possible to all men. Christ provided the means, and left it to man's choice whether he would use the means or not. That would seem just and right."

"So it might at the first glance," answered the Lieutenant, "and it is the way men would like to have it. Nothing could be more agreeable to the carnal heart. But let us calmly examine your position. You think then that Jesus died for no individual in particular, but for the whole race of men in general?"

"That seems to be reasonable," replied Ernest, "and no one could complain."

"Yes, reasonable according to man's notions," rejoined the Lieutenant, "and according to the principles of mere human philosophy. But the main objection to it, is that it is in diametrical opposition to the Scriptures. For they emphatically declare that Christ gave Himself for the Church. All through the New Testament we find such expressions as 'died for His people.' Jesus, Himself repeatedly

spoke of ‘His people’ for whom He would give His life.”

“But does not the Bible say ‘He was made a propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world?’” What does that mean?”

“Well, suppose Christ had not died at all, how many would have been saved?”

“None at all,” said Ernest.

“Then the answer is that Jesus died *sufficiently* for all the world, but effectually for His own people. He made such an atonement that every one could be saved who wanted to be. And this is the meaning of every passage of Scripture which is similar to the one cited by you.”

“But,” asked Ernest, “what was the use of dying *sufficiently* for all, when it was known that all would not be saved?”

“Christ had to die for the elect,” replied the Lieutenant, “and in so doing He died sufficiently to save the entire world. If the atonement is sufficient to save all, that throws the responsibility of the damnation of those who are lost upon themselves. But how much broader do you want the atonement, if it takes in all who want to be saved? Why should

you want Christ to make an effectual atonement for those who do not want to be saved?"

"I confess that is a puzzling question," answered Ernest.

"Besides," continued the Lieutenant, "your position is contrary to sound philosophy."

"How is that?"

"You say it is left to men to choose their own destinies. Now suppose that not one of the human race had accepted Christ, would not the atonement have been a failure? Would not Jesus have died in vain?"

"It does seem so," said Ernest.

"Do you suppose," continued the Lieutenant, "that the Lord was trying experiments?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean this," answered the Lieutenant. "if God was experimenting, He virtually said: 'Son, go into the world, and make an atonement for the sins of all mankind; perhaps, some may avail themselves of the provisions of this scheme which we have adopted, but we do not know that a single individual will be saved.' Do you not suppose that God had some definite purpose to accomplish in the atonement? If not, He was less wise than men are. Even we, weak human beings, never go to work without some plan and some object."

"Of course," said Ernest, "I admit that God had a definite purpose in view."

"Do you not believe that God's purpose will be achieved?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Certainly, it will."

"Then," said the Lieutenant, "if the Lord intended to save all men, why are they not saved?"

"Because they will not be."

"You are then driven to the conclusion," replied the Lieutenant, "that men are more powerful than God. He wants to save them, and intends to save them, but they will not allow Him. They defeat God's intentions."

"No; I do not mean that exactly," said Ernest.

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Why," answered Ernest, "I mean that God made equal provisions for all, and determined to treat all alike."

"Then all the plan you admit was, that Christ made a sort of general atonement, but determined nothing in regard to the salvation of any particular individual? It was not certain that any would be saved?"

"O, of course, He knew that some would be saved, and some lost."

“Yes,” replied the Lieutenant, “He knew that some would be saved, and some lost—just put it on that ground; now, Christ died *effectually* for those who He knew would be saved, and yet sufficiently to save those who He knew would be lost; and this is the election which my Church advocates, that is, leaving out fore-knowledge as the ground upon which the scheme of redemption is based; for God’s choice of the elect does not depend upon anything in the creature. But I am showing that your own position leads to a kind of predestination. Do you not see that your position also runs into the broadest universalism?”

“How does it?” asked Ernest.

“Why, your idea is, that God, to be impartial, must treat all alike—give all the same opportunities, and bring the same influences to bear upon all. Now let us see how that will work. Mr. A. is convinced by the Holy Spirit, and is converted, as we may say: he is saved; Mr. B. his neighbor, must be treated in the same way, or God would be partial.”

“God gives both the same opportunities,” said Ernest, “but one resists and the other yields.”

“Then,” said the Lieutenant, “you have

mankind divided into two classes—one resists, and is certain to be lost, and the other yields, and is certain to be saved. What is that but predestination?"

"I mean," said Ernest, "that God gives each class sufficient grace to save them, if they would use it."

"It is well," replied the Lieutenant, "that you brought in that 'if.' Certainly, 'if' they would use it. The grace is sufficient, do you not see, to save one class, but not the other? So here is predestination again. The line is drawn between the two classes, and one class can never be saved, because the grace given is not sufficient to induce them to make an effort to secure salvation."

"Well," said Ernest, "do you not make God unjust in not giving them sufficient grace?"

"If He did give every man sufficient grace to save him," said the Lieutenant, "then every man would be saved. What is that but the broadest universalism?"

Ernest made no reply.

"But you are not a universalist," continued the Lieutenant. "If not, you must believe the doctrine of election; there is no other alterna-

tive. The difference between us is this : I affirm that God elects His people upon a principle with which He has not acquainted us ; you say that the election depends upon men themselves ; and you divide men into two classes, and the individuals of one class are so constituted that it is certain they will resist all sacred influences, and consequently will inevitably be lost. This is as rigid predestination as ever John Calvin advocated."

" You have a way of making me say things I do not mean, Lieutenant."

" No," answered the Lieutenant, " I merely followed out the proposition you laid down to its legitimate consequences. I do not see how you can escape these consequences, and I would be glad if you would show me how to avoid them. For, I confess that there is something about it which sorely puzzles me, and troubles me."

" I thought you professed to fully understand it," said Ernest.

" On the contrary, I do not understand it. I merely take the Bible at what it says. But I never pretended to reconcile election with human free agency. We can go to a certain point, and there we must stop."

"What is it that perplexes you so?"

"Well," answered the Lieutenant, "some people assert that God desires and wills every human being to be saved. Now, if He does, why does He not save them? Why does He not accomplish His own will? He, undoubtedly, has the power."

"We might answer," replied Ernest, "that God will not destroy their free agency."

"Is it so important and necessary to preserve free agency that men must suffer eternal torment for it?" asked the Lieutenant. "Would it not be better to destroy their free agency than to permit men to use it to their own destruction? We cannot deny that God could save every man if He really desired and willed to do so. He could speak to them with an audible voice or show them a great light, as He did Paul, and in this way bring the entire human race into the fold of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is as clear as anything can be, that God never intended to save all men. If He did, what was there to defeat the divine intention? If you say that men will not let Him save them, then men have more power than God. In fact, any position you may take that is not in harmony with the Westminster Con-

fession of Faith will end in confusion and darkness. Why not, then, take the plain Scriptures on the subject? All through God's word the two classes, the lost and the saved, are spoken of. You may account for the damnation of sinners on any principle you please; you may say that God has nothing to do with it, if you will; you may say that men are perfectly free agents; that there is no such doctrine as election in the Scriptures; you may blot out predestination, but nevertheless the fact stares you in the face that there are the Saved and the Lost. We must judge of God's purpose by what takes place. Men are saved every day. Men are lost every day. Now, all this is in accordance with the divine will or opposed to it; one or the other. If it is in accordance with God's will, this is the election for which we contend. But if it is opposed to the divine will, we are forced to the conclusion that God has not sufficient power to accomplish what He wants."

"As I told you, Lieutenant," said Ernest, "I am inclined to the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church. I can see that there is more comfort in it than the opposite, and it is certainly more Scriptural."

"The opposite is too vague and loose," answered the Lieutenant. "The believer has too little security. According to the view of some people, the Christian may be in a state of grace to-day, and to-morrow in a state of condemnation. If I believed that, I should be miserable, for I should never know whether I was safe or not. I prefer to believe God's own declaration, which is that He will complete the good work He has begun, and that His people shall never perish."

"I believe that, myself," said Ernest. "I have been talking on this subject more to keep my mind off my misfortune than for anything else, but it is in vain. How can I help thinking of it? My mind is now like a volcano in a state of activity. I cannot stand this. I cannot lie here in camp doing nothing, while she is languishing in prison. Good heavens! it is enough to drive me mad."

"Let us pray to God for direction."

"With all my heart," answered Ernest.  
"Please pray for me."

They both knelt down, and the Lieutenant in a low voice prayed earnestly for his friend, that God would sustain him and bring him in triumph out of all his troubles. When they arose, the Lieutenant said:

"Now let us have faith in God, but that does not mean that we are not to be active ourselves. What course do you intend to pursue?"

"I must go into Washington City," said Ernest.

"How can you do that?" inquired the Lieutenant.

"I do not know, but I must go. Perhaps Gen. A. can assist me. He ought to do so, since he is the cause of the calamity. I shall go to him at once. The train will be here in two hours. I cannot stay here; I will desert first."

And Ernest dashed out of the tent and rushed off like a mad man.



## CHAPTER XIV.

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### DARK HOURS.

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The rapid pace of Ernest soon brought him to the quarters of his Brigadier General, a man whose name is inseparably connected with the battle of Bull Run. After the Brigadier had heard the touching story of Mildred's arrest and incarceration, he gave, without hesitation, the distressed young man a permit to visit Gen. A.

In less than two hours after this, Ernest was thundering along toward Gen. A.'s headquarters, which he reached about four o'clock in the evening. After the ceremony necessary to secure access to a General, he entered the little farm house to which allusion has already been made, and introduced himself. There is never much social intercourse between the higher and subordinate officers of an army. There is a great gulf between them which is rarely crossed. In visiting a high officer, it is not expected that the subaltern shall make

familiar remarks about the weather or any other ordinary topic. He must come to business *in medias res*.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" asked Gen. A. in that impatient military tone which indicates that the applicant must talk fast and to the point.

"Some days ago, sir," said Ernest, stung by his frigid reception, "you sent a young lady of this neighborhood into Washington, where she was arrested and will probably be doomed to death, if she has not already been."

"Well?"

"Well!" exclaimed Ernest, vexed at the General's coolness and seeming indifference, "she is my affianced."

"Well, go on."

"Are you not going to make some effort for her relief," cried Ernest, warming into boldness, "or do you propose to let her perish?"

"I should like to know what I can do?" quoth Gen. A.

"I do not know what you can do," cried Ernest in desperation, "but you ought to do something, since you are the cause of her misfortune."

"Am I to be held responsible for all the

calamities which the war may bring upon citizens and soldiers?" broke out the General. "If so, I shall resign my position at once. The young lady herself will not hold me to such responsibility. She went with a full knowledge of what she would have to encounter."

"Suppose she did, sir, does that make it any the less necessary that efforts should be made to save her?"

"I would save her, if I could," said the officer.

"General," cried Ernest, overcome by his conflicting emotions, "something must be done for her relief. It seems to me that you are too indifferent about it."

The General looked at him in surprise and with an expression of sternness, but Ernest was now deeply agitated, and he met the official *coup d'oeil* without the slightest indication of servility.

"I cannot stay here in camp," continued Ernest, "when the being who is dearer to me than life is in such imminent danger. You cannot expect me to be a good soldier under such circumstances."

"Well, what do you want?" asked Gen. A.

"I must do something," replied Ernest. "Can you aid me in getting into Washington?"

"If you were there, what could you do?"

"I do not know what, General, but I am willing to risk my life in the attempt to save her."

"I cannot see," said the General, whose feelings were beginning to soften at the sight of the young man's distress, "what you could do if you were in the city."

"General, I must go."

"If you do go, you are liable to be arrested as a spy yourself."

"I will have to take that risk, General. How did you enable her to go into the city?"

"O, that is managed easily enough."

"Then, General, in heaven's name, let me go," exclaimed Ernest, "let me go. If I do not save her, I will return and devote my life to avenging her death. I will be the bravest soldier in your army."

"Very well, sir, you can try it."

"Thanks, General, ten thousand thanks. I shall never forget your kindness as long as I live. When can I start?"

"Whenever you please," said Gen. A.

"Then I will go at once," said Ernest, "I do not want to lose a moment."

Gen. A. immediately gave Ernest the necessary directions. It is no part of our story to explain how Gen. A. enabled people to go in and out of Washington. It is sufficient to say that he did it. As we have already remarked, the real history of the war has never been written, and never will be. The most thrilling portions of it will remain in eternal obscurity. Many stirring incidents will linger for a while in individual memories, and will enliven the fire-sides of families for a few years, and then perish forever. Not many ever knew how Ernest made his way into Washington, but the next day he saw the capitol of the United States. This, however, was the least of his difficulties. How could he find Mildred? And what could he do after finding her? But he determined to make every effort in his power, trusting to chance to furnish opportunities. Fortune soon seemed to favor him. For the next day after his arrival, he was standing on a certain street, which it is not necessary to name, gazing about in a vacant way, while thoughts were revolving in his mind, connected with the object of his visit. He was opposite the hotel at which he was stopping. Accidentally, it seemed, casting his eye upward,

he beheld a lady at the window of the corner room of the fourth story. She was looking down on the crowds below as they went hurrying along the street. Ernest, after a moment's examination, recognized her. He waved his hand till, at last, he attracted her attention. Mildred gazed at him earnestly for a moment, and waved responsively in token of recognition. Ernest placed his fingers upon his mouth in a significant manner, which she understood. He stood for a brief space in profound study, but suddenly disappearing, crossed the street, and entered the hotel. He ascended to the fourth story where his own room was located. Mildred was on the same floor in the corner room. He had noticed the guard at the door, but till now, knew not who the prisoner was. Approaching the sentinel, he spoke in a tone sufficiently loud for Mildred to hear :

“ Whom are you guarding ? ”

“ It seems to be a leddy,” replied an Irishman, “ but how shud I know who she be ? ”

“ What are your instructions ? ” asked Ernest.

“ Why, to let no one in nor out, to be shure.”

“ Is the door locked ? ” asked Ernest.

“ Faith is it, and the kay is gone.”

“ Who has it ? ”

“ The Capting, I guess.”

“ What is the lady confined for ? ”

“ Narry bit do I know.”

“ Will you not let me speak to this lady through the keyhole ? ” asked Ernest.

“ Och ! what would ye be afther doin' ? Do ye want me to be a traitor to my countrhy ? ”

“ No, no ; I do not want you to be a traitor,” said Ernest in a low tone. Are you a married man or not ? ”

“ Faith no, but I expect to be, as soon as this whar is over, which I hope wont be a ghreat toime ; an' then I'll be marrhid to one of the moust beautiful geerls in the whoul city.”

“ Then listen to me, my friend. You are engaged to be married, and so am I. Now suppose your girl were confined in that room, and I should be standing guard in your place, and you should come up, and ask me to let you speak one little word to her through the key-hole, and I should refuse, what would you think of me ? ”

“ Faith, I'd take you to be a mane rascal.”

“ Well,” said Ernest eagerly, “ the girl you

have in that room has promised to marry me. I have not spoken to her for several months. Now, will you drive me away without letting me speak to her?"

"Och ; that's it, is it? By the houly St. Pathrick, I cud niver find it in me heart to deny a feller that small a favor. Biddy would call me a mane dog, ef I was to do as dhirty a trick as that. It's spaking to her, is it ? Well spake, but be as quick as you ken."

"Thank you, thank you, my good friend," said Ernest, as tremblingly he applied his mouth to the key-hole.

"Mildred ? Mildred !" he called.

"O, Ernest, is it you ?" she asked, drawing her chair to the door.

"Yes ; are you well ?"

"I am, except heart-sickness."

"I do not know how you have stood it." replied Ernest. "But what are your prospects ?"

"O ! they are dark, Ernest, so dark at times. But how came you here ?"

"I came to find out about you."

"Are you not in danger ?" she asked.

"I do not know. I never thought of any personal danger. O, Mildred, you cannot im-

agine what I have endured. But the worst has not come."

"Try to be brave," she said. There is a God who rules in the affairs of men. I have not lost faith in Him. I am in His hands, and I know He can raise up friends to aid me in the darkest hours of misfortune. I spend the most of my time in prayer, and were it not for my belief, I fear I should lose my mind. I try so hard to be reconciled to God's will, but sometimes, when I think of my parents and sisters, it is hard to keep down the spirit of rebellion."

"If anything worse than imprisonment happens to you," said Ernest, "I shall be tempted to doubt the goodness and justice of God."

"Do not talk that way," she said, as if horrified. "I would rather die a thousand times than have one harsh thought of my God. Our times are in His hands, and He has determined when and how we shall die, and He will do right. I am distressed not so much on account of myself as of my family."

"You have no thought for me?" asked Ernest.

"Yes, I include you with the family."

"O, Mildred!" he exclaimed in tones of

anguish, "I love you better than my own life. God knows if I could take your place, and restore you to freedom, I would willingly and cheerfully do it."

"I believe you, Ernest, but I could not ask you to make such a sacrifice, even if it were possible. But the good Lord knows what is best. I have no fears."

"Do you have any hope of escape?"

"I cannot say that I have any particular hope. I have no plans at all. I leave the matter in God's hands. He has appointed the time, place and manner of my death, and I cannot die till God's time arrives. You know in what faith my father has trained me. I will trust my God though He slay me."

"O, Mildred, I do wish I had such a firm faith as yours. It seems to sustain you under the most fearful circumstances."

"So it does. Sometimes," she continued with tears of joy in her eyes, "I feel happy at the thought of so soon going to the blessed mansions which Jesus is preparing for them that love Him."

"And, sometimes, Mildred, I hate myself for my spiritual infirmities. While you can look upon death as a blessing, I cannot but

see in it a calamity—I cannot regard it as anything else—that you should be taken from me and your family in the prime of life, especially—. I cannot finish the sentence.”

“ You were going to say,” replied Mildred with perfect calmness, “ especially if I should die such a violent death as makes you shudder to contemplate.”

“ Yes, yes,” said Ernest in an agitated manner, “ it maddens me to think about it. I can never forgive Gen. A. for bringing you into this awful situation.”

“ But you must do it, Ernest. God requires it at your hands.”

“ O, Mildred, I cannot see the hand of a merciful providence in this misfortune,” suddenly cried Ernest. “ It appears cruel.”

“ You are very rebellious,” rejoined Mildred gently, “ and I am sorry to see it. You will have to learn to guard your tongue and thoughts, or God will mercifully subdue your proud spirit by a worse misfortune.”

“ What can be worse than this?” cried Ernest bitterly. “ I would be better reconciled if I were in your place.”

“ Then, perhaps, God is now causing you to pass under the chastening rod by allowing

the misfortune, as you call it, to befall me. The loss of my life, at this time, may be necessary to the accomplishment of some good purpose. Suppose I should die, the separation from my loved ones will not be long. Thank God! We will all soon meet under brighter skies, where no cannon roars, no tear is shed, no sickness comes, no death invades, but where there is universal peace, joy and love."

"O, Mildred," exclaimed Ernest, "you are so much better than I am. You are as pure as the angels, and I am not worthy of you. I wish I could believe this Presbyterian doctrine as you do. I can see that it is this which enables you to bear up under the darkest trials, and in the face of death."

"I am not so good and pure as you seem to believe," answered Mildred, "but I am glad to say I fully endorse the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. Yet there are moments when the spirit of rebellion rises up in me. Frequently I find myself shedding tears."

"I do not see how you can help it," said Ernest in surprise. "Surely there is no rebel lion in that."

"I fear there is," replied Mildred. "It

seems like anticipating God's purposes. What is the use of grieving over a misfortune that may never come? God may send deliverance in some very unexpected way. Nothing is too hard for Him."

"O, Mildred, I feel as helpless as a child. I have worked my way into this city, and now, having found you, I can do nothing. You have had no trial, I infer."

"No, not yet."

"You may have to languish here for months before they reach your case. I know something about the military courts."

"Probably you will put your own life in jeopardy by remaining here," said Mildred. "You can be of no advantage to me and you would better return."

"I would not be worthy of you, if I could not cheerfully risk my life for you. Have you heard nothing from Gen. A.?"

"Not a word."

"I feel as if I never can forgive him."

"You are very wrong," answered Mildred mildly. "Gen. A. could never have persuaded me to undertake such a business if I had not wanted to serve my country. My life is of no more value than the lives of thousands of soldiers who fall upon every field."

At this juncture the Irishman who had moved off several paces from the door approached and said:

"Haven't you talked long enough?"

"Do you ever become tired of talking to your girl?" asked Ernest.

"No, i' faith," replied the guard. "Biddy is a rose, she is, an' she don't give me much chance to talk—she has such a lively tongue herself. But I'm afeerd for ye to stay here iny longer."

"I will not impose upon you," replied Ernest, "nor take advantage of your kindness. I am so much obliged to you."

"I hope ye've hed a pleasint chat with the leddy," said the Irishman.

"Yes, but let me bid her adieu."

"Certainly ye may, an' I'll move mesilf off so's I may'nt hear your swate words. I know how 'tis with Biddy, mesilf."

"Mildred," said Ernest, "the sentinel will not permit us to converse longer. I must leave you and I know not when I can see you again. The next guard may not be as kind as this one."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Not far. My room is on this floor. I shall

watch for any chance for saving you that may arise. God bless you. Good-by."

"Good-by. Pray for me."

"I need to ask your prayers," replied Ernest. The young man turned sorrowfully away, went to his room, fell upon his knees, and cried to God in anguish of spirit. He prayed that he might have the sublime faith of Mildred. He felt humbled under a sense of his helplessness.

It seems to be natural to us to cry to the Supreme Being in the hours of distress. The most immoral men will pray to God when misfortunes come upon them. They have no faith in it, but the inner soul becomes frightened; it almost proclaims its independence of its physical environments, and expresses its wants through the reluctant organs of the body. Therefore, wicked men pray in times of danger.



## CHAPTER XV.

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### A REMARKABLE EVENT.

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It was night. The stars looked down from their blue dome upon the lamp-lit streets of Washington. Busy feet went hurrying along this way and that. Small groups could be seen standing at different places, discussing some question of an exciting character. If we draw near to any of these groups, we will hear such expressions as "great victory," "hard fight," "four hundred rebels killed." But we are not now specially concerned with this "glorious news," which had come on the telegraph wires.

Let us pause before that large hotel, standing on a certain street, which shall be nameless. Then let us enter, and ascend to the corner room of the fourth story. The door is locked, and on the outside stands a sentinel with musket in hand. Inside there is a lady on her knees. She has been informed that her trial will take place on the ensuing day. Three

days have passed since her interview with Ernest. Gen. A. had told her what would be the consequence of detection with that handkerchief in her possession. The result of the trial may, therefore, be easily anticipated. The fate of a spy is “death by hanging.”

Mildred well knew what she had to expect, but strange to say, the dark prospect excited no alarm. Probably she could not make a reality of the impending danger. This is what the world would say. We are creatures of hope, and we do not yield to despair till the last chance is gone. But the Christian is sustained in the most awful calamities by something higher than any human hope of deliverance. In the darkest hours of trial, a mysterious influence pervades the Christian’s breast, produces a holy calm, a sacred joy, and elevates the soul in triumph above earthly sufferings and sorrows. Unbelievers may pronounce it a delusion, but, nevertheless, it is a delusion which brings happiness; and if this be so, the delusion is just as useful and comforting as though death should put an end to the entire man—both body and soul.

After arising from her knees, Mildred seated herself at the window, and gazed down upon

the scenes below. At that moment she felt not a particle of fear or mistrust. She was perfectly resigned to the will of the Heavenly Father, let it be expressed in what aspect it might. She gave herself up to this ecstatic sense of security, feeling as if she were nestling, like a timid bird in the Omnipotent Hand. Were "coming events casting their shadows before?"

While in this strange state of feeling, she was startled by a gentle rap on her door. This was so unusual that she waited for a repetition of the signal. There was a louder tap.

"What is wanted?" she asked.

She heard the click of a key, and the door stood open. Her lamp threw its rays upon the form of a young man dressed in the Federal uniform. He took off his cap, bowed, and looked straight at Mildred. She glanced at his face, and with a little cry of joy sprang toward him.

"O, Will, can it be you?" she exclaimed.

"It is I, cousin Mildred."

Without another word, she threw her arms around his neck, and pent-up tears flowed without restraint. The officer brushed the drops from his own eyes, and said :

"Come, cousin, you'll make me ashamed of myself. It is weakness in a soldier to cry. Sit down and let me look at you. I have not seen you for five years. Upon my word, you've got to be right good-looking."

"Why have you not called to see me before?"

"Now don't begin to scold before I've had time to say 'howdy';" said the officer gaily. "I didn't know you were here. My company has been guarding you too, but I did not see you, nor hear your name called. To-day I happened to be in the room where they are holding court, and I heard one of the officers say that the case of Mildred Arrington would come first to-morrow morning. I ascertained the charges against you, and I've come to see whether it was my cousin Mildred; and sure enough it is. But I never expected to find you in such a place—at least, in such a predicament. It seems you are a spy."

"That I deny, cousin Will, if I know what it is to be a spy."

"Well, it amounts to the same thing. Your accomplice was tried to-day."

"Who."

"You know—one Capt. Beall."

"And what?" asked Mildred.

"Why, he will hang next Friday—that's all."

We may here remark that it is a matter of history that Capt. Beall was executed as a spy, and met his dismal fate with an undaunted courage that excited the admiration, and pity of his enemies—I say pity, because we all dislike to see a brave, noble man put to an ignominious death.

"I am very sorry," said Mildred.

"No doubt, you are; but what is to become of yourself, my pretty cousin?"

"Why, has not God sent you to release me?" asked Mildred with the simple faith of a child.

"O, you old blue-stocking Presbyterian!" cried Capt. Benner, breaking into a laugh. "That is so like you. You get into an ugly scrape, and ask God to help you out of it, and a kind-hearted young fellow calls to see you, and you forthwith jump to the conclusion that the Lord sent him to save you. What a faith you do have. But don't be too fast," continued the officer, with a merry twinkle, "you are a rebel, and I am a union man. I don't know whether I ought to have called at

all or not. But how do you expect me to save you? Do you want me to be a traitor? Do you want me to release a dangerous spy? Say, now?"

"No, cousin. If it endangers you, let me be. I am ready to be sacrificed on the altar of my country," said Mildred.

"O, ho! you want to be a martyr, do you?"

"No; I have no ambition in that way," replied Mildred. "I would prefer to go home to my family; but I do not want you to take any risks to save me."

"Do you suppose I could release a prisoner without taking risks? To be sure, my fair cousin, I will have to take risks."

"Then, leave me alone," said Mildred.

"Leave you to be hanged, you mean?"

"Yes, if that is the penalty."

"And after that deplorable event," said the officer, "could I ever look my mother in the face? Could I see Uncle Arrington again, and good Aunt Jennie? After the war, when I go down South again, and call at uncle's, and I should hold out my hand, he would start back and say, 'No, I cannot touch that hand; it is stained with poor Mildred's blood.' And aunt would say, 'Leave me, Will, I can-

not bear to look at you.' How do you suppose I would feel, eh? I guess I should go off like Judas did, and hang myself—I think I would."

"Well, let us be serious, Will. I am in no humor for sport now. Do not keep me in suspense. What have you come for?"

"Didn't you say, just now, that God sent me? I wish I could think it. It would be a great relief to my conscience."

"How is that?"

"Why, don't you see, I've got to play false to my government and my country, if I give you freedom?"

"Is that painful to your conscience?"

"If I say yes, then you will become stubborn, and refuse to accept the boon of freedom. So, that you may have no scruples, I will tell you that I have a convenient conscience—one that will stretch. I never was raised, like you, a regular, old blue-stocking Presbyterian. Sometimes, though, I wish I had been. For there is no doubt in my mind that the Presbyterian is the most solid and substantial Church on earth.\* My mother, you know, is a Presbyterian, and my father belongs to the

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\* An intelligent member of the Methodist denomination once spoke these very words to the author of this story.

— Church. I notice that she is the firmer character, and I can say with truth, more consistent, religiously. I take after my father; and that, I guess, is a good thing for you."

"Why is it?" asked Mildred.

"Why, don't you see, if I were a rigid Presbyterian, I should hesitate about giving you liberty? I should be afraid of doing violence to my conscience. Waiving that, however, I think I have been a faithful servant of my government, and they might allow me to release one wretched prisoner."

"Why could you not get a pardon for me, and thus save your conscience?" asked Mildred.

"How green you women are! Don't you know there is no pardon for a spy? Don't you remember Maj. Andre, of the Revolutionary war? Washington would not even let the poor fellow select his own mode of quitting 'these low grounds of sorrow.' The punishment for this great sin of espionage is death, and death by hanging."

"Can you free me," asked Mildred, "without compromising your own safety?"

"I will have to take some risks, of course, but you needn't give yourself any uneasiness

on my account, my fair cousin. Can you make your way home, if you were out of this building? Can you go alone?"

"Certainly, but it will not be necessary."

"What! you've got another accomplice?"

"I shall not conceal anything from you, Will, since you are so kind," replied Mildred, while a deep blush spread over her features. "I am engaged to be married to a young man who is here. His room is on this floor."

"Indeed! what a pretty, romantic scrape you have got into! It would do to go into a novel. But you have made such an honest confession, though, that I can't have the pleasure of teasing you. Is he a Rebel too?"

"Yes, he is."

"Wouldn't it be patriotic, if I were to have him arrested, and tried as a spy? Two romantic lovers hanged on a sour apple tree!"

"You might call it patriotic," said Mildred, "but what would I call it?"

"O, treacherous, mean, diabolical, and the like. But we've got to act now," taking out his watch. "What do you want me to do? Can you and the young man who is so interesting, manage the matter if you can get out of the city?"

"Certainly."

“When can you see him?”

“I suppose he is in his room,” replied Mildred.

“What number?”

“No. 18.”

“I’ll go see him at once.”

Accordingly, the officer went to the designated number, and tapped on the door. A footstep was heard inside, and the door was opened by Ernest. Seeing a Federal officer standing before him, he was disagreeably surprised. The first thought that entered his mind was that he had been watched, and this man had come to arrest him. The prospect was enough to make him turn pale. Benner observed his alarm, and said with a smile:

“Is your name Edgefield?”

“Who told you that I bore such a name?” asked Ernest, in ill-concealed surprise.

“It does not matter who told me, is the information correct?”

“I do not like to answer questions in regard to myself till I understand your object.”

“My object is, to establish your identity.”

“For what purpose?” asked Ernest.

“If you know what is for your own good,” replied Benner, “you will answer candidly.”

"Supposing that to be my name, what then?"

"If that's your name, come with me."

"Where," asked Ernest.

"To that lady in the corner room."

Ernest looked more astonished than ever, on hearing this, but thought it best to obey in silence. Both entered the room, and Mildred said :

"Allow me to introduce, Capt. Edgefield, my cousin, Capt. Benner."

Ernest, at first, appeared puzzled and bewildered, but he soon took in the situation, and his feelings vibrated to the opposite extreme. He was elevated from the depths of darkness to the pinnacle of light. Of course, he thought the young man had come to bring deliverance to his kinswoman. At that moment, too, a sense of his ingratitude toward God flashed into his mind. In a subdued tone he inquired how Capt. Benner had discovered his cousin. He was told in a very few words what the reader knows concerning the affair. Ernest relapsed into silence, and bitterly reproached himself for his lack of confidence in the kind Heavenly Father. Here God was bringing the blind by a way they knew not,

and was preparing deliverance, while he had been indulging in harsh reflections toward the Giver of all good. It was a lesson which he never forgot. [From that moment he became a firm believer in the doctrines of grace as held by the Presbyterian Church.]

We hope we are not taking undue advantage of any interest that may be excited by the present story to give undeserved prominence to the Presbyterian Church. The effect which her doctrines have upon individual and national character is admitted by thoughtful historians. Buckle, in his History of Civilization, does justice to them. According to him, they are better adapted to democratic institutions than any other published creeds. It will be found that those who have believed in these doctrines, which some people call "horrible," have ever been the most stubborn, uncompromising advocates of human rights. They have been foremost in all the great conflicts for freedom. These same doctrines underlaid the Reformation of the 16th century, as is evident to the most cursory reader. We are, by no means, attempting to disparage other Churches, but our present undertaking will not allow us to point out their excellences.

We will now proceed with the story. We need not detail the conversation which took place among the trio, nor attempt to describe the happiness of the two who were in the greatest danger. Ernest was so overwhelmed by this evident demonstration of divine providence that he did not have much to say. He was thinking. Mildred acted as though she were not greatly surprised. She had sent up many earnest prayers to the Throne of Grace and she was not astounded that her petitions were answered.

"Well," said Benner, presently, when it was time to bring the interview to an end, "you must leave about 12 o'clock, when most honest people are asleep. I will see that the way is clear in the hotel. You must both be dressed as union soldiers, at least till you get to the forests. I will have the clothing here in time."

Capt. Benner then left, but returned at 30 minutes past 11 o'clock. Mildred and Ernest were soon transformed into Federal soldiers, at least, in appearance. Each was armed with a musket, and no one, without an unusually close inspection, would have supposed they were other than they appeared to be. And now all was ready.

As the clock struck 12, two Federal soldiers issued from — hotel, and walked leisurely along the streets. In a short time they left the lamps glimmering in the distance, and plunged into the darkness of the forest. Two miles from the city they mounted their horses which had been left in the care of a friend.

Early the next day, they suddenly ran upon a union soldier, who was a vidette. This route had not been occupied by Federal soldiers before, as it was scarcely anything more than a path. The young people were very much surprised, but Ernest in an instant recovered his self-possession, and decided upon his plan of action. He was still dressed in the Federal uniform, and had his musket, besides his own pistol. They came upon the soldier in a sudden turn of the path, and were within a few paces of him before they discovered him. The vidette, taking Ernest to be what this garb indicated, without raising his gun, called out:

“Halt! who goes there?”

He had barely uttered the words before Ernest leveled his gun, and exclaimed :

“Surrender!”

“Who are you?” cried the astounded soldier.

"Drop your gun," exclaimed Ernest sternly, "or I shall kill you."

The amazed vidette, perceiving that resistance would be in vain, let his gun drop to the earth.

"Now," said Ernest, "I have no disposition to harm you. All we want is to pass you. Are you willing to let us go?"

"How can I hinder you," asked the soldier "when I am disarmed?"

"But you must promise not to pursue us."

"Where are you going?" asked the soldier.

"That is my business," replied Ernest.

"Certainly. I promise then."

"Promise," said Ernest, "that you will remain on your horse for fifteen minutes, and not touch that gun, and will give no alarm after we are gone."

"I promise," answered the soldier.

"To make assurance doubly sure," continued Ernest, "I will take your cartridges."

"O, don't do that," begged the vidette. "I will promise just as you want me to."

"Why are you so opposed to giving up your cartridges?"

"Because I am accountable for them. I don't intend to say anything about this

affair, because the boys would laugh at me, and I might be punished too. Just go, and get out of the way as quick as you can, and I give you my word of honor that you shall not hear another word from me. But how am I to account for the loss of my cartridges?"

" You seem to be honest," said Ernest, " and I believe I will try you."

The two immediately rode on, and the soldier kept his word, so far as Ernest knew.

That morning, while Mildred and Ernest were making their escape, the first passers-by saw a long rope, reaching from the corner room of the fourth story of — hotel, down to the pavement below. They knew not what it meant. About 9 o'clock though, when the Court-Martial sent for the female prisoner, it was discovered that the "bird had flown." The sentinel, who had been stationed at the door about twelve o'clock, could give no account of the escape. The door was locked, and he heard nothing. It was presently noised abroad that the lady spy had escaped, and soon hundreds of people gathered in the streets, looked up at the dangling rope, and wondered how a lady could have climbed down such a fearful distance. The general

opinion was that she was a brave, daring woman, who was confined to this one mode of escape. "Of course," they said, "she had friends in the city, who assisted her in the perilous undertaking." At any rate, she was gone. The chief clerk at the hotel, who had been instrumental in her arrest, was not of the rabid class who regretted her timely flight. "I don't care," he said with a smile. "I don't believe she was a spy anyhow. Even if she was, and they had hanged her, I believe I should have felt guilty of murder."

Nothing more was ever found out about it, and Capt. Benner bore the character of a true and loyal soldier till the horrid war came to an end. Some years afterwards he met Mildred, and laughingly explained his scheme, remarking that, "people might have had sense enough to know that she could not have escaped in that way."

"Possibly I might, though," she said. "There is no telling what one can do, when life depends upon it." And she laughed as she thought of how she would have appeared, dangling by her hands on a rope between heaven and earth.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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### A CONFEDERATE MARRIAGE.

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We now return to our two fugitives. They met with no other adventure, and arrived that evening at Dr. Arrington's residence. The old gentleman would have gone into Washington himself when Mildred was arrested, but Ernest persuaded him to remain at home with his family, promising to promptly inform him if his presence should become necessary.

It is impossible to portray the scene which occurred when the two rode up and alighted. Mrs. Arrington, who had been almost broken-hearted, could not control her feelings in the transition from despair to joy. This arrival was like the coming back of the dead. The good lady must cry aloud. The Doctor was more calm, but the tears gently coursed down his cheek in gratitude to God for the restoration of his child. It was an hour or more before the family equilibrium approximated its normal condition sufficiently to admit of

tranquil conversation. After a while the Doctor said:

"We must now have a special service—a service of gratitude, for I feel that my many earnest prayers have been answered."

The family assembled in the parlor, and the Doctor selected some portions of Scripture suitable to the occasion, and all humbly and reverently bowed upon their knees. Such an out-pouring of thanksgiving never before was witnessed around that altar. This was a family of faith. They regarded God as the source of every blessing. The Doctor had no more doubt that God had restored his child, in answer to prayer, than he had of his own existence. Ernest, however, who loved to hear the old man defend his position, suggested that the same thing might have happened if there had been no prayers in the case.

"I am surprised at you," answered the Doctor. "I do not know that I ever saw the hand of God more clearly revealed in my affairs."

"But still," said Ernest, "does it not all appear natural? Your nephew was in the city, and hearing of his cousin's imprisonment, what is more natural than that he should restore her to liberty?"

"I remember," said Mrs. Arrington, "how we were all distressed when we heard that Will had joined the Northern army. Little did we think that Mildred's life depended upon it. How short-sighted we are!"

"And suppose," said the Doctor, "that Will had not been in the court-room when the officer made the remark about her trial. You told us of this a while ago. This might have appeared accidental, but still it happened exactly at the right time. Suppose Will had not gone into that room at the moment he did, the trial would have ended the next day, and Mildred in all probability, would have never been sent back to the hotel, but to a dismal felon's cell to await her execution, and then Will would not have been able to release her."

"You say, Doctor," answered Ernest, "that these things happened at the right time. Suppose this deliverance had occurred earlier, what difference would it have made?"

"We do not understand all God's ways and purposes," replied the Doctor; "but granting that this deliverance had occurred two or three days earlier, you would not have been present to give your assistance. Then sup-

pose Mildred had tried to make her way alone, she might have been re-captured by that vidette you told us about. I do not see how you can fail to recognize divine providence in all this."

"I do recognize it fully," replied Ernest. "You must not think, Doctor, that I am disposed to doubt a supernatural providence. One reason why I asked the question which I did was to get your views. I wanted to hear you point out the particulars as you have done. I am glad to say that this severe trial has proved beneficial to me. I do not think I will ever again be as skeptical as I have been. I have had a lesson."

"Let it be a lesson to us all," answered the Doctor, "ever to have implicit faith in God."

The next day Ernest requested a private interview with the Doctor. They met in the study, and Ernest said :

"I must return soon to the army, and, to make a long story short, I have come to ask you to perform the marriage ceremony for me and Mildred to-day."

"To day!" exclaimed the Doctor in surprise.

"Yes, sir; why not?"

"I do not suppose she is ready," said the Doctor.

"It will not take long to get ready," remarked Ernest. "People do not expect grand weddings such times as these."

"No; but what put this sudden notion into your head?" asked the Doctor a little bluntly.

"We have come to the conclusion that there is no use waiting any longer."

"Well, if it is Mildred's wish," replied the Doctor thoughtfully, "I shall interpose no objection."

Accordingly, that very evening a few friends assembled at the Doctor's residence, and at 8 o'clock Ernest and Mildred were pronounced "husband and wife."

During those times young people entered into the marriage relation without much ceremony, and upon short notice. In many parts of the country it was impossible to procure suitable "wedding garments," and the soldiers frequently married in their ordinary uniforms.

Ernest remained with his bride three or four days, and then started "off to the wars" again. It was a great and severe trial to the two young people to separate. They might never meet again in this world. Many a

young man left his young wife, and in a few days afterwards he was slumbering in the soldier's bloody grave.

"Mildred," said Ernest in a husky tone, "pray for me. I have faith in your prayers."

"Do not doubt my praying for you," she said, while tears glistened in her eyes. "You will never be out of my mind a moment."

"It does look hard," said Ernest, "that we should be separated by the yawning gulf of war just as we are upon the threshold of life. I never knew the depth of my affection for you till now."

"You will not suffer, after all, as I shall," replied Mildred. "You will have the exciting scenes of war to occupy your thoughts, and I shall have nothing to think about but you. O, the long weary days that must pass away! I shall think of you as constantly exposed to dangers."

And so they separated, both saying in their hearts, as they went their respective ways:

"O, shall we ever meet again?"

## CHAPTER XVII.

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### PEACE.

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The frightful clouds of war have rolled away. The smoke of battle has dissolved into the darkness of the Past. The blood-spots have been washed out by the rains and dews of heaven. Blessed Peace spreads out her snow-white pinions, dripping balm for wounded hearts, from the granite hills of New England to the smiling prairies of the Lone Star State. The little hillocks of earth that rise up all over the South mark the gory fields where the enraged warriors met in the death-struggle. We can again re-visit the awful spots where once the earth groaned under the tread of men and horses rushing head-long to the fray, and we can call up the phantom forms, and make them re-enact the bloody tragedies of battle in solemn silence. The gloomy cedar-brakes of Murfreesboro, the plateau of Bull Run, the dark stream of Chickamauga, the rugged Mount that looks down upon Chattanooga, the

black hills of Vicksburg, pock-marked by the shells of a fifty-days' siege—are all there yet, dumb witnesses to the ferocity of human passions. To-day, at all these, and many other places, we can take the torch of history, and relight the terrible scenes enacted in the now silent past. We see long lines of soldiers start up in battle array, grasping the deadly musket, and solemnly preparing to die, in that ominous lull which always precedes the mighty shock of battle. There is a strange silence. The very forests seem to be holding their breath in expectation of a storm more awful than the cyclone of nature. What is it? The awful *pause of Death*.

Presently a single gun breaks the oppressive silence. The work of destruction begins. Heavy volumes of smoke rise up all over the forests. Men on horse-back are seen flying in every direction. One remarkable man, clad in a red flannel shirt, symbolical of the fierce spirit within, is seen galloping from one scene of carnage to another, under the inspiration of a courage that never failed. At last, he reels and falls, and the fiery form of A. P. Hill disappears from the scenes of history forever.

It is remarkable that Lee and Jackson in

their last moments on earth, when they were unconscious of all temporal things, and their imaginations were roving lawlessly over the gory fields where they had been such prominent actors, both called for A. P. Hill. It is a high compliment to the hero's military genius. But Jackson himself went down in the thundering cyclone of war, and was seen no more. Alas ! such men as these had to be swept from the path of destiny before the divine purpose could be accomplished. We mourn for our fallen braves, and yet we thank God that such scenes as gave them undying fame have ceased, we hope, forever, in these States now cemented with intermingling fraternal blood !

One bright morning in April, 1865, the members of Dr. Arrington's family were all seated around the breakfast table. Every face wore a sad, anxious expression. The news of Lee's surrender, which some doubted, had been received, but not the particulars of his last battle. Who had fallen ? Mildred looked at the smoking dishes, but could not eat. Where was Ernest ? She had seen him but three or four times since their marriage, and he had been in all of Lee's battles. O, could it be possible that he had been killed in the last fight ? The thought made her shudder.

"Why do you not eat?" asked the Doctor kindly.

"How can I, father?" Mildred answered sadly. "I am heart-sick. This suspense is awful."

"Have faith in God," said the Doctor. "The last time we heard from Ernest he was well. What reason have you to suppose he is otherwise now?"

"There has been a battle or two since then, and some are killed in every fight."

"Do not anticipate, my child. Never make trouble for yourself. What is the use of grieving over imaginary calamities?"

"I know, father, that you are right; but it is so hard to be perfectly resigned to God's will."

"You have not ascertained what God's will is in this instance; but even should it be that which you dread, I do not deny that it will be hard to bear. It is natural for us to think that God should let us have our way in some things at least. But we should never forget that God knows what is best for us, and He always does the best for us, if we put ourselves unreservedly in His hands."

"I know that is true," replied Mildred.

"But, sometimes I am rebellious. "If Ernest does not come back," she continued in quivering tones, "it seems to me I can never again be happy in this world."

"Then be happy!" exclaimed a voice at the door. Mildred instantly looked up, gave a little scream of joy, sprang from her seat, and was locked in Ernest's arms. What a transition! We shall not attempt to describe it. There are some emotions of the human heart that are beyond the reach of words. They are too sacred and deep to be expressed by human language. Every trace of sadness immediately vanished from Mildred's face, which was lit up with a holy joy and peace that made her look radiant. Presently when there was comparative quiet, the Doctor said :

"Well, has Lee really surrendered?"

"I am sorry to say he has," replied Ernest. "Here is my discharge from the service."

"And you have not been wounded," asked Mildred, "since you were home last?"

"I have not received a graze," he replied.

"Well," she said with tears springing into her eyes, "let me go to my room, and return thanks to God, and ask His forgiveness for my thoughts. I cannot eat till I do."

As she went out Mrs. Arrington said :

" You have a treasure, Ernest, in that girl, if I do say it myself."

" I am well aware of that, Madam, and I am indebted to the war for it. I have learned that God brings good out of evil. I never would have heard of Mildred, had it not been for the battle of Manassas. I am sorry, though, our cause is lost."

" But it is God's will," quickly spoke up the Doctor, " and we should be thankful that it is no worse."

" I am sure it is bad enough," replied Ernest. " We have lost our independence."

" It may appear to you to be a great calamity," said the Doctor, " but I have no doubt it is a blessing in disguise. Two different governments could not exist in this glorious land of ours. I have never believed that we would succeed. I was fearful that we were in the wrong. But it is in vain to discuss such questions now. All is over, and we must submit. ' Promotion cometh neither from the East nor the West, but God setteth up one, and pulleth down another.' "

Mildred now returned to the dining-room, and all partook of the meal with hearts glow-

ing with gratitude. Do not the angels hover over, and smile upon, such a social scene?

The next day the family assembled in the parlor to hold a consultation, at the request of Ernest.

"Well," said the Doctor, smiling upon the group, "'the cruel war is over,' and we must now all return to the blessed arts of peace. I suppose you will resume the practice of law," he continued, turning to Ernest.

"No, I think not, Doctor," answered Ernest. "I called this family meeting in order to lay my plans before you. After my marriage, when I returned to my command again, I solemnly promised God that if He would spare my life, I would devote my energies to His service in the ministry. I am here alive, without having received another wound. Now do you not think I ought to regard my vows?"

"O, my dear Ernest," cried Mildred eagerly, "I have prayed God to put it in your heart to become a minister, and now, it seems, my prayer is answered."

"I did not know," said Ernest, "but that you might have an ambition for something higher."

"Higher!" exclaimed Mildred in surprise.  
"What can be higher?"

"I did not mean 'higher' in the sense that you understand," replied Ernest, "but the world, you know, regards some other professions as higher."

"But the ministry is not a profession," answered Mildred. "I cannot imagine what greater honor a human being can enjoy than to be called to do God's work."

"I have now no greater ambition myself than to be an humble minister of the gospel," replied Ernest.

"It is well," said the Doctor, "that you employ the word humble. I am sorry to say that there are ambitious men in the Church who desire to acquire great reputation as preachers, and who seek after high places in the Church. I hope you have no such disposition as that?"

"No, Doctor, if I know my own heart. I desire to be useful."

"Let us be plain," continued the Doctor, "that you may not, in the future, regret the step you have taken. Be sure that you are influenced by the proper motives. I hope you have not entered into a sort of contract with the Lord—that is, you do not propose to become a minister because God has brought you safe out of the war?"

"No, sir; I firmly believe I was called years ago, but I resisted. I think I would have been a preacher if there had been no war. But probably the war has caused me to enter it sooner than I might have done otherwise."

"You feel, then, that it is your duty to preach?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then, there is no more to be said about it," answered the Doctor. "The sooner you begin the better. I believe I have not asked you under what ecclesiastical auspices you propose to preach?"

"The Presbyterian, of course," said Ernest with a smile. "I suppose my dear Mildred would hardly consent to anything else."

"O, I am not so prejudiced as all that," answered Mildred laughing. "If you felt it your duty to attach yourself to any other orthodox Church, I should not oppose you. But to tell you the truth, I love my Church to such an extent that I could never be happy in any other, and I never could feel the same zeal in another."

"Mildred is a true blue," said the Doctor with a laugh, "and I am glad to think you will find her a useful helpmeet in your work."

"I expect she will make a better pastor than I," said Ernest, "for I am not as social as she is. I fear that this thing of visiting will be the most troublesome duty I shall have to perform."

"People will require a great deal of you in that respect," said the Doctor. "You will find that most of them wish you to visit them not on account of their spiritual interests : but it is the social feature they regard. I have noticed that most Presbyterian ministers are more reserved in their manners than those of some other denominations. This is, no doubt, to be attributed to the long course of mental discipline to which they are subjected. They acquire the habit of solitary study till the social feature of their nature is considerably impaired. On this account I have known some ministers to be accused of stiffness, pride and formality, who were humble, godly men. They really did not understand the demands of social etiquette. You will have to cultivate this feature."

"What is the use of social visiting, Doctor?"

"Whether there is use in it or not, people require it," replied the Doctor. "You will find some of them very unreasonable. They will complain if you do not call every week."

## PEACE.

"How then, shall I ever find time to study?" asked Ernest.

"You must take it. You can not please everybody, try never so hard."

And for a long time the Doctor gave the young man excellent advice, which we need not detail, as it would be of no great interest to the general reader. Besides, we are well aware, that people do not read a story for the sake of the moral, but for their own entertainment. So we shall proceed, at once, to relate the most interesting events of Ernest's life.

The next month, the Presbytery of —— met, and received Ernest under its care. Instead of going to a Seminary, it was allowed him to take a course of Theological study under the tuition of Dr. Arrington. At the expiration of a year he stood his examination, and having received a call from the Presbyterian church in his own town, he was regularly ordained a minister of the gospel. His trial sermon aroused universal wonder and admiration. The people had rarely ever witnessed such oratorical power in the pulpit. Every one predicted for him a brilliant career of usefulness. No young minister ever entered upon his work with more flattering prospects.

Ernest was praised and complimented sufficiently to have turned an older head, but he now possessed too much of the grace of humility to be affected by human applause. The great object with him was the approval of the Master and his own conscience. With the settlement of Ernest in his charge it might seem that our story had reached a point at which it could properly and happily be brought to an end, but we have other interesting events yet to relate.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

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### THE DRUNKARD.

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Ernest entered upon his work in two or three weeks after his ordination. This was the first time he had seen his native town since he left it in 1861. Things had undergone a great change during the four years of war. The prosperity of the place was a thing of the past. Many wealthy families had been reduced to abject beggary. Old Mr. Vanclure had died in 1862, and his son-in-law had administered upon his estate. If Comston had been a man of moral habits, he could have saved a handsome property for his wife, but he was dissipated, and was passionately addicted to gambling. He had pursued a course during the war which had brought him into disgrace, having avoided conscription by hiding in the cane-brakes. When the war came to an end, he found himself in possession of only three thousand dollars. By judicious management of even this amount, he might

have gained an honorable livelihood; but he soon lost it all at the gambling table. Finally, he became a sot.

Poor Clara had to resort to her needle for bread, and she gained only a precarious, scanty subsistence for herself and her unworthy husband, who sometimes spent her hard earnings for drink.

Affairs were in this condition when Ernest returned to his native town to take charge of the church. As soon as he had heard of Clara's misfortunes, he called to see her. He met with a cold reception, for she had become hardened. But by kindness, he soon induced her to talk freely. Presently she said :

"I know you think I made a great blunder."

"How?" asked Ernest timidly, suspecting what she was going to say.

"In my marriage," she answered with decided emphasis. "You know that I rejected you. Are you not glad to see me humbled?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Ernest energetically. "I sympathize with you. The good Lord knows I am sorry for you."

"They tell me you are a preacher now?"

"It is true, I am glad to say."

"O," she exclaimed suddenly, "I wish

Xerxes were a preacher—yes, anything than what he is. I reckon you've heard all about him."

"I have heard some things," replied Ernest.

"He has got to be a regular drunkard," she said, "and I am tired of him. He treats me cruelly. I think he once loved me, and I could have lived happily with him, but he got to drinking, and that has proved his ruin. He is not the same man."

"I am truly sorry for you," replied Ernest.  
"But you are not without hope."

"Where is there any hope for me?" she cried. "I never expect to be happy again."

"You can be, if you will," said Ernest solemnly, as he looked pityingly at the sad woman.

"How can I? I should like to know."

"There is a happiness," answered Ernest, "far superior to any this world affords."

"Where is it?" she cried.

"In Christ Jesus."

"Yes, I expected you to say that, or something like it. But how could I be a Christian, miserable and wretched as I am?"

"The Lord never turns away any who come to Him," replied Ernest.

"But I'm not ready for that yet," she said with candor. "I want to enjoy the world for a while. I think I deserve it. If I had not married, I might have been happy, but it is impossible now, with such a husband as mine."

At this moment, Comston came from town, and staggered into the room. Clara blushed with shame and vexation, but recovering herself, looked at him without uttering a word.

"Why, how d'ye do, Edgefield," he exclaimed in a boisterous tone, and with the drunkard's slow stammering and stuttering. "It's the first—first time—I've met ye—since you—you—er got back from the—er wars. How you make it—er now, ole feller, eh?"

"O, I am in good health," said Ernest, dryly.

"Well, I'm—er truly glad to give you—er—er the right hand—er of—er welcome. Would you—er 'a known this 'er—er little 'oman—er of mine, at—er first sight, eh? She used ter—er—er be right down—er good look in—but—er the last year—er she's—er begun —ter break—er little—yes—er you see, eh? Arn't it so, Clarer, eh? You see—er the cruel war—er broke us up, like it did—er everybody else—er."

"Yes," said Ernest, more to relieve Clara of

embarrassment than to keep up a conversation with a foolish inebriate, "the war proved disastrous to most of our people."

"Indeed—er did it. I lost heavily—er—by it—myself—ruined—dead broke—er—brought down—er to—er abject pov—er—er—tee—er, as the—saying is—er. Cruel—thing—it was. I—er didn't have—er—much to do—er—with it—you see—er,—eh? I was—er long-head-ed—I saw how the—er—thing—was agoin', an'—er—I tried ter—save my scalp—eh? I told Clarer—there was'nt—any use—er—of my—goin'. She was a great—er—patriarch —you know—er—wanted—er ter eat Yankees —up—er. But—er I don't—love that—er sort of—er flesh. It is—not—er—half as good—er—as fish. I went—a—fishin'—most of the time, and—er—we had a—jolly time—er—we did. It was—better—than shootin' yer—feller —man in—er cold—blood. The Yankees—had —never done me—any harm,—an' I could'n make—up my mind ter—murder 'em—'thout provocation—you see, eh? But I hear—you've got to be—a preacher, eh?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ernest in a manner which convinced Clara that the passing scene was painful to his feelings. She could easily

perceive that he was enduring her maudlin husband for her sake.

"Well—er," continued Comston, "it's a—nice—er profession—, not—much—er money in it—though—eh? Like the ole Injun said—poor preach—poor pay—er. I don't—er mean that for you—though—er. You—used ter be—er—a good law—yer, and—if—er you preach—as well as you—talk—I don't see—why—er you shouldn't succeed—er. I'm a—comin' 'round to—er hear you preach—er—some Sunday—if you don't object—eh?"

"I should be glad to have you as one of my audience," replied Ernest.

"We'll make two—er—of iz audience, won't we, Clarer, eh?"

She made no reply, but endeavored to appear as though she had not heard him.

"Now, come, Clarer—don't try to put on—airs—before the preacher—er. I ain't jealous—a—bit—er. No, for I know—you prefer me—ter all the—er men on earth, don't you—er, dear, eh? What—won't you—speak to me? Never mind, Parson, when you go—er she'll be pleasant enough. Some—times she gets—into one of her—er—contantrums before—er company—and there's no doin' anything with

her—have ter let 'er alone till she—sobers up—er."

"I must be going," suddenly said Ernest, rising. "I have some other calls to make."

"Thank you for your visit," said Clara. "Call again if you can."

"Yes—er—come again, Parson,—if I arn't at home—Clarer will—er entertain you."

Clara left the parlor, as Ernest did, and Comston fell asleep upon a sofa. When he awoke, he had partly emerged from his state of intoxication. Arising, and going into Clara's room, he said :

"Had a nice time with the preacher, dear ? I think, though, you might have treated me with a little more respect. You wouldn't speak to me. What is the matter ?"

"You have made a fool of yourself," cried Clara, in anger and vexation. "I have told you I wanted you to keep away from me when you are drunk. You make a brute of your self."

"Why, I thought I was entertaining the minister very nicely. You wouldn't talk to him, and it wouldn't do for all of us to sit still like Quakers, would it ?"

"You made a complete fool of yourself,"

she said with face flashing with anger. "I am getting so I hate you—yes, I hate you."

"Now don't provoke me, dear. You know I can't control my savage temper when I'm aroused. Don't you remember how you provoked me the other day till I was about to strike you?"

"Yes, sir, I remember your brutality, and I tell you now I am not going to stand it much longer, either."

"What will you do?" asked Comston.

"I am not going to live with a man who is such a coward as to strike a defenceless woman. Here you are bragging about it, as if you had performed some wonderful deed. If you ever attempt to strike me again, I will leave you—yes, I will apply for a divorce."

"O, no, you wouldn't do that, dear? Who would provide for you?"

"Who provides for me now? I should like to know. If I did not support myself, I should starve. You know that."

"O, no, you wouldn't starve, dear. You've never starved yet, have you? Do you 'spose Xerxes Comston would let you starve? Nobody can say that of my wife. But, come, Clara, let's be friends. I haven't drunk much to-day,

and I'm going to quit the business entirely—you hear that?"

"Yes; I have heard it five hundred times. I have lost all confidence in you. I expect nothing but to see you go down to a drunkard's grave."

"You want me to die? O, ho! ho! that's it, is it? Well I am not going to fill any drunkard's grave. From now on, I'm going to be a better man. We'll go to hear that preacher preach; it will do us both good—make Christians out of us, I hope. Won't you go?"

"I do not think," said Clara with a sneer, "that you will ever be sober enough to go."

"Yes, I will, though. You see if I don't."

We have lengthened this domestic scene sufficiently to enable the reader to understand the relations between this unhappy husband and wife, and to prepare his mind for a better comprehension of events that are soon to be related.

The next evening Ernest met Comston on the street. Comston was sober, from the fact that he had no money to buy the fiery beverage for which he was now thirsting.

"Mr. Edgefield," said Comston, who had a dim consciousness that he had used improper

language on the previous evening, “I want to offer you an apology for my conduct yesterday. I hope you are not offended.”

“No apology is necessary,” replied Ernest. “I am sorry that you have formed such awful, ruinous habits.”

“You are not as sorry as I am,” said Comston, speaking with emphasis.

“Why do you not leave off your terrible habits, then?” said Ernest.

“I’ve tried again and again,” said Comston, bursting into tears, “but it seems,” he continued, half sobbing, “that I cannot. O, you have no idea what a consuming thirst torments me. I must have brandy, or I will die.”

“No, you would not die,” answered Ernest, “if you had the will to resist. But that, I doubt not, is gone. And now you can never quit so long as you rely on yourself.”

“On whom must I rely?” asked Comston.

“Christ,” said Ernest solemnly. “Nothing, I fear, will ever enable you to quit your evil ways, but the grace of God.”

“How am I to get the grace of God?”

“Only by faithful prayer.”

“Do you think I could quit in that way?”

“Yes,” answered Ernest.

"Well, I'd give worlds to be as I once was. I am ashamed of myself. But if I am left to myself, I never can reform. Will you help me?"

"Will you put yourself in my hands?" asked Ernest. "Will you do as I tell you? If you will, you can reform."

"But I know what you'll tell me," cried Comston. "You'll say, never touch another drop. I can't quit suddenly. You make no allowance for my appetite."

"Yes, I do," replied Ernest. "I will give you a substitute for strong drink."

"All right," said Comston. "I will do it."

"Very well," said Ernest. "Now you must promise me to keep away from the saloons."

"I'll do it."

"To prove your sincerity, turn around like a man, and go home."

"When will you give me that substitute?" asked Comston, hesitating.

"Go home," said Ernest, "and remain till I come with it."

Comston, without another word, at once went home sober, to the surprise of his wife. He remained till his burning appetite destroyed his self-control. He could stand it no

longer. Snatching up his hat he rushed off toward town. Drink he must have. As he was turning a corner, he stood face to face with Ernest.

"Do not go there, Comston," he said. "Is this the way you obey me? You promised to put yourself in my hands."

"But you said," exclaimed Comston, "that you would give me a substitute, and you didn't do it. I stayed as long as I could. Why didn't you come, and help me, as you promised?"

"I desired to measure your will-power," replied Ernest. "I wanted to test your manhood. I told you I would come. Why could you not believe me?"

"I was afraid you would put it off too long," replied Comston. "I am dying."

"Let us go back," said Ernest.

"But where is the substitute?"

"I have it. Come on," commanded Ernest.

"Let us hurry," said Comston.

It was now dark, and they both hurried along to Comston's residence. As soon as they had entered the drunkard's bed-room, Ernest drew from his pocket a vial, and poured out some of the mixture into a glass of water,

which Comston eagerly drank. Ernest gave him two more glasses, and then the inebriate seemed satisfied. In an hour Ernest left him in a profound sleep, which he knew would last till morning.



## CHAPTER XIX.

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### THE CRIME.

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When a man acquires the habit of indulging in strong drink, it requires a will of iron to break it. Few men have the physical and moral fortitude to offer the necessary resistance. The intense, consuming thirst paralyzes the mental energies. The wretched victim will risk life itself to gratify his raging appetite. Poor Comston had not descended to such a depth of moral degradation that he had no disposition to free himself from the shackles of his terrible foe. In his sober moments he most earnestly wished that he could free himself from the vicious demon which clung to him with the tenacity of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea. But the saloon was like a load-stone—a cynosure which drew Comston with an attraction that he had not the moral nerve to resist. When the appetite was upon him, it seemed impossible to pass the open door. The fragrance of the

wines, issuing from the interior of the dram-shop, acted upon his senses with all the force of the law of gravitation, and he went in almost in the same way that a stone falls to the earth when it is thrown up into the air.

Comston woke up early the next morning from the stupor into which Ernest's substitute had thrown him. He felt that he was burning up. His terrible appetite made him forget, or ignore his promises to the preacher. What cared he for reformation, when he believed himself dying—dying for the want of brandy. In spite of the entreaties of his wife, he put on his hat, to go to town.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"O, just to town a little while—that's all."

"But you promised Mr. Edgefield that you would not go. Come back."

"I'll be back in a few moments."

And off he rushed, determined to have a dram if he should have to sell his very clothing. While he is walking along rapidly, let us secretly and silently enter the saloon to which he is hastening. We see two men in the room, and they are engaged in a bitter quarrel. Presently the man, who is partially under the influence of ardent spirits, springs toward the saloon-keeper, exclaiming:

"I'm not going to stand this any longer. You've got all my money, and I must have another drink, and I'll have it, or I'll kill you."

A brief scuffle ensues, which, however, lasts only half a minute. The man falls, crying:

"You've killed me. I wish to God there was a witness—but it's too late. I'm a dead man, curse you."

Then he fell heavily to the floor.

"You brought it on yourself," said the saloon-keeper. "You forced me to kill you."

At this moment Comston hastily entered the saloon, and without looking around, cried:

"For God's sake give me a drink! I haven't a cent. Take my clothes—anything—I'll die if I can't get a dram."

An idea seemed to strike the saloon-keeper, whose agitation Comston had not observed, for he said:

"Well, here, drink."

"Thank you, thank you," exclaimed Comston, clutching the glass, and draining it to the very dregs.

In a few moments the saloon-keeper said:

"Comston, I'll give you another drink if

you'll drag that drunken feller out there under the trees. He fell down, and cut himself on the corner of that bench, and is bleeding considerably."

"I'll do it," exclaimed Comston, upon whom the brandy was beginning to have some effect. He stooped down to lift up the fallen man, but glancing at the ghastly face, he exclaimed :

"Why, Good Gracious! he's dead, arn't he?"

"O, no—dead drunk—that's all."

"Well, may be he is," said Comston, who was more anxious about the anticipated dram than the fate of a fellow-being. "I'll take him out anyhow."

Seizing the dead man in his arms, he dragged him out of the door, and while so doing, his own clothing was plentifully besmeared with blood. As he reached the trees, two men passed by, one of whom said:

"Hello, Comston! what are you doin'? Been fightin', have you?"

"Not much," replied Comston, who wanted it thought that he was a man of pugnacious tendencies. "He gave me some of his impudence, and I slapped him over."

This brief specimen of Comston's braggadocio appeared to delight the saloon keeper.

Comston left his human burden under a tree, and hurried back into the saloon.

"Give me the drink you promised!" he said.

"Yes, here it is, and it is a good one," said the cunning saloon-keeper. "Take it, for you've earned it," he continued, laughing. "He was heavy, warn't he?"

"Yes, he was."

Comston took the glass brimful of strong brandy, tossed it off as though it had been cool water, went out, and seated himself under one of the shade trees only a few paces from the dead man.

It was no unusual thing to see men lying under the trees in front of the saloon. Accordingly several hours passed away before the corpse attracted any special attention. Comston, in half an hour was so much intoxicated, that he fell from the bench, and lay upon the ground in a state of utter unconsciousness. The crowd, accustomed to assemble there every day, gathered in, and among them the two who had seen Comston dragging the body out of the house. One of these, who had spoken first, looking at the corpse closely, exclaimed to the saloon-keeper:

"Look here, Blicker, I do believe Jones is dead! I'll feel his pulse."

"I reckon not," replied Blicker, with perfect *nonchalance*. "Him and Comston got into a scuffle about three hours ago, and Comston snatched up my knife which was on the counter, and made a slash at Jones, and I took the knife away from him. Comston knocked him down, and I thought Jones was too drunk to get up. I saw that Jones was bleeding, and I ordered Comston to take him out, as I didn't want blood on my floor. Comston, as you saw, dragged him out, but I didn't 'spose he was hurt much."

"As shore as shootin', cried the man, "he's dead! He hasn't a bit of pulse."

"Go for a Doctor," said Blicker.

"I'll step over to Dr. Warner's office," said the man. "I see him riding up now."

It was not more than five minutes before Dr. Warner was on the spot. A very brief examination proved that Jones was dead. He had been stabbed to the heart.

"Who did it?" asked the Doctor.

"That feller, I reckon," pointing to the prostrate form of Comston, spoke up the man who gave the version of the affair, which, in connection with that of the saloon-keeper, made it evident that Comston was the criminal.

It was several hours before Comston was sufficiently sober to comprehend that he was accused of a most awful crime. When he awoke from his drunken sleep, the constable was near by, who had a warrant for his arrest.

"Come," said he to Comston, "you're my prisoner. Come on to jail."

"To jail!" cried Comston. "You're joking! What have I done to go to jail for?"

"O, you pretend not to know, do you? Well, probably you was so drunk that you didn't know what you was a doin'. Don't you know that you killed Jones this morning?"

"No, I don't," exclaimed Comston in the utmost alarm, now looking at his bloody clothes, and recalling the events of the morning. Soon his mind was clear.

"I dragged Jones out under the tree for a drink of brandy," said Comston. "I can prove that by Blicker himself."

"Didn't you tell Bill Dodds, while you were dragging him, that you had a fight with him, and slapped him over?" asked one.

"O, I said that in fun," exclaimed Comston. "I only thought Jones was drunk."

"You'll find it dear sort of fun," said one.

"Say, Blicker," cried Comston, now thoroughly aroused to the fearful realities of his situation, "didn't you give me a drink to drag Jones out of your house this very morning—didn't you?"

"Why, no, Comston," answered Blicker coolly, "I don't keep brandy to give away. You've forgot all about the fight you had with Jones this morning."

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" frantically cried Comston. "I never even had any quarrel with Jones. He was a good friend, and I never thought of fighting with him."

"Poor feller!" said Blicker, with affected pity, "you was so drunk you can't remember that you made a slash at Jones with my knife that was on the counter."

"O, Blicker, Blicker!" exclaimed Comston, "how can you stand there and tell such an infamous lie? You know you gave me two drinks—one free, and the other to drag Jones out."

"Whether he did or not," interposed the constable, "you're in for it now. I am compelled to take you to jail. When your trial comes off, you can have a chance to prove your innocence."

"I'm not going to jail!" cried Comston wildly. "I've done nothing to go there for. What do you want to put an innocent man in prison for? I should like to know."

"Get up, and come along," cried the constable sternly, "or I'll hand-cuff you."

"O, my God!" exclaimed Comston, now completely sobered. "Turn me loose, Dick Bonds. You know I didn't do it."

"Come along, I say!" cried the constable.

"Please let me speak to Blicker," entreated the terror-stricken man, turning to the saloon-keeper. "O, Blicker, you're a gentleman. Now don't let me go to jail."

"How can I prevent it?" asked Blicker.

"Why, you know very well that I didn't so much as strike Jones, if you'd only say so. Now come, be honest, Blicker."

"Will you go," asked the constable, producing a pair of hand-cuffs, "without these?"

"O, yes, I'll go," said Comston in anguish. "Surely Blicker will tell the truth when he is put on his oath."

And Comston was locked up in the jail.

## CHAPTER. XX.

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### THE PRISON.

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Immediately after the arrest and imprisonment of Comston, Ernest called to see Clara in order to give such comfort as the circumstances would allow. He did not find her in tears, as he had expected. On the contrary, her face, though sad, wore a hard, stony expression. She acted as those unfortunate wives, who have lost their affection for their husbands, and who are looking forward to be released by the divorce of nature. The drunkard's wife can be freed only by the premature death of her husband. She may not desire such a termination to her continual troubles, but she lives in constant expectation of such an end, and when it does come, she is not greatly surprised, for it is nothing more than she has anticipated. Clara was just in this condition. She had once loved Xerxes Comston as much as it was in her nature to love any one. But this affec-

tion had been eradicated by his brutal conduct and disgusting habits.

"I do assure you," said Ernest, "I sympathize with you in your trials. Such misfortunes look dark to us, but God is good and kind, and we must be resigned to His holy will. All is for the best."

"You think, then," cried Clara, "it is best that Mr. Comston should kill Mr. Jones, and be hanged for it, do you?"

"We must not jump to conclusions," mildly answered Ernest. "No trial has taken place, and we surely ought not to judge of the divine purposes before they are developed. Even after they are accomplished, we may not understand them. I have no doubt, that in every instance, God brings good out of evil."

"Do you believe," asked Clara, "that God has anything to do with this horrible affair?" And she looked at him almost savagely.

"Certainly," replied Ernest gently, "I believe that God has something to do with every event."

"Do you think," exclaimed Clara, "that God made my husband a drunkard?"

"No, certainly not," answered Ernest. "He made himself a ~~an~~—inebriate. He is a free-

agent, and the Lord permitted him to exercise his powers. God is not the author of men's sins. He does not force them to sin. But if Mr. Comston killed Mr. Jones, which I do not think has been proved yet, you may rest assured that the Lord will bring good out of it in some way, and make it redound to His glory."

"I don't see how that can be," said Clara.

"You may never see it in this world," replied Ernest, "and you may live to see the day, when you will feel thankful for this very misfortune, as you now regard it."

"Look here," suddenly exclaimed Clara, "if that day ever comes when I shall feel that I ought to be thankful, I promise to join your church, and try to be a Christian."

"Why not try to be a Christian anyhow?" asked Ernest. "You must not try to make a bargain and contract with God."

"How is that?" said Clara.

"Why, you say in your heart, if God will give me certain things, grant certain desires, I will be a Christian. The Lord will accept no such service as that. You must make a full surrender of yourself to Christ—unconditional and forever. Determine to serve Him whether

your wishes are granted or not. Trust Him, though He slay you."

"O," said Clara, "I cannot be a Christian. I have suffered too much."

"So much the more reason why you should be a Christian," answered Ernest. "You have seen the folly of this world's pursuits. Now seek that happiness which the world can neither give nor take away."

"I don't know how to begin, even if I had the disposition," replied Clara sulkily. "I once was happy. I enjoyed myself, and never thought of religion. If God is so good and so kind, as you say, why does He not give me that sort of happiness—the sort that I really crave?"

"How long would it last?" asked Ernest. "Only a few years. The time will come when you can no longer enjoy these pleasures of sense. You will lose the ardor of youth. Age will steal upon you, and you will lose all relish for temporal things. You will then feel the need of something more substantial. Why not begin now to lay up treasures in heaven?"

"Shall I feel more happy, if I do?" asked this spiritually ignorant, thoroughly worldly-minded woman. "Will God care for me, and supply my wants?"

"Undoubtedly, if you devote yourself to His service from the proper motives?"

"What is the proper motive?"

"Why," answered Ernest, "you must serve the Master, not with the object of receiving earthly good, but with the view of making your calling and election sure."

"I don't know what to do," replied Clara, thoughtfully and seriously.

"Give yourself, at once, to Christ, pray for the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, and God will bless you."

"How can I do all this?" suddenly and impatiently cried Clara, when I am suffering for the \_\_\_\_\_. She paused, and appeared to be greatly embarrassed.

"Nothing, though," she added.

"Mrs. Comston," said Ernest compassionately, "God knows I would be a friend and brother to you. I want your soul saved. Confide in me. Are you afraid to trust me, and acquaint me with your troubles, whatever they may be?"

"No, I'm not afraid to trust you," she answered, with tears springing into her eyes, "but I'm proud. I'm ashamed to tell anyone." She could say no more for several mo-

ments, and Ernest waited till she became more tranquil.

" You seem to be the only friend I have in the world," she continued presently. " I once had plenty of friends, but when misfortunes overtook me, they deserted me, and I have met with nothing but rebukes and insults. I have got so I hate people. I didn't know the world was so full of mean wretches. People used to envy me, because I had money, but they seemed to me to rejoice when I was brought down to poverty and social degradation. If I wished to be good, I don't see how I could."

" Tell me your troubles," urged Ernest kindly, " and, perhaps, I can be of service."

" It is humiliating to confess," she said, turning her blushing face, " but the truth is, I can get no work to do. I have had nothing to eat since yesterday. It seems that I must starve, and that, too, when I am willing to labor. But don't misconstrue my motives. I'm no beggar. I'm not appealing to you for relief, and I don't want you to mention what I have told you. I tell it to you to show you how difficult it would be for me to be good, when I hate people for my misfortunes."

Ernest expressed no surprise at this distressing information, but he said no more on the subject of religion, well knowing that hunger is not very compatible with spirituality.

"The world is not so bad as you think it," he replied. "You do your neighbors injustice by concealing your condition."

"Don't," cried Clara, starting up, "don't tell them for the world. I despise to be regarded as an object of pity."

"Trust me," rising to leave. "I shall not betray your confidence."

In a little while after his departure, a cart drove up to Clara's door, and the driver unloaded sufficient provisions to last for several weeks. Poor Clara was overwhelmed by this expression of kindness, and she went to her room, and "wept bitterly." Several lady members of Ernest's church called the next evening with offers of employment. They acted and talked in such a manner that she was satisfied they were not acquainted with her true condition. In her heart she thanked Ernest for the delicacy with which he had come to her relief. The ladies spoke words of sympathy. All this had a tendency to open the woman's darkened heart to spiritual influences.

Ernest waited two days before he called at the prison to see Comston. Not being able to procure strong drink, the prisoner was perfectly sober. The poor fellow was humbled and subdued by the misfortunes which darkened his pathway.

"How are you to-day?" asked Ernest kindly.

"I've been in torment," he replied. "I want brandy, and it seems I'll die, if I can't get it. Give me some."

"Comston," said Ernest gently, but firmly, "now is your time to break off your evil habit. If you do not, you are ruined."

"I'm already ruined," groaned the wretched victim. "But I never thought that I would be accused of murder. God in heaven knows that I never killed poor Jones. I'm as innocent of that as you are. Blicker told an infamous lie. I believe he did it himself, and is using me as a scape-goat."

"But circumstances," remarked Ernest, "seem to be against you at present. However, I have not come to talk about that. I want to save your soul."

"Why," cried Comston, in visible alarm, "you can't believe I'll be put to death, do you?

It would be an everlasting disgrace to—to—hang an innocent man.”

“ But you will have to die sometime, Comston—sooner or later, and I do not want your soul lost. I have come to pray with you, and for you. Will you join me ?”

“ O, yes, if you think it will do any good.”

Ernest read suitable portions of Scripture, and prayed for the unhappy man, whose feelings were at last deeply moved.

Comston, the next day, stood his trial in the Magistrate’s court, and without entering into the details, which would be of no special interest to the reader, it is sufficient to state that he was bound over to the Circuit Court, which would convene at the expiration of five months. As this was no bailable case, Comston had to be confined in jail.

Frequently our greatest misfortunes are blessings in disguise, as the Sacred Scriptures abundantly demonstrate. Comston’s incarceration, was at least a spiritual blessing to him. He could not procure ardent spirits, and the consequence was, that, in a few weeks, his physical constitution began to recuperate, and he at last mastered his terrible appetite. But this was not all. Ernest visited him nearly

every day, prayed with him, instructed him, till finally the poor fellow had reason to rejoice in a brighter hope than had ever thrilled his heart before. There could be no doubt about his complete reformation. This, in connection with Comston's emphatic assertion of his innocence, had a tendency to arouse public sympathy in his favor. No one believed that he was a murderer *at heart*, even if he had taken Jones' life. The theory was, that it was done in a drunken quarrel, without there being any intention to kill.

But all this was not the full extent of the blessing. The husband and wife were also reconciled. Clara, who, too, had found that "peace which passeth all understanding," visited him in the jail—indeed, spent the most of her time there. Xerxes "was himself again," and her buried affection for him revived. So notwithstanding the unfavorable circumstances which surrounded them, they were comparatively happy. They were not without hope.

Ernest, in these hours of trial, proved a brother. He attended to Comston's outside affairs, and, among other things, secured the services of a good lawyer.

The five months had nearly passed away, and only a few days remained before the trial would occur. Now, let us visit the jail for the last time. Only Clara, Comston and Ernest were present.

"O," said Comston earnestly, "if I could only get out of this difficulty, what a different man I'd be! what a different life I'd lead! I've lost the taste for brandy, and now take a solemn oath that not another drop of the vile stuff shall ever go down my throat. O, Mr. Edgefield, pray God to get me out of this trouble, and I promise to be a true Christian as long as I live."

"Now, Mrs. Comston," said Ernest pleasantly, "you have heard his vow, do you think he would keep it?"

"If he wouldn't," she said emphatically, "he would be the meanest ingrate that ever lived on earth."

"Well," said Ernest, "I believe he will perform his vows. I shall not see you any more before the trial. Let us pray together once more for God's assistance."

When they arose from their knees, Clara seemed more cheerful and said:

"Somehow I feel hopeful."

"So do I," said Ernest, so emphatically that both looked at him in surprise.

"But upon what can you base a hope?" asked Clara, gazing searchingly into his face.

"Have faith in God," replied Ernest. "He can raise up friends for us."

"But we want *witnesses*," said Clara.

"God can raise up *unexpected* witnesses," replied Ernest mysteriously. "But good-by."

And he left in haste.



## CHAPTER XXI.

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### THE TRIAL.

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At last, the Circuit Court met. Three or four days were consumed with other business, and the case of the State against Xerxes Comston was called.

"Are you ready for trial?" asked the Judge.

"Ready," replied the Prosecutor.

"Ready," promptly answered the Counsel for the defence, to the surprise of every one. For obvious reasons, it is generally the practice to postpone murder cases as long as possible.

"Proceed then," said His Honor.

The impanelling of the Jury was the first step to be taken. This was quickly done, too, for, to general surprise, Mr. Greenlee, who had undertaken to defend Comston, offered no objection to any juror, if he only had a fair measure of common sense. He did not, evidently, care for the character of the jury, and did not appear to manifest the least

uneasiness or anxiety. He was calm and collected, as though he had no fears as to the final result. People looked at him in astonishment, but the lawyer paid no attention to their amazement. Blicker cast suspicious glances at him. Clara was sitting in the bar near her husband, seemingly in deep distress. But when she occasionally looked at Greenlee's calm face, her hope revived. Ernest was also present, and did not seem to be anxious. Greenlee, instead of trying to retard the progress of the case, manifested a willingness to hasten it forward. His whole manner was surprising to the District Attorney, who was under the impression that a verdict of condemnation must be the inevitable result.

At length, the indictment was read, and then followed the examination of witnesses. The first was Blicker, who stated the circumstances that were favorable to his own case, with which the reader is acquainted. The two men were then introduced who had seen Comston dragging the dead man under the trees. They also stated the language which the criminal had employed. This united testimony appeared to be conclusive. The spectators, who were generally in sympathy

with the accused, looked solemn. All had hoped that the trial itself would develop something that would be favorable to Comston. No one wanted him punished. But how could he escape in the face of such overwhelming evidence?

A long-drawn sigh was heard at Comston's side. It came from Clara, who seemed suddenly to give way to despair. Again, she turned her head, and looked at Ernest. Could she be mistaken? Was there not a perceptible smile upon his face? She then glanced at Greenlee. His countenance wore the same serene, imperturbable expression. There was a short pause in the proceedings when the Prosecutor said:

"We have no more witnesses. I do not know," he continued with an air of triumph, "why Mr. Greenlee foregoes his privilege of cross-examining the witnesses for the State. He can do so yet, if he wishes. I would prefer that he should do it."

"Their testimony," replied Greenlee, "can go to the jury for what it is worth."

"Do you mean to insinuate that it is worth nothing?" asked the District Attorney.

"Has the counsel for the defense," interrupted His Honor, "no witnesses?"

Every one expected to hear a sorrowful "no." But what was the universal astonishment and joy, when Greenlee quietly replied: "We have one."

Then mouths and eyes were opened with curiosity. The spectators seemed to hold their breath lest they should lose the name of the unexpected witness, or as if the only chance for Comston had wings, and might be frightened away by heavy respiration. Comston and Clara, looked up, leaned forward, and subjected Greenlee's tranquil face to a quick, close search.

"Call your witness," said the Court.

"Let Rev. Mr. Edgefield be sworn," said Greenlee mildly and quietly.

Ernest rose from his chair, and deliberately stepped to the Clerk's desk, where he was sworn, and then placed himself in the witness' seat. It was one of those strange, unexpected scenes, which sometimes occur in gloomy court-rooms, and which change the entire aspect of the case. Clara now understood that smile on the preacher's face. Ernest knew all about it, she thought. And who, but God, had sent him? She was awe-struck by the thought, and felt as one who had just

witnessed, or rather was about to witness, a miracle. Comston had similar feelings. Both could have cast themselves upon the floor, and kissed the witness' feet. What a friend he was! How good, and kind, and merciful was God, in raising up such a noble witness at the moment when it seemed that hope was about to wing a returnless flight! How both their hearts were melted to tenderness toward their Creator! for it was the firm conviction of both that God had sent His own messenger to see justice done. Ernest had not spoken a word, but they felt that his testimony, whatever it was, would be conclusive.

"Tell what you know about this case," said Mr. Greenlee.

Ernest spoke in a firm, emphatic tone, that carried conviction to every heart:

"On the morning of the — day, of —, I rose earlier than usual. The day before I had remained with Comston, and kept him away from the saloon. He had promised to reform. But, I confess, I had little hope of any reformation, if he was left alone, and I determined to watch him another day; and this accounts for my early rising on that particular morning. I started toward the saloon, and when

I had nearly reached there, I saw Comston coming out of his gate. I then concealed myself in the rear of the saloon, waiting for Comston to come, intending to persuade him to return home. When I had hidden myself, I heard two men quarreling inside, both of whose voices I instantly recognized. Presently, I heard Jones exclaim :

“ ‘I won’t stand it any longer.’

“Then I heard a rush over the floor. There was a scuffle for only a few seconds, and I heard Jones cry out :

“ ‘ You have stabbed me—, you have killed me !’

“He employed some other words which I did not hear distinctly. Then I heard a body fall heavily to the floor, and all was still. A moment afterwards, I heard Comston enter the room, and beg for a drink, stating that he had no money. I heard the rattling of glasses; then there was silence. In a short time I heard Blicker say :

“ ‘ I will give you another drink, if you will drag that drunken man under the tree.’

“ ‘ I will do it ’? said Comston. He seemed to be lifting the man, and I heard him exclaim :

“ ‘ Jones is dead, ain’t he ?’

"'No,' replied Blicker, 'He is dead drunk; he fell on the bench, and cut himself, and he is bleeding.'

"I then heard a sound as of one man dragging another over the floor. At this moment I heard footsteps approaching and I left."

"That is the God's truth!" cried Comston in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Silence!" cried the Sheriff.

Clara could scarcely restrain her deeply agitated feelings. How she wanted to fall on her knees, and thank Ernest for this strange interference. The District Attorney was astounded. Blicker, as pale as death, had started out of the room at a rapid pace.

"Sheriff!" exclaimed the Judge, "arrest Mr. Blicker, if you please."

"I am not running," said Blicker, who suddenly seemed to recollect that flight was an evidence of guilt. "I was only changing my seat. That preacher has made up that lie."

"How came you never to have said anything about this before?" said the District Attorney angrily, turning to Ernest, "Why did you not give in this testimony in the committing court, and save the expense and trouble of this trial?"

"I had a very good reason for it," said Ernest, "I was anxious for the reformation of Mr. Comston, and I believed that nothing but imprisonment for several months would ever cure him of his evil habits. Surely, the salvation of a human soul is worth the few dollars that it may cost the county."

"You have pursued a very strange course, it seems to me," said the District Attorney. "Suppose you had taken sick and died before the trial came off, you would have left your friend in a sad predicament."

"Not at all, sir," replied Ernest. "I made provision for contingencies of that sort. You may ask Mr. Greenlee."

"I will state," said Mr. Greenlee, "that a few days after this killing, Mr. Edgefield made his deposition to the facts he has just stated, and signed it in the presence of two witnesses. However, that is perfectly irrelevant. We have no use whatever for the deposition."

"Will your Honor permit such a proceeding as this?" asked the District Attorney.

"Certainly," answered the Court, "Mr. Edgefield was never summoned as a witness in the committing court."

"But still," said the District Attorney, "ought he not to have appeared anyhow?"

"Mr. Edgefield," said the Court, "has given his reason for not doing so. The jury can take his testimony for what it is worth."

The jury, at once, retired, but they returned in about ten minutes, and moved slowly up to the Judge's stand.

"Are you agreed, gentlemen?" said the Court.

"We are," replied the foreman. The Clerk then took a paper from the hands of the foreman, and read the following in substance:

"We, the jury in the case of the State against Xerxes Comston, find that the defendant is not guilty."

Immediately there was a great shout which shook the building.

"Silence! silence!" cried the Sheriff; but he might as well have spoken to a cyclone. Nothing could be heard but shouts of gladness, thus showing what a deep interest the public had felt in this trial. Comston rose from his seat and tottered toward Ernest, around whose neck he threw his arms, and wept like a child.

Clara exclaimed aloud:

"Praised be God! I shall serve Him the remainder of my days."

There were few dry eyes in the room. It resembled some of the scenes of an old-fashioned camp-meeting. The crowd looked at Ernest with a species of awe. They could not have felt more reverence if Abraham himself had come back from the dead and testified in the case.

Comston and his wife immediately left the court-room amid the plaudits of the crowd that the terror of the law could not control.

Within two days, Comston had obtained a position as clerk in a store, and soon began to prosper.

The next time that Ernest called, both gave him such a joyful and grateful greeting that he felt compensated for all the trouble and inconvenience to which he had been subjected. After conversing a while, Ernest said:

“Surely, you now see the hand of God in your affairs?”

“Yes,” replied Comston, “and I am a different man, and, by God’s grace, intend to lead a different life.”

“And what has Mrs. Comston to say?” asked Ernest with a smile.

“I am perfectly overwhelmed,” she answered. “I feel as one in a dream, and you

appear to me as our guardian angel. God must have sent you here."

"I hope so, my friends," replied Ernest, "but give all the glory to God. I am only an humble instrument in His hands. But," he added after a short pause, "you will now both join the church, will you not, and lead Christian lives?"

"I will," answered Comston emphatically. "I've not forgotten my vow."

"And so will I," replied Clara.

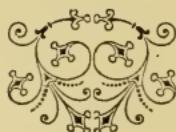
"What church will you join? I do not believe I have ever asked you."

"The Presbyterian—your church," answered Comston. "I like its comforting doctrines. They are certainly the right thing when one is in trouble. I've heard some people talk very hard about the eternal decrees, but, as you told me, the doctrine of election is taught in the Bible, and I find it there."

"A few months ago," said Clara, "I had an abhorrence of predestination, but now I have no doubt that it is a doctrine of God's Book. If it is not taught in the 8th and 9th chapters of Romans, I cannot understand language. So I can be nothing but a Presbyterian."

Accordingly, the next Sabbath both were

received into the church of their choice. Ernest never had more faithful, zealous members, and more staunch friends. If Comston heard any one complaining in regard to Ernest, or any thing he did, it made him impatient, and he defended his beloved pastor and friend, with unlimited warmth of feeling. God prospered him in business, and in a few years Comston had a store of his own. He became a liberal and cheerful supporter of the Church and all its institutions. Clara contracted habits of economy and diligence, and was foremost in all church work, such as ladies could perform. We close the chapter with the remark that Blicker was tried for murder, and condemned to the penitentiary for the period of his natural life.



## CHAPTER XXII.

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### THE LAST SCENE.

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The lives of a great many people are distinguished by a few romantic events, but no man's life is one continuous series of startling incidents. Life flows in a regular channel, and its romantic portions are mere episodes. The great bulk of mankind are doomed to toil for the necessities of existence. Hence, every day is alike. They go through the same dull routine—the same tread-mill process of eat, drink, sleep, work.

It could not, therefore, be reasonably expected that the career of a minister, like Ernest, living in a quiet provincial town, should be distinguished for thrilling experiences. The clerical life is generally tranquil and unromantic. The preacher visits the sick, comforts the distressed, resolves the doubts of the skeptical, preaches the gospel, Sabbath after Sabbath, and in this way the days glide by till death transfers him to a higher state of

existence. After the remarkable episode, involving Comston's startling history, nothing occurred, for years, in the life of Ernest which would be of interest to the mere story reader. At present he is performing his ministerial duties, assisted by Mildred, with unostentatious piety.

One Sabbath there was an unusually large congregation assembled in Ernest's church. It had been published that he would, by special request, preach a doctrinal sermon.

On Monday morning there was considerable excitement throughout the community. Many of those who had believed the opposite doctrine, were caused to reflect, and made to examine the ground-work of their creed. Little groups gathered on the streets and in the stores to discuss the sermon of the day before.

"Well," said good old father Grimshaw, "if I believed as Brother Edgefield does, I would never go to church any more. In fact, I'd never do anything, but I'd take my fill of sin—yes I would."

"I am utterly astounded," answered a Presbyterian elder, "to hear you talk that way, father Grimshaw. If you were to take your fill of sin, how could you be a Christian? Can a Christian love sin?"

"Why, what difference would it make whether I am a Christian or not?" cried the old man. "If I'm to be saved, I'll be saved anyhow, and if I'm to be lost, I'll be lost anyhow, no matter what I may do."

"Look here, father Grimshaw," said the elder, "did Brother Edgefield say anything like that?"

"If he didn't say it, that's what his doctrine leads to."

"I confess," said the elder mildly, "that I cannot see that it leads to any such conclusion. But that is the way with some of you people. You draw your inferences, and take them as the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. You know that Brother Edgefield said that all could be saved who wanted to be. I should like to know how much broader you desire the plan of salvation. Do you want God to save people, *nolens volens*?"

"No, sir," replied father Grimshaw. "But if certain people are fore-ordained to eternal death, how can any of them be saved?"

"Brother Edgefield made that as plain as anything could be," replied the Elder. "But I will answer your question. Of course, if they are fore-ordained to eternal death, they

cannot be saved, but whose fault is it? God does not prevent their salvation. It is nothing but their own wicked hearts—their own perverse will. No man ever was lost simply on account of predestination."

"But why don't they have the will?" asked father Grimshaw.

"I do not know, but that is the truth," replied the elder. "Their lack of the will is not to be attributed to any eternal decree, and if that be so, I am sure the sinner can charge the loss of his soul to nobody but himself. We naturally hold every man responsible for his own character. If a man is a thief, it is not natural for us to think that God made him so. Neither do we hold the Lord responsible for any man's will. If, then, the sinner lacks the disposition to be saved, surely he cannot charge God with injustice. Every man has the consciousness that he could be a Christian, if he only desired to be. Then, I ask you, in the name of common sense, how does predestination prevent his salvation?"

"I don't know how to argue the question," cried father Grimshaw testily, "but it does appear horrible to me that God should choose one man to eternal life and condemn another

to eternal death, when both are alike by nature—both sinners."

"Let me ask you," said the elder, "if God was under any obligations to save any one?"

"No, certainly not."

"If He were to send all to eternal torment, would it be just?" asked the Elder.

"Yes," answered father Grimshaw.

"Well, then, if God, in mercy, choose to save a large portion of the human race, and leave the rest to perish in their sins, *and on account of their sins*, how is any injustice done them?"

"Because they have as much right to be chosen as the others," said father Grimshaw.

"Right!" said the elder, "What right do they have? I suppose if the Governor were to pardon two or three convicts, he is bound to pardon all, is he? Why, my dear, sir, your position runs squarely into Universalism?"

"How does it?"

"Why, you say that one man has as much right to be saved as another. If then, God saves one, He must save all. What is that but Universalism?" asked the Elder.

"He's got you there, father Grimshaw," cried one of the by-standers with a laugh.

"I repeat, father Grimshaw," continued the elder, "no man is punished on account of predestination, but on account of his sins. Show me a man who feels that he must be lost by reason of the eternal decrees, and I promise to give up the doctrine."

"I can't for my life," said father Grimshaw, "understand why some are chosen, and others are passed by."

"No," replied the elder, "if we understood that, Peter never would have said that Paul 'wrote things hard to be understood.' If we only knew what God's reasons are, there would be no difficulty and no mystery in the doctrine of predestination. But we are told that the secret things belong unto the Lord, and those which are revealed are for us and our children."

"Well, you Presbyterians," said father Grimshaw, "have a way of getting around things so that it is hard to keep up with you. I cannot argue the point, but the doctrine looks strange to me—don't look right somehow."

"No," replied the elder, "that is what people said in Paul's day. It did not look right to some of the disciples of Christ, and they went back, and 'walked with Him no more.' People always have found fault with this

doctrine, and I suppose will do so till the end of the world."

"I must say," spoke up a man by the name of Wallerton, "that Mr. Edgefield made it plain to my mind. I never knew before what Presbyterians do believe."

"What!" exclaimed father Grimshaw, "are you going to turn Presbyterian?"

"Well," answered Wallerton, "I fully endorse what Mr. Edgefield said yesterday. If that makes me a Presbyterian, I am one."

"All may believe that please," cried father Grimshaw, "but I never will. You may out-argue me, but you are not going to make me believe that predestination is right, no sir—never."

"But what will you do with the Scripture?" asked Wallerton. "It says, 'Whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate.' Now what does predestinate mean?"

"I don't know," cried father Grimshaw, giving way to a feeling closely related to anger, "but there ain't no predestination in it—not a bit of it."

"If there is not," replied Wallerton, "I should like to know where to find it."

"You'll find it no where, but in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith," cried the old man.

"Well, I am convinced," said Wallerton, "that it is the true doctrine. I love to believe it too, because I can see that there is more comfort in it than in the other."

"What comfort is there in it?" cried the old man, raising his hand in holy horror.

"Why just this," replied Wallerton, "I am trying to serve God. It does me good, then, to think that I have been elected from all eternity to salvation, and, therefore I can never perish."

"If you believe that," exclaimed the old man, "then go on, and sin as much as you please. You'll be saved anyhow."

"But I do not want to sin," replied Wallerton, looking at him in surprise. "That is the very thing I pray God to deliver me from. Instead of desiring to sin, I pray to become more holy. I do not ask God to save me in my sins, but from them. I should think I would make a poor return of gratitude to God, if He should give me the evidence of my election, and I should say to Him, I will, then, serve the devil. What sort of religion is that?"

"You will make a Presbyterian out of me, Wallerton, if you talk much longer," said another by-stander.

"Father Grimshaw," continued Wallerton, laughing, "you've got this doctrine wrong; you are mixed up on it."

"If I am, I guess I'll stay mixed up," replied the old man, shaking his head. Rising, he limped off on his stick, leaving the group wondering at his prejudice.

Father Grimshaw was a type of that class that will not be convinced by anything. Many people reject the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, especially predestination, because such doctrines are repugnant to their feelings, and are not in harmony with their preconceived opinions.

We may here state that all the parties who have been conspicuous in these pages, are alive at the present writing, and our story must come to an end.

There was so much discussion in regard to the doctrinal sermon which Ernest had preached, that the elders of his church requested it for publication. He thought it advisable to comply with their request, in order that there might be no misconstruction of his views. We present the outlines of the sermon to our readers, leaving it to them to draw their own conclusions.

## THE SERMON.

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“ For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.”—*Romans viii: 29.*

I have quoted only one clause of the verse, because I have not time to elaborate the several doctrines to which the apostle calls our attention. On this occasion, I desire to make some few remarks on the divine purpose. In one sermon I can do little more than present only a few of the reasons which Presbyterians have for believing the doctrine of predestination. Without taking up the time in further preliminaries, I proceed, at once, to discuss the doctrine that is announced in our text. We can hardly misapprehend the text. But to remove all possible ground of misconstruction and misunderstanding, let us notice in what sense “foreknowledge” is employed. There can be no doubt as to the meaning of predestination. No one will dispute that it means to “appoint,” or “destine beforehand.” “To foreknow,” says Adam Clarke, “here signifies to design beforehand,

or at the first forming of the scheme." Without, therefore, doing the least violence to the text, I am justifiable in translating, "whom He elected or designed before He did predestinate." The term predestinate embraces both the decrees of election and reprobation. Some persons are disposed to limit the word to election. But no good reason can be assigned for such restriction, as God determined the final condition of both classes. Permit me to say here, that we ought to enter into the discussion of this subject with feelings of the deepest solemnity and reverence. I know it is revolting to the carnal heart to think that the eternal destiny of men is settled before they are born. It is repugnant to human pride; but above all things let us avoid warping and perverting the truth of the Scripture so as to bring it in harmony with our feelings and desires. If we allow ourselves to do violence to God's Word, in order to support a theory, we shall run into serious error. Men, impelled more by feeling than reason, have embraced the doctrine of universalism. I am sure I could have no objection to the doctrine of universalism, if it could be established from God's written Word. I want no

one to go to hell, and I would be glad to think that all of Adam's race will be saved at last. I, for one, hold to the doctrine of predestination, not only because it is agreeable to my feelings, but because I believe it to be taught in God's Word. If it were not taught there, I would not have the least objection to renouncing it. Now let us, as briefly as possible, see whether or not it is promulgated in the Bible. I begin with *Election*. Is it to be found in the Scriptures? If so, it is our duty to accept it, no matter if we cannot make it square with our notions of the fitness of things. The definition of election is, that it is the choice which God, in the exercise of sovereign grace, made of certain individuals of mankind to enjoy salvation by Jesus Christ. I do not think the position can be successfully combatted, that God has elected some to salvation in preference to others. There are many passages of Scripture that establish the position. But I have time to call attention to only a few of them. Romans 16: 13: "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord." "I have manifested thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world." "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the

word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." "I have much people in this city" \* \* \* \* "to them who are the called of the Lord according to his purpose," "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." "So then, it is not to him that willeth nor him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Who hath saved us and *called* us with a holy calling, not according to our work, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." "According as He hath chosen us, in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." These are but a few passages that establish the doctrine of predestination and election. It would require a volume to contain the passages of Scripture that teach the doctrine both by precept and example. Some persons admit the doctrine of election with certain modifications. They say it is an election of *character*;

they affirm that God elected the righteous character. I cannot see what is gained by this attempt to separate an individual from his character. It is character that makes the man. It would be just as reasonable to talk of extracting the sweetness from sugar as to make a distinction between an individual and his character. But leaving out the passages which I have just quoted, our text settles the point. It says plainly, *whom*, not *what*, he did foreknow. All through the Scripture, election is spoken of as applicable to individuals, and not characters. Some say, God elected to salvation those who He foresaw would believe and repent. If Paul meant no more than this in the epistle to the Romans, he used language for which there was no necessity. Why should he exclaim with such solemnity, "Who art thou, oh, man, that repliest against God"? If Paul did not hold to the doctrine of predestination, it is strange that Peter should have said that Paul "wrote things hard to be understood." There is not the least difficulty in understanding the proposition that God elected those He foresaw would believe and repent. No Presbyterian would deny that proposition in its

literal sense, for it is certain that those who are elected, do believe and repent. God never elected any one that does not believe and repent. But those who oppose the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, assert that God elected some to salvation on account of their foreseen faith, and their voluntary compliance with God's requirements. Well, if this position be correct, there was no necessity of Peter's saying that Paul wrote things hard to understand, because no one could fail to understand such a proposition, and no one could reply against God, not even the worst sinner on the face of the earth, if Paul meant no more than that every man's salvation is placed in his own hands; because this is the very thing for which the natural man has ever clamored. No one would object to the doctrine of salvation on account of foreseen faith and righteousness, or righteous works, if it were taught in the Scriptures; because it is in accordance with human notions of things. It is a philosophical idea. I will cheerfully concede the point that the main system that stands opposed to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church has the merit of philosophy. But this is one great objection to it. The

Bible is no book of philosophy. It announces truths in disconnected order, some of which, owing to the weakness of our finite minds, appear to be contradictory. But the chief objection to this doctrine of foreseen faith and works as a ground of salvation, is that it does not appear to be consonant to the divine will. Paul tells us why we are chosen. He says “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” We were not chosen because we were already holy, but that we should become so. Then he goes on to say : “He having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the *good pleasure of His will.*” That is the reason why we were chosen ; it was the good pleasure of His will. He does not say that we were chosen on account of our foreseen faith and works. I hope no one will understand me as affirming that we are saved without faith. We must have faith ; but it is not the ground of our salvation. Besides, faith itself is the gift of God. It is a well-settled principle in all orthodox theology, that man is dead in trespasses and sin. How

God could foresee that a man in this condition could, of himself, exercise faith, it is difficult to conceive. It requires the Holy Spirit to awaken men to life. Without such an operation, no man is capable of spiritual activity. If this be granted, then, we can easily see in what sense faith is the gift of God. Now to bring the discussion down to the narrowest possible limits, I will lay down a proposition which cannot be disputed.

First, God made choice of some to be saved. On what principle was the choice based? Why, to use plain language, God chose some on account of some good in them; or some evil in them; or the choice was simply His good will and pleasure. Well, there was no good in them, consequently God could not have chosen them on that account. There was not a naturally righteous character on the face of the earth. If men had been left to themselves to believe, not a single individual of the human race would have been saved. Again, God is too holy to have chosen men on account of the evil in them. I presume no one will contend for any such doctrine as this. Then, the conclusion of the whole matter is, that God chose some men to salvation because it was His good will and pleasure.

Some cry out that this would be unjust. They say that God should not make distinctions, and that He should be impartial. I do not see where the injustice is. To illustrate: Here are five criminals condemned to death. If the Governor should pardon two of them, is there any injustice to the remaining three? The objector says there would be, unless the Governor has some good reason for showing clemency in the case of the two. For the sake of argument, we will admit it. God also has His reasons for His choice; but these reasons, so far as His secret purposes are concerned, have never been revealed to us. All we now know is that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. Men somehow, seem to think that God has no right to make distinctions among the sons of Adam; and that He is bound to put all on the same level, and if He saves one, He is bound to give all the same opportunity to be saved. But God is under no sort of obligation to save any one. If the Lord has no right to make distinctions, then we are driven to the conclusion that the universalist has the true doctrine. Because it would follow that if God saves one, then He must employ such means in the case of every

individual as would result in His salvation. If it required a miracle to convince Paul, and it would require a miracle to convince me, God would be bound to perform it. So all must be saved. The only safe position is to take God's Word at what it says. It speaks of the elect as individuals, and not mere characters, and it speaks of them as chosen before the foundation of the world, because of God's good will and pleasure. Now let us notice the other class whom God has not chosen—the class of reprobates. The idea of reprobation is necessarily implied in the idea of election. So if we prove one, the other is virtually established. They are correlative terms, and men do violence to Scripture and logic when they admit election and deny reprobation. When out of some objects a choice is made, those not chosen are certainly rejected. When objects are presented to a person for the selection of some, even if he speak not a word, he says by his actions: "This I will take, and this I will not take." It is in vain to say that nothing has been done to them; but that they were left in the precise condition in which they were found. There certainly has been some sort of act of

mind in refusing them, or passing them by. But leaving out the question of logical consistency, we would have no zeal in the advocacy of such a doctrine were it not taught in the Scriptures. We could well afford to admit a logical inconsistency, if by the admission we could get rid of this doctrine which has aroused a spirit of rebellious wrath in the heart of the natural man. We may lift up our hands in holy horror at the idea of reprobation, but the Scriptures affirm it in language plain enough. There are so many passages bearing on the subject, that I have not time to call attention to them all. I refer to only a few as specimens. The Scriptures say concerning Pharaoh, ‘For this same purpose have I raised thee up,’ etc. “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.” “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” “Men of corrupt mind, *reprobate* concerning the faith.” “There are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old *ordained* to this condemnation,” etc. Again, we read of those whose names are not written

in the Book of Life. I could quote other passages just as strong and conclusive as those referred to. Throughout the whole Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, we are taught both by precept and example, that there is a line running between the people of God and those doomed to eternal destruction. Therefore, we conclude that the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith were justifiable in inserting that much-abused article : “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are pre-destinated unto everlasting life, and others are fore-ordained to everlasting death.” The idea is expressed in no ambiguous terms. These men perceived the doctrine in God’s Word, and they did not shrink from avowing it, without the least sugar-coating.

And now, if reasoning from logical premises would be of any avail ; if it be thought necessary to support scriptural truth by logical processes, I would say that only three propositions can be made in regard to the salvation of men :

First, All men will be saved.

Second, All men will be lost.

Third, A part of the human race will be saved, and a part lost.

We can easily prove by the holy Scriptures that the first two propositions are not true. Then, we are bound to admit that the *third* is true. This is a fixed fact. The question is, when was it fixed in the mind of God? The Scripture says the elect were chosen before the foundation of the world. The point for which we contend is that the fact was fixed by the Lord. It was not simply foreseen as a fact that would arise independently of divine interposition, but it was predetermined. It was God who determined it. This is the kind of predestination to which the Presbyterian Church holds. Whatever objections may be urged against it, we believe it to be taught in God's Word. There are questions in regard to it which no human being can answer. We are confronted with the question, how fore-ordination and man's free agency can be reconciled. It is certainly no good reason for the rejection of a doctrine that we cannot fully understand it. Who can understand the Trinity? Who can comprehend the dual existence of our Lord Jesus? Such truths we receive on faith, and not because they are in harmony with reason. But it is not right to require that Predestinarians shall remove

objections which apply with equal force to the theological system of those who so bitterly oppose us. For instance, how can fore-knowledge be reconciled with man's free agency? Whatever God fore-knows must come to pass.

We, too, believe with others, that so far as free agency is concerned, every man on the face of the earth could be saved, if he only had the *will* to come to Christ. But some will not accept; and that fact was fixed in the Eternal Mind, away back before the foundation of the world, as well as the other fact, that some would accept. It is in vain to say that this result was merely fore-seen. When there was nothing in existence, how could God fore-see anything except what He had determined should be? Permit me to use a plain illustration: Here stands a sculptor before a block of marble. There are millions of possible images and forms in that marble. With his chisel the artist can develop *one* image. That must first exist as a conception in his mind. After a while the beautiful statue is brought out as the result of a predetermination. Or the sculptor might produce *two* images—three—four—a hundred. There are millions of possible forms in the marble, but

the workman determines what forms he will develop. Applying the illustration, there were millions of possible events or circumstances before the divine Mind. The Lord could have made this world larger or smaller; He could have made Adam a very different being from what he was. But God chose, predetermined, to make this world just the size it is. God selected the events that take place out of millions that might have taken place, as the sculptor chose the images which he would develop. If the Lord did not select, or predetermine, the precise events that occur in time, who did make the selection? Was the All Wise God merely trying experiments? What would we think of a sculptor who should go to work on his block of marble without any conception or plan in his mind? How, then, can we believe that God would place men in the world, and devise the scheme of redemption without selecting the exact results in His own Omniscient Mind? The Lord has His own purposes, and these purposes will be accomplished; and this is predestination. Therefore, I do not hesitate to endorse another article of our Confession of Faith, which has been often assailed with un-christian virulence:

“ God hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Here I would observe that the objection is without foundation that, if predestination be true, it is in vain for men to make any effort to be saved. This is a gross perversion of the doctrine. God does not decree that any one shall be doomed to eternal torment who desires to enjoy heaven, and who is willing to accept the terms of salvation. Show me the sinner who is thirsting for the waters of Life, and I will show you one whose name is written in the Book of Heaven as an heir of God. Now, how much broader do we want the plan of salvation, if it embraces all that desire salvation on Scriptural terms? If the sinner is disposed to repent, he has no reason to suppose that he belongs to the reprobate class. But some men want an excuse for continuing in sin, and these are the persons who, Peter said, would “ wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.”

Another argument in support of this doctrine is the fact that Paul mentions, and comments upon the very objections that are to this day urged against the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. It is evident that the apostle

taught precisely what the Confession of Faith does. We have to meet the very same objections which he met, and refuted. We know that this doctrine has ever been revolting to men of the world. You remember, when Christ said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him," some of His disciples "went back, and walked with Him no more."

I have no doubt the doctrine of predestination will be opposed to the end of time. But it can never be destroyed. You may revise the Confession of Faith till every vestige of it disappears, but that does not blot it out from the pages of God's Word. To get rid of that doctrine, the whole Bible must be revised from Genesis to Revelation. Strike out from the Scriptures every thing that is said in regard to predestination; expunge every passage from which the doctrine may be deduced by plain inference, and there is nothing left but Universalism.

Predestination and man's free agency are both taught in the Holy Scriptures. Recognize this fact, and you will find little difficulty in harmonizing passages that may appear to some persons to be antagonistic. Reject either

doctrine, and you will run into serious error. There is Fatalism, on the one side ; and on the other, there is a broad Liberality of sentiment among men which receives no support from God's Word. Hence we honestly believe that the position of the Presbyterian Church is the only true way to steer in safety between Scylla and Charybdis.



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