

## **Reminiscences of a specialist / by Greville Macdonald.**

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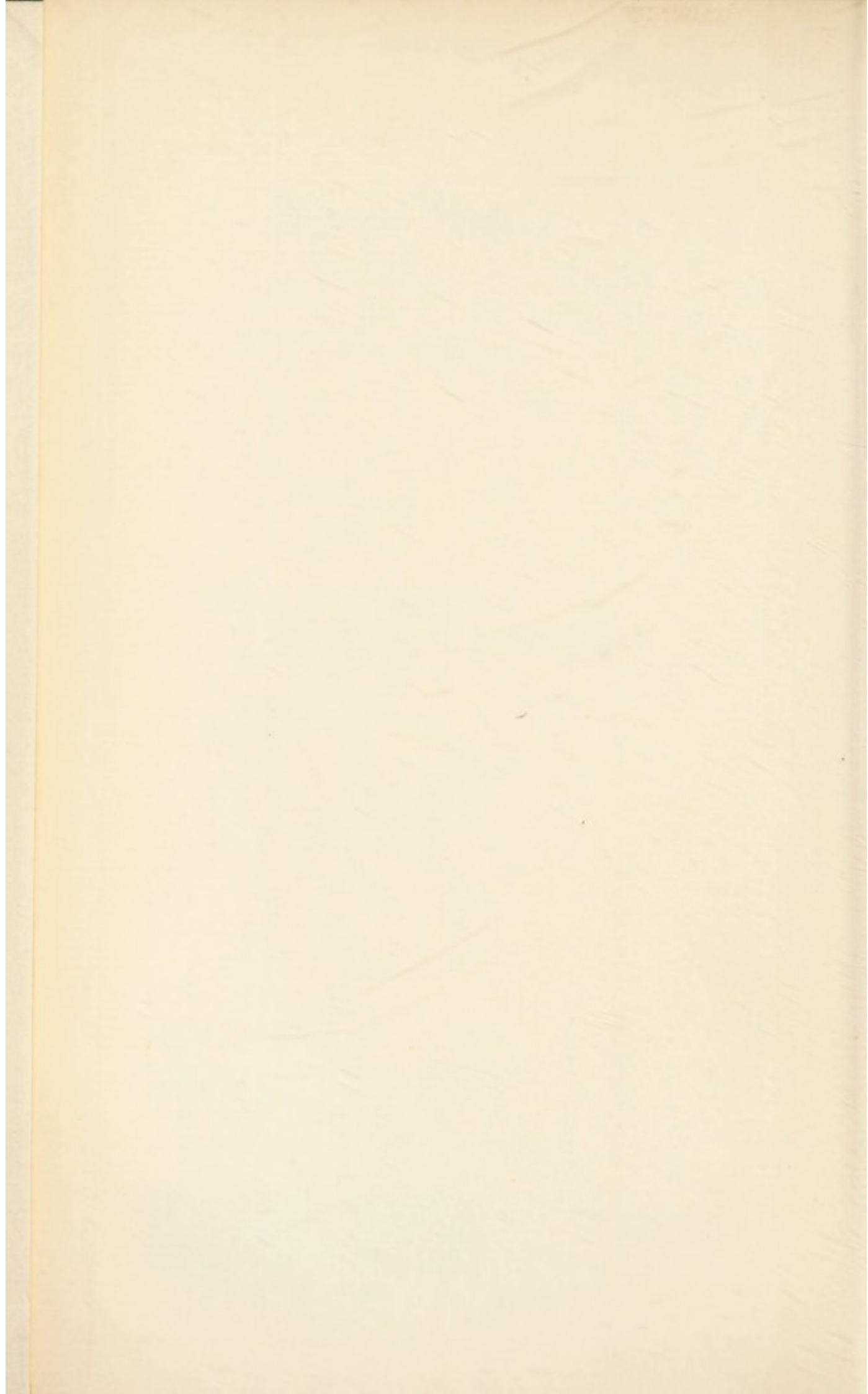


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REMINISCENCES OF A  
SPECIALIST

BY GEORGE W. BROWN  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY J. H. BROWN

BY GEORGE W. BROWN

EARLY DAYS

EDITED BY GEORGE W. BROWN  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY J. H. BROWN

LITTLE A ROMANCE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY J. H. BROWN

THE DIARY OF AN OLD MAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY J. H. BROWN

THE TRAGEDY OF HAZEL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY J. H. BROWN

THIS IS PUBLISHED BY THE LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

*By the same Author*

GEORGE MACDONALD AND HIS WIFE

With an Introduction by G. K. CHESTERTON  
*and 28 Illustrations*

*By George MacDonald*

FAIRY TALES

Edited by GREVILLE MACDONALD  
*Illustrated by Arthur Hughes*

LILITH: A ROMANCE

*With a Frontispiece by F. D. Bedford*

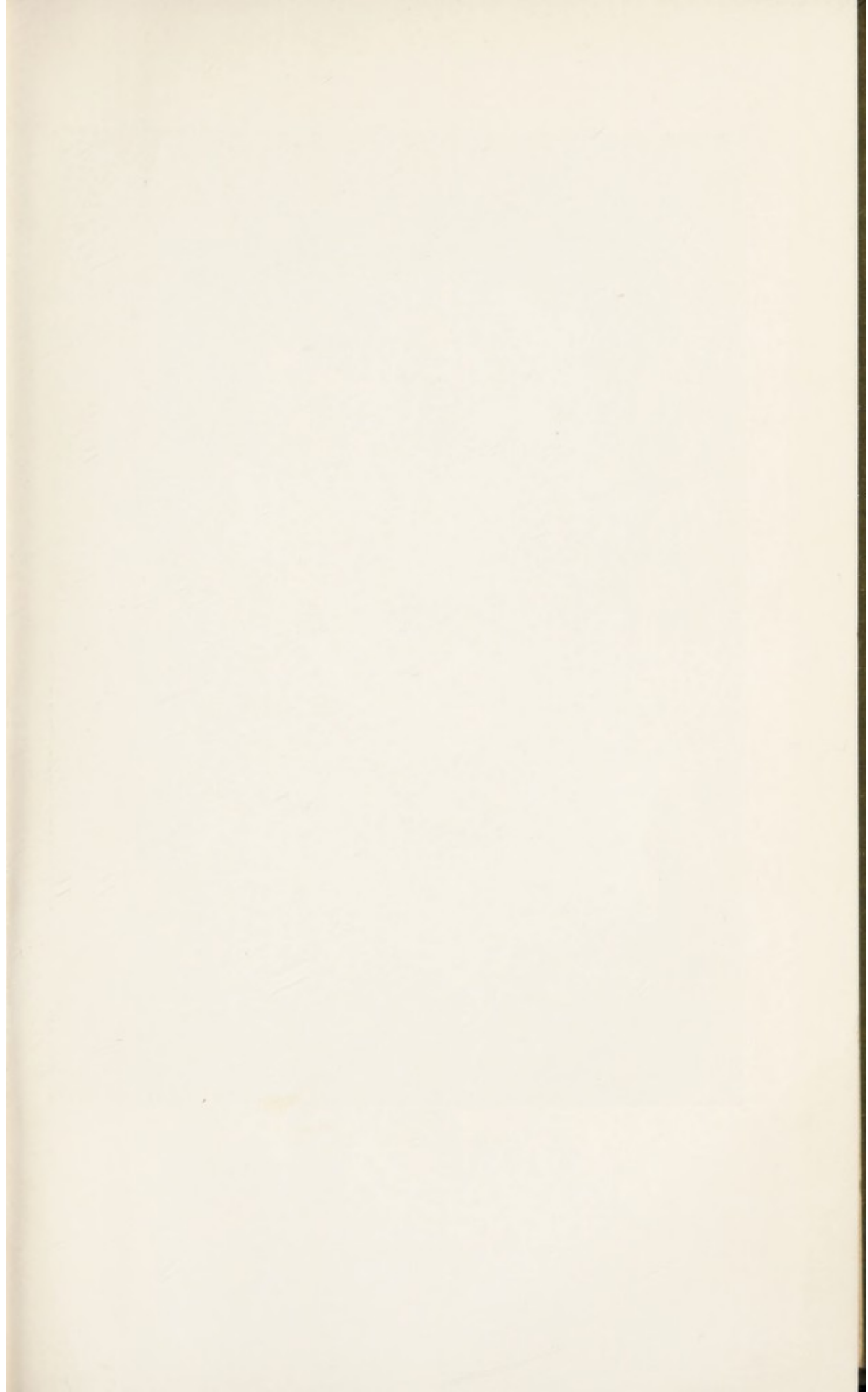
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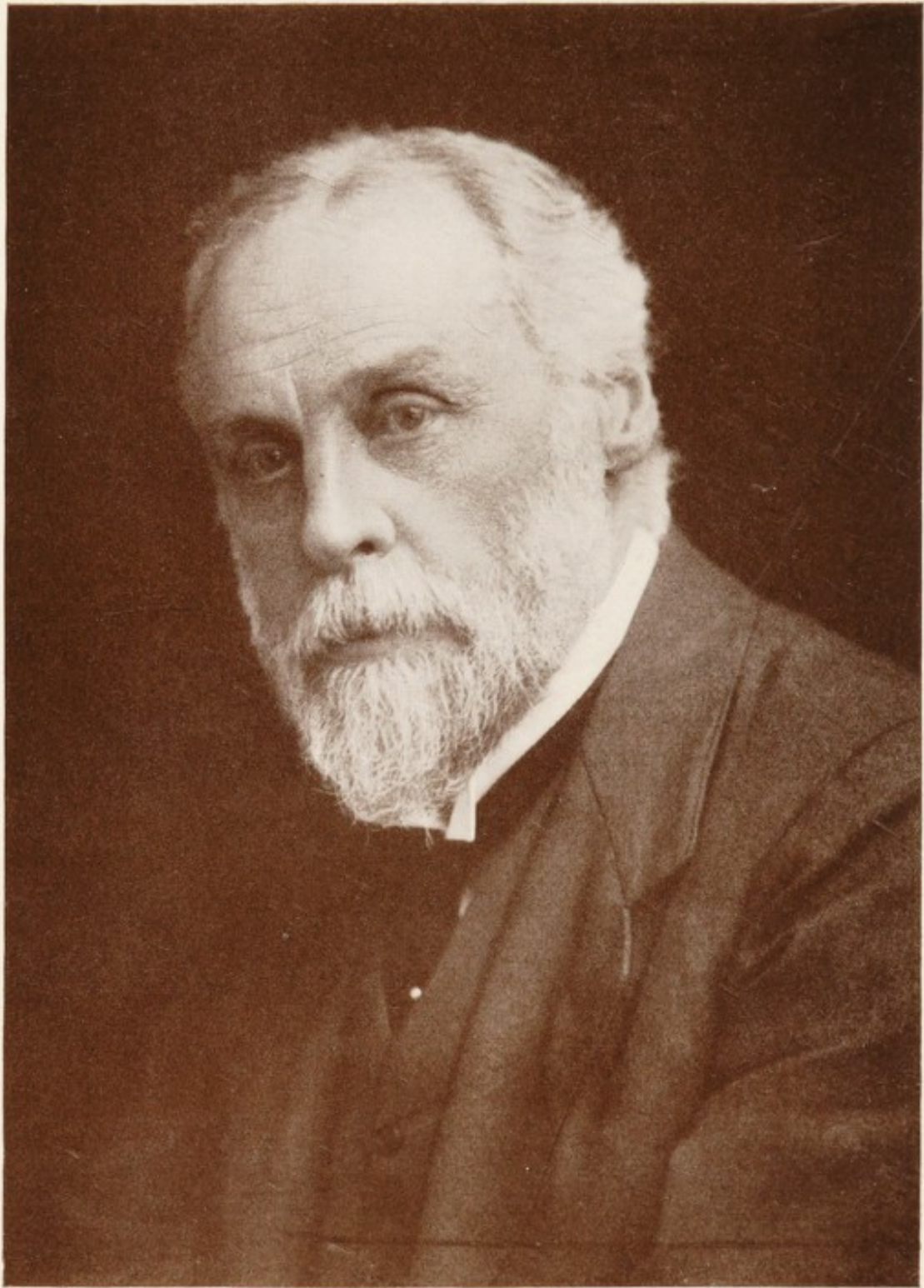
THE TRAGEDIE OF HAMLET

(PRINCE OF DENMARKE)

With an Introduction by SIR JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON







THE AUTHOR, ÆT. 68

65940

# REMINISCENCES OF A SPECIALIST

by

GREVILLE MACDONALD, M.D.

*Consulting Physician to King's College Hospital; Fellow and  
Emeritus Professor, King's College, London*

MEMINERUNT OMNIA AMANTES

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

MUSEUM STREET

(1932)

MACDONALD, Greville Matheson

[1856-1944]

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## NOTE

THE author cannot make acknowledgment of all the help given by friends, though some are specified in the text. But he must record his gratitude to Mr. Joseph King for permitting the quotations from his first wife's writings as well as the references to her personality and work. He owes much to the Rev. Dr. John Wood Oman, more than he will realize, for reading the manuscript and for wise suggestions; also to his brother-in-law, the Rev. Kingsbury Jameson, and to Miss Anna Barwell. The late Mr. Alexander Wedderburn sanctioned the use of a few from the many of Ruskin's letters to George MacDonald, while the late Mr. Percy La Touche authorized the free use of his sister's. Mr. John Murray kindly permitted the printing of a letter from the late Empress Frederick. Messrs. Elliott and Fry have allowed the use of the Ruskin portrait. A word of thanks is due to Major C. H. W. Dodgson for permission to use his uncle Lewis Carroll's absurd sketch, which was done especially for the author. Concerning the photograph of MM. Tchertkoff and Tolstoy, which the former gave to the author, it has not been possible to discover the ownership of its copyright: so that for this, along with any other possible infringements, the author must plead extenuation.

BOOK I  
CHILDHOOD

W

and that cannot possibly depend upon any of my





## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS

WHENCE came the suggestion that I should set down these Reminiscences of a long life, I am not sure. I have never kept a diary, and consequently have no unassailable data for an autobiography; though, for that matter, perhaps few diaries are as sincere as they mean to be. On the other hand, the leisure of old age has invited me to explore a half-century's accumulation of letters, particularly those passing between a wonderful mother and one of her sons. Thus has come about an astonishing re-opening of doors seemingly shut for ever, and a display of treasures first gathered and cherished like wayside flowers but doomed to perish. My mother, in spite of her unmethodical, yet artistic ways, had bundled and docketed all my letters—and probably those of her other ten children, though circumstances account for these being fewer. Similarly I have kept most of those wise and tender epistles that came at least every week to refresh a much harassed son in his fight with the world; to sustain him in its forbiddings or kindnesses, even in the blunders he could never quite mend; and then in her old age to seek his support in her own tribulations. Yet the letters' chief worth is their vivid recalling of friends who, more than anything in a lifelong education, were responsible for some still widening convictions. I have been signally blessed in friendships, even if in young days I accepted rather than chose them as lilies of the field more lovely than Solomon in his glory—friendships, however, of toil and spinning. The loveliest of them all was my mother; and her letters, uplifting, racy and wise, are, I know, worth offering to more readers than she ever dreamed of their reaching.

Yet their interest inevitably depends upon some of my

own. So I propose linking the best of these, with sundry items in my own adventures, in a hope that the resultant chain will make clear its intention to be honest in craftsmanship. Nevertheless, I find that if I attach to it still other letters, like jewels with their own settings, I shall make the whole more significant. Thus my reminiscences may exceed the strict requirements of autobiography. Yet I shall reject many details, decorative or possibly only gimcrack, that would perhaps tempt me were I writing another man's story, but which in my own might mislead some readers who may not at once sympathize with my attitude towards certain problematical topics.

. . . . .

A man cannot absolutely know anything concerning the most important components of his life. I cannot even vouch for my initial howling introduction into the world, or for my behaviour towards the love and food lavished upon me. But I set my mother's evidence before the Registrar-General's: a method of argument that, for myself at least, has always held good, even though to get at some attestations not officially recorded, one's eyes must scan the mountains. That adorable woman was evidential of a Divineness integral in her bounty.

A few facts however, even if not belonging to memory or epistles, may be given. My father, George MacDonald, son of a large-minded tenant-farmer in Aberdeenshire, was a poet, novelist and preacher of distinction in his day. His character was the product of the highest Calvinism grafted upon Celtic interpretation of Beauty. My mother, daughter of a London leather merchant, was also Calvinistic in inheritance and education, as well as largely Celtic. Since her people belonged to South Wales, she may possibly have been blessed with a strain of Moorish mysticism; for the rare loveliness of her eyes implied a mental equivalent.

When at last I arrived on a foggy winter's day in 1856,

my father, then lying at the house of his friend, Alexander J. Scott, Principal of Owens College, Manchester, seemed to be dying of haemorrhage from the lungs. Yet in spite of scribbling forbidden notes to my mother to reciprocate her joy that a boy was now added to their three little girls, the danger was arrested. Within a fortnight my mother was preparing to leave a city that offered small chance of his cure. For two years he had by teaching subsisted precariously, heroic alike in industry and ailing, while my mother tended and taught her children, superintended cooking, kept the house and its furniture spotless, yet always the lover and support of her husband. Strong in her family were a passionate love of music and a quite singular dramatic gift. Her pure and rich mezzo-soprano voice had been finely trained, and its tenderness did much, I think, to encourage her husband's genius.

So, it being ordained that my father must no longer endure the fogs of an over-chimneyed city, I myself, after breathing them for three weeks, raised no objection to a hurried departure. With my grandfather's help, and much from Lady Byron, the poet's widow—who had been attracted to the young author's first book, *Within and Without*, and became a wise unfailing friend—my parents and their most delicate child, Mary, spent the ensuing winter in Algiers. My grandfather Powell and the only daughter now left to him, along with the hospitable cows of The Limes, Upper Clapton, gave a home to the other three. I remember something of that house, especially its stabling and paddock, its moss-scented paths of shadows, and a lime-tree on the lawn with a forbidden seat in its fork. The vastness of those three acres has increased as their details have faded. But I remember standing, when barely three, at an open garden door, hungry for my breakfast, while my grandfather came in, holding a bunch of tea-roses. He put them, deliciously cold with dew, under my nose, saying, "Sniff at them, Greville!" And to this day, after more than three-fourths of a century

sweetened with like joys, I never smell a *Gloire de Dijon* rose wet with its dew, but I am shipped back to that entrancing moment, still wonderful, immortal.

That winter in Algiers had doubtless, if indirectly, some bearing upon my life. For it brought into my parents' story new and rich influences. Despite ill-health and environmental incompatibilities, the sojourn was made pleasant by friendships with certain English visitors introduced by Lady Byron. One, to particularize, Miss Anna Leigh-Smith, became a lifelong intimate of my own—a woman of rare education, unitarian and liberal in politics, who died in my arms in 1918. Her family was interesting, her grandfather being the first Unitarian to sit in the House of Commons. One of her sisters, married to M. Bodichon, was the founder of Girton College, and a brother, Captain Leigh-Smith, R.N., is of North Pole renown. With them too was Mr. Hilaire Belloc's mother, adding to this little coterie's singular intellectuality. Through it, moreover, other friends came later, especially some of the early feminists; and, as I shall presently explain, the baby left in England was having arranged for him certain miscalculations that were subconsciously to govern his conclusions. Nevertheless he was in one way starved during the six months' grass-orphanage. My mother would tell how, on the night of her return home, exhausted after a three days' miserable voyage to Marseilles, the tedious rail-journey to Boulogne, and then a most horrible channel-crossing, I, a cave-brute of fifteen months, refused to let her sleep. The moment she put me in my crib, I set about howling, although when she took me to her heart again I slept at once in a long-denied bliss. Little wonder is it that I have always adored my mother. I still do so. She left us in 1904.

Few of childhood's small memories are worth record, yet some are inscribed so deep and vivid on our palimpsest, that their significance, however trivial, must have importance. Thus I recall the blessedness of sitting on the floor, my head

against my mother's lap, while she told us a never-ending story of two children and their rainbow-coloured glass balls, each marvellous and magical. The tale itself is forgotten, though its sweetness remains as if earnest of a longing for green pastures and still waters—the land perhaps of the lotus, perhaps of unforbidden adventure. On the other hand, my father, I think, did not altogether understand children, though in his books he so fully realized their needs. On rare occasions he would read to us his tales before publication, and *The Light Princess* gave me imperishable happiness. I note the fact because Ruskin, now intimate with my father, wrote condemning the tale in that, being a love-story, it was unsuitable for children. Had he, I wonder, forgotten *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and countless others that fed us subconsciously with a sense of his own dictum, "The Law of Loveliness"? Certainly we were fed upon fairy-lore. Closely linked with it was the Reverend Charles Dodgson, who, as "Lewis Carroll," wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. To us he was *Uncle Dodgson*, though only by adoption. Debarred from clerical work by an incurable stammer, it was instantly effaced when surrounded by children. He asked my mother to read his first "Alice" book to us, just to see how we took it and thus to gauge its worth if published. It was neatly written in print characters and illustrated by himself, his own drawings having clearly inspired John Tenniel in his illustrations of a book that proved the most popular ever written for children. I remember that first reading well, and also my braggart avowal that I wished there were 60,000 volumes of it. Yet I distinctly recall a certain indignant grief that its characters were only a pack of cards; and I still look upon that *Finis* as a blemish upon the sublime fantasy. Doubtless Charles Dodgson felt that a child must never be deceived even by a fairy-tale. And he was right; though there would have been little or no risk of this, had he left his immortal narrative just a fairy-tale that needed no justifying.

But Uncle Dodgson's method was more potent than he knew, and it made him very dear to us. We would climb about him as, with pen and ink, he sketched absurd or romantic or homely incidents, the while telling us their stories with no moral hints to spoil their charm. I clearly remember his urging upon me—and quite in the manner of his "Alice" fun—the advantage to myself if my head were marble; for then it would never suffer from combing its curls and could not be expected to learn lessons. But he drew for me with his pen one possible consequence, namely that such a head might terrify the sculptor Munro, to whom I was sitting as a model for his fountain, *Boy Riding a Dolphin*, still in Hyde Park. Then again he would take us to that old home of delight, the Polytechnic, to see the "dissolving views" of Christmas Fairy Tales. No pantomime or circus ever gave me the same happiness.<sup>1</sup> There was a toy-shop in Regent Street where he let us choose gifts, one of which will remain my own as long as memory endures. It was an unpainted, wooden horse. I loved it as much as any girl her doll, so that at last it must break my heart. It slept with me and fed with me, helped me to carry things away from their right places and compel them to some fairyland service. The strong-hearted creature would drag wooden bricks into a corner where I built a peep-show—a long tunnel through which everyone must come and look. Behold! a picture robin, his red breast made glorious by a trapped sunbeam! But there came a day when our nurse had to caution me to be gentler with Dobbin or I should break him. Indignant with her narrow views as to his mortality, I exclaimed, "*He won't break! He's wood, not china!*" and, to prove my claim, I threw him against the nursery wall. Dobbin's back was broken: there he lay in two pieces, dead for all eternity. I think I was too much amazed to weep; yet the tragedy

<sup>1</sup> Nor is this surprising, seeing that these lantern slides were painted by that consummate revealer of the South Downs glory, H. G. Hine, V.P.R.I., in his early days. Of his work I shall have something more to say presently.

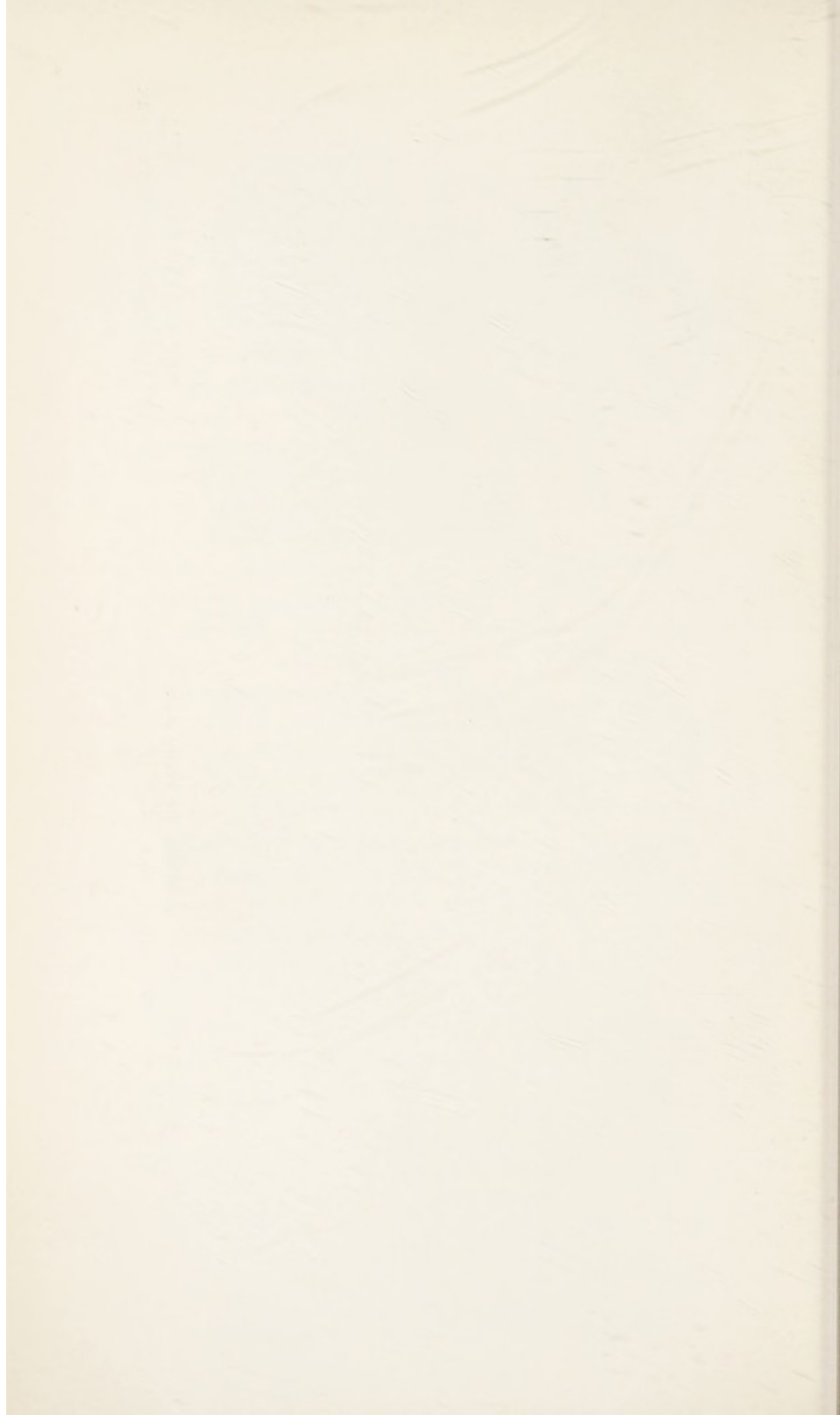


PEN SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR, IN KILT, ET. 6  
BY LEWIS CARROLL



THE AUTHOR'S STATUE (!)  
BY ALEX. MUNRO, IN HYDE PARK





did, I know, leave my conscience with a wound I would not touch, knowing it could never be healed. Dobbin was dead: one door into the kingdom of magic was closed for ever. Nor would I ask Father to mend him. For along with the horse, peep-show, sunbeam and robin fled also. Such an incident can hardly be non-significant, seeing that seventy years later it is remembered with a stab of pain, just as my first tea-rose became a joy for ever. And it keeps with me a living hope that one day the intellectually material will open into some kingdom of faerie where a faculty of faith may be reborn. Is it because of their immortal possibilities that children find in fairy-tales encouragement for their subconscious, spiritual longings? Indeed, the truth involved in such suggestings has become, all through my life, increasingly sure.

## CHAPTER II

### FAIRY-TALE INFLUENCES

I ADMIT at once that my early days were supplied with food different from the usual school provender, which to myself was never alluring. In those times the child's larder, like that of every well-planned house, was given a cold, sunless aspect. But mine had, high above shelves stocked with wholesome food, a window open to the mountains, whence came living waters that satisfied thirst without any abating of it.

Thus fairy-tales, fact-scorning in their magic, began their work upon me earlier than I remember. If they did not make me wise, they were yet largely responsible, I do think, for some adventuring in thought. Acquiescence in the miraculous had undoubtedly influenced me in many questions that perpetually hammer at our doors, when, for peace sake, we would rather shut them out. So much indeed do I believe that philosophers have never realized the full worth of play in racial and individual evolution; of transmuting, that is, contingent utility into the rare gold of revelation; that one reason for setting down these Reminiscences has been to suggest the need of a new orientation in our enquiries. Many problems demand for their solution other data than the puissant facts increasingly garnered by scholars. But we have never advanced, nor shall we, without Imagination. The wise man who first said *Mens agitat molem* made new departure. But if we admit his claim that mind is supernatural in power, we allow that a creed must be more than axiomatic. Is not Imagination always bidding us ignore the lie, "No Thoroughfare," and adventure the unexplored? Nature herself is inspired when she bids the lark mount up, ever up in repudiation of this earth—only a fragment of the sun where it once belonged.

So, in not unwise ignorance, I would have Imagination surmount all scheduled limitations. Even when the time came for worldly successes, I do not think I ever lost hold of that intangible, rainbow clue leading onwards in progress perhaps more than ephemeral.

My mother made the Grimm Brothers' stories so dear to us that we just hungered for their incessant repetition, preferring them, I think, to the most exquisite of Hans Christian Andersen's. They dominated my sisters' games so much that our mother wrote little dramas based upon them for us to act.<sup>1</sup>

Rapturous was it when Father assumed the rôle of the greatest of *The Three Bears*, or the Prince transformed into a Beast. I remember how my younger brother Robert wept over the shaggy quadruped's love for Beauty, and still more inconsolably when her tenderness of heart restored him at last to his human form and princely habiliments: to little Bob the Beast of unkempt fur was the one he loved.

Indeed, looking back and comparing these things with all I have since learned about children, I am increasingly sure that fairy-tale is a necessary corrective to the inevitably mechanical of much school education. It is a wild flower for the child adventurer to clutch at and gather for his joy: from its free, untutored glory all literature has grown. As the child is father of the man, so is fairy-tale greater than its intellectual offspring, more significant of the spiritual, passionate consanguinity of weed and rose, tiger and lamb, dragon and saint, that binds all creatures into a destined harmony.

Similarly long ago it was the unschooled peasant folk and craftsmen—painters, masons, glass-stainers—who built their cathedrals, unmatched in glory even now when millionaires' superfluous money thinks to build better ones. Nor were these simple men afraid of honestly carving cruelty on

<sup>1</sup> Some of these were published later with a delicious frontispiece by Arthur Hughes as *Chamber Dramas for Children*, Strahan, 1870.

their gargoyles, or devils in cowls and cassock, as if to declare the power of evil. Correspondingly fairy-tale is always pointing the conflict between good and evil, and the stubborn facts of hard-heartedness and greed. Unlike the sentimental Sunday stories of my childhood, Grimm's tales teem with the mischances of life where vice so easily rides roughshod over virtue. Their imagination fearlessly faces the worst of the facts.

Still more it is the sweetness of these memories that holds. Nothing could outweigh our Christmas carols; even now, in spite of deaf ears' refusals, I can never forget them. The same spirit of fairy-tale ruled these ancient songs. Their simple belief in God, their trust in Nature's ministrations put to shame all our endeavours to teach the ethics of religion. Where in Church doctrine can we find anything so inspiring, at once realistic and symbolic, as *The Holly and the Ivy*? Even as I write its title, back come to me in longing delight the jolly old carol's words:

"O, the rising of the sun,  
The running of the deer,  
The playing of the merry organ,  
Sweet singing of the choir!"

Just as the child knows if his porridge is well cooked and loves his milk creamy, so does he know the worth of those old, ever young things. In a word he must have freedom to run and dance and sing, if he is to find his life.

Then again the humour of these old tales sanctioned our instinct to transform chairs into horses by turning them upside down, or the half-disliked coal-scuttle into a dragon with our youngest brother as a captive prince awaiting deliverance.<sup>1</sup>

All through life the purest joys are in ethical sense unearned, spiritual rather than utilitarian. The child in his

<sup>1</sup> Vide my articles, *Hibbert Journal*, January 1923, "The Spirit of Play"; and *Contemporary Review*, "The Fairy Tale in Education," April 1913.

play must be his father's schoolmaster; and with this sanction, that the baby's ancient appetite for bread and milk is more trustworthy than any laboratory synthesis of its elements.

For myself, though I was certainly slow-learning, I was perhaps less hampered by home-preaching than was customary in those days. Hence I soon began vaguely to suspect that, although Jack the Giant Killer's boastful triumph over brute stupidity typified the germinal hunger for adventure, it had no moral significance whatever. The story's charm lay in its suggestion that wits, fairy-like and spiritual, may laugh at the trite maxims of nursemaids and schoolmasters, and that there really is much to be said for entrancingly coloured beans. But the mystic things needed years of hard, sorrowful thinking to find justification, even though the child always knew it.<sup>1</sup>

The conventional teacher would always prefer untruthful moral tales where good conduct is rewarded. But I remember perfectly well my discovery, when I could not have been more than six, and with Jack's beans in my mind, that such stories must be all *fudge*. They certainly did not tally with my own experiences. For, having told my first lie, the policeman did not appear instantly and carry me to prison, as I really feared he might. Worse, I discovered that my sin saved a cousin of eight from a whipping. He being two years

<sup>1</sup> Recalling here Ruskin's introduction to *German Popular Stories* illustrated by George Cruikshank, 1868, I must quote one paragraph in particular:

"Children have no need of moral fairy-tales; but they will find in the apparently vain and fitful courses of any tradition of old time, honestly delivered to them, a teaching for which no other can be substituted, and of which the power cannot be measured; animating for them the material world with inextinguishable life, fortifying them against the glacial cold of selfish science, and preparing them submissively, and with no bitterness of astonishment, to behold, in later years, the mystery—divinely appointed to remain such to all human thought—of the fates that happen alike to the evil and the good."

Ruskin put into those few words all that I am claiming.

older, it was intolerable that *he* should suffer that horror! Thus the very foundation of ethics was swept like sand from under my feet and I started out on a reckless career of disbelief in *moral* stories. The fairy-tales I loved stood on a higher plane of religion than the schoolroom considered safe. When I was a schoolboy of thirteen, I had to write an essay on the silly claim that "honesty is the best policy." Instigated thereto and helped by my eldest sister, I claimed that Napoleon's career as well as Queen Elizabeth's, and indeed her father's, proved the contrary; and I ended with the concession that for a stupid person, honesty might be *safest*. I was, of course, sternly reproved, though I had a suspicion that in puzzling my master—for then I was never above the middle of my form—I may have risen a little in his estimation.

But no story for children was ever so arresting as my father's *The Princess and the Goblin*, with its invisible clue leading girl and boy lost in the mine up to the mystic stairway and the ever young great-grandmother. There, ethics were set forth in their right and truly religious glory. I do not think that we, though perhaps already picking up crumbs, were expected to find its poetic loveliness. Only in later years, when at last we had perhaps discovered our own needs, should we realize its truth. But children are still of angelic inheritance and are not yet quite modernized. So they love imaginative stories. This one, along with that other gem, *At the Back of the North Wind*, if I may judge from their continued large sales, still remain priceless. Even if few children think out their beauty, all feel it. For if the Princess Irene's invisible clue is Imagination, it is still only a lead up to that vision, which, when won at last, may fill heart, mind and soul with an immortal content. The miner-boy Curdie, trusting his pickaxe and shovel to unearth hidden gems, naturally could not believe in Irene's clue. When he follows her up the stair till safe in her always watchful grandmother's arms, with spinning-wheel and the fire of roses

beside them, he sees nothing but an empty garret and a truss of straw. The antithesis is a miracle of art, and, when at last apprehended, can never pass into nothingness.

Madame Montessori, notwithstanding her insight into unsuspected possibilities, has curiously denied imagination to children; and many teachers, though their number is, I am told, rapidly diminishing, still regard fairy-tales as unsafe in their playful disdain of hard fact. And I fully allow that Pegasus sometimes takes the bit in his teeth. A rather terrible incident in my early years may seem plausible argument against stimulating an imagination capable of cruel, if fantastic, suffering. Yet the ghost I invented, having no relation whatever to fairy-tale, led me only to angry defiance and self-pity. It all came from my misinterpretation of sacred words. If the occurrence has a moral, it is not so much that the imagination may like other gifts be misused even to a point of disaster, but that it is better not to take children to church. And it is worth telling, if only to show how paralysing Fear may be; for it incited me to commit the unpardonable sin—one more awful even than defying our domestic commandment, "Thou shalt not call thy nurse a *Beast*," and for which I had been chastised on a certain occasion when I found this appellation appropriate and edifying.

Like other children I hated the dark and all the invisible creatures, especially ghosts, that clutched at one in shadow-corners on the creaky stairs. Somehow Fear came to be associated with Sundays, which I hated, in spite of the roast mutton and apple pudding instead of cold boiled beef and rice for dinner. They meant "going to Church," a duty which might sometimes be evaded by pleading a headache, whether real or induced by fierce shaking of the head with a peculiar, jerky rotation. Nevertheless, it was a joy to go with father and mother in a four-wheeled cab smelling deliciously of dirty stable-straw, to Vere Street Chapel, whose incumbent was the great Frederick Denison Maurice.



Though only six years old I do not forget his tender voice, often tremulous with emotion; nor the chain-suspended sound-board over the pulpit, which I would gaze at in the hope that it might fall and, like my beloved Jack-in-the-box, put an end to the sermon. But the luck was all against me; for I actually remembered the text of one of those sermons. Thereafter the fear of blaspheming the Holy Ghost dominated my life. I do not think either father or mother ever talked to us of that dread Being; yet something may have been picked up in church to set the ghastly Fear stalking, even before that Vere Street text suggested to me how best I could commit the unpardonable sin. Anyhow, from that day onwards, I began to visualize, whenever I was in the dark, a white-sheeted, Holy Being always tempting me, compelling me, to blaspheme Him: and simply that I might perish everlastingly. How exactly I must do it I did not know—unless it was to apply to Him the forbidden word that I had once thought Nurse deserved. So, every night, as soon as I was in bed and the gas-light out, I was seized by the frightful need. I would repeat again and ever again, fast and furious, this all-sufficing denunciation, "The Holy Ghost's a beast: the Holy Ghost's a beast!" On and on it went like a train, which I, its passenger, was unable to leave. At last, in sheer fatigue, the non-stop, hated words would cease; and then, with face buried in my pillow, I would hide from the irate Being, to weep and weep, piteously, hopelessly—for hours together, it now seems—until sleep came in angelic solace. Night after night, month after month, thus it went on, for I do not remember how long. I never dared confess my sin, or ask help even from my mother; though either she or my father would have instantly exorcized the insane possession. Indeed, even in my manhood's close intimacy with my father, I never spoke to him of my once pitiful plight, dreading lest the awful yet tragico-comic irreverence should shock him. But the experience has left me with a strong conviction that young children should have

religion found for them in fairy-tales, Saints' tales, and the simple Bible stories.

Though fairy-tale may seem a strange rock on which to build up a scientific education, I cannot wish that these home influences had been different. While reviewing critically my blunders and successes in life, I believe those influences were responsible for a certain patience in outlook, as well as, perhaps, for some impulsiveness in action, not necessarily indiscreet, which have been always mine. The intellectual Mammon, our invulnerable Dictator, forgets that education means *leading forth*; that the germ-plasm is not primarily a machine but a spiritual energy of inheritance, passion and enterprise. Long ages before Mendel and Weismann experimented and defined, the ancient, ever-renewing Logos had, all unaided by schoolman's hypotheses, evolved a Man quite as marvellous in his structure of impulses and hopes as the mightiest prophets have conceived. If pedagogues are to mend their ways with the child, it may well be through discovering that fairy-tale best entices him forth to win his freedom, that Idea within himself, waiting and brooding in indefinable wonder for his very own adventure.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My father has expressed this in finer simplicity: "Freedom is the unclosing of the idea which lies at our root, and is the vital power of our existence. The rose is the freedom of the rose-tree." (*Donal Grant* (1883), Vol. III, p. 78.)

Some may think I am hardly wise in my claim that the child's love for the marvellous is an instinctive passion. But it must be remembered that the newcomer arrives with a rich store of inherited, subconscious knowledge, whereby his whole economy, down to each minutest cell of brain and body, knows how every process of life must be fed and guided into correct functioning. It is in the strength of such knowledge alone that he subsists, and even adventures into wider consciousness. So we cannot well distinguish between such instincts and those passions that still instinctive and necessary, lie nearer conscious participation and control. Against this wealth of quite unchartered mystery stands the pedant, whose chief aim is to smother every enterprising soul with the cement of uncongenial static law, as if in fear of the dynamic of inheritance. Passion, as I would understand it, is the very flame of life in which we were heretofore, are now, and shall continue immortally.

It deals with entities which our new braggart psychology hardly dares define, even while aware that the individual soul of man must embody all depths and desires. Milton, that conscientious weigher of every word he uses, says, in his *Areopagitica*, that "the passions within us, rightly tempered, are the very ingredients of virtue." And even Wordsworth, whose orthodoxy at last was as notable as Milton's blazing non-conformity, does not hesitate to speak of

"passion, which itself  
Is highest reason in a soul sublime."

*Prelude*, Book V, l. 40.

Nor is it possible to dissociate the imagination from such passion. However awakened, whether by beauty or pity or love or art of any sort, it seems to originate, as is now widely suspected, in the subconscious, deep-dwelling, racial memory which tempts us to adventure in realms where the pedagogue can never see a road, because of its ill-defined hedgerows. In such sense, Wordsworth again should reassure and justify our instinctive convictions:

"This love more intellectual cannot be  
Without Imagination, which, in truth,  
Is but another name for absolute strength  
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
And Reason, in her most exalted mood."

*Idem* (earlier version), Book XIV, l. 166.

### CHAPTER III

#### HOME DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL

MY father, in the education of his children, put duty before everything. In spite of his militant repudiation of Calvinism, he upheld passive obedience as essential in training the young. He would tell us we had to accept this or that on trust before we could understand it, this being the surest way to apprehending it when we were older. Yet he was wonderfully patient with me, though I was indubitably much slower than my sisters, and no sternness ever qualified his tenderness in any sickness or repentance. So far as was possible, he never refused me anything I asked. I remember his saying that his own father, poor though he was, had never denied him anything, and that he hoped his own children would be able to say as much of him.

I doubt if I should question his theory of education except that it made me look upon my father with some fear. He stood for the Inexorable. So that when appeal to an undeveloped moral sense failed, corporal punishment, sometimes severe, was inevitable. It compelled submission, but never made me repentant. Certainly it did not encourage my brains. But worse, it made an over-sensitive child craving for love, so truly afraid of his father that more than once I lied to him. He never spoke of himself having been punished for, I think, it would have seemed like irreverence towards that noble character, who as *David Elginbrod* in the novel thus named, represented my grandfather. Be this as it may, the teaching he got in the Huntly School, where prosperous and poor were together grounded in the Scriptures, Latin and Mathematics, but, first of all, in "The Shorter Catechism," was inseparable from the awful taws. With hardier-living Scots boys, these instruments of torture, never out of the master's hand, may possibly have eliminated the

unfit ; though it is certain they indirectly killed one of my boy-uncles. In my own case, such punishment did more harm than good, even if I am inclined to claim that symbolically, in prophylactic dose, it anticipates Nature's more cruel revenge upon all who thwart her. As a child, the law of retribution seemed to me always unjust. Thus, when I was ten, I did my best to enjoy a wet August holiday at a farmhouse on Holmwood Common, by climbing with another boy a little older, day after day, into a great tree crowded with red apples and eating our amazing fill ; we found ourselves amply justified in the very fact that my companion's father had sold the orchard's produce to a neighbouring farmer. Certainly the point was discussed by us ; and as we gathered and stuffed, we questioned the wickedness of a boy who, for stealing six turnips, had just been birched and gaoled. But, be it noted, he was only a gipsy and hardly counted ; while my companion's mother had converted four Roman Catholics, who, but for her, would have been listed for Hell and to be burned for ever ! I suspect we knew that our argument was weak ; but such opportunities as these might never recur. Again, at about the same age my German violin-master gave me food for ethical puzzlement. Being rapped on the knuckles with his bow for not keeping my left hand upright, I retorted that he himself often let the neck of his violin lie in his palm. But his rejoinder was unanswerable : "An angel," he said, "can do what he likes, but a devil durn't !"

I am not sure whether he was fool or humorist, though certainly he was a bad violinist. Yet he made me suspect that Religion and Law were sometimes in conflict, poor Justice standing blindfold till she could back the winner. My ratiocination was less definite than this, of course ; but, in spite of the rosy apples, I really had a conscience, even if home-training had made it argumentative.

I do not know that my sisters were ever punished. That girls were far above boys in goodness was always impressed

upon me. My young brothers, arriving one after the other without benefit of sister, used to dispute among themselves the justice of this assumption, or to resent the injustice of the fact, if such it were; but I had stood alone, and the sisters would at times exult over my inferiority. The first social axiom I was taught to express in words was "Ladies first!" My parents' intimacy with such protagonists of the feminist movement as the beautiful and devoted Josephine Butler, Madame Bodichon of Girton renown, Mrs. Reid, Principal of Bedford College, where my father was lecturer in English Literature, Anna Sidgwick, Miss Buss and Miss Beale, no doubt made deep, if forgotten impression upon me.<sup>1</sup> The power of suggestion, though not yet formulated, thoroughly convinced me of my sex's inferiority. I distinctly remember wondering how it could be that my adored mother had ever married my father who, in spite of his splendour, was only a man!

I was noted as a very shy and silent boy, too prone also to smiling; for which latter I remember being reproved as well as puzzled how to remedy the defect. I hated "ladies"—the word implying all manner of afternoon callers to whom I was exhibited. Then I must have been often "sulky," and was certainly dull in my lessons; nor did my delight in fairy-tale and music, or my untaught painting of flowers, help me to learn. Lessons were given by my mother in any accidentally spare hours; and, over against my stupidity, she would tell of my precocity in beguiling her sex, even while I could not realize that c-a-t must never spell *dog*. For, she long afterwards told me, once when she was in despair over

<sup>1</sup> Yet these ladies' pupils were already defending their immemorial rights with keen humour; for I am advised now by one of them how a certain rhyming lament was running wild among the "young ladies" for many months:

"Miss Buss and Miss Beale  
Cupid's darts do not feel:  
So unlike us,  
Miss Beale and Miss Buss!"

such elementals, I set a period to my lesson by irrelevantly pleading, "Mama, what pretty brown eyes you've got"! The discovery, bringing me instant proofs of her love for me, was of more importance to both of us than any claims of a disciplinary alphabet. Never but once in my long life have I met eyes so compelling of loyalty and love as that beloved woman's.

If I was slow in being taught, I was quick enough in learning; but "being good" did tire me beyond all bearing! I was taught to hem dusters, to knit and net, besides other domestic duties. Alternatively, it was a joy to have the measles or my perennial winter quinsy; for then I got so much of my mother to myself. Being ill somehow implied that I was good also, and that without any anxiety as to the consequences of being "sulky." Perhaps the keen realization of my mother's pity for my suffering helped to obliterate the insistent cruelty of my grotesque Holy Ghost.

When I was nine, my father gave me a box of tools, and a little bench with an adorable vice that squeaked vilely but never held. They gave me infinite happiness, but only until, all too soon, the plane notched and blocked itself; the gouge, my favourite because it made boats, became hopelessly jagged; the oil-stone refused the work of a grind-stone; and the saw, blunted by alien nails, demanded too much of my slack muscles. One recompense was an admonishment from my father over an attempt at box-making; and I have never forgotten it: "If ever you do anything badly and content yourself with saying, 'Oh, that'll *have* to do!' then you may be sure it *won't do at all!*" It represented well a stoic quality in his own creed: "God," he once said, "is not hard to please, but it is impossible to satisfy Him." Anyhow the admonishment has served me well through life, both in surgery and recreative handicrafts; perhaps in my even more exacting literary endeavours.

A year or so later my father bought himself a new silver watch which cost ten pounds; and his old one, renowned

for its defiance of all tinkering, was given to me. This was a truly uplifting joy. I promptly took it to pieces; and the fact that, after I had reassembled its works, it went as consistently ill as before, brought me much praise. But although I showed some skill with my hands, could write fairly well, loved painting, and tortured the whole house with my violin, I was woefully backward. My father began to teach me Latin when I was nine, I think. The initial lesson dealt with the opening lines of the Aeneid. He first translated them, and tried to make me feel their metric thrill; then I had to commit them to my impossible memory. But I did not understand him; and the words had no more meaning than if he had himself invented them just for a lesson. Such a system might be good for a clever boy; but it was worse than useless for me. For it suggested that foreign words were hateful and meant only *tasks*. He failed almost as much with Euclid. I recall his patient attempts to explain, with the help of matches, the first of the Axioms; and how, hypnotized by my own wrong version, even punishment failed to help me. At last the *pons asinorum*, easily traversed by a sister, proved me hopeless. And there the lessons ceased. Yet later at school I was singularly facile with geometry.

So now I heard talk of being sent to a boarding-school: a most horrible possibility! for my mother had been reading to us *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, published in 1857, but only now in a new edition, bearing the name of its writer, Thomas Hughes, who, as one of F. D. Maurice's followers, was intimate with my father. But the fees were an insuperable obstacle even for a day-school. Fortunately I had inherited from my mother an exceptional singing voice and a perfect ear. So, one of many applicants, I was chosen for an "exhibition" in the Choir of King's College, London. This entitled me to free education in its school, which, though its only accommodation was in the College basements at Somerset House, numbered some five hundred boys of the middle



and professional classes. Except for the choir practice and Sunday morning services, which I always anticipated happily, my school years were full of misery. As a choir-boy I was despised because I earned my schooling. Some of us, I do not doubt, were strong enough in brains and character to live this down; a notable instance being the senior boy when I joined the choir. He kept us in disciplinary order, and our tone deteriorated when he left. His career, first in winning scholarships and prizes, was very distinguished; and as the Rev. James Gow, Litt.D., he became Headmaster of Westminster School. While cock of our choir, every addition to it must be initiated in such wise that no doubt should remain of his own condescension and authority. For which he instituted a delightful ritual. The new boy must submit to a spanking by the other fifteen boys in order of seniority and in the manner sanctioned ever since the beginnings of education. The ordeal was declared by Gow to be the new boy's "Confirmation by the Laying on of Hands," though copy-books were generally preferred. Thus was his influence over us made absolute. He would tolerate no levity in talk or conduct, even if his own disciplinary ritual was something Rabelaisian. Unhappily for the scholastic world, Dr. Gow is no longer with us, or he would be able to confirm my memory of his method; and, I trust, he would not reproach me for quoting it as misrepresenting his future distinction.

Another mischance lay in my thick hair being down on my shoulders: and this, only because the home law—more especially my mother—loved to have it so. She was in all things more or less non-conforming, even after close friendship with Frederick Denison Maurice and his intellectual circle had made my parents Anglican communicants. Little she knew what opprobrium this eccentricity meant for me, while my commingled pride and shyness forbade all thought of complaining. I was, too, the shabbiest-dressed boy in the school, besides being almost the stupidest; while minor ailments seem to have been constantly gnawing at me, such



THE AUTHOR, ÆT. 7



THE AUTHOR, IN PLAID, ÆT. 5, WITH HIS  
FATHER, GEORGE MACDONALD



as the headaches which to this day have not left me. At home I would be sometimes crying with backache as I sat over my books. Colds and sore throats were accepted as normal attributes of winter. The quickly gorged, coarsely generous dinner in the school's half-hour-interval at one o'clock always left me with "indigestion-pains." But the worst of all was my deafness. It began before I was ten and has, in steady increase, handicapped all my running. Now at the last lap, it is some excuse for setting down these reminiscences, because of the loneliness it entails.

In the first two terms at school, I, the oldest, biggest and fattest of thirty-two, was always at the bottom of the class, chiefly because I knew not how to tackle my lessons. To learn by heart two stanzas of the simplest poetry—well, the impossibility was created by its suggestion; and impositions or detention only added to the subconscious forbidding. Perhaps I was more susceptible to suggestion than most; and I recall two incidents in those unhappy days that point its tyranny. A boy, whom I hated, "dared" me to fire under the desk his toy-pistol during class. To be *dared* to do it, made me know that it just had to be done. I did it. Similarly the master's voice, "Stand up the culprit!" suggested a no less instant obedience; and, there being no alternative, up I stood at once and had to accept my dues. Once only was I caned, and then it was in punishment of another's crime; but I remember it as a most horrible outrage, restraining all outcry, and preventing my ever alluding to it at home, though I had to hide my hands at the tea-table.

But angelic influences soon came to my rescue. The first was Octavia Hill. She it was who a few years later was recognized both here and in America as responsible for a general reformation in alms-giving. Because I knew her so intimately, because she became a dear friend who could believe in me, because I looked upon her, and still do so, as one of the noblest women ever sent upon earth, it will be my happiness and duty presently to write of her at some

length. But the present point is the pity she took upon an intellectually impoverished boy of eleven, serving him lavishly with her indescribable charm of voice, her beauty and her intensive understanding. Octavia Hill spent the midsummer holidays of 1867 with us at Bude. Every morning she took me out alone with her on to the Chapel Rock at the end of the breakwater, our delightful solitude shared only by the gulls and the Latin Grammar, which, so long my enemy, she soon taught me at least to respect. Nor did she have much difficulty. Her personality overruled all adverse suggestive influences, and I went back to school finely grounded in my Latin, my stupidity no more insuperable.

A second solace I found in music; although the many hours devoted every day to my violin had, I suspect, a large share in damaging my too sensitive auditory nerves. When I first went to school, we lived in Kensington, but removed in 1867 to a house facing the river on the Hammersmith Mall. There we had an acre of grand old garden, and I, my happiest days. But it seemed responsible for my sister Mary's becoming tuberculous, and was relinquished to William Morris, the poet and craftsman-socialist, who made it widely known as Kelmscott House. Throughout the winters there I would seldom miss the "Monday Popular Concerts" at St. James's Hall. Often alone, but more generally with mother and sisters, I would wait outside, sometimes for two hours, till the door to the Orchestra was opened, where for a shilling we got seats in the first row, almost in touch with Joachim, Neruda or Piatti, Madame Schumann, Edward Lloyd, and even Plunkett Green. Lessons might go hang, impositions be cheerfully incurred, rather than miss these supreme joys. Our home-music, too, was good and very happy. My sisters, like my mother, had sweet voices, and Grace, the next older to myself, played the piano so wonderfully, even as a child, that on Sunday evenings her interpretations of Beethoven, Chopin and Schumann, partly accounted for the large gatherings of our friends. The Sunday

supper of cold joints, hot potatoes, milk puddings, bread and cheese needed no formal invitations. To save the servants extra work on the Day of Rest, guests and children would share in the washing of dishes, glass and silver; so that one of our most constant friends, Canon Ainger of the Temple, solemnly confessed to my mother his fear that she was making it a "Day of Wash-up"! Later, when our music was broken up by our family attendant, tuberculosis, my father would gather crowds of friends to his readings from the Scriptures, Shakespeare, Dante or Coleridge, and to join in our hymns or listen to—some doubtless sharing in—his uplifting, eloquent prayers. As for myself, while I think even my dull mind felt their beauty and power, my heart refused to join in them; for I used to argue with myself that prayer, for some at least, must be in solitary companionship with God alone. If consorted, it should be liturgical and uplifted by ritual, whether of music or colour or sculptured forms. Such were the crude choir-boy's thoughts in opposition to his father's appeals for all that he knew God was waiting to give. Nor have these early feelings undergone any change whatever.

## CHAPTER IV

### I WAKE UP AND BEGIN DREAMING

**A** YOUNG doctor in practice at Jedburgh, an earnest believer in my father, visited us in the spring of 1870. Immediately he became a hero in my eyes; for he kept two horses and played the violin. An invitation for me to spend the next summer holiday with him was gladly accepted, though he was a bachelor and spent most of his time in the saddle, visiting patients. One or two lessons from him in riding a mettlesome cob, with a few days of saddlemisery, offered a new significance in life; and his nephew, a boy of my own age, helped to make those weeks glorious. We spent long days trudging over the wild Cheviots, whose invigorating air, with abundant sandwiches and buttered scones in our satchels, have never been forgotten. But my host was a little irritable over my shyness when he took me among his friends, who possibly expected something remarkable in a son of the most distinguished of Scottish writers; and his reproofs did not make the Scots accent any easier to my deafness. Yet I bless him for examining my ears professionally, and then for warning my parents of the grave possibilities in store for me.

On my return home, I vowed I would be a doctor, though my host had discouraged me because of my ears. My father, moreover, thought I could never pass the examinations, yet my wish made him very happy—so my mother assured me—seeing that he himself would have been a doctor if his father could have afforded it. Anyhow, I never wavered in my determination; for horses were necessary to a doctor, though otherwise enjoyed only by rich men and butcher-boys. But I was now sufficiently awake to see that as a doctor I might have many adventures: I would be a prison-doctor, a mad-doctor, a parish-apothecary, a ship's surgeon, an

army-doctor. More, I could travel over strange lands, make friends with Red Indians, build a log-cabin in the forest and nail my brass name-plate—O gorgeous eminence!—on its door. Whatever the explanation, it was after this holiday that I began to do well at school. So unexpected was the change in me that I was aware of being especially watched during written examinations, lest artful cribbing accounted for my good papers.

King's College was foremost in popular education, even though it was originally founded as a protest against the largely Unitarian University College; but the zeal of its Council, chiefly composed of Church dignitaries, was so pronounced that presently, because of his heresies, they turned Frederick Denison Maurice out of his Chair.<sup>1</sup> So it is surprising that Dr. G. F. Maclear, the School's evangelical Headmaster, determined to give the boys instruction in science, although it was looked upon as very questionable for "young persons." Lectures on "Natural Philosophy" were initiated for the fifth and sixth forms, with Mr. Herbert Tomlinson, subsequently Professor of Chemistry in the College and an F.R.S., as the lecturer. Fortunately for me, the fourth form were also permitted to attend them. They began immediately after my holiday in Scotland, and must have been admirable, as they made me happy. At the end of the course an examination was held, for which we of the fourth might enter. We had no text-books and had never been taught to make notes; yet, to everybody's amazement, I came out first. Always slow at book-learning, I was certainly

<sup>1</sup> I remember one of our friends recalling *Punch's* earlier gibe at our College; and it is worth giving:

#### "INFALLIBILITY AT KING'S COLLEGE

"The Council of King's College have dismissed Professor Maurice because they disapprove of his views on a question which is left open by their common Church. The point in dispute was not settled at the first Council of Nice; but it has now been decided by a modern Council of Nice Men." (November 26, 1853.)



quick to seize and memorize what I observed or was told, and I well remember my instant admiration for the lecturer. One immediate consequence was that my father, probably now realizing my faculty for observation, yielded to my increasing hopes. He thought also that my facile hands might serve me well in surgery, even if the deafness would be a difficulty.

But it was the master of the fourth, the Rev. William Hayes, or more accurately "Billy Lobster," because his ruddy complexion tallied so obviously with his claw-like nose and chin, who first gave me real teaching. His scholarship must have been sound, judging from his inexorable demand for accuracy. His portrait is admirably drawn in *The Giant's Robe*, the charming novel of F. Anstey, who was at school with me. To the Reverend Lobster I still feel deeply indebted, in spite of an injustice worth recording, because it instances the narrow-mindedness then lurking among clerics. My father's novel, *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*, was then appearing in that earliest sixpenny magazine, *Good Words*, edited by Norman Macleod, D.D., Chaplain to the Queen. The story mainly concerned a country vicar; his parish, under the pseudonym of Marshmallows, being Arundel, where the author had for two years been minister to its Congregational Chapel. One morning, as soon as the fourth was assembled after Chapel, the Reverend Lobster shouted the order, "Stand up all boys whose fathers are clergymen!" Three obeyed, myself not one of them. Thereupon I was called up to the desk and cross-examined:

"Is not your father the author of *The Annals*?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then he must be a clergyman, of course!"

"No, Sir; but he was once a dissenting minister."

"Go back to your place!" was then bellowed at me with contempt so fierce that it shattered his voice to a squeak.

Thus I learned that the sin of having once been a non-conformist must in the interests of a divine orthodoxy be

visited upon the children. Though top of my class in every subject, I straightway forfeited the master's favour; and for two or three weeks he deliberately denied me every opportunity of recovering the place from which he tricked me. More than one of my school-fellows openly expostulated; and before the end of the term I regained my place, though the marks lost prevented me from winning the class-prize. I was now far and away the best boy in the classics, especially good in Latin verse. Even Greek, because, *mirabile dictu!* I could now read the Gospels in the original, became a pleasure.

This last admission leads me to a point not so rare in a boy's development as may be supposed, although the manner of the present-day's thought perhaps takes less note of it. Nor do I know how far my observation will apply to girls, whom I make no claim to understand. I was certainly religious in temperament—consequent no doubt upon home influences, although I was always in silent revolt against family prayers, even while loving our hymn-singing. Consistently with my delight in any imaginative story, I was strongly, enduringly attracted to the poetic, profoundly emotional narrative of the God-man Jesus. But my point is this: that this religious instinct, which for many years held me devoutly to Church ritual, did little to strengthen my moral conduct. As with more than one responsible man of the world I have known, genuine religious feeling did not imply virtue in conduct, even if it invited compassion. I need not particularize my commonplace iniquities, many, I am sure, being suggested by unexpected opportunity rather than advantage. Indeed, I suspect it is not so much home restraint that makes a lad kick over the traces, as that reiterated exhortations to be good suggest antithetic sins, which at last and subconsciously compel insubordination. Yet the consequent misery to myself proves that I was not deficient in conscience; and before long my sins came tumbling down like a house of cards, leaving me little the worse—and just

possibly able to live more sanely. It looks convincingly clear that without the thorns and thistles Man would never have had longings after Eden's water-brooks, nor learned how to cultivate the earth "to its right praise and true perfection": even if he had already begun it. Happily I was never offered the new psychology's specious exoneration; and presently a new influence all unconsciously awakened me into more exalted dreamings. I deliberately dwell upon the point thus early because of my increasing conviction that the emotions rightly inspired are of more importance in education, individual and therefore racial, than school-discipline with its utilitarian ethics. Fairy-tale for a child, spring-time for a poet, a sweet maid for a youth, each may illuminate and make irresistible the immortal clue.

When I was thirteen I began to adore a sedate yet captivating girl, twelve years older than myself. Some will still remember Lucy Harrison, with her blue eyes, gold-brown hair—"bobbed" as we now say—as well as her entrancing smile, none too freely given. And she took some notice of me—actually of *me*, though only a shabby school-boy! She was a Quaker and a niece of Mary Howitt, the poetess. In 1861 she had attended my father's lectures at Bedford College. He at once detected her instinct for poetic philosophy. Along with other students, such as Octavia and Miranda Hill, she was often invited to our house. Subsequently, as Headmistress of the Mount School, York, she won distinction in the scholastic world. She died in 1916. From her biography,<sup>1</sup> written by her most intimate friend, some remarks of my own may be quoted:

" . . . There was strength in her poise of head, with its short curly hair; sweetness in the firm lips and their wonderful smile; and her clear blue eyes seemed to shed light upon all they beheld. Her characteristic attitude with hands clasped behind her, made one feel her reliance upon things given from above,

<sup>1</sup> *A Lover of Books*, a Biography of Miss Lucy Harrison, by Amy Greener, 1916.

rather than the environment which frailer human beings clutch at and blame. That she was a skilled carpenter added much to my admiration. . . .”

Octavia Hill had been the first to lift this dull, backward boy out of school hopelessness; but it was Lucy Harrison who led him from his moral apathy. I owe her a debt which I have no wish or right or means to repay. When I met her again after fifty years, and only two before her death, my boyhood's impressions needed no revision. How much during that half-century I remained in sympathy with her is suggested by the fact that, at my request, she contributed two articles to the magazine, *The Vineyard*, which I founded, though another was responsible for its inspiration.

My father has declared that falling in love often awakens deep religious questionings, both in girl and boy. Nor is it surprising; and the psychic importance is in no way lessened if in later years all sense of the love-passion's relation to the Divine wanes and is forgotten.

At that time among Nonconformists, and even now among Methodists, especially in their mighty offshoot the Salvation Army, some *conversion* was expected before anyone could be admitted to Church membership. But my parents were “broad” Anglicans, and, if I experienced any conversion, it was not from the Church catechism, but the unrealized influence of Lucy Harrison. It came to a point when I once chanced to go with my mother to hear the Elijah Oratorio at the Albert Hall and Antoinette Sterling's rendering of “O Rest in the Lord.” As soon as we reached home, I begged a word with my mother. Though tired with the great music and the slow omnibus journey, she sat up with me till 2 a.m., I mostly on the floor, before I could tell her all my sins. But I went to bed in blissful rest from my flagellation; and assured that the chief obstacle to any earlier confession—namely a fear that everyone, especially the adored friend, would all be told and distrust me for

evermore—was absolutely groundless. On the following morning my father's only reference to the incident was the warmest embrace I ever remember from him—but, yes, there was one other like it—whilst his eyes shone like stars in a rain-washed sky. Thereafter the whole world became new to me: had not the Kingdom of Heaven come right into its very duties? Although I have since brought into it, or found waiting for me, many a misery, many a wrong, it has never been to me otherwise than a world of potential, inspired beauty, with its eternally renewing hope. The transformation of my world was not, I think, wholly subjective: it came chiefly, I believe, from the discovery of my mother's and father's love for me. Certainly my repentance was no *conviction of sin*, for I had always hated my wrongdoings. It was rather the prodigal's *turning back*—the *μετάνοια* of the Gospels—from those particular sins which my mother exorcised once and for all when she held me to her heart and wiped all tears from my eyes.

A few more words may be said of my school, if only to suggest certain points peculiar to its day. Yet I fully allow that, being somewhat exceptional in inheritance and home environment as well as rather deficient in health, I may be prejudiced in my conclusions. (1) There was little done at King's for the development of character, seeing that idiosyncrasy was ignored. (2) There was a good deal in the Lower School of foul talk, and some even in the fourth, the lowest class of the Upper School. But this came chiefly from boys who, boarding with certain masters, missed the good influence of the greater public schools in their standards of good "form" and sportsmanship. My own few intimates were absolutely free from juvenile depravity—boys like James Gow, T. F. Anstey, Nestor Tirard, and George Starling, of whom I shall have more to say. The school-system was entirely apathetic: though the fitter who survived brought their own tone into the Upper School, where richer soil gave opportunity for germination. I have a very distinct

memory of the atmospheric release when, at last, I got my remove into the Fifth. (3) The deprivation of games was serious. We had cricket and football clubs; but the playing-fields were away at Wimbledon, and subscriptions had to be paid which, for most of the boys, was not possible. We had a fives-court in an asphalted play-ground; and I excelled here, though we had no systematic contests. Being a day-school, there was little quarrelling, and I myself hated fighting—partly perhaps from the dislike of being hurt, partly because I craved for friendship. Only once, when my anger was at last aroused, did I have a real fight, with half the school as a ring; and then, as I remember, I fought like an untrained Berserker, quickly and unscientifically demolishing my enemy. I think my father must have seen, before I went to school, that I lacked physical vigour as well as mental energy. He himself at my age, though often ill, had been very athletic; and while never fond of the fearful games and school-fights common among Scots boys, he would be leader whenever tempted away from his books and the worlds which they made his own. So, before I went to school, he had arranged boxing-lessons for me, if only that I might hold my own—or as he would have put it, stand up for the right—if ever I must *not* turn the other cheek. But, because of the bad headaches they entailed, I hated the gloves. I think that my school failed most in the discipline of roughing-it: which, I take it, ought to begin its kindly office as soon as a child's legs can give him firm stance, or his arms can resist injustice.

But when I was sixteen, though my remove into the Sixth Form was assured, my parents decided to take me with them to America whither my father had been invited for a lecturing tour. He was then at the height of his fame; ranking, especially in Boston, the intellectual capital of the New World, with Longfellow and Emerson, Thackeray and Dickens; the latter two having recently preceded him on similar tours. Though school had at last become so far happy

to me that I was loth to leave it, my delight was extreme in going with my parents upon this great adventure.

For myself the twelve days' voyage, by combined steam and sail in the Cunarder, the *Malta*, set a period to my boyhood. There is not much of my earliest years that I would have again—perhaps only the music and the imperishable joy of a mother's miraculous healing.

BOOK II

YOUTH AND ITS COUNSELLORS



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## CHAPTER I

### AMERICA

“THE greatest step,” wrote Jean Paul Richter, “is the one out of doors.” It invites an outside view of the home that has given a boy food and drink, but now proclaims its relation to the world it serves, from which it is fed. In taking me with them to America, my parents opened the house-door for me, and gave me its latch-key. Closer companionship let me understand better their courage and devotion, as well as my father’s bold facing of his day’s militant materialism; how he was strengthened by his intense love for men, women and children, and by faith in that beauty, Ruskin’s “Law of Loveliness,” in which their Creator found for them delight and believing. I began to see how indeed it was my father’s passion for God, rather than his logical intellect or his superb eloquence, that made men follow him.

Although I have told of them fully elsewhere, I must here refer to certain incidents in the eight months spent in the States, because they left me with reminiscences for myself, even if at first I was not fully conscious of their significance. Thus my father’s first great address in America was given in Boston before an audience of 3,000—perhaps the most critical, most hospitable, yet the least demonstrative that he had ever faced—was a revelation to me. Times and ourselves with them have changed, and perhaps Los Angeles, for aught I know, may now dispute Boston’s claim to intellectual supremacy. But it was in the age of Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Longfellow, Agassiz and Thoreau, more than half a century ago, that my father first spoke for an hour and a quarter to that huge gathering—without notes and only a volume of Robert Burns’ works in his hand. At first people seemed puzzled: he had none of the academic

eloquence they got from their own orators, such as Horace Greely, Charles Dudley Warner or Henry Ward Beecher, none of the quiet appeal of Emerson's transcendental rhetoric. He had not even Charles Dickens' dramatic power; nor Froude's ruthless array of historic fact; nor Tyndall's faultless laboratory experiments and colloquial charm. These two last were then also on tour lecturing in the States.

That my father at first missed the quicker expression of sympathy or the occasional applause to which he was used at home made no difference to his mode of attack. He sought for a place in their hearts rather than in their minds, and he got there. Even at the end, the applause was not great; but our host, James T. Fields, the great publisher and lover of England and her literature, the friend of Dickens and Thackeray, hastened to us in the ante-room and, with my father's two hands fast in his own, was hardly able to speak for his emotion. He said that Boston had known no enthusiasm like this since Dickens spoke from that same platform. One may wonder what thing it could be in these two men, so extraordinarily different in outlook and manner, both moreover in a sense foreigners, that made such similar and instant appeal to Boston's culture. One of that audience said to me afterwards, "Why, certainly, your father's elocution was so quaint, he might have been sitting with us around the yule-log, telling the very sweetest of old-time stories": and this though again and again his words had risen to quite sublime passion. It was the personal appeal by which he always kept his audience spellbound, and sent them away, not only with thoughts that would never wither, but with hope to search for the heritage that is every man's for the finding. One may well claim that the personal touch is always royal, a spiritual giving away; and that, while it heals, it compels the poorest in heart to go and do likewise, thus finding the only way. One person in that audience of open-hearted welcome was not surprised at my father's triumph—namely my mother. Even before he



THE AUTHOR, ÆT. 16, AND HIS SISTER MARY, FROM AN OIL  
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first dared tell her all she stood for in his heart, had she not dreamed and believed all this of him, his sure future and his due? She was now just perfectly at peace—even if, after the inevitable reception following the lecture was at last over, she too must weep a little for her joy. One may know this, even if he were never told of it.<sup>1</sup>

But the story of that eight months' tour was one of frequent illness, terrible attacks of asthma, periods of broken engagements, and yet always attended by the same overwhelming enthusiasm. I have seen my father, after a delayed, snow-bound journey and arriving just *not* too late for his lecture, climb the platform hardly able to breathe, or with such terrible headache that he could hardly face the glare. Yet the moment he began to speak, the demon would slip away ashamed, and he would soon be conversing in his own, always fresh splendour. The penalty he paid afterwards was nevertheless more than once grave.

On this tour we made friendships of the truest, most lasting: even the boy of sixteen, though the beauty and sweetness of American girlhood ministered more to his aesthetic fancies than the great minds with whom he yet got some sort of contact. I was still shy and silent, yet none

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Samuel McComb, D.D., of Harvard, in a recent book, *Preaching in Theory and Practice*, which he dedicates to the memory of F. W. Robertson, George MacDonald and Stopford Brooke, "Masters of the Art of Preaching in humble acknowledgment of a lifelong debt," thus writes of my father: "George MacDonald, poet, novelist, preacher, affords the most remarkable illustration known to me of this mysterious creative faculty of mind. . . . In a dimly lighted, ugly, dingy chapel . . . as soon as the preacher began his sermon, those things were forgotten. . . . In simple, beautiful, conversational English . . . he poured forth, apparently without effort, a stream of noble thoughts and gracious sentiments which woke responsive echoes in my heart. The audience, gathered from all parts of the metropolis, was held in the hollow of his hand. On the same day I heard Dr. Westcott in Westminster Abbey and Mr. Spurgeon in his Tabernacle; but good as their sermons were, it was George MacDonald that made an impression that the lapse of years has failed to efface. I have often wondered since what was, from the psychological point of view, the secret of his fascination."

the less ready for instant adoration of one especially, whose charm of character and skill in her art of painting made me her slave. Only once again was I ever so enchantingly convinced that here stood a woman where none was before, yet whose every lineament, whose wit and grace of mind were revelation of Loveliness.

Of the greater literary men we met, four have remained vividly like symbolic figures in stained-glass windows of my memory's sanctuary—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Whittier, Emerson, and the much younger, though later wielding no less an influence in the literary and social worlds, Richard Watson Gilder.

The first of these endeared himself to me at my first meeting of him. It was at a dinner-party, where the witty, humorous talk of James T. Fields, Emerson, Longfellow and Sothorn, our own creator of Lord Dundreary, would have shut the shy lad out from his seniors' pleasure, but for the engaging sympathy of the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. I shall never forget the almost confidential ease with which he was at pains to chat with me, precisely in the style his pen had already made familiar to all English-speaking people. He talked to me of the autumn tints, more glorious there than any I had ever seen at home; of the sun that had just set gorgeously over the distant Harvard; of our lovely English hedgerows and London's yellow fogs. So that he loosened my bashful tongue.

Later we visited the Quaker poet, Whittier, so loved for his tender handling of sacred grief and holiest joy. His old-fashioned courtesy to my mother, and that largely because of her ownership in George MacDonald, I shall never forget. But it is Emerson, though I never got direct word with him, who remains most vividly in my mind. He seemed to me like a mountaineer daring to climb into the blue of heaven, and, coming down to our level again, to give us news and hope far more lovely than Moses' tables of stone. A little later I learned to delight in his rough

poetry, and to find more encouragement from such of his writings as *Man the Reformer* than from any of our own Thomas Carlyle, notwithstanding my enjoyment of *Heroes and Hero-worship*, and my pick-axe worryings over *Sartor Resartus*.

I admit that this first introduction to the States, to be repeated more than once in later years, was something like touring in a halo, seeing that the overwhelming honour paid to my father gave the New World a very special illumination. Consequently we came into touch with the elect rather than average people. Yet two ineradicably remembered points are worth mentioning.

The first is the charm we found in the New England agricultural society, a sweetness of life along with literary culture, abundant food and simplicity of comfort. Farmers lived well upon their produce, worked along with the wives and daughters, whose refinement was evidenced as much in their tasteful dress as in their hospitality and the personal services to their guests and to one another. Their reading was extensive, and their religion, though generous and wide, was still tempered by the puritanism that had brought their forbears across the Atlantic. They were invariably teetotalers. My father said they resembled more the farmer-class of Scotland in his boyhood days: although there luxury was all unknown and the ghost of John Knox still haunted their outlook. Also in the New England of half a century back, the refining influence of the arts, the abhorrence of alcohol and an openhandedness helped by a kindlier soil and easier purse, were more in evidence than was possible for Scotland. In England, on the other hand, there never had been any country life quite like this. Even the yeoman-class, though claiming some social rank, had little that could be named culture. But to-day, I am told, these New England farmers are all gone West, actually or metaphorically, and life on the land, mechanicalized and greedy for quick money, is lamentably changed.



The other point, I think, still holds true, namely the absence of meaner class distinctions. Even now, when the fight for dollars is as fierce and disastrous as in every other part of the so-called civilized world, there still remains a belief in manhood-equality: at any rate, so far as individual worth is not estimated by family status and paternal possessions, or even by academic successes—all equally unnatural and misleading. Yet if there the fit have had better chance of surviving, we ought to know them and hear their voices oftener.

## CHAPTER II

### SCIENCE AND THE MATTERHORN

WE came home in the spring of 1873, and I began at once to read for the London Matriculation. Although I had little help but books, with the mistaken coaching of a morning glass of port as I read in my father's study, I passed in the first division, and became admissible to the Medical Department of King's College. But the entrance fee was a difficulty. A wealthy uncle, when approached on the subject, offered me a clerkship in his stockbroking office as a generously intended alternative. Yet the punctual death of a great-aunt and her legacy to my mother of a hundred pounds made everything easy.

Nothing in my five undergraduate years happened beyond what was ordinary, although my father's ill-health and, more inevitably, my sister Mary's lung-disease, necessitated a break-up of the old home. I became largely dependent upon the hospitality of my uncle, George H. Powell, a leather merchant, as I could not afford the *diggings* used by my fellow-students. Though the generous life of a large family of cousins was bad for my studies, I won the first and second years' scholarships, besides a few prizes, for which the competition was not formidable. In various ways I was distinctly enterprising. Thus I was responsible for founding the *King's College Magazine*, and the Committee, my own selection of masters and men, nominated me editor. I have lost every copy of it; but I remember that I secured for its first issue a poem by my father in parallel German and English; a very able article by my cousin, now Sir Edward Troup, K.C.B., on "Evolution according to Lucretius," with an editorial by myself advocating a proper scepticism as regards Authority. Then a fellow-student and I started a society for

helping patients after leaving the hospital. Lack of time and funds soon brought it to an end, but not before it had conferred some real benefits as well as widening my education.

But two Reminiscences seem to me worthier of record, although, being little more than a young student's dreamings, they may look quite trivial. They were but side-issues: one, of my early studies in biology, the other, of a holiday in Switzerland.

An initial year of grounding in general science was required for the "Preliminary Scientific (M.B.) Examination." This I passed with honours in chemistry and biology. The first of the two "dreamings" came from an *obiter dictum* of Huxley in a text-book: a remark so profound that through long years of doubt it held me: in fact, I often still quote it as an enunciation of a stupendous law transcending all scientific proof. For Huxley, with his *œil du maître*, captured, brought to earth, an almost unheeded truth; one the more arresting because, while formulated by the most fiercely logical mind of all the mid-Victorian disputants, it had already been recognized by Ruskin as "The Law of Loveliness"<sup>1</sup> with something more than Huxley's nodding assent. Huxley's words, more definitive yet hardly more lucid, occur in his description of the almost microscopic *Foraminifera*:

"Nor is there any group of the animal kingdom which more admirably illustrates a very well-founded doctrine, and one which was often advocated by John Hunter, that *life is the cause and not the consequence of organization*; for, in these lowest forms of animal life, there is absolutely nothing worthy of the name of organization to be discovered by the microscopist, though assisted by the beautiful instruments that are now constructed. In the substance of many of these creatures, nothing is to be discerned but a mass of jelly, much of which might be represented by a little particle of thin glue. Not that it corresponds with the latter in composition, but it has that texture and sort of aspect; it is

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, 1860.

structureless and organless, and without definitely formed parts. Nevertheless, it possesses all the essential properties and characters of vitality; it is produced from a body like itself; it is capable of assimilating nourishment, and of exerting movements. Nay, more, it can produce a shell; *a structure in many cases of extraordinary complexity and most singular beauty.*

"That this particle of jelly is capable of guiding physical forces in such a manner as to give rise to those *exquisite and almost mathematically arranged structures . . .* is, to my mind, *a fact of the profoundest significance.*"<sup>1</sup>

But I must be no less definite also in Ruskin's claim. He is discoursing on the many forms of leaf, and largely in emphasis of the differences between the conditions of crystal-building and those where vital energy is triumphant over unliving matter:

"Under every oppression of external accident, the group yet follows a law laid down in its own heart; all the members of it . . . seeming to desire, for themselves and for each other, only life which they may communicate, and loveliness which they may reflect. . . . But how various, how delicate in beauty! . . . in this lowest field herb [is proclaimed] the law of being; it is the *law of loveliness.*"<sup>2</sup>

Such a truth, with the facts proclaiming it to all who have ears to hear, Huxley, that most passionately honest among seekers, felt bound to admit as holding "profoundest significance"; but there he left it. Yet for me—well, it has never let my mind rest, even if, later in life, I learned that Truth would never be discovered in the scheduled facts of textbooks, unless accepted along with some subjective rays of the light that lighteth every man. Perhaps the Elizabethan Spenser came very near confessing the significant law in Huxley's microscopic shell-forms, and in Ruskin's leaf-loveliness, when he wrote:

"For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form and doth the body make."

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to the Classification of Animals*, by Thomas Henry Huxley, LL.D., F.R.S., 1869. N.B.—The italics are my own.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Painters*, Vol. V, p. 20.

Some day it may be taught even in class-rooms of Science that a "Law of Loveliness" is essential in life, and opens wide a greater Door.

In after years, when I had joined the Staff of my Hospital, I was asked by the Principal, Dr. Robertson, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, to give at the College a short course of lectures, open to all departments; and their text was to be this dictum of Huxley's suggesting a Law Beyond, subjectively guessed at by some, though to others assuming an inevitability consequent upon objective evidence.

The second side-issue in dreaming was hardly less important to me. In my second year I was invited to join a party of men for a holiday in Switzerland. My host was William Matheson, brother of Greville Matheson, a rare poet by the world unknown, after whom I was named. It was early September and our weather was disappointing. One dull morning, however, there suddenly came to us a sublime vision breaking through a mist that enveloped even the sombre pines immediately against our horizon. Instantly was unveiled a sky of deepest blue and, piercing it, the snow-clad Matterhorn dazzling in whiteness. Had I been alone, I think I should have dropped upon my knees before this revelation of the Absolute. And all through my life the vision has remained with me as a fact of "profoundest significance," bringing conviction more nearly divine than any priestly dogma or even the teachings of my father.

Many of to-day's young people, desiring, even as we did, intellectual honesty before everything, think they are not religious, and only because the Infinite must remain indefinable to the human mind, in spite of language infinitely plastic in its poetic possibilities. But I think they are beginning to see that certain revelations must hold good just because they can never have laboratory sanction.

A few letters to my mother will suggest what the Alps did for me :

*To my Mother*

“RIEDER ALP, SWITZERLAND,

“August 18th, 1876.

“. . . I wish I could send you some flowers, but they all withered. One especially interested me. It was just like a cradle of gondola-shape with a handle running from one end to the other; and in it lay, dressed in long spun-silk gowns a number of brown-faced babies. After a time their clothes, emblems of their helplessness, became starry wings, waiting for the winds of Heaven. But there! It was only a podful of seeds!

“The butterflies are lovely too. One little one I carried ever so far perched on a flower. It flew away several times, but came back again when I offered it the flower. It was the richest copper colour studded round the edges with perfect metallic gems. . . . It did not stay very long however. . . .

“. . . When I left off writing yesterday I went and lay down on the heather with one of my small volumes of Shakespeare. Presently I was sure I heard a little stream running under ground just in front of me. I followed it up for a long time, constantly putting my ear to the ground; but I never got any nearer it, and at last had to discover that it was only the tinkling bells of the cattle grazing below me! . . .”

“RIEDER ALP,

“August 22nd, 1876.

“. . . Yesterday we had a two hours' walk up the Eggishorn, the last five or ten minutes being over loose (though quite safe) rocks and stones. But the view we got was well worth the climb. We saw the glacier magnificently spreading away for fifteen miles into the snow fields and clouds of the Jungfrau. Unfortunately the day was very cloudy so that we could hardly see the more distant peaks. Snow lay beneath us everywhere. On one side we looked down on the lovely Rhone Valley, with its villages and roads, all so minute; on the opposite side this huge, ugly glacier, a corpse-like turnpike of ice and dirt with here and there its marvellous blue tints, slowly crawling away from fields of desolation; on another side (the Eastern) almost perpendicularly below us, lay the loveliest lake, of the deepest, richest blue-green

you ever saw (on a cloudy day, too!) with tiny icebergs floating on it, broken off from that cold-hearted glacier; the fourth side, extending to other jagged peaks.

"I should so enjoy a little glacier work; I should like trampling on this hateful old serpent with its innumerable yawning mouths, ready to plunge you, as a punishment for a slip of the foot, into eternity, or freeze you, heart and soul, in its prodigious belly! Glorious! . . .

". . . By the way, as an instance of the superiority of everything English, I can always understand French when spoken by a son of Britain, but never when these Frenchmen try it on me! They make such a jumble of it. I really don't believe they comprehend half of it themselves. . . . The head-waiter here has something of the negro in him, and strolls about the salon in slippers with a cigar in his mouth. . . ."

"ST. LUC,

*"August 28th, 1876.*

". . . I have discovered that the waiter I told you of in my last is the proprietor; and not this only, but surgeon, dentist, auctioneer, engineer, architect and barber to the village! What is education about that it would improve such as he?

". . . This afternoon the weather cleared and we got the loveliest sight I have ever seen. Beauty perfectly unattainable! For if you get to that majestic, silent peak of the Matterhorn, silvered and radiant with snow and sun, against the eternal blue, miles and aeons away, isolated in its grandeur from all the strivings of its Creator against the one Enemy Death; if at last you should reach it, all would be cold and heartless, bitter winds beating you to death. This perfection of Beauty would hold you to its heart and freeze the life out of you with its lovely arms. Yet it nearly made me cry for its beauty. But presently a curtain of dark clouds was drawn over it, almost imperceptibly, till all had vanished, as though it were too good a sight for human eyes; too terrible for human fears.

"It proved a perfect evening and we saw the Matterhorn many times in our walk. . . . It has smaller, though not less beautiful attendant peaks, huge fields of snow sweeping up to it, with constant change of light, shade and cloud. Some lit only by reflections of blue sky around and above, had just the faintest loveliest tint of blue. Towards sunset a dash of molten gold was thrown over the Matterhorn, and came shimmering

to us poor mortals gazing at her mightiness. . . . But if there was something of horror in the attraction of the glacier, there was infinitely more of beauty in the Matterhorn. . . .”

“ST. LUC,

“August 30th, 1876.

“. . . As if inexorable Beauty and frozen Terror were almost too much for poor Londoners to bear, we had flowers in tenderest loveliness on every side; but the only one that lasted all the way up was the gentian, in divinely blue clusters in the snow itself, finer and larger as we ascended. Somehow they belonged to the Matterhorn, after all, and her grandeur to them . . . with the sky for us all.”

Only one little letter have I kept of my mother's. It suggests her response to my happiness:

*From my Mother*

“. . . Your letters have delighted me very much. I love you to love all those grand creatures of God, those Alpine manifestations of His Power and His Will—I enjoy them through you—even more, isn't it strange? than I did through Papa when he was there—I am afraid I was a little jealous of his seeing them when I did not! It was very small of me; and do you know, I have only just found out that it may have been so. But in you I see them: I am so happy in your seeing them. I'm so grateful to God for letting you, that I rejoice all day about it. Tell Uncle William I shall never be able to thank him enough. . . .”

A little before my visit to Switzerland, my father had gone there for the first time in his life. In his novel, *Wilfrid Cumbermede*, he relates in words truer than any I could find an experience almost identical with this my arrestment by the Matterhorn's beauty. Ruskin, too, in his *Praeterita*, tells of a similar revelation in his own youth: and I do not doubt that some such uplifting has been experienced by multitudes as a kind of *conversion*, even though the faculty of subjective vision must differ strangely in degree. “The fool sees not the same tree that the wise man sees,” says William Blake; and nothing better instances it than this Alpine revelation. It



lifted me out of my cubbish youth; and the memory of its magic has never left me: not even when my energies became almost absorbed in winning the world and chancing the loss. As years advanced, many a similar unveiling of Beauty has come to me. Thus when I was travelling in Japan, the road through a bamboo forest, bordered with masses of burning blue gentian, suddenly turned: then behold! the bamboo plumage fell away and a mountain covered with salmon-pink azaleas towered into a sky, almost matching the gentian in its burning blue.

And yet the wayside things at home, treasures new and old, have often brought me near weeping for their loveliness and the disharmony within me. Indeed, every man must, I think, sometimes get similar uplifting experience. And surely at the end of his life he may confess it?

## CHAPTER III

### ROUGH-HEWINGS

WHENEVER a man, wiseacre or dolt, sets up his mirror to shave, behold! he finds himself scraping the chin of some waxwork figure—borrowed, perhaps, from Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, or, less likely, from her bevy of divines. In more prosaic word, no man ever knows or sees himself. If he thinks to read his lineaments by shaving off what naturally belongs to and sometimes happily hides them, he will gain nothing but fresh questioning. Moreover modern psychology has distorted the optics of all mirrors, plane, convex or concave, so that a youth, still aboriginal in spite of civilization, if he shave from his features every trace of what signifies nothing, becomes more self-conscious and less able to interpret the story written upon his face.

As for myself, as I summon up these Reminiscences in order to delineate the medical student of half a century back, I find that no memory-mirror helps me. The razor too is for me useless whatever its safety; for, as I never used one in my life, any bringing to light of those tell-tale lines that, do what we will, record life's frail tendings, even something of its fulfillings, might appear to myself strange and fallacious, and even forbidding any further record of the rascal's miscalculations. So the portrait must be guessed at from the environmental rough-hewings that shaped his ends; and in a measure from the way he retaliated upon them. The haphazard friendships, unsatisfied adventurings, crude successes and failures, must have been influential in my development, even though their chippings at the marble produced neither an Achilles, nor a Chicago *tough*, nor even an Epstein perversion of "all I could never be." Certainly these young years are extraordinarily susceptible to the

carving and moulding of suggestion. "We become what we behold," said William Blake, a full century before we troubled ourselves about self-expression; and even now I am not sure that the shaving-glass tells us whether we have profited chiefly from our germinal leanings or rather from the food set before us as sustenance, even if woefully out of reach and merely suggestive.

As I recall friendships of my student-days, I cannot think they had much influence upon me. Poverty still kept me shy. Yet certainly I was happy in meeting and knowing more great minds than most come across in a life-time. And these did much for me, though I must wait many years before I found intimacy with them. As with other youths it was just the common-place rough-hewings that knocked sense into my vague adventurings, even if some might have been avoided had I been less in a hurry to have my own way in ordering things. So it comes about that, in spite of my own reflections and my mirror's distortions, I seem to have a tolerably clear reminiscence of that medical student who, I honestly believe, was myself. That his ambition was far ahead of his abilities was quite in order—or nothing would ever get done in the world; while, as far as examination-tests indicated, he was above the average.

To begin with, I may in real humility of mind confess that a certain hunger after the ideal—hardly distinguishable perhaps from a strutting, often stumbling, desire to excel—fostered my best ambitions. The hardships and kindnesses that beset my undergraduate days strengthened, I think, an inherited aesthetic sense, and did more for me than any pronounced strength of mind. This belief in Loveliness necessarily quickened a detestation of the jungle-mire, which always—I write only of my own days—lay grinningly attractive to youths let loose from home-influences all too young. Another support which I hardly appreciated at the time was the lack of money. My mid-day meal hardly ever cost more than sevenpence, sometimes only half as much;

and having no strong desire for tobacco until I could buy my own, I satisfied any desire to smoke with the herd, by criticizing my friends' cigarettes.

The generosity of my uncle, who, for two years made me one of his large, wholesome-minded family, was unfailing. Their kindness—even when, being ill, I exacted most—did perhaps as much for me as my lack of funds. This brother of my mother was an ardent nonconformist and a liberal in politics, with a hearty contempt for “West-End” society, somewhat qualified by an ill-concealed envy of its inglorious privileges. One point about my cousins is worth recording as peculiar, I think, to those Victorian days. Although athleticism and sport were highly important to all the young men with whom I there consorted: although they were, with a few exceptions, neither very intellectual nor artistic: although too they accepted the home's religious conventions—such as family prayers unfailingly romped through before eight o'clock breakfast, and, on Sundays, church-going wherever one pleased, but no games: not one of them was other than entirely virtuous. Nor can I believe our home-life was less merry and happy than to-day's. We had a hard tennis court and a full-size billiard-table. Theatricals, dances and home music kept us out of mischief; while some, in spite of the demands of rowing and cricket clubs, would have some sort of philanthropic work in hand. Yet we knew nothing of cocktails and little of whisky, though my uncle's table was always generous in wine and beer and laughter, and the house open to all our friends. My fellow-students also were generally very honorable in conduct, though the dangers to undergraduates in London were greater than at Oxford or Cambridge; and quite as great, so I inferred, as in Edinburgh and Aberdeen which demanded subservience to a straighter-laced religiosity, even if it was not conceded.

But now I am constrained to quote from two contemporary letters, for they vividly suggest the life more intimately our own than any thorns and thistles, which, because they are

so much concerned with our sustenance and suffering, are more keenly remembered. The immortal Garden is still our own in unconscious memory; but I would forget the breezes that constantly came from its hills to sustain me. One letter, though I do not remember what led to it, seems of especial importance because of its plea of more sympathy for the deaf, whose difficulties are never quite realized by their friends. But the second is treasured as a rose-leaf from the pot pourri whose perfume still belongs to that Garden's winds.

*To my Father*

"CEDAR LAWN, HAMPSTEAD,  
"December 6th, 1878.

". . . Thank you for your letter about speaking the truth. I always try—I *think* I do—to be truthful. All the same I tell a great many petty lies, e.g. things that mean one thing to myself though another to other people. But I do not think lightly of it. Where I am more often wrong is in tacitly pretending I hear things which I do not, especially jokes and good stories, the *point* of which I always miss; but, seeing everyone laugh, I laugh too, for the sake of not *looking* a fool. My respect for the world's opinion is my greatest stumbling-block, I fear. . . .

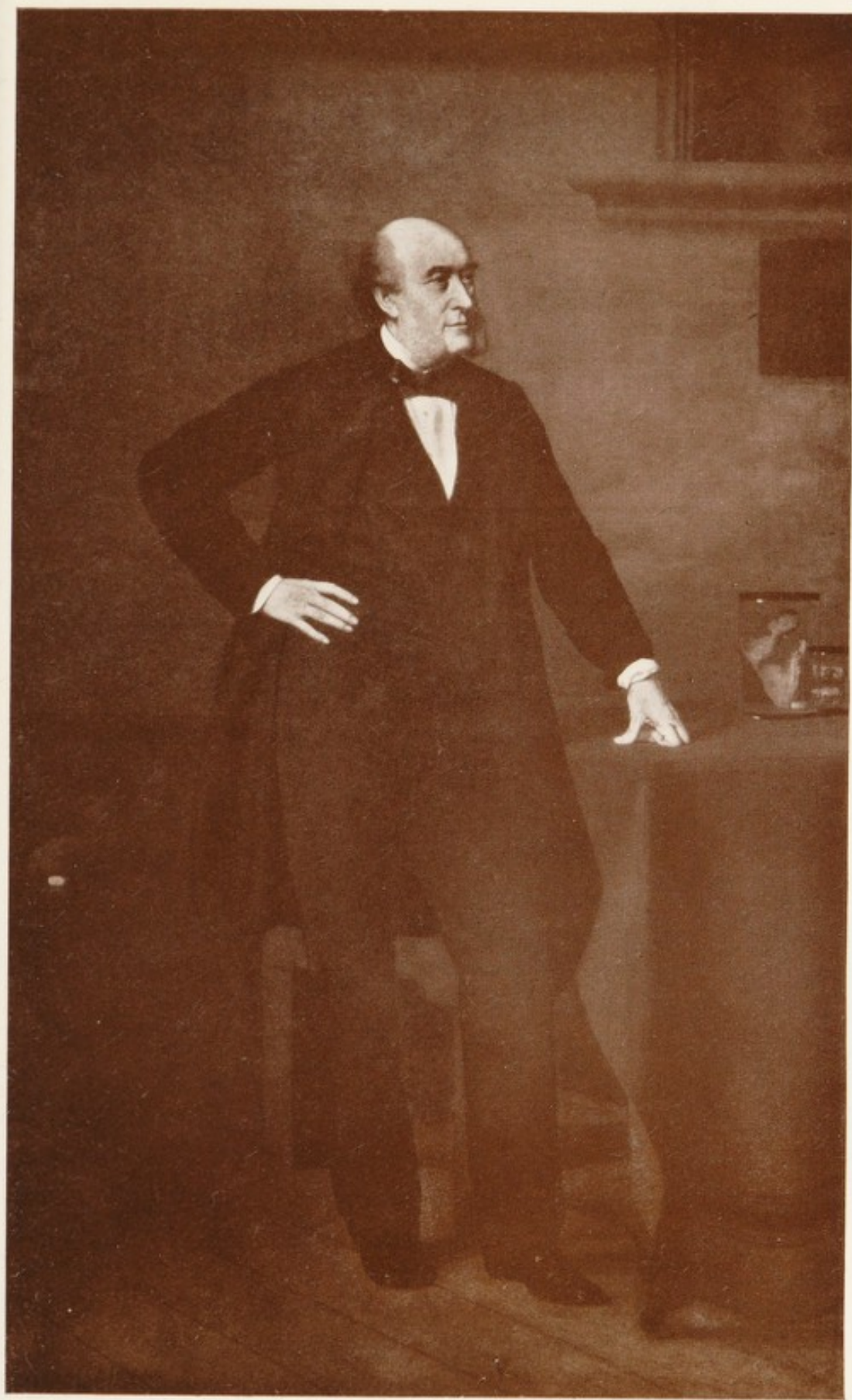
"I do want talks with you so much. Sometimes I seem to know more than my years can bear. The things that look most beautiful turn their hollow backs on me, though real Beauty must still exist, and the hollow only comes from its dying. So I gathered long ago from *Phantastes*. Do you think we shall ever know everything? Not that it matters much, but I feel that there must be something that we shall be learning to all eternity, but which will never be learnt. . . ."

*From my Mother*

"CORAGE,  
"BOSCOMBE, BOURNEMOUTH.

"MY VERY VERY DEAR MAN,

"Your father's and my very dear love to you this day when you are 21. God be with you and help you—all your journey through, as He has these three sevens that are past. You have taken God as your help. You have not forgotten that He *is* your Father (however little you remember it sometimes). . . . But



SIR WILLIAM FERGUSSON, BART.



there is one word I want to say to you, beloved Son—I think you take the burden of what He is creating you to be too much on yourself. You must plant and sow—study and read; but it is He that gives the increase. Do let Him take all He will. You should not be anxious about to-morrow with your work, any more than *we* should be about our money or our bread. . . . Work while it is day and leave it to Him to make the next years and provide for them. . . .

“Though you are now a full-fledged bird—you will ever be my Boy. But you must not work yourself dead, else where’s the use of your working at all? Better lose the scholarships than your health. It is not like fighting for Gold Imperishable. . . .”

But of thorns and thistles there were dense thickets. To satisfy the diploma-granting bodies, I had, at the close of my student-days, to lodge near the hospital, and be certified for attendance upon twenty expectant mothers. With little or no help, beyond a kindly neighbour or rarely a professional Gamp, such students could in any difficulty summon help from the Hospital.

At that time it stood in Portugal Street immediately south of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, close to the slums of Clare Market and Great Wild Street. But our out-patient practice extended as far as the crime-infested alleys off Fetter Lane and even across Holborn to less disreputable streets adjoining Red Lion Square. The clearing away of these slums was the chief reason for removing the Hospital to South London in 1913. Now at the foot of Denmark Hill, it is perhaps the most perfectly equipped hospital in scientific and charitable requirements.

So far as the medical work went, these my new experiences were quite ordinary. But I had already learned much about the abject poor, thanks to Octavia Hill. Yet now I was to discover that human beings can somehow thrive in an environment of depravity and horror unmentionable. Open defiance of all decency in conduct and language: jeering and buffoonery by mothers towards their daughters in the agony of labour; often the absence of any providings for the event, and sometimes the impossibility of getting any woman’s



help : conditions incredible, one would think, until he became intimate with the denizens of such slums. Into certain of these alleys not even the police dared go at night, though the young doctor was tolerated and his watch grudgingly allowed to remain in his pocket.

I recall one case where a half-drunken mother was scoffing at the agonies of her seventeen-year old unmarried daughter, and then left me absolutely alone to help as best I could. The filthy room was bare of any furniture, except the distorted iron bedstead and a rickety table, at which, on a solitary chair, I had to wait or give what encouragement I could. To help pass the hours, I remember experimenting as to the ways of the candle-flame with bed-bugs, that swarming everywhere, I impaled on a pin.

My patient's suffering grew acute, and I was at the end of my resources, seeing that, not holding any diploma, I was not allowed to give chloroform or morphia. Her eyes wild with terror and her screams awakened no surprise in that nethermost pit of drunken noise, wife-beatings and obscene yellings. Distraught with her agony, she would not let me come near her. There was no one to send to the hospital for help, nothing available but one possibility. And if I relate the incident it is solely because it left an impress on my mind that no reasoning has ever effaced, and not because it has any evidential value.

Opening from the patient's room was a smaller one, empty and filthy. I went into it; and then, between the door and a window whose dirt was not so absolute, but that the gleam of a street lamp oozed through it, I had to drop on my knees on the bare chance that the snow-clad Matterhorn might after all stand for something pitiful as well as sublime, in spite of human abomination. Hardly had my impulsive, if vague hope taken form of words, than the child-woman's cries instantly, absolutely ceased. I went back to her, and the last stage of her labour was accomplished without any more suffering; a perfect baby was born—bugs and obscenity

and Hell notwithstanding. I managed things as best I could; and—with a tactfulness that perhaps justified my little joke—I cheered the exhausted mother with the assurance that her baby-boy was the finest I had seen for many a day. But even for me, as for all mothers, the magical, the miraculous was accomplished. Once again the lily rose unsullied from the dung-heap.

Now, half a century later, I dare comment on the little story, because a Reminiscence I shall not forget. Most people still claim—and I grant the argument—that the patient's instant relief was but coincident with the natural course of things. On the other hand not a few, who have themselves found reason for believing in prayer, may welcome my story. For myself, I have never been able to dismiss the inference that inexorable Law must have been in operation none the less if telepathic sympathy took a hand in it, the outcome being more instant that God's help was sought. Certainly I could never allow that a loving, all-powerful God, responsible for that young mother's existence along with the very passion that had brought her low, would be regardless of her anguish until, perchance, some medical student might appeal for His clemency. Even then, while braggart of my science, I could not but believe in a mystic atmosphere within which we all, so-called good and bad, filthy and clean-hearted, move and have our being; and that this atmosphere, being Love, is always miraculously yet quite naturally and more instantly operative whenever strengthened by appeal to its eternal Source. Imbued with science-teaching, yet holding by my father's insight concerning the Great Mysteries, the question of prayer's objective efficacy was constantly with me. An article on the subject by Professor Tyndall had appeared a little earlier in the *Contemporary Review*.<sup>1</sup> There he endorsed a suggestion, purporting to

<sup>1</sup> "The 'Prayer for the Sick': hints towards a serious attempt to estimate its value," by Professor John Tyndall, F.R.S., *Contemporary Review*, July 1872.

come from some unknown correspondent, that by praying for certain wards in a hospital to the exclusion of others, both the existence of God and His pitifulness might be firmly established. The proposal was on the face of it absurd and unscientific; and my father had been strong upon the point. I recall how, late in 1872, he met Professor Tyndall in Washington and how the conversation, in a way not unusual at that time, drifting on to a religious topic, my father asked the great agnostic whether there was not evidence enough of the *possibility* of a divine and beneficent Intellect dominating all phenomena. But the Professor turned away, strangely enough for him a little discourteously, saying, "Really, Dr. MacDonald, the question does not interest me!" Did it need a great mind to perceive that exploiting prayer as experiment would necessarily destroy its vital efficacy?

I shall have a few more words to say on the subject of miracle in my chapter on Octavia Hill.

But to conclude my student days. The twenty maternity cases being done with, my uncle let me have my room in his house again. Yet there I lacked the incentives to study and sport ensured by the old Universities. My book-work was fitful—intense enough when the prospect of a prize or scholarship drove me; and the pits of theatres where I could enjoy the Bancrofts, fall in love with Ellen Terry and Mary Anderson, or worship Irving and Toole; and the finer joys of stringed music or oratorios—especially Bach's Passion Music in Lent—conspired against my winning even higher distinction in the examinations. A quinsy at the last prevented my standing for the fourth year's scholarship, which, had I won it, would have made it possible for me to become House Surgeon and then House Physician at my hospital. These coveted posts had to be paid for, but would, I think, have led me step by step to some appointment on the permanent hospital staff, though my deafness might still have debarred me. So now, as soon as I passed my M.R.C.S.,

I had to earn my livelihood. Thus it was that I relinquished all present touch with my hospital and soon came very near abandoning my profession as quite hopeless for a deaf man. Nevertheless, the story of how, after varied adventures, at last I won distinction for original work and was invited to make a Throat Department for King's College Hospital, is worth relating.

Before dismissing my student days, however, I must tell something of that great man, Joseph Lister, partly because his revolutionizing of surgery ought to be better known, but also because he did more than he ever knew for one student in particular and for a thousand others. Then I am correspondingly impelled to write of Octavia Hill, if only because she holds so high a place in my reminiscences. Moreover, in her overthrow of philanthropic conventions, she opened my eyes to a power in personal devotion such as I had never imagined possible. Lastly, to complete my list of Youth's Counsellors, must come my memory of John Ruskin's story—or as much of it as concerned my parents and their endeavours to bring some happiness into his tragically sad life. He also, like all truly great men and women, was revolutionary; and soon he will again be recognized as one of greatest influence in English thought and enterprise. My own emancipation owes more to him than it is possible to summarize.

## CHAPTER IV

### LORD LISTER

**A**LTHOUGH I had no social intimacy with the one man of last century, whose name will, five hundred years hence, still be current even if every other of the Victorian Age is forgotten, I not only saw and took minute part in the revolution in surgery of which he was protagonist, but I claim to have understood him in very personal sense. And there are not left many of his students who could tell of his nobility and simplicity of character, even though many realize the heroism of his steadfast convictions that ultimately saved more lives than the worst of all wars sacrificed.

My first winter of Surgery was in the wards of Sir William Fergusson, the "leading operator for many years in London." His portrait by Lehmann in the Royal College of Surgeons is well known, and its engraving may be still seen in the consulting-rooms of Harley Street and thereabouts. Two points in it are significant; one is a glass shade on the table by his side covering a shoulder-blade he had removed—a trophy of his phenomenal skill. At that time, it seemed that a patient's surviving his operation was, like this cherished bone, only a side-issue: though such a remark could not apply to this Surgeon who was noted for his intensive kindness. The second point is the turned-back cuffs of his frock-coat. This was almost the only preparation for an operation, and the coat itself would be an old one, recording many an operative mishap. It hung in the theatre's ante-room ready for exchange with the immaculate broad-cloth article then essential to the profession's reputation for benevolence. Surgeons would vie with one another in their recorded speed over amputations, and Sir William's rapidity was notorious: a point of more importance than now, even

though chloroform had for some years been in general use. Nevertheless this brilliant surgery filled some students with dismay. As I recall my first introduction to the wards, it seemed to me that every third or fourth patient was dying, whatever the operation. Septicaemia, erysipelas, hospital gangrene, were rampant, and every surgical wound became septic. Indeed we were taught that inflammation, presumably because invariably present, was essential to healing. Yet a few months later we had to realize that such inflammation never appeared unless through bacterial infection and was scientifically criminal.

By this time Lister's system held indisputable sway all through Scotland and was almost universally adopted in Germany. Thus in 1874 Professor von Nussbaum of Munich, whose name even we students knew for that of perhaps the greatest living surgeon, had confessed that 80 per cent. of all his operations proved fatal! In despair he delegated one of his assistants to learn directly from Lister, then in Edinburgh, his elaborate technique. Von Nussbaum adopted its minutest detail, and the awful hospital gangrene, which, in the German surgeon's own words, used to "gnaw at every wound like a wild beast," instantly vanished. His statistics of mortality from wound-infection sank to zero—as was invariable wherever Lister's method was conscientiously followed.

Nevertheless, before Lister's coming to King's, London surgeons had been scornful of his claims. Actually for some years after, one of London's largest hospitals still refused to accept the new prophylaxis. Its students would come to King's even ten years after Lister had converted every unbiassed surgeon in the Kingdom, and declare that our surgery was a revelation to them. But other hospitals immediately adopted Listerism, especially St. Thomas's with Sir William MacCormack as its advocate, and Guy's, where the younger men, such as he who was soon to be my near friend, Sir Charters Symonds, took to it eagerly and

with entire success. But the whole story has been told by some more authoritative than myself.

In my early days of surgical study, I had of course heard of Lister's claims; but chiefly from the *Lancet's* pages, which almost relegated him to companionship with quacks. In 1875 a leading article of that journal, then the most important, summed up its conclusions thus:

"If the special merits of Mr. Lister's plan were really as great as alleged, they should at the expiration of eight or ten years have declared themselves with overwhelming certainty."

Later the same journal wrote thus:

"My Lister seems to have lost himself in infatuation . . . that he so far forgot all the rules of decency and good taste as to contemptuously decline an offer that has never been made to him," etc., etc.

Yet the offer referred to had already been made; and Mr. Joseph Lister accepted the Chair of Surgery at King's College with the conjoined post of Surgeon to the Hospital, vacant through the death of Sir William Fergusson in 1877. The journalese disparagement of Lister at first seemed to me justified by the fact that Fergusson, although big-minded enough to meet homoeopaths in consultation, and—almost worse in the profession's eyes—avowing some measure of sympathy with anti-vivisectionists, had not put the new surgery to the test. Moreover, other surgeons of distinction had apparently adopted Lister's method, even improving upon it—so they claimed—and still failed in lowering their mortality. But, as I was soon to learn from direct observation, the new system was accepted by these surgeons with such ignorance of details, that failure was inevitable.

Hence Lister, almost hopeless at London's pitiable surgery, must leave his class of 250 students in Edinburgh—the Royal Infirmary's surgeons all now religiously adopting his methods—and accept this invitation to King's where, in the

first place, his class numbered only seven: of whom I was one. He brought with him his Edinburgh house-surgeon and dressers, one in a few more years to be known as Sir Watson Cheyne, Bart., the chief apostle of Listerism.

In the usual course adopted by London hospitals, each surgeon must work his way up on the staff in strict order of seniority. This custom, essentially English in its adherence to privilege, obtained in no other country, I think; and even here it is now very commonly ignored. In 1877, however, the Committee of Management of King's, largely composed of lay-members elected by the subscribers, overruled the canon, notwithstanding the surgeons' opposition; and, supported by every one of the physicians, they offered the vacant post to the greatest surgeon of all time.

That there could be any hesitation about the step must to-day seem incredible. The entire profession must have heard of Lister's triumphant reception by German surgeons when he visited their hospitals in 1875. Von Nussbaum welcomed him with extraordinary demonstrations, giving a banquet in his honour, where the leaders of the profession, as well as members of the Government and municipality, were present. Lister, in spite of his retiring ways and nervousness, replied admirably and in perfect German to their ecstatic eulogies. At Leipzig, Bonn, Berlin, Magdeburg, the same sort of thing happened. But in France, although Pasteur had been Lister's advance-agent, as it were, in the discovery that all wound diseases were infective; in Italy, and even in the United States, the new surgery was still ridiculed. Even at home these quite recent events contrasted extraordinarily with the open contumely that awaited Mr. Lister at King's. It might be claimed that a student could know little of what was happening among his masters. Yet one single incident, too shocking to invent, too arresting to misinterpret, remains indelibly on my mind. It concerned Lister's first operation in our theatre, which was packed to the full, while the passages leading to it were thronged with



practitioners eager to see the man operate, of whom they got such conflicting reports. On the floor of the theatre, ranged in a semi-circle about the operating table with the Surgeon, his dressers and nurses, sat the whole hospital staff of physicians and surgeons, his new colleagues.

Now Lister was always a deliberate operator. He would claim that, with antiseptics, anaesthesia, and the new methods of bloodless amputating, there was seldom reason for haste. The patient had fractured his knee-cap, and the operation involved opening the knee-joint; to do which, we had been taught, was invariably followed by fatal infection. While the carbolic steam spray was still enveloping patient, surgeon and assistants, so as to sterilize the whole atmosphere, and while the knee-joint lay open prior to wiring together the fracture, Lister, to emphasize some point—I forget what it was—momentarily looked up to the spectators close-crowded in the tiers above him. At the same instant one of his new colleagues rose from his seat, and unobserved by Lister, turned his back upon the operating-table, looked up at the spectators, set his forefinger to the side of his nose, and then tiptoed out of the theatre! Another, yet quite friendly incident occurred almost at the same moment, showing the ignorance of even leading men concerning Lister's technique. Sir George Johnson, one of our most distinguished physicians, rose to get closer view, and was on the point of inserting an *unsterilized* finger into the wound, wholly ignorant that he might thereby introduce some fatal infection. But Lister turned in time to fling the investigator back, and with such violence that he almost fell, but only to laugh apologetically at his own folly. Then Lister, his hands re-sterilized after their contact with a physician whose fingers, in spite of their cleanliness, might, like any rag-picker's, have teemed with infective organisms, completed his operation. Throughout the subsequent healing, no faintest blush ever appeared on the edges of the wound; or any other ever made by Lister's scalpel. In three weeks that patient left the hospital cured,

when, but for the new surgery, he would have gone with a crutch for the rest of his life.

The discourteous incident, though highly significant, must not be misconstrued. The successful man will always look with suspicion upon any prophet whether born in a stable or hailing from Scotland, even if, as in Lister's case, of English birth and education. Moreover, the old guild-spirit, or the newer trade-union temper, dominates all social organizations, aristocratic or professional, and has the justification of self-protection in herd-safety. So that it is small wonder that some hailed Lister with the indictment of *Quack*, however unpardonable in anyone who ever had personal contact with his arresting personality. Yet to this day one may hear disparagements, even malicious, of his great work. Thus as late as 1918, Mr. Bernard Shaw attacked Lister in a letter to the *Nation*—then under other control than the present journal of the same name.

"Lister's theory of antiseptic surgery was so shallow and stupid in its conception, and so disastrous in its practice, that his only excuse for his rash acceptance of it was that it seemed at first to produce good results, owing to the astonishing improvement wrought by its accidental introduction of cleanliness and common decency in surgery."

Thus without summoning aid from his ornate wit, Mr. Shaw found it advisable to discredit the great reformer, and chiefly—so it might seem, but for the absurdity of the assumption—to exalt an eminent pathologist working on different, yet not less original lines. Mr. Shaw informs his public that—

"Lister's powers of reasoning were of the usual brass-plate order. Having learnt from Pasteur that pus was produced by microbes, he argued that the thing to do was to clear them out, as you clear out blackbeetles from a kitchen by poisoning them."

Yet Lister's success lay solely in preventing microbes from ever reaching a wound.

It being my good fortune to serve Lister as one of his first dressers in London, and later to become one of his colleagues on the hospital staff, I felt bound to answer Mr. Shaw in the *Nation*. In my reply I summarized the facts here recorded, and claimed, as I shall presently insist, that it was perhaps the dynamic of Lister's humanity and sympathy with suffering that in the first place drove him to his devoted labours in Science. I even admitted that possibly, from the standpoint of mere intellect, Lister might not rank with, say, John Hunter or Thomas Huxley, and yet had done greater work than theirs. Mr. Shaw in his rejoinder did not shrink from the sort of repost he has so skilfully specialized. He said that in my admission that Lister, *quâ* intellect, might not rank with some other great men, and in a way was not the most brilliant of operators, I had given him the *coup de grâce*! One may generally allow the irresponsible to have the last word, and I did not continue the discussion.

But the real point of my letter was to show that, while Sir Almroth Wright in his war-surgery, where wounds were all grievously infected before treatment was possible, had proved the efficacy of cleansing them with his "Hypertonic Saline" irrigation, he was but endorsing Lord Lister's original claim for the free drainage of wounds, and that the great surgeon, whose life-labour it was to prove that operation-wounds should never become infected, had always admitted that he found it sometimes impossible to sterilize wounds already contaminated. Lister had no experience in war-surgery, and the distinguished pathologist had made so signal a contribution to it that it was hardly necessary to disparage one who had paved the way for his work.

But to return to my reminiscences of Lord Lister. Immediately following his first operations, there was only one exciting topic among us students. Everyone sought dresser-ships under him, and I was chosen among the first batch. The other staff-surgeons soon adopted the carbolic spray

and the new dressings; yet we, Lister's dressers, drilled into the belief that the minutest details of his technique were of utmost importance, would, in watching the other surgeons' operations, often detect omissions that made failure inevitable. Thus it was that many London surgeons remained sceptical. Absolute belief in his system was essential if every danger was to be avoided; and Lister, before appointing us, would exact from us a confession of fidelity to his teaching and a vow of implicit obedience.

Like other great minds, Lister had the wisdom to be doctrinaire in his teaching—or he had never recast the whole world's surgery. If, as a student, I compared his ways with Sir William Fergusson's amazing rapidity and coolness, and saw that he was a less brilliant operator, I knew my master as something far greater. Even while confessing that a certain nervousness in himself might be a disadvantage in surgery, he yet dared operations never before attempted and with success hitherto incredible. He was a little slow even in speech, sometimes slightly stammering; and some therefore argued that he was an indifferent lecturer. Yet he was the greatest teacher I ever knew. I never forgot any one thing he ever told me, though, because of my deafness, I took no notes of his lectures. No text-books gave us what he knew; so he left to the other surgeons the task of dinning into us the unchanging facts concerning diagnosis, which, for passing our examinations, were more necessary than the new surgery.

A great man's wisdom dominates every detail, and a disciple needs be careful how he discard any rules given him. For instance, Lister's system for giving chloroform was laid down as if it were natural law that one dare not question. Slow administration obviated all danger of overdose; and the pulse, he would say, looks after the patient so long as the breathing is watched. So sure was he of these rules' infallibility that he required his senior dresser, and never the staff-anaesthetist, to administer chloroform for his own patients.

The proof of the pudding lies in its eating; and, as Sir Watson Cheyne assured me, Lister never lost a patient from chloroform. Moreover, I may add, in support of his doctrinaire guidance, that my own subsequent and unusually large experience in anaesthetics justified his claim that chloroform must be regarded as the one perfectly safe anaesthetic *in intelligent hands*. In my approximately 20,000 operations, 95 per cent. under chloroform, I never lost a life. Yet fashions and methods change, statistics with them.

But, fearful of being misunderstood, I would not stress the point of Lister's brain-power being perhaps less than the greatest. What I do insist upon is that his all-round nobility in mind and character depended upon something higher than its academic estimate. I claim that his investigations into the secrets of wound-infection, his marvellous patience throughout years of experimental failure before the secret was revealed, were prompted primarily by his *humanity*, his pity, along with a remorse, amounting to affliction of conscience, over his profession's surgical failures. He had the imagination to see how the high surgical mortality could and must be prevented; and it was Lister's humanity—a new thing to us students—that awakened this imaginative prompting. Indeed one of the many things he had to teach us—if only to save us from that callousness which, in the impressionable years of youth, so readily takes hold and may never be quite eradicated—was *humanity*. Things are different now, and my conviction is strong that Lister's personality with his tenderness for his hospital patients, both inseparable from his fundamentally reconstructive system, spread rapidly—I am inclined to say almost magically—through the whole atmosphere and outlook of surgery. In my first introduction to out-patient work there was much that amounted to cruelty, though perhaps it was only obtuseness to suffering—yet not the less brutal. The old "saw-bones" coarseness in the medical student, and indeed in more than one of our teachers, was depicted by Dickens

without much exaggeration; and no less truthfully matched by his physicians' quackish "bed-side manners." Happily, now, such criticisms apply only to the past, though I am old enough to have had touch with both aspects.

I remember well how, upon an occasion, in going the rounds of the wards, Lister sent his class beyond hearing, because he had to tell a woman, after many weeks of patient treatment, that there was nothing left but to amputate her foot. Then, a little later, he told us just why that conversation had to be private. "Think, gentlemen," he said, "just what it meant—not only to her but to that human nature she represented for us all. We have been six or seven months doing our best to save that foot—the woman's faithful servant through a long life of hard work and motherhood!—and then at last—just think of it!—I have to tell her she must be a lame woman for the rest of her days! There is, too, another responsibility in my decision—one to be faced with utmost reverence. We cannot forget, gentlemen, that it has taken the Almighty perhaps—I do not know—a million years to fabricate that foot, so wonderful in its form and mechanism and obedient service; and yet now I, with a sweep of my knife, have to destroy it! Do you now understand my making you all stand apart? We may so easily forget the sacredness of our work."

This was the substance of what he said, and most of the words were actually his. Some might think they savoured of sentimentalism; but it was this that drew to him equally the indolent and earnest students. One in particular I remember as the best-groomed and loosest-living of us all—somewhat supercilious, too, to an ill-dressed student like me, with no time for rowing or other sports, no money for beer and cigarettes, and actually singing, along with one or two other medical students, but now voluntarily, in the Chapel Choir. Lister would often prefer him to myself for certain duties; and he so far justified the master's confidence that he became an enthusiastic, hard-working student, thanks entirely, I

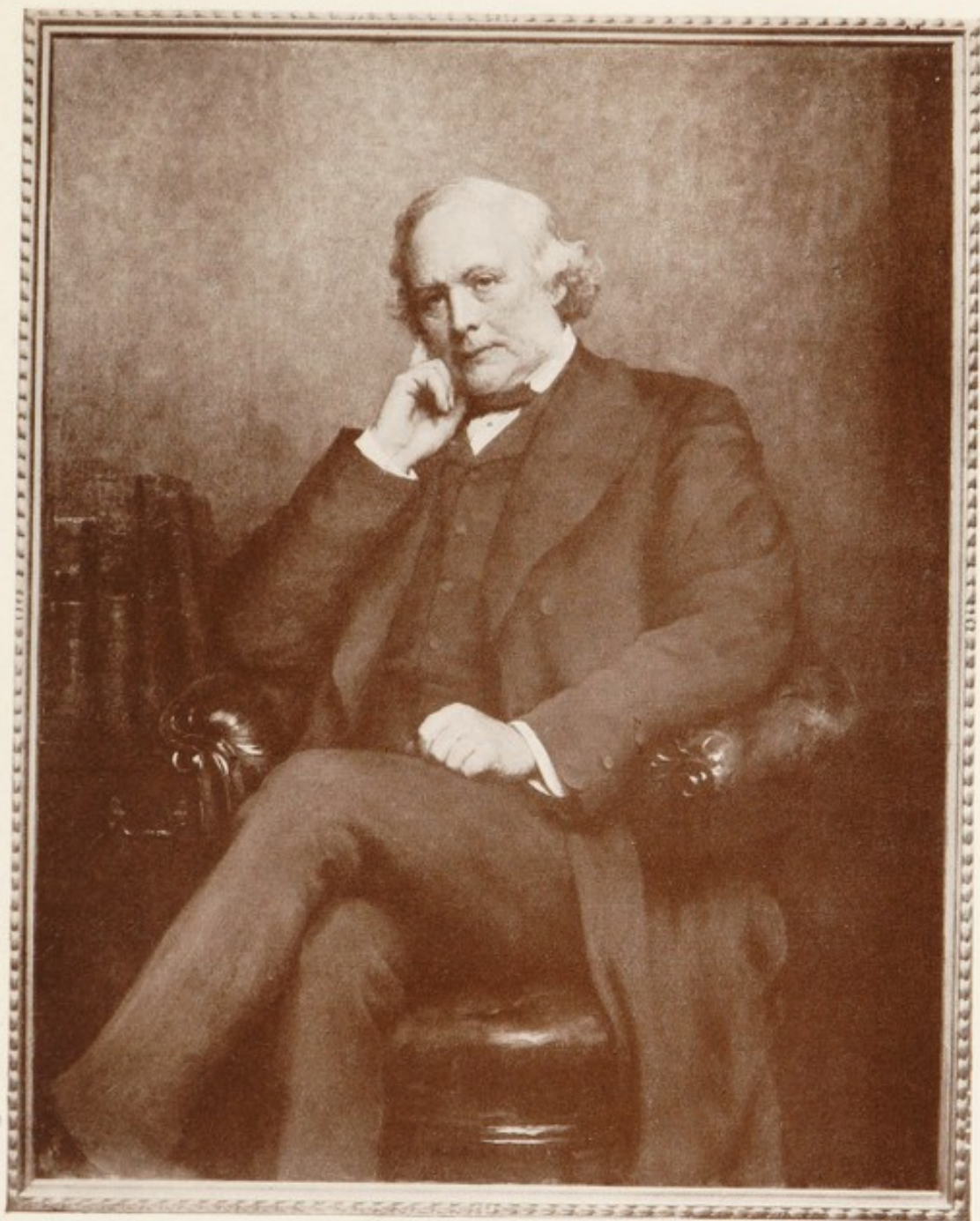
believe, to Lister's personal influence, so simple and unaware. But I think, in greater or less degree, Lister reformed every one of us, as well as the whole world's surgery. I do not know that he always read character quite truly. Perhaps he did: but I used to think he was not quite fair in his estimate of myself, and would often pass me over, as if the fact that I might not instantly hear him, implied inferiority: and, in a way, it certainly did. Little instances of his misunderstandings and mistrust of me, slight enough in themselves, have to this day left their small scars. Yet he was always good to me when I needed help. Once, when in later years I was threatened by a false charge that might have led to professional disaster, he stood boldly as my friend; prepared, if necessary, to go into court in my defence. Now and again I would take a relative to consult him, and, though such clemency was sometimes not even reasonable, he would refuse absolutely to accept fees. When at last I became his colleague on the staff at King's he would send me patients. So I have much to thank him for.

Looking through my letters to my mother, it may add point to what I have said of the man if I quote two or three items. Thus I find that I first introduced myself to him by naming my father and begging him, if possible, to make me one of his "clerks," instead of first putting me through the usual six months as "dresser."

#### *To my Mother*

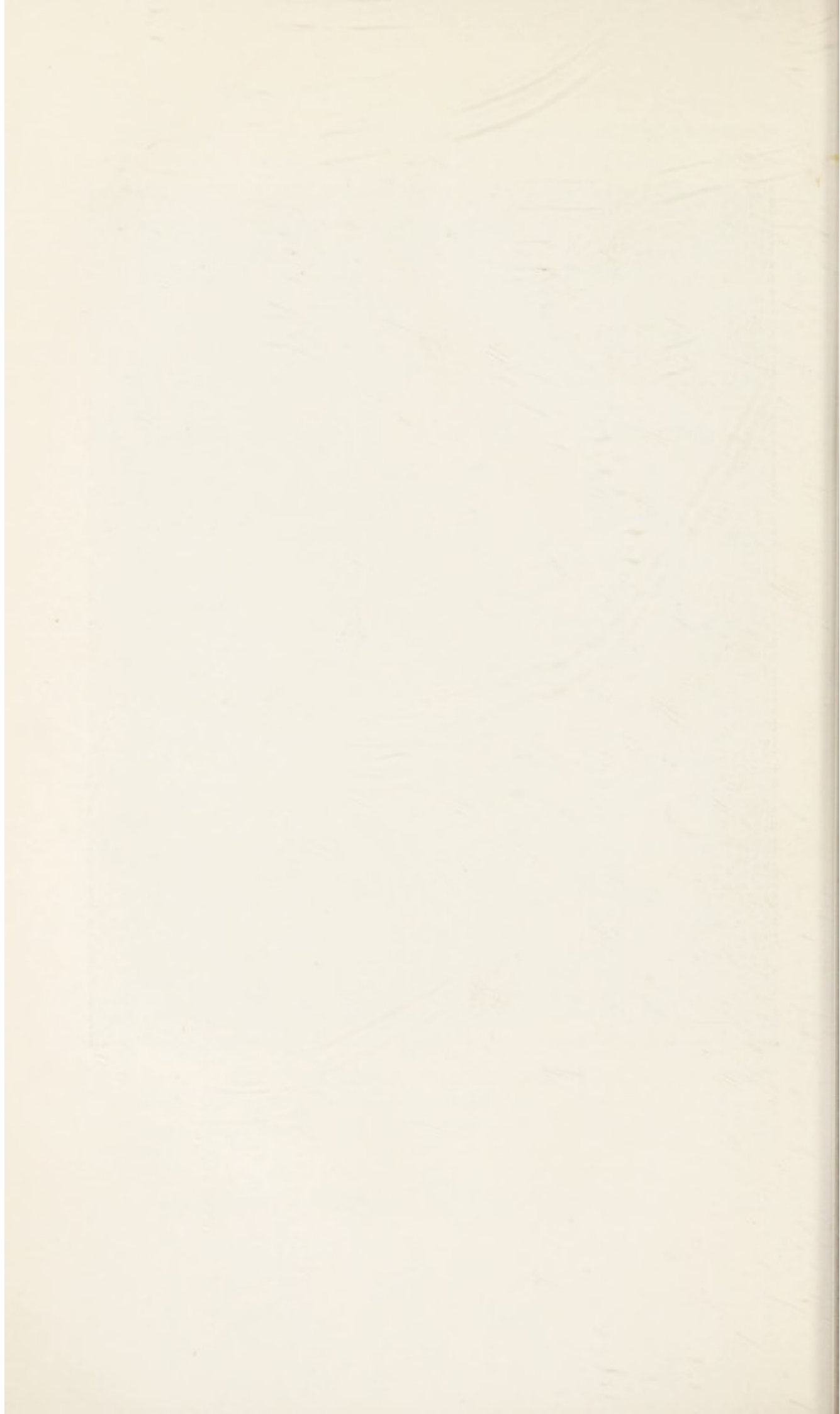
"He said very kindly how well he knew Father's name, and then that 'considering your scholarships and prizes, I will think it over.' Anyhow I should, all the same, have to pass his regular examination. To this I had no objection, though the competition is keen. I presume I managed the written part all right, seeing that at the subsequent '*viva*' he asked me not a single question, though he talked to me about science in a very fatherly sort of way. . . ."

So I got the privileged "clerkship," which involved such



BARON LISTER, F.R.S.





responsibilities as giving chloroform, which, as I have already said, proved of utmost value to me subsequently.

In another letter I tell my mother of one specially informative lecture of Lister's, and how I had remarked on its "nobility" to a fellow-student:

"He being a year senior to myself, patronizingly agreed but added: 'All the same, for myself, I wish he could spare us his penny-dreadful style. We want more of the *practical* in Surgery, less of his *morals* and *science*.' Yet it is just because his Science is so absolute and so far ahead of all the other surgeons', that his 'morals' are so weighty and convincing. But I know what that man meant—for Mr. Lister gives us nothing that would be quite acceptable to the Examiners at the College of Surgeons. He says we can get all that instruction from our text-books. . . . He has still a lot to fight in the hospital. For one thing he does not quite like our lady-Sisters, who sometimes go against his orders. An old woman appealed to him yesterday as to whether she was to be done out of her tea, which Sister had denied her because her temperature was over 100° F. And Mr. Lister said of course she was to have it. Then the Sisters object to our coming on Sundays, though the dressing of his cases is never entrusted to the nurses. . . .

"To-day (Sunday) we had two operations on; Lister had declared that he had no other time and must do them then. This put Sister — into a great flurry, and she expostulated personally with the Professor. She being *very* High-Church, we thought of sending her a bottle of Soothing Syrup, with a copy of the New Testament! . . ."

Later, there came an open rupture between the great surgeon and the really devoted ladies, and all because, now and again, he was driven to this operating on a Sunday. St. John's House threw up their responsibilities, thinking to take the nurses with them, and so leave the wards in an awful predicament. But the nurses declined to go, and the Committee, well prepared for the threat, had ready for the post of matron a lady of unusual experience and charm; and thereafter there was no more trouble.

About the same time I wrote again concerning the

difference in Lister's and other surgeon's attitude towards their patients :

“. . . An operation—not Mr. Lister's—of rather a rare nature had to be unexpectedly done on a man suffering from aneurism of the aorta. It was a question whether he would live through it owing to the haemorrhage. And yet half the school were crowding round the poor fellow's bed, shoving at one another to get a better view, talking and arguing, even betting on his chances, etc.—enough to frighten the poor fellow out of his life. However, the operation was successful. How differently he would have been handled by Mr. Lister!

“I am writing alone in the Library, as all the other men are at the Chemistry Lecture. But I know more on this subject than the lectures cover—I don't say more than the Professor. And yet, Mother dear, I have more in this headachey head than when you first met me : but shall always be your little boy, G.”

A few weeks later I was writing in a more chastened mind, when, still acting as Lister's clerk, I was responsible for all instruments, cleaning, sterilizing and sorting them, while, during an operation, I had charge of their re-sterilization after perhaps a moment's use, as well as being instantly ready to hand him any he might need. For this, some familiarity with his ways and the technique of an operation was essential. So far, I was expert enough : yet I had to write thus to my mother-confessor :

“. . . There is so much whispering during an anxious operation and I often do not hear some demand or instruction from Mr. Lister. Then he seems annoyed with me, never having realized how real my deafness is. Of course I had told him of it. Yet now I feel that he thinks me slow-witted, not up to the mark particularly of . . . his great favourite, a man without an ounce of brains. . . . It makes me feel how gravely I shall find myself handicapped in practice, though it would not matter so much if I could be a surgeon. And that's impossible, unless I could afford to wait many years before earning my bread. . . .

“I am getting quite into the way of inflicting suffering without flinching—or almost. Another man has got the house-surgeoncy for the summer ; so my chance is gone. I have six children

in my beds. They don't mind me, if I have to hurt them. I am awfully fond of children. I am afraid in the hospital they get rather spoilt. There is no discipline, such as lessons or work for them, and they get a good deal of petting. Many of them only suffer when their wounds are being dressed, and between times are as happy as larks. . . ."

The Science and Art of Surgery have advanced in these later days by leaps and bounds, and now, every day, lives are saved by operations which Lister could never have dreamed possible. Even during his life-time, much of his method was abandoned—with the reverse of advantage in many cases; and it became the fashion, especially among younger men who had not seen the horrible older surgery which Lister banished for ever, to speak disparagingly of antiseptics. To make the issue quite clear to the lay reader, I will restate it. The opposition was based upon the new claim that surgery should aim at securing *a-sepsis*: and the fact that much of Lister's technique in the use of *anti-sepsis* was no longer essential, might seem, at first sight, to disparage it. But it was forgotten that the prevention of septic infection is now far easier than it was in the seventies, when hospital wards teemed with toxic organisms. To-day by elaborate and costly preparations of the environment, the boiling of instruments, and the swathing of everyone concerned in sterilized overalls, gloves and masks, results are secured practically as good as Lister's, though they are certainly no better than when his carbolic spray etc. made to-day's more elaborate and costly detail superfluous. No surgeon can be *certain* of securing *a-sepsis*; but Lister's system—with all its admitted disadvantages—made the infection of operation-wounds simply impossible. He took our hospital wards and theatre as he found them, teeming with infection; yet, let me repeat, the absence of any infection in his operations was invariable. The little theatre in the old King's College Hospital, inexpensive and surgically dirty in spite of conscientious soap and scrubbing-brush, gave results quite

as marvellous as the new ones, extravagantly equipped with every scientific luxury.

If during the Great War new and better methods than his were discovered for washing living poisons from wounds, the fact holds good that, but for his work, these better methods would never have been reached. Chemists to-day who talk in terms of electrons, do not belittle Dalton for his Atomic Theory; nor do astronomers speak ill of Newton, because Einstein has led us further. So only foolishness or ignorance will ignore Lister as father of the new surgery; and the wise will still give him his due when our present technical methods are abandoned for newer, perhaps still better ways.

## CHAPTER V

### OCTAVIA HILL

IF one conviction more than another bids me carry on these Reminiscences, it is that to-day we are so overwhelmed by the Ephemeral—unexpected events, conflicting duties—that we are distrusting, perhaps losing, our spiritual intuition. Like the common physiological instincts essential to individual behaviour, this intuition has survived in the race as a sort of inherited memory. But it almost seems that, with the higher development of intellect and freewill, along with the authority conceded them, the spiritual element becomes less imperative, less incisive in its content: the consequence being that it is less universally accredited. It may be consequent upon women's more open spirituality that they have the quicker perception: in them, the intuitive being less meddled with by intellect, they submit to it even when they know it may not be sanctioned by science. This conviction that, with our marvellous increase in knowledge, we are losing something important in our inheritance, may be put more clearly in figurative words. Any Man, the moment he is born, becomes aware that he is adrift in the world. Yet, being hungry, he automatically remembers that a mother must be at hand ready to satisfy him. Thus far, no one will question the authority of his instinctive, inherited knowledge. But thenceforth, and very quickly, the new arrival discovers that things are not ordered solely for himself, and that his instincts have to be subordinated to social needs, even if the world plays havoc with all that he had so rightly trusted. Presently, and perhaps before he really *thinks*, he becomes aware that his environment as well as himself must have come from somewhere; that the widespread exultation in life, the ubiquitous thirst for its betterment, must correspond with

some River of Life which all Creation, unconsciously no doubt, reaches after lest it perish. Then he is sent further adrift into that needy world; and the wise men tell him his one duty is to throw heart and soul into his job. The wonderment of thought that had begun to possess him is discounted as unpractical; and even if religion is tolerated as a support when things go wrong, it is but a misconstruing of submerged instincts, a by-product, rather than the essential. What matters the loss of a purse if its contents are worthless assignats?

Whether or not our progenitors had a finer ethical code than ours—and we must admit it was surprisingly different—I do not ask. But it is quite certain an awareness of their responsibility to an Eternal greater than themselves environed their conduct. Some in moments of exalted vision did get glimpses of its wonder and seemed to realize, as if objectively, the subconsciously inherited intuitions; some received direct leadings by the hand; and some could even tell us what they were thus told or shown, if only in symbolic word, in music, or in the upsoaring spires of their cathedrals. If we are more accurate and literal to-day in our thinking—though this is by no means certain—our fathers were more imaginative and expansive. Man's brain, say two thousand years back—such a little hand-span of time!—though he had no science, no newspapers, no machinery, was as large as our own. In other ways than ours, it must have done as much work if widely different, or it had never attained the size of ours. Men could not, I allow, check by appeal to experiment what we name their superstitions, which, though not defined as such, were but symbolic forms, like language in general, for suggesting truths not otherwise predicable. The Shepherds of Bethlehem—the same to-day as when the Star rose over it—may be in some need of science to correct their fears of afreetts and ghouls that make sleep impossible unless the lamp is kept burning; yet we may be increasingly in need of imaginative understanding that such ideas may not have been ill-

founded, although we use other words for discussing spiritual influences quite possibly as evil as fairy-tale gins.

But as regards justification for these Reminiscences, it seems to me that we may be losing along with sense of a spiritual universe, much that ought, for our social and racial good, to be remembered of some who almost immediately preceded our own personal advent. In allowing the new knowledge to usurp the ancient instincts for truth and eternity—for which certain recently departed men and women, lived and died—Life itself may very possibly be suffering. And yet, East and West, the same ideals still live and claim us. We are all of the same Indo-European stock as the Bethlehem shepherds. And it seems to me that any records of great spiritual forces that have touched any one man's experiences—even if he himself is not very important—may well be as noteworthy as scientific discoveries, although such records appertain to the laboratories of stony streets or verdant valleys, with human beings for their equipment and reagents; and although Love, Imagination, Vision, were in control of the experiments rather than mathematics and telescope or evolution and microscope.

Hence it comes that I have to write of Octavia Hill and John Ruskin. There was perhaps less need to recall Lister, no less great, seeing that his work is not forgotten. Of my father, also in the first rank of thought-reformers, I shall incidentally relate memorable things, which, even if trifling, are illuminating. Many a lesser star also must have a place in my Reminiscences, though their radiance extended hardly beyond their own orbits.

If Octavia Hill had lived in the Middle Ages, she would have been sainted, more surely than any I have known; and her statue enshrined in many a cathedral.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A lovely recumbent statue of her was, in 1928, placed in Crockham Parish Church. Perhaps it is better in that country place than if huddled somewhere among eighteenth-century horrors, or enormities of this twentieth, when Art mocks at Truth and Beauty.



I have already told how it came about that I, the dull schoolboy, discovered her sweetness and tenderness of heart years before I knew of her work. But her renown depends upon her "raising the poor without gifts," restoring their self-respect by insisting upon the landlords' rights. Her seemingly stern system, emanating from Ruskin, is still recognized as the surest way of changing slum-poverty into decency, slum-mentality into responsible citizenship. Her plan was to train ladies to collect rents, and thus, backed by the landlord's authority, to secure cleanliness of home and heart. The expedient has been adopted by local authorities, for instance in Liverpool, Chester, Stockton-on-Tees, etc. But in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, I understand, municipalities have more fully realized what wonders accrue when tact, perception of normal needs, and keen personal sympathy combine to exact a punctual rent. Nevertheless, Octavia Hill was greater than her work, and some who still remember her personality will agree that the magic of her labours is fully explained in Carlyle's words :

"Not only was Thebes built by the music of an Orpheus, but without the music of some inspired Orpheus was no city ever built, no work that man glories in, ever done. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Her biography has been written by her brother-in-law, C. Edmund Maurice,<sup>2</sup> son of Frederick Denison Maurice; but her achievements are hardly yet realized. In this book we learn how Ruskin, who did so much for her understanding of Art and Beauty, gave her charge over a few slum-houses he had bought for testing his belief that reform must begin with giving no money that was not earned. In the first place, instead of turning out the drunken, work-hating and money-grasping tenants, Miss Hill took them and their homes just as they came to her. Leaving no stone unturned to find work for the workless she never gave any money help. I

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, 1849, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Octavia Hill*, 1913.

remember her telling of an old reprobate who justified his indolence by claiming that "Thrippence giv' is better any day nor five bob *if* a bloke's got to 'arn it!" Yet she discovered real happiness in reforming such rascals and their energies. Disreputable or merely indolent, they were never ejected unless they refused the rent; every penny of which she assigned to making the houses comfortable. Before my student days I became intimate with much of the depravity she had to face; and I saw that in her "inspired Orpheus" lay the secret of her disciplinary power. Then her courage was amazing—indeed, integral in her faith.

Of which courage one remarkable, yet hitherto unrecorded, instance occurred during my early intimacy with her. It concerns her first taking possession of certain slums bought for her in 1869 by a few friends. They were known as Barrett's Court, a blind alley leading out of Wigmore Street, but now named St. Christopher's Place, and opened into Barrett Street. Although in the heart of the then fashionable West End, it was notorious for drunken brawls defying all law. Did space allow it, Octavia Hill's own description of that quintessential slumdom should be quoted; for anyone now passing through its wide, well-paved footway flanked by model tenement houses, with antique furniture creeping on to the pavement from out the dingy shops, would hardly credit the horrors she had to contend with.

On Saturday nights in this Court, the promiscuous fights—fists, bottles, or broken-up furniture the favourite weapons—were so terrible that the police were content with a cordon to prevent egress from the pandemonium. Yet on the first Saturday following the conveyance of the property to her, the little lady, on the ground of her ownership, thrust the police aside, and grappled with the screaming rabble. In half an hour perfect peace reigned, though the stalwarts of the law had done nothing to help her: perfect love had cast out fear—and the people into the houses.

In contrast with such a picture it is wonderful to recall how a few months later, the basement of one house, now converted into an entertainment hall, would be filled every week by these same tenants, while one or another body of Octavia Hill's followers would entertain them with drama or concert or "penny-readings." Too degraded for even the coarsest music-halls of that day, they enjoyed, apparently to the full, any wholesome music or recitation. So may spiritual atmosphere summon into happy recognition a dormant preference for true art—provided "no white choker was trying to score off 'em." They would listen to my father's talks for an hour fascinated by his red tie—which then had no political significance. When I and my sister Mary gave them the simplest of Mozart's duets for violin and piano, the most reverent listening would prevail. It seemed as if simple and pure music would carry them right out of their squalor, though the ribald songs of the "halls" would invite only yells and cat-calls. Later I used now and then to explore such buffooneries—now gone for ever. If perchance the management introduced a ballad well sung and appealing to the normal emotions, especially if Love hoodwinked Villainy, the applause would always excel what was automatically assigned to coarseness and immodesty; and one still marvels at the stupidity of managers concerning what the people want.

All Octavia Hill's belief in the possibilities and rights of man, even while thick encrusted with vice, explains her endeavours in yet another direction, namely, to save the common-lands for the people. Fifty years ago it was thought indelicate for a woman to thrust aside a cordon of police or to buttonhole politicians in the hope of arresting the rapacity of country landlords.<sup>1</sup> Yet though she hated force and politics, she did what official and statesman feared to touch. Her own words suggest this brave woman's subdued passion:

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Octavia Hill*, by C. Edmund Maurice, p. 262.

"Our Commons . . . the birthright of the people of England . . . are filched away by the big landowners, often without any legal right. . . . There are yet left for the common inheritance some few moorland spaces set with gorse and heather, fringed by solemn rank of guardian fir-trees, where in the sandy banks their children may hollow caves, where the heath-bell waves in the faint evening breeze, and from which—Oh, wondrous joy to us Londoners!—still the far blue distance may be seen."<sup>1</sup>

Certainly saintship was not wholly foreign to the nineteenth century; and in my hope of reminding these later days of things that should never be forgotten, I want to show how this woman fulfilled the five canonical requirements. The first of these, Fortitude, I have already instanced. The others were (2) Poverty; (3) Humility; (4) Simplicity; and (5) a minimum of five authenticated Miracles.

(2) Octavia Hill was always poor in purse, her dress plain to dowdiness. Much as she depended upon Beauty, she never thought of adorning her person, and well I recall my boyish regret that it must be so. But it was in her work that she realized money's limitations. She would insist upon the danger to philanthropic service if depending primarily upon anything but the spiritual. It was comparatively easy, she would say, to get money; but only faith in the man will rekindle the divine fire that makes a drunkard hate his vice. Money, however freely given, will no more raise Jerusalem from its ruins than build Thebes without Orpheus. Actually she never had much difficulty in getting funds, even though she admitted some soreness of heart while "waiting for the rich people to make up their leisurely minds." Prayer and personal appeal ensured her an unlimited overdraft in the Bank where thieves do not break through and steal. Poverty, she said, was a help to herself, keeping her simple and energetic: "*somehow low and humble and hardy in the midst of a somewhat intoxicating power.*"<sup>2</sup>

So much for her Poverty. Rigid economy went hand in hand

<sup>1</sup> *Our Common Land*, by Octavia Hill, pp. 148-150.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Octavia Hill*, p. 270.

with those sweetest of intrinsic virtues, viz., (3) Humility and (4) Simplicity. Both were hers. Even her complicated organizations were in no danger, she would aver, so long as the Simplicity of Spiritual power—in fact, just Love—held the reins. From her originated The Charity Organization Society; and, even if it is sometimes accused of procrastination, it still works with zeal and understanding.

It was from her lips that I first heard Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra's* uplifting words, which, she told me, had helped her again and again in Life's puzzlements:

“All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.”

Her way of almost chanting them seemed to emphasize her catholic humility. Like the lark's exultant song, Fra Angelico's beatific colour, or St. Francis's Cantic of the Sun, her rare gifts in music and painting were as surely self-ignoring as was her indefatigable serving. She wrote of this to a Quaker friend in 1874:

“You and I know that it matters little if we have to be the out-of-sight piers driven deep in the marsh, on which the visible ones are carried that support the bridge. We do not mind if hereafter people forget that there are any low down at all; if some have to be used up in trying experiments before the best way of building the bridge is discovered. . . . The bridge is what we care for, and not our place in it.”<sup>1</sup>

And again, writing of the regenerated Barrett's Court:

“. . . The people are delightful down here, so responsive, so trustful. . . . If ever I write again, I shall make a point of Ruskin's beginning the work. He feels sadly his schemes have not succeeded. They only want the admixture of hum-drum elements to make them into bodies; the soul is all there. His share is the soul!”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless we all knew that it was the self-unawareness

<sup>1</sup> *loc. cit.*, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.*, p. 264.

of her influence, her own steadfast faith—not Ruskin's "trying-out" of a theory—that gave soul to her labours.

(5) The last requirement of saintship is Miracle. If any woman out of her faith compelled mountains or sycamore trees to her will, it was Octavia Hill. Only those who love deeply have vision to realize that "Life is the cause and not the consequence of organization"; and these knew how her saintliness fully accounted for the miracles she wrought. From such vision, I suspect, came her quite logical distrust of politics, and their "luring people from cultivating their gardens."<sup>1</sup>

But in testifying to her powers, I must be truthful to the letter. I recall her once quoting Ruskin as saying how difficult, almost impossible, it was to convey a truthful impression: it tallies with an *obiter dictum* of my father that, if anyone told him it was easy enough to be truthful, he would suspect him of never having tried.

Rome demands, as essential for saintship, five authenticated miracles. Yet we who saw Octavia Hill's work might count them by hundreds. Had she with her magic wand effected her healings in a moment instead of discovering a leaven that needed time for its achievement, her work would admittedly be miraculous. From no one I ever knew did Love radiate as it did from her; so great was its virtue, that it overcame dirt and parasitism along with their legal consequences, decay and death. Always rendering unto Caesars and landlords their dues, she yet stood above the law, a woman greater even than those. The very atmosphere of her presence—with her keen humour, her ringing, most musical laugh, her communing in presence of quietude or rare Beauty—seemed portion of an Omniscient Mercy. While she gave her life to the poor, she was serving no less sweetly the rich: and even that dull schoolboy who learned from her so much more than his Latin Grammar.

<sup>1</sup> "Colour, Space and Music for the People," by Octavia Hill, *Nineteenth Century*, May 1884.

Of her own most secret cross little was known, and nothing may be told. As with other Saints, it lay between her and her God. And when to this grief was added the shock of Ruskin's mental collapse—an early warning of which I think may be seen in his attack upon her in his *Fors Clavigera*<sup>1</sup>—well, few would have come unscathed through such bitterness. But bruises, however black, *do* heal; and, *Dei gratia*, leave no visible scars; the virtue woven into the hem of Saint Octavia's garment served her own needs as well as her patients'.

Surely her free giving away of herself without worldly recompense was a miraculous denying of the first law of life, namely, self-preservation. Her Treasure was hid in a field: and to get it she sold all that she had: more than any but a very few ever knew. To all who came into any touch with her, she was "instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven . . . a householder which bringeth forth out of his Treasure things new and old."

But lest in telling what I knew of Octavia Hill's influence upon the world—not unlike Lister's upon surgery—I be accused of hero-worship, I must add yet a word about miracle. Even those who do not question its possibility look upon it as a suspension of, or interference with Natural Law. Yet its reality is admissible only if we regard it as victory of vital power over physical law; and some of higher vision may claim that all healing is like the bidding of Lazarus to come forth the grave. Least of all will physicians venture to define any limits to what is possible, seeing that Life itself is precisely a power controlling unliving matter and its indestructible forces. The whole of Life's evolution has been miraculous from the beginning, if there was one, till now; even though man may have prostituted its gifts, enslaved and robbed his fellow-men, transmuted his spiritual energy into force for ensuring his money an absurd immortality. Nor has his Science either explained or proved this evolutionary uprising.

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's *Life and Letters*, Library Edition, Vol. 29, pp. 326, 354-360.

As a last word, the following letter from Octavia Hill to one who still owes more to her than he can tell or know, will not be inopportune, seeing that it refers to the National Trust, of which she was the originating soul and inspiration; as well as to the permanent securing for the people of the land at Brandlehow, near Derwentwater. To me the letter is the more memorable for its associating with that happiness my parents' Golden Wedding:

*From Octavia Hill*

"CROCKHAM HILL,

"June 16th, 1901.

". . . It is delightful to me to think of those wonderful old days in your parents' house, Bude and its breakwater, Hammer-smith and the garden and the river and all the sweet and high converse of the good and wise in which you all grew up, and in which we who had the high privilege of their friendship shared; and to think we are now united in such a lasting work. What a light those days have thrown forward, so that now, when physical strength wanes, the might of love remains royally triumphing.

"What a gathering the Golden Wedding must have been, such a weight of memories, such a well of love that would tax even your mother's strength; but the blessing of all your love would be about them both.

"I am going down to Derwentwater on Tuesday; and as I go up the lake and see the land which I hope will one day be preserved for the public, I shall like to think of your share in the gift. Surely the blessing of this will be twofold from its own beauty and from the love and self-sacrifice of so many givers."



## CHAPTER VI

### JOHN RUSKIN'S LOVE-STORY

**A**ESOP'S Fox is possibly the most admired character in all literature though we entertain him variously. In my youth I would flippantly declare that he was misunderstood, and find something angelic in his leaping up to the unattainable; for did he not know that grapes were made cool and sweet to quench the thirst of any and every red-tailed rascal? Was there not some co-responsence between the fruit's beauty and a fox's needs, something of mutual belonging? But also I found him typically human, in that he would not allow his idealism to interfere with common sense and thus endanger his capture. Yet he certainly had a goodly share of the Satanic also; else, anticipating the method of M. Coué, he had never *suggested* to himself that the grapes might be sour, that his idealism might not hold water: and then, look you! he was for speed through the vineyard-shadows, caring not a fig for Sweetness that might betray him! Nevertheless, all honour to him that he risked much for those kindly fruits, "good for food, pleasant to the eyes." For therein he came near realizing that nor fox nor man can live by bread alone; that Beauty stands for something to be got only by leaping, never by any slaking of thirst in low-lying pools.

Such-like rambling thoughts come back to me as I set about telling the tragedy of Ruskin's love-story, and with the sole object of using letters in my possession to throw new and more light upon his wonderful character. If I am but the fox leaping up at the unattainable, trying to do something beyond me, I am not the less justified. Indeed, the task is mine to do; even though many may think that the correspondence and its circumstances are too heart-rending and hence sacred; that I should be wiser to consign



JOHN RUSKIN (1870?)



ROSE LA TOUCHE (1870?)



all the letters I hold to the flames and let the world remember only the fact of some queer love-story that set a period to the great man's best work.

But the Fox had imagination. Without even first tasting the grapes, he knew that their loveliness was of vital importance; and that, even if he failed, he must risk something and leap for them. I may even liken my feeble endeavour to the story told in these letters, only some of which I am permitted to print: for it tells of Ruskin's failure to get for himself the one thing that could make his life perfect. For which failure he paid the uttermost penalty. In saving others he could not save himself. Yet he was throughout obeying that Law of Loveliness in which he would have every man find salvation from the sordidness of modern life; a law as much necessary to our nature as is the Law of Gravity, say, to an astronomer's fathoming of stars' and planets' spatial glory. Every bit of work he did, every word of criticism he flung at our vulgarities, every adventure he undertook with mountains or gems, valleys or verdure, all tell the same consistent faith: a faith too none the less inspiring his love for Rose La Touche that it shattered his and her life.

Thanks to my parents' intimacy with Ruskin and the girl who broke him, I know more of this tragedy than anyone living. Yet I confess to a feeling of presumption in handling so sacred a mystery, albeit one quite pitiful in its denial of joy to these two beings who seemed celestial to my adoring boyhood. Still the letters reveal so much sweetness and suffering of the saintly child, so much fidelity and radiance of her Sir Galahad, that the world ought to have them.

Many will say that such personal evidences as those I hold do not concern a man's work and are best forgotten. The converse however is far more nearly true, especially when we look at the spiritual significance of these letters to my father and mother; as well as the saintly girl's, in which she describes the anguish she endured, because, paralysed

by the Victorian bondage of duty, she must deny to her passionate lover the Key to the Kingdom of Heaven, though it lay in her hands.

Others again, in their ignorance of Ruskin's work, argue that he is little read to-day, and that his personal story has little importance. Yet, simply as a narrative of intrigue, tyranny and dogmatic fears marring utterly the lives of two singularly lovely characters, it is absorbing in interest.

But I have another reason for telling the story. I believe Ruskin's message will soon be taken to heart again by English-speaking people; and I think some knowledge of his Gethsemane, even of his Calvary, may accentuate the fearlessness of his attack upon everything that undermines the worth of Life. I doubt if the Sermon on the Mount would ever have held the world—and it has done so, even though we hardly realize it even yet as vital law—if we had not been given the story, simple, consistent, utterly heroic, of the Saviour's life, His passionate love, His personal abiding by all He taught culminating in the greatest of all tragedies. Every champion of the truth must pay the personal price, is despised and rejected of men; and when we are allowed to know something of the suffering endured, he becomes just that much more endeared to us. By how much we love, by so much we believe. And for such reasons I feel that Ruskin's story will draw us to the man, even making us sure that, he being no liar, and having vision such as in convincingness is given to few, anything he gives us of fact or upbraiding, of criticism or revelation, must advantage us.

But for yet another, less cogent reason, some I have consulted think it urgent that the story of these letters be told; for it gives the lie to unsavory gossip still enjoyed by people who, unable to believe in a Sir Galahad, prefer to belittle that Knight's simplicity. Only a short time before her death in 1928, Mrs. Mary Drew, the great Gladstone's daughter, urged me to tell all I knew. She had been inti-

mate with Ruskin in her youth, and was indignant at the flippant way in which even well-read people would speak of him. "For instance," she said to me, "at a social gathering only a few days ago the conversation lit upon Ruskin; and when I referred casually to Rose La Touche, a lady I hardly knew turned and asked, 'Oh, she was one of his mistresses wasn't she?'" Mrs. Drew also hinted at even more disparaging gossip. Thus a certain unnamed reviewer of a recent, very original biography of Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> added to his critique this impertinent observation, "Of course Ruskin was an immoral man." Again *à propos* of a letter I sent to the *Spectator* (February 9, 1929) a member of my own profession wrote to me, thinking I ought to be given the real clue—one however as absurd as any fantastic detective story. He detailed particulars of an unpardonable folly said to have been committed by Ruskin, and for which he was forced to pay an unmentionable price. My correspondent claimed that the story was authenticated by a well-known Scots judge, as well as by his own grandfather! Yet it occurred in a country Ruskin had never visited, and while he was still tied to his mother's apron-strings.

Mrs. Drew, however, in the course of our conversation, particularly referred to Ruskin's unwisdom in his flattery of women, remarking that many of his published letters showed how easily his innocent if endearing remarks to charming girls might be misunderstood by them. She said that more than one she knew had her head—if not her heart—turned by such words. Yet Mrs. Drew added: "Make no mistake about this, Dr. MacDonald, he never so much as laid a hand upon any one of us." She was quite willing to count herself as one among the many who had come under his wonderful influence.

The story of Ruskin's love for Rose La Touche was, as he wrote to my father, "like *The Bride of Lammermoor* over again." Yet it falls within my Reminiscences only so far as

<sup>1</sup> *The Tragedy of John Ruskin*, by Mrs. Williams-Ellis, 1928.

this, that some courting of the angelic girl occurred in our house at Hammersmith, and that the lovers' happiness was very obvious even to me, a lad just done with school-days. A few years later my father told me all about Ruskin's marriage and of its nullification, insisting that neither event could in any way smirch his honour. He told me too how the man almost challenged him to disbelieve that any man or woman had been the worse for his friendship. Simply to have looked into Ruskin's face and felt the grasp of his hand was to believe in him utterly; and I do not remember that ever in my life I have been misled concerning any man's integrity.

There can be no doubt whatever of Ruskin's singular if romantic innocence. His close personal intimacy with, say, Lord Acton, Lord Mount-Temple, George MacDonald, men who would reject intimacy with any whose private character was suspect, especially in those days of sterner requirement, ought to be sufficient evidence of the claim. My father, moreover, before he would be party to the courtship of Rose La Touche in opposition to her parents' approval, put certain questions concerning his early marriage; and he told me all the particulars.

"Was it true that you were incapable?" my father asked, pointblank. Ruskin laughed merrily and denied it unconditionally.

"Then why," pursued my father, "did you not defend yourself?"

"Do you think, if she wanted to be rid of me, I would put any obstacle in her way? I never loved Euphie before I married her; but I hoped I might and ought to, if only for her beauty." Then he proceeded to explain his deplorable foolishness; how, over-persuaded by his parents, he proposed to a girl whom he only admired. Curiously ignorant, he presumed that the necessary love would follow marriage, as he had been assured it would. But he was not the man to claim intimate relations, to him most sacred, without the

only justification for them, namely that of loving the woman beyond anything in heaven or earth. Such notions may perhaps seem incredible to most men; yet the fact of incompatibility of sentiment occasionally standing in the way of completed marriage, even with those quite normal, is fully instanced in the annals of medical jurisprudence.

After this assurance, my father could conscientiously sanction my mother's efforts to do anything possible for Ruskin and his Rose, who, in her letters, would subscribe herself as my mother's "still unfledged but loving nestling, Rose."

When all his hopes came crashing about him in ruins; when accusations against his moral conduct were flung before the lovely, imaginative, worshipping girl to make her reject him; when his denial of these charges was, as my parents knew, deliberately withheld from her; when the secret attacks upon him were at last traced by my parents to a certain woman whose name need not be even hinted at; Ruskin declared what my father told me, and as I gather from a letter of my father to him, that no woman had suffered for his friendship.

I ought to print at least one of Ruskin's noble letters to my father on this subject, but I was forbidden by his late literary executor, even though it refers only to accusations trumped up for the purpose apparently of alienating Rose. A letter of hers to my father proves how terrible was the shock of now learning that the man she had adored since childhood was one of the basest; and I shall refer to it presently.

But first, for the beloved Ruskin's sake, I must make it clear what sort of a maiden this was who at last roused from its dreamings his full manhood, although she, in her frailness of health, seems to have been terrified at the passion of its appeal. Her character, her veritable saintliness even in childhood, her deep and spontaneous sympathy with suffering and poverty, are charmingly portrayed by Mrs.



La Touche in letters to my mother and father in the early days of their friendship. Her mother's estimate moreover is confirmed by Rose's own letters to my father, when she was a little older. It is apparent enough that Ruskin's intensity of feeling for a child thus easily impassioned to right every wrong, began when she was only ten years old. How wise Mrs. La Touche might be with her own children I can judge from her delightful ways with us children. I was about seven when her intimacy with us began in 1863, and we all quickly loved her; and, in later years, when her letters came into my hands, I realized her gift for literary expression. She was then full of admiration for my father, who was already winning distinction for his Scots novels; and a correspondence began between the lady and my mother. I have naturally no letters of my mother's; but many of Mrs. La Touche's are worth quoting.

Ruskin had first met Mrs. La Touche in 1858. It seems that she first wrote to him for advice about her three children's education. Thereupon, Rose being nine and Ruskin thirty-nine, began the long friendship which ended only in the wreck of any possible happiness for either of them.<sup>1</sup> The man's overpowering love for the little maid must have been quite precipitate, and his description of her as he first saw her is notable:

"A little stiff in her way of standing, her rather deep, blue eyes, the profile of her lips perfectly lovely, and her hair in short soft curls about her forehead."

Yet what I myself recall of her in 1871 is her smile, pathetic and winning as a trusting child's. Neither Ruskin's portrait of her, given in Vol. 35 of the Library Edition of his works, nor the photograph lent me for these pages by the late Mrs. Arthur Severn, give any idea of a beauty, which neither camera nor lover could suggest.

Yet here was a summons; and to obey its call Ruskin

<sup>1</sup> *Praeterita*, Vol. III.

must at once offer to give Rose and her sister, Emily, lessons in drawing. He has told all the world how he found them much his superior in powers of design: a remark I recalled on reading, many years later, Tolstoy's belief in children's innate genius for literary expression. In the third volume of *Praeterita* (1889) Ruskin gives us the first letter Rose ever wrote him—a sweet child-letter full of fine feeling and keen intelligence: “no vanity in it,” he says, “her one thought being always how she can help him or give him joy.” In 1860, he tells us, “a new epoch of life and death” began, in that his parents could no longer travel with him; but Rose, he adds, was in heart with him always, and “all I did was for her sake.” Yet she was but eleven years old!

Mrs. La Touche's description to my mother of her Rosie when sixteen, and written from their home in Ireland, makes delightful reading:<sup>1</sup>

*From Mrs. La Touche*

“. . . The Wild Rose is very well, but wilder than ever. I sometimes wonder if she will ever be a civilized being. She is out in the dew at break of day—and all day long she is in and out let the weather be what it may, and not one single thing that girls do does she do—except a little music when she pleases. She has the run of all the cottages and cabins about, gets fed from the labourers' dinners and is an exception to every rule and custom of society. If your husband could see her life, he would photograph her in a book. A thing happened in Scotland which reminded me so of the *Hidden Life*,<sup>2</sup> Rose being the heroine, and a shepherd boy of 15 the hero. She got lost on the moors alone, and with her accustomed intrepidity she captured a boy to show her the way. For miles she walked over the heather with her captive. She told me of her talk with him, and how *very* kind he was to her, helping her in rough places. He told her

<sup>1</sup> I have had full permission to use Mrs. La Touche's letters, first from the late Percy La Touche, Rose's brother, and later from Mrs. Hotham, Rose's god-daughter and niece.

<sup>2</sup> A long poem published by my father in 1857.

he wouldn't be out after dark for the world and was surprised that she didn't mind. When they came to a house he said, 'I hope there's no gentry here to see *you* walking with a dirty lad like me!' . . . At last she found us, and, with her hand on her small knight's shoulder said, 'You can't think what care this boy has taken of me—and he has so far to go home—and I had only my knife to give him'!<sup>1</sup> The Knight and the Lady would have made a pretty picture—in a background of purple moor and golden sky. . . .

"Rose is sometimes, not always, pretty—anyhow she is very slender and very fair and a creature one would readily idealize into a sort of Una. . . ."

Again, a few weeks later :

"We had a curious experience another day. We went to see Dhuleep Singh and his Arab wife at a sort of log hut in the Highlands where they had buried themselves. You know he is enormously rich and accustomed to every kind of splendour and luxury. He was brought up a Christian and, like my husband, he is not very much the worse. [Mr. La Touche, a banker and large landowner in Ireland had recently been converted and baptized by Spurgeon.] But this Oriental Prince has dropped all his splendour, except a fragment here and there. I have seen many Highland shooting lodges but never one so uncomfortable as his—no carriage road within 4 miles and only one tiny sitting-room to eat and live in. But I was charmed with his sweet little child-wife—a tiny, soft-eyed, brown, quiet child, with wistful spaniel eyes—features a little African, but the sweetest and truest expression I ever saw on a girl's face—and little, lithe brown hands nervously clasped, matching the fixed appealing eyes that seemed to say, 'Oh, big stranger, don't frighten me!' That's the Maharanee—she was dressed in black stuff with a little plain collar and didn't wear a single ornament. The Prince said, 'Will you excuse my wife? She does not know English manners.' Whereupon the brown face brightened with a comforted smile, and she pointed to a chair for me and made a place beside herself for Rosie and then turned the big eyes on her Master with a look that said: 'I do know manners a little.' . . . At last a very sweet voice began to struggle with our hard English words—and she and Rosie made each other out pretty

<sup>1</sup> The knife was a much treasured present from one or other of my parents.

well—wild things both, the Caucasian and the African. ‘Have you ever seen snow?’ asked Rosie. ‘Yes—I liked it—I walked in it!’ was the reply. But Rosie looked like the snow-treader—the other’s feet seemed made for walking knee-deep in Syrian lilies and red anemones. . . .

“Here a soft heavy footstep like a tiger’s was heard on the vibrating floor, and lo! an awful Afreet stood close to us. His head the size of an ottoman by dint of folds of turban and just up to the ceiling of the low room—his face nearly black with terrible eyes and bristly black beard—his gigantic body clothed in gleaming orange and crimson silk. It was not an ogre but a butler—in fact *It* was lunch. . . .

“A little beyond, a group of Highlanders, with a crimson and Purple Indian among them, were drawing a net out of the loch close at hand. And the Prince ate and drank abundantly and told us how very happy he was and delighted to have found a wife who knew nothing about London. ‘Indeed,’ he said rejoicingly, ‘she knows nothing at all.’ . . .”<sup>1</sup>

About the same date, Mrs. La Touche writes again to my mother:

“Rosie is quite well—the cold makes no difference to her, nor does rain or snow or the bitter white frost and fog of morning and evening. Anything to her is better than many hours indoors. . . . She is perfectly wild, and how she is ever to be made a modern ‘young lady’ of, I can’t imagine! She is out from dawn till dark, and it is utterly useless to expect from her any restraints of civilization, such as wearing a bonnet under any circumstances whatsoever—or decently thin [!] boots. . . .

“She is out always at early morn—in and out of every cottage, as if she was everybody’s dog. . . . She is a wonderfully *available* little creature in all the saddest realities of life, and yet they never do her a bit of harm. I wish Mr. MacDonald could put her

<sup>1</sup> The Indian Prince referred to had been Maharajah of Lahore. After successive invasions of British territory, his Sikhs were routed, and Dhuleep was deposed, a pension of £40,000 a year being settled on him. He embraced Christianity and came to England. An estate was purchased for him in Suffolk by the British Government, his pension being equivalently reduced to £25,000. But his notions of the simple life could not be supported upon so meagre an income, and, as some may still remember, he sold the Koh-i-noor diamond to be added to the British Crown.

in a book—with her cream-coloured pony and her huge dog, and her wonderfully independent ways. . . .

“Rosie gets on with all the poor people better than I do. I am afraid of intruding. They have no servant at the door to say ‘not at home’ or ‘particularly engaged.’ But Rosie runs in and out of the cabins as a breeze of wind might do. She took me into one yesterday—as a sort of auxiliary Force on an unmanageable widow, whose favourite son, after a good deal of neglect and unkindness, has married a girl hated by the said widow, who now won’t see or speak to her son, tho’ loving him with all the bitterness of her faithful, vindictive Irish heart. . . . The youth, Tom, is in our employment, and Rosie talks to him about his poor Mother till she makes him cry; but he can’t and won’t ask his mother’s pardon without insisting on her ‘taking back’ the ugly things she said about his wife—and then she raves at him and says still uglier things, and he bangs out of the cabin door, and tells Rosie how it was, and cries again. So Rosie brought me yesterday to the Mother—and you should have seen and heard. It was strange—the intense bitterness and revengeful feeling and the wild cries and tears and rocking up and down. . . . The scene ended in her promising to receive her Tom if one of us would come with him. So Rosie is to lead home the prodigal son and in time we hope to get the daughter-in-law received also. They are all Roman Catholics; but with regular Irish unreason, the indignant woman has abandoned Chapel, priest, confession and all, because the priest married her son without consulting her! . . .”

Mrs. La Touche’s letters certainly give her a place among gifted women; and did space permit, more of her correspondence with my mother would be welcomed. Yet while I am puzzled and amazed by her conduct to Ruskin and her adored child, I must bear witness to her fidelity to my father and mother, and her charming ways to us, their children. But if a man, with such tenderness and penetrating vision as Ruskin’s is ready to find in a woman’s children all that he desires and believes in, it is small wonder if she think herself included in his lavish generosity; or if at last she succumb to a personality almost celestial in its simplicity of heart and purity of outlook. My parents never thought her feelings for him were in any way irregular.

For that matter we were all in love with the man, parents and children, as well as some dearest friends, such as Octavia Hill. So a letter of Mrs. La Touche's to my father (1863), soon after she had introduced Ruskin to him, is quite intelligible, even if it seem at first surprising :

“. . . I have to thank you for a great deal—most of all for what you could not help—for loving and helping and letting yourself be loved by that poor St. C. [Rose's pet name for Ruskin, 'St. Crumpet'.] Nothing will ever get me right, save getting him right—for somehow if he were holding on to a straw and I to a plank, I must leave my plank to catch at his straw. Still, I don't care what becomes of me so long as anyhow he can be brought to some sort of happiness and life. He knows that very well, and is welcome to know it. I don't think anyone on earth can help him or understand him as well as you can. . . .”

Some may wonder if it is possible that the mother's attraction to the man can account for her subsequently harbouring malicious disparagements of Ruskin's private life, invented, I do believe, by a certain woman whose name, as I have already vowed, I will not even hint; disparagements absolutely discredited by his best friends and succinctly denied by himself. Yet Mrs. La Touche, it is likely, may have partly credited them, however reluctantly; and it would appear that she felt justified in quoting them as a help in dissuading her daughter from a marriage, which, for other reasons, she believed was undesirable, possibly quite wrong. A letter of my father to Ruskin—to be presently quoted, can only thus be interpreted. By such means Rose was driven to refuse his offer of marriage, though old enough to know her own mind. Yet it is certain that Mrs. La Touche, as long as Rose was only a child, did everything to foster the lovely and beneficent attachment.

For many years, until indeed the waning of Ruskin's mental vigour which followed close upon his break with Rose and her own collapse and death, his intimacy with my father was unchanging; and how constantly, almost intoler-

ably, he was burdened by his idyllic love for this once adoring maiden is suggested in this characteristic letter:

*From John Ruskin*

“BADEN,

“November 8th, 1863.

“MY DEAR MR. MACDONALD,

“I have your sweet letter, and the verses which are delightful, and I shall be so glad to see you again—and hear you talk—though you can’t do me any good—in one way I like, to hear you. This is only to say I’m grateful to you for loving me—and that I hope to see more of your kind faces, yours and your wife’s—than I did last year. What sort of a place am I in? It used to be prettier here than it is (as every place in Switzerland) but it is still pretty—in a limestone valley—wooded with oak and pine. Hapsburg within a walk—the Alps within sight—the Rhine within an hour’s rail-roll—every kind of thing within reach, except my old heart. Alas me—I’ve been born again with a vengeance—twofold more the child of—darkness—not Hell. I’m heartily uncomfortable whenever I come near the hells they are making of their great towns with steam and avarice and cruelty and accursed labour—I’m so puzzled with everything and so dead to everything. . . .”

Judging from her brilliant descriptions to my mother of the dire poverty around them during the Irish Famine, Mrs. La Touche seems to have still enjoyed all manner of social privileges. But not so the little daughter. Her letters to my parents show how thoroughly unhappy she was made by the peasant misery. As a pupil, first of Ruskin in his contempt for misused wealth, and then of George MacDonald in his teaching that God’s love for man should shine in man’s love for his neighbour, her home’s luxury, when compared with their tenants’ poverty, looked to her intolerable; and the paradox seems to have been largely responsible for frequent illnesses. Concerning one such attack—apparently similar to a later illness which Mrs. La Touche described to my mother as puzzling the doctors in that the child developed the most extraordinary powers of clair-

voyance—Ruskin wrote that it had assuredly nothing to do with any regard she may have had for him [she then being twelve years old!] that she likes him to pet her, but is “in no manner of trouble when he leaves her.”<sup>1</sup> Writing on his birthday, February 8, 1864, to my father, Ruskin says:

“I can’t love anybody except my Mouse-pet in Ireland, who nibbles me to the very sick-death with weariness to see her.”

To this my father seems to have asked more particularly about Rose; and Ruskin replies, after thanking him for the enquiry, that the child is “just a wild fawn, and likes him about as much as a nice squirrel would.” Then he adds that Rose has sent him orders in Switzerland to go to my father, as “the only person who could do him any good. . . . She’s the only living thing in the world I care for.”

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, Library Edition, Vol. I, p. 386.



## CHAPTER VII

### A SAINT ON THE RACK

IT will be straining no point if we conclude from Rose La Touche's letters to my father in 1872 that Ruskin's love for her was responsible for the grief that was destined to overwhelm her. His influence and teaching had, as I have indicated, compelled dissatisfaction even as a child with the luxury of her home contrasted with the frightful poverty of her father's tenants. It was almost unbearable. She seems, too, to have got little sympathy from her mother, who, a little later, was bewailing to my mother her own hardship in having to share her husband's heroic efforts to keep his bank's door open during the Irish famine, when most similar houses were suspending payment.

It may be noted that in 1866 Rose, being then eighteen, had bidden her lover wait three years. For, in writing to Mrs. Drew, then Mary Gladstone, in 1879, four years after Rose's death, he says, "To-morrow, Lady Day, it will be thirteen years since she first bade me 'wait three,' and I'm tired of waiting."

But to make still clearer the character of this girl, "so like St. Catherine of Bologna," said Ruskin, I must give portions of her letters to my father. The truth is always infinitely worth knowing, even if it concerns only the solar system; but when it elucidates the martyrdom of two people wonderful in all divine gifts, yet crucified like "malefactors one on the right hand and the other on the left," surely everything possible ought to be known.

*From Rose La Touche*

"HARRISTOWN, BRANNACKSTOWN,

"NEWBRIDGE,

"April 20th, 1872.

"DEAR MR. MACDONALD,

". . . Do you think God ever puts us into positions where we cannot do His will? . . . Should we always consider that circumstances are God's Providence for us? Or does He teach us truths we are powerless to obey? And how are we to keep ourselves from being tortured with disquiet when this is so?

"May I explain my puzzles by telling you a little of my life?

"I have nothing in the world to do from day to day but what I like. All my parents want from me is that I should be well and happy. This seems a slight requirement, but I cannot fulfil it—because the conditions of my life (which I cannot alter) do not make it possible for me to be well and happy. For my daily life is simply hour after hour of leisure for pondering, wishing, praying, enduring. To drive and walk, see one or two poor people, paint, read, play—and at the end of each day I feel like a child tired out after a long, lonely holiday. But continual pain sometimes torturing, keeps me from being content with this lethargic life. And my own needs, which are enormous, have taught me to sympathize with *all* those that need—the sinful, the doubting, the sorrowful and the suffering. For I have learnt to *realize* how full the world is of darkness and suffering—and how impossible it is to sit content in believing I am possessed of everlasting treasures—as well as this world's goods which I may not share with those that need. I go about among our poor people here and come back in despair sometimes. They lead a life so much more like Christ's than mine, and I go jingling off from their doors in the carriage with my ponies and bells, but with a sadder heartache than many of them could know. They have more childlike trust and faith in *their* sufferings than I have—and I want to be more on an equality with them—to serve them, help them, learn from them. 'Be happy yourself, separate yourself from the world, and preach to those you can reach'—this is my father's religion, and he is *very* good. But it is a religion that I cannot feel is the whole of Christianity.

"My Mother hates the place and does not interest herself at all in it—and cannot bear me to talk to her on the subjects I feel most strongly upon. Though she has been most devoted to me when I have been very ill, she is not happy with me. . . .

"Can you give me a word of counsel?—for I believe you will understand; although I have expressed myself so dimly. For the life that I now live *is* my life, as I shall not marry (unless indeed one alters utterly and miraculously)—and I want to live it well. And will you send me your good wishes and prayers sometimes?"

*From the Same*

"15th May, 1872.

"DEAR MR. MACDONALD,

". . . Why, I wonder, does God allow His instruments to go so out of tune? Why does He place instruments together who are only capable of playing the same tune in different keys? . . .

"I used to want to die, now I want to live—and I cannot help feeling that He has some better life for me than this—a shadow, adding to the shadows of this world that He meant me to take in His sunlight, to rejoice in it myself and radiate it to others. I would die for Papa and Mama—they are almost my *all*—but I would rather live for them.

"But on the contrary, friends I have met in strange ways, very poor and suffering people, curious characters that have temptations I can't understand, form half of a strange clasp that draws my heart to them—these are the people that really come into my *life*, who are helped and made happy in some odd way by me as *I am*. They give me the harmony I want but can never get at home.

"I believe a great overflowing ocean of love, or rather a fire of love, might fuse us all together, might alter the Home that to me constitutes life—if God would send it. For '*tout aimer c'est tout comprendre.*' . . .

"I have been tossed to and fro God knows fearfully—heart and desires, head and judgment. *My* interpretation of right and my Parents' all pull different ways to puzzle a brain that cannot bear perplexity.

"I can only love and desire, and these two 'things' keep me from despair. Yet I love what I cannot have and desire what I can't do. . . .

"Last night I sat down at my Mother's feet and laid my head on her knee aching to rest my heart there too.—But she said I was a baby instead of a young woman of 24! and though I tried to draw closer and she tried to understand, the end of it was

wakeful nights for us both. If Love gives way, how terrible it is, for the contrary might be so divinely good and glad. . . .

"Please give my love to Mrs. MacDonald."

*From the Same to George MacDonald*

"May 14, 15, and 16, 1872.

". . . God must know the sorrowful perplexity of my present life. . . . Once one has learnt to understand suffering one has entered into a brotherhood with other sufferers. . . .

"It cost me more than my head could bear to find a poor family living near here, father, mother, and 10 children so poor that the newest baby whom the Mother was too ill to nurse could be fed on nothing better than bread and water.—And then here a dessert with forced strawberries and cream finishing up a 'sumptuous repast.' 'Ought these things so to be?' My mother would be distressed for a whole day if I did not eat my dinner; yet here was a small life ready to pass away, and no one knew or cared. And yet we professed to follow the example of Christ. . . .

"Of course I could ask, and get a cup of milk daily from our dairy; but I could not ask for and get an answer to the thoughts that overpower me. . . . My life has altered so much lately because I have lost so much out of it. . . . I know that what I need is not medicine and food; and I shall not, I believe, marry. *If it could have been so that I could have kept the friend who has brought such pain and suffering and torture and division among so many hearts—if there had never been anything but friendship between us—how much might have been spared.* . . .

"Perhaps life would be altogether different to me if I was perfectly strong and well, but . . . all my troubles came to me at the very door of life, and I have no experience of any happy, hopeful life. . . .

"I wonder if you will at all understand what I have written and if any words will be given to you for me. Many that you have already written have revived me. Only do not write again if it is difficult to you. I am very grateful to you.

"Your affectionate ROSE."

It appears that medical advice urged a change of environment, and so the desolate girl at last found some practical help from visiting those wonderful friends of my parents,

the Cowper-Temples, first in Curzon Street, and thence at Broadlands, without her mother.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that a little before this threatened breakdown, some enemy of Ruskin had brought accusations against him more infamous than heterodoxy and atheism, and that Rose's parents thought they ought not to be withheld from her. It is certain, moreover, from evidences in my hands, that Ruskin's answers to these calumnies were deliberately kept from her—of course in her interest, as it was supposed. The fearsome nature of these reports is proved in a letter from Rose to Ruskin, sent under cover to my father, but which, having been asked by her to use his discretion, he did not forward: it was too late, and rightly Ruskin never saw it.

The letter itself is too harrowing to justify its actual reproduction; but I do not feel it will be dishonourable on my part to suggest something of its substance seeing that it proves how wickedly Ruskin had been calumniated. It appears to have been written about four weeks after Rose left home. She begins by telling him that just because he is and always has been so dear to her she does not know how to think of him. But she refuses to judge or condemn him, even if she could believe what they said he had written of his past life. Yet she feels bound to turn from him. His love for her, all his "great perception of whatever things are good and lovely, all the gifts that God has given you" will not expiate his wrongness towards God. "How the angels must sorrow over you, and some hearts are sorrowing still." Finally she does not wonder that his faith is shipwrecked, that Christ is to him only the Christ of others, seeing that he, Ruskin, cannot see beyond this life. She continues that she would lay down her life for him, would even deny herself the certain hope of ever meeting him hereafter, if her love

<sup>1</sup> William Cowper-Temple, afterwards Lord Mount-Temple. He was one of Ruskin's, as well as of my father's, closest friends. He and Sir Thomas Dyke Acland were the original trustees of Ruskin's Guild of St. George, and it was thanks to Ruskin's inspiration that both Epping and the New Forests were saved for the people.

could change him. She ends with words which make me wonder whether the younger generation can fathom their tragic calumniation :

“All I can do is to speak of you to Christ . . . in His love our hearts might be drawn together again ; in His forgiveness, redemption, renewing, all that is past might be blotted out as a thick cloud. . . . Be Christ’s and one day or other I shall find ‘my piece that was lost.’ . . . Is it a light thing to lose eternally what one has loved? . . .”

It seems to me that this letter as well as one of Rose’s to my mother in similar if less heart-breaking words is inexplicable unless some malicious enmity had been at work. Against whatever charges had been brought we must always remember Ruskin’s utterly outspoken claims of his innocency. Also I may give here the only bit of writing extant of my father’s to Ruskin : partly as evidence of my father’s belief in Ruskin and partly to show how fearless he was even to the point of gravely reproaching Ruskin for his distrust of his friends. But clearly it is only a copy of notes jotted down from which the letter was to be or had been constructed. It is in pencil. That I found it preserved among Ruskin’s letters to my father suggests its importance.

*From George MacDonald to John Ruskin*

“. . . First of all, I must repudiate . . . your requesting me to speak to Mr. Cowper-Temple for my own satisfaction. What satisfaction can I want? Even if you had not yourself satisfied me concerning what I wanted no satisfaction in, years ago, what right should I have to seek satisfaction? I want no satisfaction concerning you. . . . I have nothing to consult about. . . .

“My offence seems to be that I have made so much of R.’s faith in us, as enabling her to hope in regard to the untruth of what is said of you. . . . You speak of explanations. *Not one of those ever reached her.* Mr. C. T. wrote to her father, probably ; you sent letters to her aunt. The former was never mentioned to her. The latter she has only seen within the last fortnight or so, and *they were interpreted to her, in her girlish ignorance, by the lurid light of Mrs. . . .’s letters to her mother as confirming the worst things*

*in them. . . .* Surrounded with false and devilish representation, and those coming to her from the lips of another, hearing no defence of you, or anything you said to rebut the charges. . . .”

The break here is in the copy. The italicizing of certain words is my own doing.

As one consequence of the correspondence my parents inevitably never renewed their friendship with Mrs. La Touche.

Rose was possibly largely influenced by the narrow dogmatism of her father, hardly qualified by the then fashionable broad-churchiness of a mother of whose apparent harshness Rose had written to my mother. Likely enough the daughter altogether misinterpreted Ruskin's doubts, even counting them as unpardonable infidelity. If ever he talked to her with the touch of provocative ill-temper suggested by these words which I quote from one letter to my father, it is small wonder that the sensitive, heroic girl should brood over them and exaggerate their importance. As I remember his talks with my father, Ruskin always put himself in the witness-box and gave his evidence in favour of any defendant:

“. . . I suppose it is quite impossible for you dear good people, who think it your duty to believe whatever you like—and to expect always to get whatever is good for you, to enter into the minds of us poor wicked people, who sternly think it our duty to believe nothing but what we've been used to get. Now—if it were possible for me to go to my Father in direct personal way (which it is not) the very first thing I should say to him would be—‘What have you been teasing me like this for?—Were there *no* toys in the cupboard you could have shown me—but the one I can't have?’ . . .”

It is tolerably clear that, closely following upon Rose's letters of 1872, my parents and the Cowper-Temples were able to disentangle the truth from the spider's mesh, and to leave the girl with love and hope once again. But she never recovered. Nor will the truth of the tragic story ever be

known beyond the fact that Ruskin was never given the one "toy in the cupboard" which should have saved her lover, and thus herself.

A few years later I myself came to know Lady Mount-Temple with some intimacy, and to feel as sure as man is ever allowed to be, even with directest evidence, that, though she may not have been always wise, she could never have helped—not by any juggling whatsoever—any good girl to marriage with a man concerning whom there was the slightest uncertainty. Probably Rose's health was by this time too shaken for matrimony to be right. Yet, from what I remember, and looking upon her with the experience of later years, it seems to me highly probable that love's sanction and ingrain wisdom would have brought her into touch with the healing hem for the miraculous healing of her wounds. To-day we should give her malady the name of psychasthenia, and, in spite of its applicability, should cure her. I have known more wonderful things happen.

Ruskin was now in Venice. What passed between the date of Rose's latest letter and June 30th—only eleven days—I do not know, but this telegram from Ruskin to my father, and two letters following, show that a final adjustment was almost accomplished. The telegram reads thus:

"I will not move unless in certainty of seeing her. If you and Mrs. MacDonald can bring her to Italy I will meet you at Geneva."

But Ruskin's bitterness suggests hesitation over the responsibility.

"VENICE,  
"30th June, 1872.

"MY DEAR MACDONALD,

" . . . I have a little to add to the telegram I sent to-day. I will not allow any more doubtful measures in this thing . . . unless in absolute certainty of seeing her. . . .

"If you and Mrs. MacDonald can take charge of her, I will meet you at Geneva, and we would return to Venice all together—if R. so pleased—or I would return alone—after having for-



given each other what each may have to forgive—but I will have no talking. I have thrice all but lost my life for this, and my life is now not mine. The little of it she has left me must be tormented with anger no more. With hope it cannot be disturbed—the time for that is past. I trusted her with my whole heart; she threw it to the dogs to eat, and must be satisfied. But we might at least contrive that we could each think of the other without horror.

“Thank you always for what you have done—now or in time past, and believe me ever your loving

“J. RUSKIN.”

Again :

“VENICE,  
“3rd July, 1872.

“MY DEAR MACDONALD,

“. . . She has every means of ascertaining what I am, by merely hearing my friends, as well as my enemies; the first are worthier than the last as it happens. Mr. Cowper-Temple has still in his hands the evidence I gave him to lay before her last year.

“She need not fear exciting vain hopes—nor need you. She has broken my heart much too thoroughly and finely for any such weeds to grow in the rift. . . .

“Ever your affectionate,

“J. RUSKIN.”

There is good evidence that Rose herself was anxious for another meeting, but could not do anything in opposition to her parents. Ruskin's next letters, not quite intelligible without the corresponding ones, imply irritability at Rose's continued misunderstanding.

“VENICE,  
“8th July, 1872.

“MY DEAR MACDONALD,

“I had your wife's letter yesterday. I will come home; and when I come, it will not be to talk.

“. . . What can in any wise be done for her peace—or, if she be still capable of it, happiness—I am ready to do, . . . if she will make up her mind, and tell me face to face. . . . I have surely already done enough—though it be little—to enable her to judge of my character—without depending on one man's ? George MacDonald's] faith in me. . . . What I choose to say

of myself, I have said to all men and women, in the beginning of *Sesame and Lilies*. Let her read that. . . .”

“. . . I wrote with absolute openness to her aunt. They burn my letters and then ask me to write more. I am not a saint. Rose is—but a cruel one. . . . What good there is in me she has power to learn if she will. I am at least, Ever her servant,

“J. RUSKIN.”

So Ruskin came home:

“MILAN,

“Sunday, 14th June, 1872.

“MY DEAR MACDONALD,

“. . . It is exactly ten years since R. wrote to me in this city—saying—‘a wreath of wild rose is not so easily disentangled.’ I have had ten years of suffering, since then; and my story is ended. If R. chooses to be friends, she may, I should think, after keeping me waiting six years. . . .

“At any rate, D.V., I will be in England on the 27th inst. . . .”

In point of date then comes a letter from Rose to my father. It explains a great deal, and its postscript openly confesses her love for Ruskin:

“. . . I want to say some things to you please.

“My father and mother want me to come home on Monday and I feel I ought to obey them. . . .

“I believe you can understand me. I know what the misery of believing the ‘evil reports’ I have heard of him have been to me.

“I cannot trust him as you do. Remember, the words and beliefs of my parents and the advisers and counsellors who have brought me up *must* weigh with me, and come to me as they could not to you; for they are in some measure the divinely appointed guardians to whom I must give heed.

“If your faith in Christ was wholly shaken, or irretrievably gone, would you not be a different man, would not life be a different thing to you?”

“You will understand, almost in the same way, how the absolute overturning of a strongly spiritual love and faith alters the whole existence; and *a child’s love, growing on year after year, deepening in silence and suffering, becomes a strong, intense spiritual power and passion. . . .*”

The italics are mine.

Yet Rose, probably quite unfit for travel, did not immediately return to Ireland, but came on a short visit to us at Hammersmith. There the lovers met, and both were for a few days supremely happy.

It is these days that bring back to me the great man and the fragile girl, as if in living presence. I recall clearly Ruskin's grandeur of face, his searching blue eyes, and his adorable smile—his ultramarine cravat also! Supreme was my joy in the grip of his hand, or in running to bring him a cab. I remember the frail Rose, so amazingly thin yet with such high colour and her great eyes, with the tenderest of smiles possessing so readily her exquisitely red lips. I was astonished at her being alive, seeing that, I well remember, her dinner once consisted of three green peas, and, the very next day, of one strawberry and half an Osborne biscuit! She was too frail to sit at table, of course. But Ruskin would be left alone with her either in the drawing-room or in the study. Here is Ruskin's letter:

“HERNE HILL, S.E.,

“Sunday, 11th Aug., 1872.

“MY DEAR MACDONALD,

“A pretty note from Mrs. MacDonald came last night saying how sorry you both were for me. And it is right—but not to be grieved that you had part in bringing this to pass; for it is much better as it is than as it was. I have had three days of heaven, which I would have very thankfully bought with all the rest of my life. . . . *They* were *clear* gain out of the ruin; more may yet be saved. But even as it is, I am better far than I was: I thought, before I saw her, that she could never undo the evil she had done—but she brought me back into life, and put the past away as if it had not been—with the first full look of her eyes. . . . But think what it was to have her taught daily horror of me—for years and years—in silence. I had prepared myself to hear that she had died in indignation with me. I know now that she is ill—but she is at peace with me, and I may help to save her. I think you may be *very* happy in having done all this, for us both. . . . Her illness is very grave—her entire soul being paralysed by the poisoned air.<sup>1</sup> What I can or may be allowed to

<sup>1</sup> How near this phrase corresponds with the new word *psychasthenia*!

do for her, I will. She still is happy to be with me, if she will let herself be happy; and she can't forbid my loving her, though she fain would. How infinitely better this is for me, than if I had never found the creature! Better all the pain, than to have gone on with nothing to love through life, as I might, twelve years ago. So now, believe me,

"Ever your grateful,  
"J. RUSKIN."

Directly after this meeting Rose went again to Broadlands. Thence she wrote the following to my mother. Though undated, it is easily placed:

"DEAREST MOTHER-BIRD,

" . . . His last words to me were a blessing. I felt too dumb with pain to answer him; yet God knows if any heart had power to bless another, mine used that power for him—though I could only yield him up to greater Love than mine. I cannot be to him what he wishes, or return the vehement love which he gave me, which petrified and frightened me, Motherbird, as you perhaps will understand. Don't be hard on me. When we come 'face to face' in that Kingdom where love will be perfected—and yet there will be no marrying or giving in marriage—we shall understand one another. Meantime, God cannot have meant nothing but pain to grow out of the strange link of love that still unites us to one another. Somehow or other it must work for good. My love to you all—especially to my other parent. I shall never be sorry for this meeting tho' it seems to have brought pain. We cannot see to the end of things that concern heart-and-soul growths that have no end. And we are powerless to be anything but true—if we are God's at all. . . .

"Your still unfledged but loving nestling,  
"ROSE."

Only two more of Ruskin's are needed:

"HERNE HILL, S.E.,  
"14th August, 1872.

"MY DEAR MACDONALD,

"Yes . . . I will come to see you and to thank Mrs. MacDonald for bringing me from Venice—for it was *her* letter that did it.

"I had another day—from morn till even—on Monday—and should be content to die now—if I am never to have another;

but I am so thankful to find her so noble. It is not her fault but her glory, that she cannot love me better. I only wonder she ever loved me at all. . . ."

There the sad story must wait. "We know in part and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Even so, a final letter of Ruskin must be given. After her death my father sent Ruskin his translations from *Novalis*.

"CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE,  
"June 2nd, 1875.

"DEAR MACDONALD,

"I am so grateful for your letter and those *Novalis* things.

"I am a very different creature and can only read for him not myself, but I can take the first verse of the VIth for myself otherwise.

"I have fought no good fight except that the little fight I have made is from narrow vantage-ground. For, you know, so far as I can see or feel or understand, she is only gone where the hawthorn blossoms go.

"Ever lovingly yours,  
"J. R."

The verse referred to, as translated by my father, goes thus :

"My faith to thee I break not  
If all should faithless be,  
That gratitude forsake not  
The world eternally.  
For my sake Death did sting thee  
With anguish keen and sore,  
Therefore with joy I bring thee  
This heart for evermore."

This letter seems to mark the onset of that illness which struck the mighty man down; concerning which I find some notable words written to my mother by one who, if Rose La Touche was a Catherine of Bologna, was a Joan of Arc and did as much for Ruskin's warfare against the Dragon in its threats to destroy England, as the cloistered child did

little for his faith. I refer to Octavia Hill. When this illness came upon her master, she was in Rome, and she writes thus of him to my mother :

“ . . . One is thankful the visions were bright and of consummation in hope. I like to think of his thoughts turned back lovingly to Mr. MacDonald. Bread cast on the waters is never lost, I think. . . . I am so thankful for the glimpse behind the veil about Ruskin ; was it not strange and merciful that it should come just to you and to us? . . . ”

I do not know precisely to what the words refer, but they suggest lovely happenings. Further she writes :

“ . . . I think of Ruskin quite incessantly. . . . The poor brain has yielded to the long strain and broken from its hold on the world. . . . His once magnificent power, consecrated so long to the service of men amidst such hard struggles of pain, being now set to imagine fair things not actually realized yet on earth, but still . . . in keeping with those of their Maker and his God. . . . ”

Ruskin and my father never met again, and all attempts at correspondence were frustrated. Though Ruskin came back from that land of bright vision and grim dismay, he was never himself again. He died in 1900.

Because of Ruskin's love for and indebtedness to my parents ; because of his love for this saintly child-woman, and of hers also for him, with my father and mother ; I have thought it right to give the world other news of him than his biographers could attempt. The letters reveal at once the weakness and tenderness, the failure and fortitude of this fearless champion. More, while they show us his capacity for suffering, the penalty paid by all with sense of life's possible joy, they make plain this truth : that those who give most of themselves in sympathy, need and tacitly ask for much in return. Along with his substance and wealth, Ruskin gave of his passion and tenderness in a manner unexampled in this age ; and nothing of his desires was awarded in return. He saved others, himself he could not save ; and she who

held his salvation in her hand could do nothing, it is very clear, but die for love of him.

Thus I end this fragment of a prophet's story—one of lamentation and uplifting courage; and from it I return to my own hotch-potch narrative.

BOOK III

ADVENTURES IN FAILURE



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LIBRARY

ADVERTISEMENTS

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1. That the advertiser pays for the advertisement in advance.  
2. That the advertiser is responsible for the accuracy of the statements made in the advertisement.

## CHAPTER I

### QUALIFIED WITH QUALIFICATIONS

**I**N the spring of 1879 I took the diploma of M.R.C.S. This gave me the right to perform any operation, to make any blunders not too flagrant, and to sign certificates of death. But there were other qualifications to be won, should the young surgeon's ambition be to work his way, step by step, on to the permanent staff of his Hospital. He must in the first place hold the offices of House Surgeon, House Physician, etc. But quinseys and increasingly severe attacks of ear inflammation made the senior scholarship—£40 a year for two years—quite hopeless; and without this it was useless for me to compete for any resident appointment, seeing that £30 had to be paid for each six months' board. I do not doubt that if I had told my father how urgent my professors were that, by patient waiting and working, I should at last win a post on the staff, he would somehow have found the necessary funds. But I was now twenty-three; and the realization of his incessant work and ill-health, with my four younger brothers still to educate, forbade me asking more of him. Maurice, most gifted of the six boys, had died of acute tuberculosis at Porto Fino a year after my second sister died at Nervi of lung disease. Doubtless I felt these home troubles the more poignantly in that poverty never seemed to moderate my parents' charity. The necessary manna had always fallen for their children, as it did for any others asking their help. My mother had adopted three destitute children.

It was then that I consulted the eminent aurist, William Dalby. He assured me that my deafness was quite hopeless unless I gave up my profession and went farming in South Africa; although our ear-specialist at King's thought I should first see whether a year or two at sea might not arrest it.

Yet I still hesitated. Denied all hope of a resident Hospital appointment, I yet clung to the hope that somehow I might continue my studies under Lister, if only because I knew how ill-equipped I was for my profession, in spite of my diploma. Incidentally, in my search for work that would both feed me and afford some leisure for study, an incident occurred as amusing as it proved unhelpful.

An advertisement in the *Lancet* headed "RARA AVIS" offered £150 a year—generous pay then—to a fully qualified man for night work only. I applied for it and was asked to call. On the previous night I dreamed of the man I was to see, his huge size and long beard, and of his *petite*, much older, vulgarly dressed wife. The dream was so curiously vivid that I described it to my aunt, heartily wishing, after my visit, that I could take her to see the two people, and so substantiate what seemed very like prevision.<sup>1</sup> When I did meet them, and had to spend the best part of an hour with the lady before her twenty years' younger husband returned, I could not dismiss the feeling that I already knew them. Doctor —, a six-foot, overfed young man, was an M.D. Lond. and an F.R.C.S.Eng.; he had been house-surgeon and house-physician at one of the largest hospitals, and yet was now making money fast in a quite dishonest, if not illegal, way. He owned five "Provident Dispensaries" in South London, running them with the help of assistants; and I was to establish a sixth for him. He at once took me to see one of them, and how the work was done. Every patient paid a shilling entry, the sum covering examination and treatment. His method was rapid. His stethoscope's information, got through a fully clothed chest, or a touch at the pulse, or a tongue inspection, one or another, was enough for a swindling diagnosis. The more enigmatic the examination, the wiser must seem the magician; and the hieroglyphics

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, to judge from the convincing evidence given in his recent book, *Why I Believe in Personal Immortality*, 1928, would be interested in this dream, so suggestive of previsionial possibility.

scribbled on a slip of paper to indicate which of the stock remedies was to be dispensed may, thanks to the magic of suggestion, have done the patient some good. Presently I had to take the doctor's place, and prove my fitness for this lightning work. After I had done my best with four or five patients, ordering, I remember, iodine for one patient and quinine for another, my prescriptions were rapidly modified before the patients received them; and Dr. — whispered to me that such expensive remedies could be afforded only in exceptional cases. Yet at each of these dispensaries, he had already told me, the takings would range between £20 and £30 a week.

Happily I proved not acceptable: the "provident dispensaries" caged no *rara avis* that could solve my difficulties. Such bucket-shops of qualified quackery are now things of the past. Dr. — is fortunately dead also.

Continued ill-health now set me thinking of a long sea voyage, and through a friend's influence with the P. and O. Company I was nominated for the next vacancy as surgeon on one of its liners.

While waiting, I spent the summer months with a young man of my own age, the owner of a lovely yet poverty-stricken property in North Wales. He was in indifferent health and needed companionship with someone who could share his pleasures and intellectual pursuits. This young squire, though his childhood had not been worried by any religious theories, was constantly reverting to the old Calvinistic doctrines. With insufficient means to attract his social equals, and little interest in his estate, he had become a recluse, and would absent himself from home for days together to wander over his barren hills, brooding over his destiny. Sometimes he would set sail in his half-decked boat, however stormy the sea, or go whipping his trout streams. Certainly I found some pleasure in scrambling over those romantic torrents or gloomy passes, whether riding a sure-footed pony, or on my own legs. I welcomed even the perils

of the little yacht, though my host ignored them, and had not even rudimentary knowledge of sails or winds. But one trifling occurrence inflicted a sort of wound upon me which a half-century's failures and successes have not yet healed or hidden. One day we set out to kill time by killing rabbits, yet only to discover, so my host vowed, that poachers and gamekeepers had robbed him of this poor sport. As this was my first experience with a gun, I was anxious to discover whether I was anything of a shot; and, rabbits disobliging us, I was suddenly tempted by a stone-chat on a gorse-bush thirty or forty paces away. To my instant remorse, I shot it; a remorse more sportsmanlike than my sport, and so far sincere that never since have I taken any life wantonly—unless a rat's or a rattlesnake's. Anyhow, that stone-chat set me asking myself some unanswerable questions. Had not that little bird as much right to its joy in life as I to mine? Indeed, its right might well be greater, if its little mating-song be taken as the measure of its joy. Biology may easily claim that our evolution is accomplished through the survival of the stronger. But will the destruction of life in sport or war really help to determine who are the fittest?

In later years the question cropped up again in a far more amusing environment and with an answer stereotyped and farcical. But it must be left till I tell of my friendship with Vladimir Tchertkoff, Tolstoy's most intimate friend.

## CHAPTER II

### AT SEA

**T**HEN came my appointment as surgeon to the S.S. *Kashmir*,<sup>1</sup> and six penitential months at sea. I had constant sea-sickness, several agonizing ear-attacks, and all manner of personal miseries. The Captain, hated by all his subordinates, would jeer at my deafness before the passengers, and threatened to get me transferred to some ship in one of the P. and O. local services, so that I should have no chance of going home till my contracted two years of service had expired. He would not hesitate to ruin, so his officers declared, anyone he disliked; and every doctor was obnoxious to him, because he could not do him much harm. In later years, he being then dead, I incidentally spoke of my experiences to the Chairman of the P. and O. Company, Sir Thomas Sutherland, who happened to be my patient. He told me that this Captain D——'s character had been fully realized by the Board, but that, although an unscrupulous disciplinarian, he was an exceptionally fine navigator. I gather from letters to my mother that I recognized some of his better qualities.

After an eventless voyage, relieved by brief peeps at Gibraltar, Malta and Suez, and with only a dozen passengers, we reached Bombay, where, uncertain as to our next destination, we remained for over six weeks in harbour, with ample excuse for cursing the monsoon and its drenching miseries.

The other officers were kindly and interesting, the second, named Clarke, being a well-read man. All deplored their boyhood's infatuation for the sea. The small likelihood of

<sup>1</sup> It has seemed to me preferable not to give the vessel its real name, lest, even indirectly, and after these many years, one or two individuals might be identified. Nevertheless, a few names are correctly given.

ever winning the home they longed for, the slow promotion, the wretched pay and pension of that day, and, not infrequently, the fear of an arrogant captain, kept them hoping soon to get quit of the Mercantile Marine. Things were much better for officers on the Atlantic liners, and are now, so I understand, more tolerable everywhere.

*To my Mother*

"S.S. *Kashmir*,

"BOMBAY,

"August 12th, 1879.

". . . There is absolutely nothing to do. . . . We are out in the harbour a mile from shore, and when you get there you have to take a buggy, which costs a rupee, to get anywhere. But oh! I have had such a week of it since we left Aden. The change from the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean was at first like Hell into Heaven. If sinners ever do get out of Hell, I doubt if the new Theology has calculated the risks of a too sudden Abraham's bosom—no doubt comfy if just a bit North-Pole-ish! Anyhow, I took a bad chill in my better ear, and I have not yet recovered. It made me as deaf as a stone and the pain prevented all sleep. Add to this the heat, the constant irritation of the *Prickly Heat*, the sea-sickness, and a putrifying dead rat somewhere in my cabin! . . . Then during this week I had more to do. One night a 2nd class lady was very ill and delirious, so that I had to crawl down to her constantly to keep her quiet. An Army doctor on board was very kind and saw the crew for me once or twice; but he did not understand their undiagnosable ways. . . . Oh how I longed to be at home! Instead of soothing poultices from loving hands, I got nothing but sloppy messes of cold porridge in a rag from my lascar 'boy,' and kindly meant chaff from the officers! Strange that I should go to sea especially to get my ears better, and have them now worse than ever before! If I once get to London, all the ship's articles in the world shan't drive me to sea again. . . . I am afraid this sounds ungrateful after all you have spent on me. . . ."

So the *Kashmir* lay at anchor for seven weeks. The lascars were paid off, but the officers remained all through the ceaseless rain. Only for brief spells were the torrential veils

parted, giving some hint of the lovely harbour, dotted with precipitous islands, and of Malabar Hill with its terraces of lordly residences. I had no money, as none was due till the whole ship was paid off. I borrowed a little from the first officer at 10 per cent. interest for the duration of our trip against the security of my pay. He was over forty, had but the same salary as myself, viz. £10 a month, and a family of small children at home; so that I could not feel he was extortionate, especially as, according to his all-consoling religious faith, I was myself doomed to perdition. Yet, though I had no work to do, I might never go ashore without the skipper's grudging permission. It was costly too; yet I managed to spend many hours wandering among the bazaars and markets of the native city, whose elaborately carved three-storey houses remain in my memory for their splendour.

*To my Mother*

"S.S. *Kashmir*,

"BOMBAY,

"August 20th, 1879.

". . . One week of the six has lapsed into eternity. . . . I have had two days in Bombay with Mr. Jordan a passenger. . . . We went for a walk, then tiffin and in the afternoon a drive out to the suburbs. I enjoyed it immensely. Great crowds were out for a fête. . . . But how different from an English crowd! All the men, old and young, so domestic, fatherly and friendly. The women's loose, gorgeous coloured shawls do not hide the lines of their beautiful figures, and they look modest and cheerful. There is none of the vulgar nonsense essential in an English crowd. Every face seems full of 'meek intelligence' and they do not look oppressed. . . . I should like much to find the secret written in these people's lives. . . . What strikes one most is the colour. Rows of tiny coppersmiths' shops, filled with Hindoos hammering and polishing away. All their vessels seem to be copper and even buckets are beautiful in shape. They take great pride in keeping them bright. I suppose it is part of feminine nature to keep things clean, so that as they have no clothes to wash they must scrub their coppers. Then there are rows of shops



full of women making red, toe-pointed slippers, or of others making fezes. Some shops are filled with the red and green shawls all the women wear, not beautiful in themselves, but very harmonious when wound round their rich brown figures. . . .”

But these interludes hardly compensated for being imprisoned on board ship, studying my medical books, exhausting the ship's poor library, and fattening on the interminable curries. I had happily an introduction to a Parsee barrister, a Mr. K. M. Shroff, who was uncommonly kind to me.

*To my Father*

“BOMBAY,

“August 24th, 1879.

“. . . On Friday last I met Mr. Shroff at his office at 4 p.m. when he set to work immediately showing me the sights of the town and telling me all he could of the people. I was intensely interested the whole three hours I was with him. At the University Hall and Library—two beautiful new buildings by Sir Gilbert Scott, Gothic and quite wrong here—I was introduced to several learned-looking Parsees who were jolly and wanted to know all about our Universities. The wise and impartial way in which one of them talked, comparing his own race with us, impressed me much. He seemed to think that it was finer memory rather than intellect that ensured their successes in our schools. This don was Registrar of the University.

“. . . Then we went over the Town Hall. . . . A grand organ was being played by a lady, Mendelssohn at first, though soon she passed into Purcell's ‘I will arise.’ This at once transported me thousands of miles back to our own Sunday evenings. It was the most delicious music to me, and I fear I lost a good deal of what Mr. Schroff was talking about. But I did my duty and talked more than I have in the last two months all put together. . . .

“Mr. Shroff thinks much as we do about our present Government. . . . The Afghan war he considers was as unnecessary as it was unjust, and India is quite unable to bear the taxation. . . . At the same time, while acknowledging that things are not quite as they should be, she owes everything to England who, he says, is now as necessary to this country's existence as ever she was, if only because of the variety of race and the prejudices of caste. . . . If India were now left to herself she would lose all

the civilization she is so much indebted to us for; while the struggle for supremacy would end in civil wars in which the masses would be quite unconcerned. It is the same to them whether Europeans or Asiatics rule over them. They are peaceful, contented and very ignorant. They spend a large part of their meagre earnings in ceremonies, which is about all that their religion teaches them. . . . In morality they are far above Europeans, though I don't suppose Mr. Schroff knows anything of our work-people. . . . But Captain D—— holds that if it weren't for the English 'the Parsees would be squashed out in no time.' Our fault seems to be that we will not mix with the natives. The Hindoos despise us, but the Parsees are ready enough to mingle in our society. The skipper says their manners are so beastly that it is impossible: they give such dam bad dinners! But those I have seen are perfect gentlemen. . . .

"This is all frightfully interesting and yet in spite of my ignorance I cannot help wondering whether Mr. Shroff is right in taking it for granted that India is so much indebted to us for our civilization. The Parsees of course have gained, and all the wealthy native merchants. But when I look at the crowds of people in the streets, one cannot help wondering. . . ."

*To my Mother*

"P. & O. S.S. *Kashmir*,

"BOMBAY,

"August 28th, 1879.

". . . I am still very deaf. . . . I have at last discovered the dead rat that I knew must be in my cabin. . . . Yesterday, on pulling up one of the windows I saw grey hairs sticking to the bottom of the sash; so I had the carpenter in at once, and all the woodwork pulled down, though the skipper first refused to allow it. Presently a big grey tail dropped out, followed without apology by sundry items of the deceased's anatomy. Permanganate finished off the job. . . . The only bad things that don't rest o' nights for more wickedness in the day, are mosquitoes. I do trust they will be punished in another world. . . . Yet compared with the cockroaches they are angels; and as for dead rats, well, *De mortuis nihil*, etc. . . . I have just finished my nightly game of backgammon with the Skipper. Fortunately he always wins, yet always swears when the luck turns against him. I am getting tired of nautical society. Their fun is unmirth-

ful, their jokes are nasty, and the captain is the least refined of the lot. All the same, whenever he opens his mouth the whole table is bound to roar. . . . I sit next him, fortunately for me, else I should miss his disgusting stories. However, he is a good sort, I think, and sits all day doing nothing, with nothing to do unless eating. . . .”

“S.S. *Kashmir*,

“BOMBAY,

“August 31st, 1879.

“. . . One of Mr. Shroff's friends, a Hindoo, took us to see some Hindoo temples. . . . In the midst of the little town was a tank of stagnant water about 120 yards long, round which were built several small temples, solitary pinnacles, and stone houses, all the walls mossy and utterly neglected. The temples each consisted of an outer and an inner compartment in which sat the idol lit up with candles and surrounded by worshippers. In the outer sat a small bull of brass, on which the deity takes a ride lest he gets too fat. The priests are disreputably dirty, woe-be-gone looking ruffians with painted faces.

“Every house has its own god of clay which it drowns every year at this season. We were lucky in seeing this ceremonial performed in the great tank. The idol, in form of man with an elephant's trunk, was about a foot high dressed in gorgeous silks. It was surrounded with flowers and then carried down a flight of stone steps and placed on a plank floating in the water. Next a Hindoo swam out with it into the middle, dragged it three times round a pole in the centre, took it in his hands, and dived into the water and left it. Finally he climbed up the pole, about 20 feet high and dived into the water again. . . .

“On Tuesday I went in again to see Mr. Shroff, when he took me to call on the Chief Hindoo in Bombay, Sir Mangaldas Nethrobhoy, Kt., C.S.I., who is very advanced in his ideas. . . . Mr. Shroff had told me to come in my ‘best attire as the gentleman is highly respectable and rich.’ Perhaps I ought to have gone in full uniform. The gentleman, very pompous and affable, has an enormous house with all manner of treasures, but decorated and furnished in the most atrocious English fashions. He has done all he can to introduce European customs and has done much in the way of education. But he still holds to his idol-worship; for he says, if he gave this up, he would no longer be able to elevate his race. On Mr. Shroff asking if he really believed in

it all, he answered, 'Yes, because I can't do any good to my people if I drop it.' I was struck with the similarity of this Hindoo Knight's opinions with those of the Parsee, in reference to their relation to England, but Sir M. N. was fuller of grievances. . . ."

*To my Mother*

"September 4th, 1879.

". . . All the officers acknowledged that the Skipper wants to get rid of me, but they tell me not to 'care a damn for the old man.' But it isn't pleasant. . . . However, on the whole he is quite tolerable and gets many a laugh at my expense. The other day I played backgammon continuously for four hours with him. . . . I hope they won't send the Second officer, Clarke, into another ship, as we are becoming very good friends. He has taught me to read Shelley; I have been enjoying *Adonäis* very much. . . . He knows Tennyson almost by heart.

"On Saturday Mr. Shroff and I went to call at Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy's. He was at Poonah, so his brother received us. I was very much taken with him, so courteous and well-bred was he. . . . He was dressed in magenta silk trousers and a long loose tunic sort of coat of the finest cambric. He drove us to the highset point on Malabar Hill, where, in the Towers of Silence, as of course you know, the Parsees leave their dead. The grounds are lovely, and in the Temples the Holy Fire is kept continually burning. Each Tower is a circular wall, about 30 feet high, enclosing a space about 50 yards across, open at the top. On the floor are arranged great circular slabs of stone on which the corpses are placed. . . . Sitting on the wall all round, closely packed, were the vultures, who swoop down when a body is taken in, leaving, in a few minutes, nothing but the bones. The latter, exposed to sun, wind and rain, soon crumble away and are then swept into a central pit. . . . Of course we did not go in, the Parsees themselves being excluded. It is only since the Prince of Wales was here that any than Parsees have been allowed even in the grounds. . . . Though I could not go into the Temple, I saw one of the Priests, dressed in white, and looking vastly superior to the dirty, painted Brahmins. The Parsee's religion is far above the Hindoo's. . . . After leaving this place, each with a beautiful nosegay from the gardens, we drove to a bungalow of Sir Jamsetjee's, where we sat and talked, and had other bouquets prepared for us. Then Mr. Shroff left us and the

baronet's brother drove us to the pier, where, on saying Goodbye and thanking him, he gave me his flowers in addition to my own—an unusual compliment I was told.

“The next day, Sunday, we went for our picnic. The party consisted of Mr. Shroff, two other Parsees and myself. Although I, as guest, had to take the head of the table, following Parsee custom, I really enjoyed it. The day was fine, and the bungalow was high up on the coast, so that we looked down on woods of palm-trees, sea and country, with Bombay in the distance. . . . One of our party was a little keen-eyed man who plays half a dozen instruments. He is very enthusiastic about native music, which he says is more like Italian than anything! This I find hard to believe from what I have heard. . . .”

From Bombay the *Kashmir* made for Colombo, thence to Hong Kong and Shanghai, with a general cargo as well as a few quite interesting passengers, among them Sir William Mackinnon, that humane Scots banker, who founded the British East Africa Company. He once compelled his agents to cancel a contract for supplying rice at an enhanced price to Orissa during its famine, and then made them sell it below market value; and he took a chief part in equipping Stanley's expedition for the relief of Emin Pasha. With him was travelling a charming niece, upon whom he would keep fixed a stern yet kind eye, whenever the impecunious ship's surgeon accompanied with his violin the songs she sang so sweetly. In the China Sea we were caught in the whirling skirts of a Dervish typhoon, and were for twenty-four hours in some real peril.

*To my Mother*

“S.S. *Kashmir*,  
“HONG KONG,  
“Oct. 18th, 1879.

“. . . In this sort of life I cannot feel that I am honestly *working*, and I have the queer idea that I *have* work to do, be it ever so humble. . . . I don't suppose I shall ever be really successful, but now I am trying my best to succeed in doing nothing. Carlyle says an Englishman's idea of hell is *not to succeed*; it certainly

approaches my idea! I think I have got some good out of this time, and as much as I shall get. I wish I knew what to do! . . . I hate the idea of an assistantship at home, where I should be the servant of some old buffer, with a hundred pounds a year to moisten the dry bread with. That is about the only opening there could be for me in England. I feel that it would break my heart; but hearts have to be broken to get bread and cheese. I wouldn't mind *hard* work for a hundred a year, but I wouldn't be a slave for five times that.

"We have been having rough weather; and you can imagine how prostrate I have been, with such a head too that I could scarcely lift it off the pillow. Several of the passengers were very bad too, and it was almost impossible to look after them. Yet when the Fourth Officer came and told me that Mrs. T. had fallen down the companion and dislocated or broken her ankle, I had my clothes on instantly, and barefooted, clinging on to whatever I could, and drenched with rain, I reached the quarter-deck. Everyone was living that day in the Companion. . . . Mrs. T. was lying in dishabille and looking uncommonly pretty, giving her eyes away gratis to any man who wasn't sea-sick. But it was all a hoax to drag me out of my cabin. . . . Well I was just awfully bad when I found what a fool they had made of me, and flopped down on the wave-swept deck, running backwards and forwards from the gunwhale—for you can guess what purpose. Once G. caught hold of me just in time to save me from going right overboard. Oh! the wind did blow. In the night we couldn't make more than 4 knots after our usual 11 or 12. . . . For 48 hours I think I heard every bell go—that is every half hour, bunk so hard, I aching all over, tossed from side to side. This morning it was a little better. . . . I went on the bridge and I quite forgot my misery in seeing what a toy our huge ship looked chucked about in these chaotic magnificent waves—and she not caring for them any more than they did for her. . . ."

Coming home we picked up at Colombo a young coffee-planter at death's door with dysentery. He was carried to his state-room on a stretcher, and his only hope lay in a sea-voyage home. He could keep nothing down but chicken-broth, and I had to sit up with him night after night, as there was not one of the stewards I could trust. After passing through the Red Sea, he began to convalesce rapidly. Then

came a day when the Chief Steward refused to supply fowls for his broth. So as we carried no purser I went straight to the Captain on the bridge with my protest. He told me he knew more about dysentery than any bottle-washer of a doctor like myself, and that my dieting of Mr. G—— was all “damned rot.” Thereupon—and the Second Officer was with him—I said that unless my orders were obeyed, I should report him to the Directors, with, of course, the full support of my patient. The Captain flushed scarlet and I, wisely evading more words or, I think, quite possibly a blow, turned my back on him and, with studied deliberation, descended. I had no more interference, nor ever once any response to my morning’s customary salute. The Second Mate assured me that any other officer, daring thus to warn the Captain, would have been sent to his cabin for the rest of the voyage and then dismissed. So for once the tyrant was thwarted. But I never heard what revelations of my character reached my friend in the Office.

*To my Mother*

“S.S. *Kashmir*,

“Dec. 21st, 1879.

“. . . We have a full number of first-class passengers. . . . But I am not the right man for this work. All the other ship-surgeons I come across seem to enjoy it and B——, my fellow-student at King’s, whom I met in Bombay, got £14 on his first voyage, whereas I, in five and a half months have not netted a single fee! Evidently people *don’t* like me. Yet as I read prayers every Sunday morning before the whole boiling of ’em, they might take me for an angel, hoofs hid in deck shoes and tail neatly coiled out of sight.

“Anyway I am in good spirits just now, if only because of my success with a patient who was carried on board at Colombo little more than a skinful of tropical disease. . . . I knocked off at once his huge doses of Ipecac, the specific for dysentery, as well as his opium and brandy, thinking he was suffering largely from their poisoning. I gave him nothing but thin arrow-root and almost homoeopathic doses of calomel—or *mercurius*, as your

respected medicine chest calls it.<sup>1</sup> The result was astonishing, though I had to watch him day and night lest the benefit of my treatment should be delayed till he was dead! Now he sits at table opposite to me. As each dish comes round, a little dumb show passes between us by which he knows whether he may partake of it. I think he at least ought to fork out at Southampton. . . . I think my faith in medicine is increasing, as I had to sit up five nights in succession, nursing him. . . .”

“IN THE GULF OF SUEZ,  
“Dec. 26th, 1879.

“. . . Yesterday, Christmas Day, the sea was frightfully rough and I was again knocked down with sickness. But Mr. G— was none the worse, and at dinner he had, like everybody else, his bottle of champagne, even indulging, like a fool, in plum-pudding. The consequence was that I

‘poured down his throat our last gallon of wine’— or rather, to be more truthful than literary, the literal last of my castor-oil. Then I gave him ipecacuanha wine and laudanum again for a few doses, though during my sickness he seemed to have lost all confidence in me. Yet I was again justified in my treatment. . . .”

*To my Mother*

“SUEZ,  
“Dec. 31st, 1879.

“. . . After dinner last night, having bethought me that Revalenta Arabica would be good for G—, who has not yet quite recovered from his plum-pudding, I went ashore to see if I could get some—which I did after much trouble, the place being infested with gaming-houses and worse. But I have the greatest difficulty in getting things done properly for the sick man—who is still only skin and bone. I had to complain twice to the Captain. But this morning I had to go and cook the Revalenta myself. With beef-tea it is most palatable. You would have laughed to see me in the galley stirring away with a long spoon in one hand and my watch in the other. The lascar cook thinks it a great joke. . . .

“G— is a good deal better, but still requires constant

<sup>1</sup> My mother had brought us all up on homoeopathy.



attention day and night. What with being doctor, nurse, chemist, and cook, I should have enough to do, even if he were my only patient. . . .”

This patient, “Mr. —,” landed at Southampton in perfect health. He was profusely grateful to me, saying I had saved his life, and that he would be writing in a day or two to express his thanks substantially. But his letter never reached me, and I admit that, legally, he was quite within his rights. I had some consolation, however, a few months later. I met him at an evening party in London, given by two intimate friends, the daughters of Richard Cobden. His pallid-bronzed face flushed duskily red when he caught sight of me. Poor man! he *had* to cut me, with not even a nod of recognition.

Thus ended my experiences at sea; for my friend in the P. and O. office cancelled my two years' agreement. The voyage did me no good or harm: unless a trifling incident, some years later, suggests that it stood in the way of a few guineas, even though I had by that time a larger practice than any other throat-specialist in London. A lady of social position brought her daughter to me for advice, and my opinion was not questioned. A small operation was necessary. The day was fixed and a room secured in a nursing-home. But two days previously the mother wrote begging me to answer a curious question before she could consent to the operation: “Had I ever been surgeon on board the P. and O. *Kashmir*?” I admitted the fact, adding that it would interest me to know why the question was asked. But the only reply I had was the cancelling of all the arrangements! To this day the reason for it puzzles me. She knew well of my professional standing, and the doctor who sent her to me was unable to enlighten me. So I was left to wonder if some slanderous words of my old Captain had in roundabout way enabled him at last to “get even” with me. Or did the fact of my humble appointment dub me as an incompetent, or worse, a self-made man?

## CHAPTER III

### A MENTAL HOSPITAL :

#### (i) THE MEN'S SIDE

ONE result of those six months at sea was the conviction of how gravely I was handicapped for general practice. Yet just because of this I must at least secure my M.B. and M.D. degrees, for which I needed further clinical experience and study. An old family friend suggested my applying for a post then vacant in one of the private mental hospitals licensed to take paupers, with the superintendent of which, Dr. Starling, he was intimate.<sup>1</sup> As its locality was not too far from King's, I might find time for more hospital teaching as well as for reading. Possibly also Lunacy might even serve me as a vocation. So, without demur, I spent the succeeding eighteen months in a Lunatic Asylum as its "Assistant Medical Officer." There was a second appointment made at the same time, that of Dr. Roberts, a young and able Scot with already some experience in lunacy, I being his junior. But he was from the first disliked by Dr. Starling and his family, largely for his lack of polish, but more, I think, because his appointment had been required by the Lunacy Commissioners,<sup>2</sup> who also were obliged to approve my own.

I may as well tell at once how it came about that two new medical officers were appointed together, though

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter all the names are fictitious. The locality and style of the Asylum also are deliberately misleading; and it has ceased to exist. Everyone mentioned is now dead. In every other respect my reminiscences are meticulously accurate.

<sup>2</sup> Since the Lunacy Act of 1890, the Commissioners are known as the Board of Control, though in the text I shall refer to them by the title in use before then. Also I may mention that the word *Asylum* is rightly and mercifully changed to *Mental Hospital*, while the word *Lunatic* is studiously avoided, the mentally deranged being now always referred to as *patients*.

hitherto one assistant to Dr. Starling had been deemed sufficient. The incident throws light upon the slackness and ignorance that were still very common in most asylums. The Commissioners in Lunacy were required to make each year at least six surprise visits to every private Asylum, and my own observations convinced me of their zeal and efficiency. In spite of them, however, carelessness and even evasions of the law were possible, and often deliberately ignored at our "Avenue Asylum." During one of these legal visits, a few weeks before the two new appointments were made, a certain Commissioner thought it advisable to examine a bed-ridden, demented old woman. He discovered bed-sores and a fractured thigh, of which no note had been made in the case-book, while no explanation was forthcoming as to how the medical officers had overlooked them. The Commissioners had summary ways of meeting such contingencies. They demanded in this case the resignation of either the Superintendent or his subordinate, and ordained that thereafter two medical officers, one of whom was to be nominated by themselves, should assist Dr. Starling, if he chose to remain. I believe this account is correct, though I gathered it only from hearsay.

Hence it was that Dr. Roberts, finding his position uncomfortable, six months later secured a more lucrative and opportune post in a County Asylum.

But I cannot dismiss this admirable man without touching upon his curious personality; and here again contemporary words will the better describe him:

*To my Mother*

"THE AVENUE ASYLUM

[Undated].

". . . Roberts is not only full of professional knowledge, but is awfully well read. He also quotes Tennyson by the yard and divides his friends into two classes—those who think *Maud* the finest poem ever written, and those who 'sentimentalize over'

*In Memoriam*. He is a Maudist. Last night after my rounds I found him with a visitor, a fellow-student of his in Edinburgh, named McCorquodale, who is on the staff of the *Pall Mall*. They were discussing Father's poetry, and the man was mighty astonished to hear I was his son. McCorquodale vowed the most pathetic stanza in the whole English language was the one beginning, 'Alas! how easily things go wrong.'<sup>1</sup> 'I can never repeat it aloud,' he said, 'for fear I'll just weep—hardened sinner that I am!'

"Then Roberts chimed in with *Better Things*, but admitted he didn't understand the lines—

" 'Better to love in loneliness  
Than bask in love all day.'<sup>2</sup>

"I told them I thought I knew what they meant—though a little while ago, I know I did not. But I said no more except this: 'To explain anything,' I remarked, 'is only to change blood into black-and-white.' And then McCorquodale jotted down something in his note-book.

"Roberts grows more and more melancholic. He declares he is wasting away; but he could well lose two or three stone and nobody see any difference. He vows he neither eats nor sleeps; all of which my senses fail to verify. So he is never cheerful company. And he's the coolest dog that ever wagged. He has worn out his own shoes, and being too lazy to buy new ones, or having no money left, he takes my thin patent-leather ones because they were handy, and wears them out in the muddy streets till they are sopped. I said nothing the first time; but when the same thing was to happen again, I offered him a thick pair, when he pretended not to know they were mine! Then he borrows money of me, and though he has a marvellous memory and half as much again as my pay, he never remembers to pay me back. Still, we are very good friends, and I like him. In spite of his melancholy, he is disgustingly conceited, though he vows he is one of the most humble-minded of mortals! A few days ago he went and filled one of my patients' sleeping-draught bottles with pure Chloroform, and if I had not discovered it, he might have killed the patient. He pretended to know nothing about it; but no one, except him and me and the Old Man, has keys to the dispensary. I am sure he drinks something more than the marsala

<sup>1</sup> *Phantastes*, Dent's Everyman's Library, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *The Poetical Works of George MacDonald*, p. 403.

and tarragona we get with our grub. Dr. Starling does not starve us by any means, even if in the account books the wine is prigged from the patients' dietary. But we have nothing to do with these matters. . . . I went to see Booth in the *Fool's Revenge*. A most marvellous artist is he. His intensity is *supernatural*, but not therefore *unnatural*. He is like a Turner picture. I think that perhaps we are wrong in condemning *ranting* on the stage. Some of my patients rant most shockingly, and with no idea of being looked at; their abuse, their rage, their despair, are what we should call frightfully stagey. But when you come to think of it, one rarely sees the emotions let loose in real life; they take place only in the strictest privacy. But in a madhouse the inhabitants let fly their wildest passions uncontrolled. I almost believe here is a better field for studying human nature than with sane people—even though their actions are ridiculous, stagey, ranting! . . .”

Though I stepped into Dr. Roberts's shoes—not quite worn out, though he had destroyed mine—his salary also of £150, half as much again as I had begun with—I was sorry to lose him. He had knowledge of his work, was well read if indolent; and both of us had thoughtful minds. We had comfortable quarters with a sitting-room to ourselves; but we had to dine in some formality with the Superintendent and his family: an arrangement utterly distasteful to Dr. Roberts, with his gauche and sullen manners. Dr. Starling was also a Scot, and, though holding an inferior medical diploma, had some scientific distinction as a naturalist. To judge from his charming personality, his kindness and his easy-going conscience, along with his courteous ways to his pretty, uninteresting wife, I suspect he was largely Celtic. His management of the “Avenue Asylum” fell short somewhat of legal requirements. The institution being proprietary and in the hands of trustees, Dr. Starling had a fixed yet ample salary, excellent housing and free board for his family, along with many facilities for entertaining. Neither of us juniors despised the good food, though our abundant cream contrasted suspiciously with the thin milk supplied to the otherwise well-fed patients, paying or pauper. One of Dr. Starling's sons had been at school with me, a brilliant boy

who had stood my friend in more than one small trouble. He had since taken a first in the Classical Tripos at Cambridge, but was now at home eating his dinners at the Inner Temple. He brought pleasant friends about him—particularly another schoolfellow, who had just made a phenomenal success in literature. I was able sometimes to take a hand in their rubbers at whist, though my spare hours were mostly given to reading for my M.B. exam. This I passed with honours in 1880.

With my rise to be senior assistant, my adventures and troubles began; and defeated all my hopes in lunacy as a career. Many incidents are worth recording, not only because of the light they throw upon asylum management, but because their very absurdity suggests much to amend in the care of the mentally alienated—perhaps more to be pitied than any other patients, if only because their miseries must always be more or less suspect.

First, however, the status and working of this "Avenue Asylum" must be described, there being only a few others in the neighbourhood of London similarly privileged to take pauper patients in addition to the smaller proportion of those paid for by their relatives. I may add that the Lunacy Act of 1890 indicates the intention that gradually Public Mental Hospitals should be substituted for Private Licensed Houses. In fact no new Private Asylums can be now licensed. Many reasons for this will appear from these experiences, even though I have more than a few for regretting the change.

This particular mental hospital accommodated altogether five hundred patients. The law stood thus: any patients coming into the hands of the Relieving Officer, or to-day when taken charge of perhaps by a constable, would be detained in the Workhouse Infirmary, before removal to the County Asylum. But if the County Asylum was full, then the R.O., with the sanction of the Infirmary Medical Officer, might take such patients to one or other of these specially

licensed private asylums, and this upon the same certificate of insanity and magisterial order as would suffice for detention in a County Asylum. Many abuses arose out of this arrangement, one of which was soon revealed to me and accounted for a curious friendliness I had already observed between more than one Relieving Officer and our Superintendent. One day, Dr. Starling being away, and I in charge, a four-wheel cab came shambling along the avenue of limes to our office, which, with wine-cellar etc., was separate from the old Georgian house where Dr. Starling with his family and the medical officers lived, and behind which lay the various detached wards, walled yards and gardens of the patients. The Relieving Officer was sitting beside the driver and four victims of senile dementia in pauper garb were huddled up within. The R.O. came into the office and produced the certificates, all of which I found to be in order. But, as I was a new-comer, he explained with apologetic leer, that before he fetched his patients out, he wanted his "new hat—just a sov. for luck you know, Sir!—Five bob a-piece, as per usual."

I indignantly refused, even suggesting that his request ought to be made known to the Commissioners. "All right," he said, snatching up the four certificates from my desk, "other shops know me better!" Then, scrambling up on the cab again, he bade the old flounce-caped Jehu turn and drive away. Fortunately, I really think, for the poor patients, the Superintendent returned at that very moment, and at the entrance-gates arrested the cab's exit. With hardly time for any words, the four patients were brought back and admitted. Though I did not witness the fitting of any new hat, the R.O. quickly left with an exultant grin, though there was an ominous scowl on the Doctor's face. Yet the incident was never mentioned between us, and I had to wait for its explanation. Only twice more did this sort of thing happen to me; for the various R.O.s soon learned to bring patients at an hour when the Superintendent was sure to be on duty.

Once I was openly asked for the *hansel*, once merely for a *little lunch*. I learned later that bribery of this kind was generally practised at these private pauper asylums, and that occasionally half a sovereign was added as a refresher.

Whether or not such presents were illegal, their expediency might seem justifiable to an easy conscience. Indeed the competition made it inevitable. But the custom was so unwholesome, to say the least, that I made enquiry into its operation, and discovered ample evidence of its dangers. I quote a few notes concerning them which I made while I was still in residence :

“(I) The R.O.s being but men, are insatiable in matters like new hats or little lunches; they deliberately arrange for these patients to be kept in the infirmaries until the County Asylum is full, and then bring them in batches to the private Licensed Houses.

“(II) Many cases of mere senility, though legally certifiable, need only skilful nursing and feeding. Yet they are brought to us all too frequently, and the bribes may well be instrumental. The rates again should not be burdened with the extra cost. Our charge was 17s. 6d. a week for each patient, the actual expense per head being well under ten shillings.

“(III) The Master of the Workhouse, the R.O. and the Medical Officer, it seems, work together, in somewhat curious harmony. The parochial medical officers being grossly underpaid, are but average men. Although an accumulation of new top-hats is not necessary to professional respectability, the extra legal guinea for every certificate they write may tempt them to banish cases of senility to an asylum. . . .”

Altogether I had had but eighteen months at the “Avenue Asylum,” when, during Dr. Starling’s absence, an occasion arose when I was legally required to inform the Commissioners of a nurse’s cruelty, being, as I believed, the cause of a patient’s death. This angered my chief, and I had to resign. But before giving particulars of the incident, I would indicate how it came about that, in spite of such possibilities, I was convinced that the private asylum gives more security against improper detention than does the County Hospital.



Only one certificate was needed for a pauper, while two doctors visiting the patient independently must separately certify for private treatment. The private houses were visited six times a year by the Commissioners, absolutely unexpectedly; and with their own list of patients, they speak to every one of them—even apart from doctors or attendants, if desired. But they visited the County Asylums only once a year, and held no such list; and the Visiting Magistrates, knowing little of law and less of lunacy, whose visits are supposed to make the Commissioners' visits unnecessary, did their work in haphazard fashion: at least so I gathered from various sources of trustworthy information.

A striking instance of dangers besetting pauper patients occurred early in my experience, and the particulars as I then made notes of them deserve quotation:

“C. D. applied for relief at the workhouse, as he was starving. He was admitted to the infirmary and compelled to lie in bed, his clothes being taken away. This seems to be an ordinary method of enforcing order on lunatics sometimes for several days, and without explanation, until they can be conveniently removed to an asylum. C. D. resented this treatment, grew angry, and lost control over himself. He declared that as long as he was kept there his affairs were in danger; that he was the owner of great wealth which he would one day ‘recover better than Tichborne did.’ He was laughed at, and consequently grew more and more excited, till for his pains he was certified a lunatic, detained for five days in a padded room, and at last removed to the Avenue Asylum. I examined his mental condition the day after admission, the result being that I found him perfectly sane. He stated that he had spent every penny on his lawyers, and that for the last six weeks he had been slowly starving. I wrote immediately to the solicitors he named, and found that a considerable property had been left to him in Australia, but that there had been disputes and litigation such as C. D. had described to me. The man was discharged after three days with us, and I have since learnt that he did indeed succeed in recovering his own better than Tichborne.

“But the medical certificate of this man, only one being needed, ought to be quoted:

“*Facts indicating insanity observed by myself*”—(the certifying medical practitioner)—‘he is very excitable, and has a sharp jerky way of speaking and that as soon as money or property is mentioned he gets excited and says that he is very wealthy, but he is watched by people, and kept without it, but that he will have it in spite of everybody, and that he will manage the recovering of it better than Tichborne did.’ ”

My comments noted at the time for possible use subsequently proceed thus :

“The assertion that he was *watched* contains the only possible hint of insanity : but he strenuously denied ever having laboured under such a fancy. Anyhow, he might have been untruthful and not deluded.

“In this case, had the patient been sent to a great County Asylum, the true facts might never have come to light. Of an irascible temperament by nature, and now overwrought by hunger, ill-treatment by officials, and disappointed in his financial expectations, he might easily have been exasperated by a too casual resident doctor, who, likely enough, on getting a bad report of him from the attendants, would accept the certificate as unimpeachable. Moreover, if the doctor was not tactful, the man might have become excited in emphasis of his rights and wrongs, thus ruining his opportunity. True, he might appeal to the visiting magistrates on their rounds of inspection ; but unlike the Commissioners in Lunacy, it is no part of their duties to interrogate every individual, as is required of, and practised invariably by the Commissioners, when visiting private Asylums. Unscrupulous attendants might very easily prevent any patient they wished *to get even with*, from having word with the magistrates. Moreover, unwarrantable accusations against doctors, attendants and nurses are so usual and so generally unjust, that genuine complaints may easily pass as symptomatic. The final hope of a certified patient such as ‘C. D.’ might be only in the Commissioners’ annual visit ; and the time lost, the temper exasperated, the resentful officials, might easily lead to actual insanity. Yet *in all probability* the truth would come to light before long, and the patient be righted. Nevertheless the possibility of a sane man being deprived of his liberty is too grave to be ignored.

“Again, the elaborate care of the Lunacy Commissioners to protect the private patient will be well instanced if I quote one

of the two certificates that consigned a melancholic lady to *The Avenue*:

“ ‘On being hurriedly fetched to see Mrs. —, found she had attempted to cut her throat, but unsuccessfully, only scratching it. The bone of the index finger of the left hand was cut through.’ ”

“The Commissioners—to whom the certificates must be sent immediately on a patient’s admission—returned this one with the remark that ‘suicide is no evidence of insanity.’ ”

I remember saying that clearly the Commissioners were right, seeing that *attempted* suicide is misdemeanour punishable by law, although the verdict of a Coroner’s jury on almost every case of *successful* suicide is that the delinquent was of unsound mind!

The accusation of inefficiency as to treatment in the County Mental Hospitals will presently be inferred from a few particulars of my patients. Had I been in a County Asylum with its overwhelming numbers, it would not have been possible to give as much time to those individual cases; and some of my results were astonishing.

I am fully aware of the wise and costly improvements made of late in the great mental hospitals, the finely equipped laboratories for pathological examination not only *post mortem*, but in diagnosis of constitutional ailments, as well as in experimental treatment and inoculations. I am even not ignorant of what had been done in normal psychology—though few indeed in these days dare think anyone quite normal; and I can easily credit the possibilities in suggestion and the sublimation of complexes. I can almost agree to the notion that jungle instincts, subconsciously asserting themselves, must be trampled down once more into a grave of impotency. But in spite of all the money spent, and the wasted sanity of psychologists, I do not gather that much more is done for the average sufferer whom cruel circumstances, or grief, or lack of interest in life, have overwhelmed. The greater freedom now generally allowed is an enormous gain; seeing that the deprivation of personal liberty, though

often inevitable, encourages a bitter antipathy alike to the system and its officials. Yet little can be done for individual patients where only four conventionally qualified and unenthusiastic doctors have charge of perhaps 2,000. Indeed, there is much in favour of the private mental hospital; and the owner depends as much as a general practitioner upon his reputation for honesty and skill, knowing quite as shrewdly that a mere suspicion of his integrity may do him untold harm. A cured melancholic's gratitude for his doctor's kindness and anxiety to send him home as soon as possible is invaluable. Nearly all the stories, whether of private or newspaper origin, concerning illegal detention, faked certificates, or cruelties of nurses, are probably untrue—even though a patient contributing perhaps twenty guineas a week is financially a very desirable boarder. Nevertheless, the very carefulness for the good name of the "Avenue Asylum" may lead to irregularities unknown in a *County Asylum*, where the overworked doctors are in less danger of unjust aspersions. Dr. Starling stood more in fear of the Press and its wilful injustice than of the Commissioners. Consequently he would do anything, adopt any subterfuge, to avoid an inquest; or, if this was inevitable, to prevent its report in the newspapers.

Here is a case. A melancholic young man had been with us for many months, but his recovery was still not hopeless. As senior assistant, I had then charge of the women, more numerous and more exacting than the men. So this patient was not under my immediate care. But one day, my junior, Dr. Dawkins, being away on leave, I had to take his work as well as my own. He had specially mentioned this case to me as one of advanced lung-tuberculosis, and hardly expected to live through the night. When I saw him late on my rounds, I realized that he was without doubt *in extremis*, but, from the look of him, his mode of breathing and his dusky blue colour, I at once questioned the diagnosis, though Dr. Starling as well as my junior had been seeing him at least

twice a day. A quick examination proved that hardly any air entered either lung; and only because fluid in the left pleura was squeezing them flat as well as forcing the heart over to the opposite side. The correct diagnosis reflects no particular credit upon myself; but it was important, seeing that tapping the fluid would certainly save the man's life. I went and told Dr. Starling the facts. He denied the accuracy of my views and said that even if I were right, he would have no operation done; adding that, after all, the poor fellow would be better out of his misery! Actually it was fear of publicity and the possible misinterpretation of facts at an inquest, should the patient succumb to the operation, that ruled the old man's decision. Curiously he omitted to see that if he let any patient die whose life could so easily be saved, it would look very ugly to the Commissioners, should the facts transpire; and would, following upon that recent exposure of a patient's neglect, have probably ruined Dr. Starling. Yet no argument moved him; the prohibition was absolute. There may have been in his obstinacy some dislike to having his own ignorance revealed—the more so that already in many little ways I had been taking things unwarrantably into my own hands. Of course I had no alternative in this case but to disobey him immediately. I was equipped with all Lister's requirements for operations in general; and I drew from that patient's left pleura five pints of fluid—a quantity as astonishing to me as the immediate change of the patient's colour and vitality was to the attendant helpers.

It so happened that the Commissioners paid one of their unexpected visits the very next day. I had the pleasure of seeing, (but alas! not hearing) Dr. Starling describe the history of the case to them; and doubtless it did something to counterbalance his former remissness in the affair of the old woman's undiagnosed fractured thigh and bed-sores.

On three other occasions I had to perform small operations after being similarly forbidden. Once a compound

fracture of the wrist, occurring before the patient's admission, had been so neglected that gangrene had set in, and there was imminent danger of septicaemia and death. Nothing but operation could save him. I said the hand would slough off of itself, if the patient lived long enough. "Let it," said Dr. Starling, "but you leave it alone. I've told you again and again I won't have any operations!" So I immediately operated, secured rapid "healing by first intention" and saved that unfortunate life also.

It was yet another occasion of my assuming unsanctioned responsibility and actually inviting a Coroner's inquest that led to my resignation. But I have first to speak of certain cases, which suggest that many like them, and almost hopeless, might be cured, if only the doctors had time, insight and zeal.

## CHAPTER IV

### A MENTAL HOSPITAL: (ii) THE WOMEN'S SIDE

**M**Y first six months had been chiefly with the men; but, on Dr. Roberts's resignation, I was made responsible for the women. The work was more exacting, if only because the attendants were less trustworthy; but it was more varied. The tragic, the anarchic, the romantic complexes were even more desperate: while the women's submergence of discretionary will and their appeals for support of cherished delusions defied every endeavour to shunt their thoughts on to rational happier lines. Their seclusion, however inevitable, was the very worst expedient for breaking through the vicious circle of self-pity. Nevertheless, I was now quite sure that Lunacy, notwithstanding its possibilities, was not to be my work. For one thing, deafness was inimical to discipline. Thus the women attendants found they could easily check-mate reproof by claiming that I had misheard this or that explanation of their delinquencies: yet discipline, perhaps autocratic, is the first essential in these institutions. Unfortunately I could never deny my possible inefficiency, whatever my pains to circumvent it. Yet I was not, in those days, so deaf but that I could still enjoy the theatre and even concerts in the old St. James's Hall, though the huge Albert Hall made pleasure more questionable. It was in such matters as a whispered remark that I might possibly be at fault. And before long Dr. Starling, resenting, as I thought, my popularity with the patients, and irritated by unexpected encomium I once received from the Commissioners, was not sorry, now and again, to disregard my exposure of some nurse's neglect. Indeed, I wrote home in some distress on these points; so that my father, already anxious

for me to give up work so insatiable in its demands, began urging me to join my family and make a practice at Bordighera, where he now had a permanent home.

*To my Father*

“13 February, 1882.

“. . . Do not press me about your loving suggestion. The objections are insuperable. I should have to get the F.R.C.S. before the profession would accept me, and this would mean another year in dissecting-room and wards at King's. No, I must stop here as long as my hearing lasts me. The work is not always too hard, and I have good antidotes to its worry and am in good spirits. Don't doubt that I would do anything in my power to make you and Mother happy. . . .

“I am going to hear Wagner's *Tannhäuser* to-morrow. On Wednesday I play at a concert to poor people in Kentish Town; and on Saturday I am going to the National Gallery. . . . My work too gives heaps of entertainment, though not always so high-class as Wagner, and far more tragic.

“For instance, Dawkins [my new junior] being out, I have just been called to see a man roaring like a wild beast. He was naked and looked horrible, using the foulest language, and threatened to knock down the first to touch him. I soon pacified him. These attendants are so stupid; tact needs education, I suppose; and with these anguished patients it must come fresh from the oven of sympathy, and never be cold, conventional routine. When this maniac told me he would burn the place down, I simply agreed with him, patted him on the back, and suggested the postponement of our fight till the morning. I said I was very busy, and he would himself feel fitter after a little rest. So I left him promising that he would go quietly to sleep. That is one and a half hours ago and I have heard now that he has asked for his clothes. He then curled up in a corner of his padded room and went to sleep. It is marvellous how easily they can be humoured. . . .”

On taking over the women's side, I was more fully convinced of the work's real value. Thus, I began by winning the confidence of a girl of twenty-three who had already interested me on occasional visits, when Dr. Roberts had



been extra lazy or unfit. I will name her Ellen Black. She had been in the Asylum nearly a year and was now in the refractory ward, because of her fixed suicidal designs. Having made rags of her own clothes, she was kept in an untearable canvas frock. She would pace up and down the bare, high-walled, asphalted yard all the day long, to and fro, to and fro, weeping incessantly, gnawing her nails till they bled, picking sores on her face and tearing out her hair. She had no company but other maniacs. It was impossible to make her talk; and if she listened for a few moments to any words of comfort, she would then turn away to weep again, wailing incessantly, "I am lost, lost and damned for ever: lost, lost, lost!" Two favourable points about her were that she took her food, fitfully yet sufficiently: and that the usual sedatives gave her some sleep. The story of her breakdown, told to me later may be quite ordinary; but the mode of her cure must be told even if its rationale is generally accepted.

But first I must insert a word about our matron. I could never have had my way with Ellen Black had I not early realized the importance of pleasing this important lady; and Miss Youngmans, as I will call her, would always, very kindly, if somewhat superciliously, listen to my suggestions. Her unusual character, quite apart from Ellen Black, is worth understanding. She had much to do with my work among her patients, although she manoeuvred my ultimate downfall.

Socially, this very competent woman belonged to the lower middle-class, and the *Family Herald* was the limit of her literary recreations. Domestic differences, so she told me, had driven her from home, and she had begged Dr. Starling to help her, though I never heard how she first met him. With his shrewd insight into character, he gave her at once the post of matron, though she had had no experience in any sort of nursing. Of tall, commanding presence, singularly immobile in facial expression, she was exactly the sort to inspire, along with perhaps some fear, unquestioning

obedience. Muscular strength was implied in her every movement; and, whether instinctively or deliberately, she assumed a majestic, somewhat theatrical demeanour. I do not remember that she ever smiled. If she exceeded her legal powers, she was always upheld by Dr. Starling, although her secluding of patients in padded rooms was never recorded in the case-books, as the law required. I wrote thus to my mother of her character:

“. . . She has interested and amused me much—and with all her egotism she is, as far as her matron's duties are concerned, perfect, I think. Firm, kind and full of pluck, she is worshipped by the patients. She is not afraid of their wildest ravings, though *once I saw her scream at a mouse!* We had a frightful row ten days ago—à propos of a patient's bed-sores which had not been reported to me, she rudely suggesting that it was not my business. But when I said I should have to put it before Dr. Starling—which might have meant my resignation, as he is always extolling her virtues—she was penitent and said it was her fault, *as much as mine!* As this was tantamount to remorse, I accepted it as an apology. . . .”

However, without her help in a suggestion of my own, to her amazingly absurd, Ellen Black might never have recovered.

I must first explain that once a fortnight during the winter months we had a ball. To this spiritless affair were admitted selected cases of men and women, the hours being, I think, from 7.30 to 10 o'clock p.m. The ball-room was a long, dreary shed, its murkily whitewashed walls not enlivened by the trite maxims or weary texts illuminated on fly-spotted, smoke-begrimed cards. Two at least I remember, because, while they unblushingly declared that “God so loved the World” and “Jesus Wept,” they hung as much askew as the minds of the mad dancers. A dozen smelly gas-jets flared in wire cages suggesting that nothing but gas could escape these prison walls; yet they hissed sympathetically with the blastful cornet's music, timidly supported by an untuneful piano. I doubted much if these dances had any healing

value, though they satisfied the Commissioners as regarded the patients' recreation. The attendants—not called *nurses* at that time, and not uniformed—got some pleasure from the dancing, and some would encourage patients to join them in polka and waltz. Sometimes Dr. Starling and his ladies in evening dress would attend for a few minutes, but only to sit on the platform and tepidly approve these pathetic, ponderous exhibitions. The two junior medical officers did something, I hope, to put life into the ordeals. Occasionally ridiculous incidents would amuse the platform guests; but the atmosphere was so devitalized by antiseptics and half-washed clothing that, to them at least, these balls were only boredom. The dancing, however, did actually help to awaken Ellen Black's long-dormant sanity.

A few days before one particular ball the conviction had suddenly gripped me that I might compel this desolated patient to identify herself with what she used to be; I would make her realize that she was a very pleasant, indeed attractive, young woman, and that canvas-frock, tears, and the spoiling of her good looks with nail-biting and hair-tearing could quite easily be forgotten. In spite of the matron's fear that the dance might leave Ellen worse than ever, she let me have my way. A simple frock of white muslin, cut prettily low at the neck, was made for her, and I claimed that a bright blue satin waist-band and a bunch of many coloured ribbons at her shoulders would be essential. Her own stockings and shoes—not the asylum's undamageable substitutes—would suffice, seeing that the floor was as rough as the patients' boots. Though for a week beforehand I had told her she was expected at the ball and must give me the first waltz, she was shown the frock only when it was time to dress. I insisted upon all this repeatedly, though in those days there was no talk of the power of *suggestion*. Yet, up till the moment of her muslin frock's unpacking with its bright, happy trimmings, she remained

unmoved, at the best only ceasing to weep for a minute or two, while I told her how much I wanted to have her for a partner. When at last the time came, she apathetically submitted to be dressed. But not till the music began was she led to the room—and with no more than a little persuasion from Miss Youngmans. She looked about her shrinkingly, timidly, till I made my way to her and claimed her. Then her face changed. For I was immaculate in swallow-tail, a paste solitaire to my shirt-front, such as was then fashionable, and a gardenia in my buttonhole, though its scent was hateful to me. I wanted beyond all things to make myself “quite the gentleman” in the eyes of these mournful merrymakers. That evening Miss Black was my partner for every single dance, all other attractions being utterly ignored. True, during one polka, the poor girl’s red-flannel petticoat slipped down and fell entangling her feet. Anxious for her inevitable confusion, I instantly gathered up the hapless garment, threw it over my left arm, and danced away with my girl, till I could deliver the recalcitrant skirt to a giggling attendant.

I assured Miss Ellen, as we resumed the dance, that this sort of accident might occur to any grand lady at a Court Ball, though I confessed I had no idea whether duchesses secured their flannel petticoats with buttons or tapes! *And Ellen laughed!* So we hopped away triumphantly. Then I saw to my partner’s refreshment with the tepid lemonade, the stuffy sweet biscuits and shabby tasteless cakes. What we chatted about I do not remember, though she had little to say. I am sure only of this that I talked as I would to any perfectly sane girl. Once during an earlier dance I remember looking down at her and feeling suddenly as if some magic must be at work: this could not be the same girl I had set out with! The piece of silver was found; the dead was alive again, the devil exorcised. On that occasion I think there was no audience of ladies and gentlemen on the platform. I do not even remember if I had Dr. Starling’s sanction

for my experiment ; but even if I had not made my suggestion to him, it is certain that the matron would have told him, and that he was so far of kindly disposition, as yet only half afraid of my energies, that he raised no objection.

The next morning Ellen Black was absolutely sane, having slept soundly through the whole night. She was given her own clothes on rising, and was removed to the convalescent ward. Indeed, so sane was she, that on my early round I was able to explain my attentions to her quite candidly and so obviate all fear of her misunderstanding them. I told her I was determined to make her realize that, in spite of any bad luck or mistakes, she was still a good and sweet girl ; that it was a real pleasure to dance with and talk to her ; that behind all the stormy clouds of her misery I had seen her real bright self ; that the dancing had awakened it again—that truly I was proud of her ! Being a girl of refined intelligence she understood me perfectly. So simply grateful was she that, I being a serious doctor once again, and no longer a fella' to dance with, she told me a few days later the story of her misfortune. It was a very ordinary one—a handsome irresponsible man to whom she had given her whole heart had shattered her hitherto untried sanity. She willingly remained with us a further three weeks, just to make herself and us sure of her perfect recovery ; and, rapidly regaining colour and strength, she showed no suspicion of mental weakness. After a short holiday at her own home, where, as before, she continued to live, she resumed her work—that of a barmaid. Once a fortnight she would come and visit us—simply out of gratitude. At last she brought with her the young man, a policeman, who was chiefly responsible for her breakdown. I had a strange talk with the fellow in my own room. Though I have always been accredited with some gift of craftsmanship, I had hitherto never tried my hand at match-making. But this was a clear invitation to my skill ; the result being that very soon the two were married. Even now, and in spite of eugenics, I see no reason for thinking I

was at fault in rectifying the mishap and helping a pair of lovers to happiness. Yet of their subsequent story I know nothing.

Cases of similar acute melancholia were then not uncommon, although my brief stay in the Asylum gave me only one other opportunity of testing my theory of treatment. The second was that of a younger maid-servant, with a very pretty, childish face, whose story had some resemblance to *Esther Waters*, George Moore's great novel. This girl's insanity was, however, from the first not as ominous as the other's though, on her betrayal and the dismissal of her lover, she had hanged herself with garters in her garret bedroom, possibly hoping the attempt would not succeed. Anyhow she became acutely deranged and her weeping uncontrollable; so that after a second attempt at suicide she had to be certified. When she came to us, she was refusing all food, though one meal with the stomach-pump, administered by myself with little difficulty, made its repetition unnecessary. She did not destroy her clothes, as did Ellen Black, but her bewailings that her soul was lost eternally and her almost sleepless nights were not helped by kindly talks or drugs. I repeated my former experiment; yet as her case seemed to call for milder treatment, I had a few dances with other patients. Though the improvement on the following morning was unmistakable, she was not quite convalescent, and she had to wait a fortnight for the next ball, when I administered larger doses of the terpsichorean mixture; after which her cure was complete. Here also, as with Ellen Black, I was able to warn her that she must not misunderstand the reason of my treatment. She also was so penitently grateful that she told me her story explicitly enough for me to read between the lines. I got in touch with her former mistress, who had some real affection for the girl; and the lady made herself responsible for her care when she left us a few weeks later. So I lost sight of this patient.

Here I am tempted to quote another of my fifty-year-old

letters, not only because its story is interesting, in points tragically humorous, but because it instances the extreme difficulty any mental hospital may have in doing all it would wish. My patient was in the last stage of lung-disease. She had, while in her own comfortable home, developed such grave maniacal symptoms that the only kind treatment was certification and restraint. She came to the "Avenue" as a paying patient. There being no single room available, she was, because then easily manageable, put in the ladies' smaller infirmary; which, though it had six beds, was then occupied by only three other patients, each of them senilely demented. Her lungs grew rapidly worse, though her mind was not much astray. When very near the end I sent for her husband:

*To my Mother*

"19th August, 1881.

". . . I never was present at a more touching death scene. Her husband, a young surveyor in good circumstances, was absolutely devoted. They had no family, though married for seven years, but had adopted a rosy-faced, hearty boy, now about eight, who crammed down the sweet biscuits and milk we gave him while his adoptive mother was struggling to die. For the final two days of her life she was quite happy with imaginary twins. She thought she was holding one on each arm, and talked to me of their black eyes and silky hair. I fear I romanced freely to her about these babies, how sweetly they smiled at her, and so forth. I had to let the poor husband sit by her side well into the night, though his nurse took the boy home; for the man's grief was so great that I could not turn him away. We had screens set up round her bed, and I had begged the three old ladies, everything being quite convenient, to join us in pity for the husband and wife's extremity. They quite pleasantly accepted the position. But before midnight—and I was constantly in and out—they began a toothless, angry chatter, saying they were horrified; that they would bring down vengeance on me from the Commissioners. One old lady of 85 began to throw her dozen dolls, one by one, over the screens; and another of 91 vowed she would get out of bed and put the wicked man to shame.

By this time, however, the patient was unconscious. The poor husband was oblivious to all, as he sat by his wife in his well-cut clothes, while his mother-in-law worried her dying daughter with useless heart-rending appeals. When at last she drifted away, and I led the distraught man across the garden to my own room for a whisky and soda, his gratitude made me feel how right I had been in braving all that outraged female senility. His wife used to tell me that I was better than all the nurses—so much may an arm do, at once gentle and strong. . . .”

It was, however, the attendants—not at that time “nurses,” I repeat—that gave most anxiety—almost more than the patients. Their influence for good or evil upon their charges was incalculable. Some of them came from the lowest grade of society, well below domestic servants. Vulgar, unsympathetic and selfish, they looked upon the patients as lower animals. They would ridicule and irritate them, knowing it was impossible for these patients to substantiate their complaints: a glance from an attendant would make a patient contradict a complaint she had made immediately before. Of course male attendants would knock patients about, and then swear that some demented inmate, whose denial was worthless, was responsible for tell-tale bruises. But generally speaking, women patients had to put up with more unkindness and foul, abusive language than the men. It was bad enough for a young girl—perhaps a governess (and there were several among my pauper patients)—to be herded with lunatics, hearing day and night their jeering and blaspheming. But it made things far worse when the only sane persons with whom she had any intercourse were even less refined than the mad people. If she recovered she must retain a life-long memory of the asylum's ineradicable nastiness, its gloom and awful company.

Dr. Starling told me once how he had thought to get better attendants by offering better wages; but no good came of it. So repulsive and arduous are the duties that it was mostly women disqualified for pleasanter work who undertook it, and the wages already were higher than domestic servants'.



The food too, being excellent and abundant, they ate hugely, and the dispensary suffered from it. They were allowed two hours out of doors on alternate evenings, when men and women would make merry at the nearest public-house. Yet a few really did their work well. That the men were superior to the women was perhaps due to their being mostly ex-army men and disciplined; but anyhow masculine vices seem less destructive of human kindness than are womens'.

Our head male attendant, Bradford, was an admirable servant, proving again Dr. Starling's general shrewdness in character-reading. The man had been a sergeant in the army, and, as a rigid disciplinarian, he knew how demeanour alone will ensure obedience. I retain a feeling of real affection and respect for that man, so kind was he to his patients. He supported me admirably in my inexperienced notions, taught me much, and was full of tact in arranging differences between patients and his subordinates. Once he saved me from the attack of a homicidal maniac when my ill-considered reproofs drove the patient to a sudden fury of hatred. A few years after my resignation, he being now married and with a young family, secured the post of Master to a neighbouring workhouse; but, as I learned some years later, his own mind had given way, and he died in the very asylum where he had done such honourable work.

As Bradford had had some years' experience in County Asylums before he came to "The Avenue," his wise opinions, when comparing the public and private Asylums, were highly informative. So, if again I set down my notes made at the time, many of their conclusions are as much Bradford's as my own. Yet I believe all I jotted down in 1882 of the great institutions still holds and is worth summarizing.

There used to be no doubt in my mind that the kindest treatment for a case of violent acute mania was the padded room. But in the County Asylums the Committees would generally object to such seclusion. They thought it cruel, and preferable that two attendants should sit up at night with

an acutely maniacal perhaps suicidal or homicidal patient, and forcibly restrain him from mischief. "But when such night-duty is necessary," said Bradford, "each attendant is allowed 2s. extra pay. It was quite common in — Asylum to irritate a quiet patient until he became violent, when their extra services would be required." This, of course, is but hearsay evidence, but I knew Bradford was truthful. Moreover the mere possibility of his evidence being accurate shows how difficult is a conscientious alienist's work.

When the world is happier and more orderly, more prophetic and wiser in commonplace affairs, less sentimental and more sympathetic, certain reforms hardly yet dreamed of may materialize. The treatment of Lunacy may be relegated quite conceivably to some spiritually militant community like the Salvation Army—where Faith brings joy, and joy reinvigoration. For some minds gone astray miracles would be quite ordinary. But personal devotion is quite impossible in our huge mental hospitals; and how can even the most kindly restraint—

"Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
 Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
 That weighs upon the heart."

Seclusion of the insane will always be necessary, I am convinced, both in their own and Society's interests; but the hospitals might well be staffed by devout men and women who, upholding social and personal rights, may, through individual pity and sympathy make the deprivation of freedom more than tolerable. More cures will then be effected than the constantly increasing expenditure upon comfort and luxuries and "research" can justify their advocates in hoping for. Spiritual uplift will be the basis of mental therapeutics; psycho-analysis will be more concerned in awakening the *ultra-conscious* instincts after the water-brooks of loveliness, than in submerging the subconscious remnants of jungle-bred disgusts.

But one point in such possible reform might at once be given serious consideration. With a more rational and reverent understanding of a profound Truth that lies at the very heart of our evolution and resultant society, and therefore of our personal sanity, it may be possible to exploit more often that sex-attraction which in my limited experience gave astonishing results. Even now we might realize that certain patients will be better handled by "healers" of the other sex than by those of their own: but of course only if reverence and restraint are instinctively ordering the extremely delicate psycho-mechanism.

Most, I fear, will pronounce such hopes as Utopian. For at present it looks as if the sex-equivalent in life must be slipping back into some mire antipathetic to spiritual evolution—mire in which the ideals of ichthyosaur and plesiosaur—namely size, greed and brute-force—had at last won in the contest for survival. Yet the life of all living things is the same life, whether in normal child, abnormal lunatic or ichthyosaur that has blundered into a success disastrous to its own species. And this life, I again insist, is primarily an emotion, a passion, waywardly plastic to environmental compellings and suggestings even while dominating them. It is still an emotion dynamic with undreamed possibilities: possibilities however that will win success and felicity only through understanding that in losing the life it is found; that in relinquishing it the Universe itself may be inherited—and infinitely more. The Crucifixion, after all, symbolizes the one Law of Life.

In which faith of my father—his, though I put it in new words—I find one conclusion that bears on the present topic. I feel sure that sooner or later, in treating the insane, women will often be found to have more influence in rearranging the dislocated mind-workings of male patients, while men may be no less useful in rediscovering to women patients their once dominant normality.

But now I must briefly relate events which led to my resignation and the abandonment of what at first looked like the best career for me.

Although in my subordinate position I was nominally in charge only of the women's wards, I was increasing my influence with my junior, Dr. Dawkins, in charge of the men's. In later years, when he was superintendent of his huge County Hospital, he would sometimes consult me about his own health, and in our social meetings would in his funnily stupid way often declare that I was "a most extr'or'nary fella," wishing that he too had seen how much better laryngology would pay than lunacy! Yet I never discovered any sense of humour in him, Irish though he was. While we worked together, so always friendly was he that he let me have the run of his own wards and get intimate with many of his patients. Thus I persuaded one, in particular, to resume his violin, and we would practise Mozart's duets assiduously. This patient being my superior in execution, gave me sound advice; a point that greatly helped him to recover his self-respect. Even his queer delusions would slink away into obscurity, for some hours afterwards, though not permanently. He claimed to be the Holy Ghost, whose chief privilege, it would appear, was a right to fly out of window whenever he pleased. Yet when at last an opportunity came for such an exhibition, one that would make us all fall down and worship him, the poor paraclete proved to be not even a parachute, and he broke his arm. The accident ended our musical converse, though I fear it did not exorcise his delusion.

Here a letter will suggest the variety in work I enjoyed:

*To my Mother*

*(Undated)*

" . . . We have had Small Pox again in the house—a solitary case. I found her at large in the wards when I came back from you and neither Starling nor Dawkins had diagnosed it! But I

isolated the case, and have vaccinated all the patients. One attendant took it: she also had been vaccinated, though it had not taken! . . . I packed her off at once to the Small Pox Hospital, whither I am going to see her this afternoon. . . . I have now five cases of phthisis on hand in various stages; but Dr. Starling does not like my examining their chests much! I just ignore him! So I get a lot of general medicine to keep me up with stethoscope etc. for my M.B. . . . Dawkins and I work together very well. He does not know much; but as he did get qualified, he should be an encouragement to many! He is down now with typhoid and I have all his work to do, as well as sitting with him as much as possible. . . .

“This was the last day for sending in the application for Colney Hatch and I have not done so. . . . I will hang on here a bit longer. Dr. Starling and I have made it up quite, I think. He tells me I am fearfully conceited (perhaps I am) and makes satirical remarks thereon, which I swallow to my own amusement and the confirmation of his idea of me. . . .”

But an old melancholic pauper with intractable insomnia presently led to my resignation: Thomas Groner, I will name him. He was suicidal and an awful picture of misery. Occasionally forcible feeding was necessary and hypnotics gave him only brief snatches of sleep. So that, as he disturbed other patients with his incessant moaning, we gave him a room to himself in the men's infirmary. His bed was very comfortable, though it was necessary at night to strap down his wrists and ankles: a measure preferable, as it rightly seemed to Dr. Starling, to setting one or two special attendants to watch him for hours when no one could supervise them. I had tried hypnotism on several patients, but Groner was the only one with whom it proved even partially successful. I would sit for two or three hours by him at night, using the ordinary hand-passes and suggestive assurances, as he lay quietly, but strapped down; and had it been practicable to continue this treatment I think it might possibly have saved him. At any rate, he improved so much that we put him back into the infirmary-ward. The head attendant here, Boulder, was an elderly army man, with a

long County Asylum record, and only recently engaged; but from the first I had grave suspicion of his character.

Occasionally if I was anxious about any special matter at night, I would play the spy in the small hours of the morning, creeping in my slippers with my master-key well oiled, from yard to yard, from building to building. As regards the woman's side, where espionage was open to objection, I would be content with listening outside the infirmary and various dormitories, and my visits to these were never suspected. So that I wondered if my real vocation might not be burglary.

One night I had been sitting up late reading for my M.B. exam., and at 2 a.m. I was tempted, before going to bed, to take a look round, particularly because I was not happy about Groner and the man, Boulder. I crept across the communicating garden and then up the stone stairs to the infirmary. Its door was half open, and I saw Boulder stuffing a dirty duster into the patient's mouth, who, contrary to orders, was again strapped down to his bedstead. My anger had to be subdued for fear of waking the other patients. Boulder protested that Groner's howls were keeping the whole ward awake, and that only thus could there be any peace. I then sat down by the patient's side, continuing to suggest sleep by hand-passes and the frequent reiteration of the words *silence* and *sleep*, until he was snoring safely. Not then did I reprove Boulder, merely appealing to him because of my interest in the case. But after breakfast, I told Dr. Starling of the incident, saying, as I had already done more than once, that I altogether distrusted this man. I took it for granted that he would be immediately dismissed. But the Superintendent began by objecting to my spying; and then insisted that Boulder's experience was so wide that we might trust his handling of this particularly troublesome patient. Dr. Starling's real humanity was at the moment obscured, I think, by the happy excuse for snubbing me: more especially because, a few mornings before, he

happening to be away, the Commissioners had paid one of their visits. This in itself was provoking; but still more annoying was a remark they appended to their report in the Asylum's statutory book, "commending the zeal of the senior medical officer"—this being myself! But to continue.

A few weeks after this spying incident the Superintendent went to Scotland for his summer holiday. The men's side was directly supervised, as I have said, by my junior, now newly arrived, Dr. Dawkins having found work in a County Asylum. In Starling's absence, my authority was supreme. One day, my new colleague reported to me that a recently admitted pauper was down with pneumonia in the Infirmary, where Boulder was still in charge. I made my own examination and found broken ribs—a fact highly suggestive of ill-usage. The man died in a few days. Instantly I took the steps enjoined by the Lunacy Law. I informed the Commissioners and the Coroner; but I deliberately did not recall my Chief, as, in his opinion, I ought to have done. I was anxious for the enquiry to be held without him, and hoped that justice would now fall upon Boulder, though I admit there was no *proof* of his responsibility for the broken ribs. Unfortunately the Matron took it upon herself to telegraph to the Superintendent without my knowledge. He returned on the morning of the inquest, which was then adjourned, pending a post-mortem examination. This was correctly undertaken by my junior, as the patient had been under his immediate care, and Dr. Starling insisted that I need not be present. The jury's verdict was that the ribs had been broken before admission, and that there was no evidence of responsibility. Now the press is always admitted to inquests; and as this one might prove of exceptional interest, inviting heavy captions such as "Brutal treatment in a Private Asylum," the reporters attended in large numbers. *But not one newspaper, local or general, reported the inquest.* Such matters were easily, if expensively, arranged.

On the following morning I thanked Dr. Starling for all his kindness to me and his patience with my occasional disregard of his wishes; but I told him I would no longer serve under a man I had ceased to respect. If he liked, I said, to complete his holiday, I would remain and do my best, as I hoped I had always done; but that the day he returned I should leave him. He accepted my compromise. Thus it was that all my hope of a career in Lunacy was shattered. I never heard how my sudden resignation was explained to the Commissioners.

Before I leave the subject altogether, I must add a few words. I was convinced that the Lunacy Laws were often too restrictive in the patients' interests; and one or two instances of this are, I think, worth recording.

A young woman, Ann Sloman, had been in the refractory ward for two or three years. She was powerfully built and had good features, which often would be controlled by a hateful, indeed bestial expression. She was certified as an epileptic and treated continuously, though with no benefit, with large doses of bromides. Her unpleasing delusion was that, being divinely ordained for such punitive sport, she dared not resist the impulse to bite off people's noses. In fact, since her admission, she had succeeded in thus mutilating one poor imbecile—whose life, I do think, was not made any less bearable. She generally contrived to have a fit during my visit to the ward, and after two or three of these exhibitions, I became convinced that, as regards the fits, she was malingering. At last, following a plan I had found useful in other cases, I whispered to the Matron—but intending the patient to hear what she thought was not for her ears—that the cure for that sort of fit was three bucketsful of cold water; and, would Miss Youngmans kindly have them ready for me on the morrow? The next day the patient's exhibition was even more extravagant—almost "post-impressionistic." I asked the matron for the buckets, and she, playing up to me, ordered in her usual cool way two attendants to fetch



them. The fit immediately subsided, and the attendants were recalled. On the next day, however, the seizure began again. Two buckets of water, this time actually ready, were brought into the ward, and the patient, at last believing she was to be drenched, recovered instantly and without the heavy dosing. During the stay at the Asylum she never had another fit.

Now the administration of such proposed treatment is illegal; yet I became convinced that punitive discipline of some cases of moral obliquity may be the only way of cure. Abuse in such ways had formerly become so horrible that legislation had to prohibit them altogether. Ann Sloman needed more, however, than the *threat* of cold water to cure her, and the Law was a friend to her possessive demon, if not to her and me. Realizing perhaps, that I had seen through her tactics, she changed them into virulent hatred, and was determined to bite off my nose. She would lurk behind the refractory-yard door, ready to pounce upon me on my entrance. But no one ever entered that ward of danger without two keenly watchful attendants, and my nose still held its own. Her allurements being somewhat barbaric, I had not courage to dance with Miss Ann Sloman at our balls; we could not safely invite her; nor was hers a case it seemed, where such means could be beneficial. She might have responded: I can hardly conjecture, her case being so very like one of possession. Yet my appearance at the ball in an iron mask might, even though I were otherwise immaculately attired, have weakened the personal appeal essential to success. One point of interest in Ann Sloman's case is this, that, half a century ago the possibilities in mere suggestion were by no means unrealized.

I recall another case of delusional melancholy in a young girl, when the pseudo-secret mention of red-hot irons to the spine instantly cured her paralysis and pseudo-broken leg. In the insane any intellectual appeal to reason always does more harm than good, and by opposing, strengthens the

demon-idea in possession. I am not sure that this is not equally true of the sane.

Although, from the mere alienist's point of view a diagnosis of *possession* must be fanciful, other cases still seem to me to be strongly suggestive of its justification. Thus Mrs. Muggins, the extraordinarily tall and muscular wife of a greengrocer was admitted as a pauper patient, with acute, possibly homicidal, mania. She had been at the "Avenue" twice before, but each time, after a few weeks, had been discharged cured. As on the former occasions, so fierce, noisy and destructive was she, that the padded room was the only kind treatment. After she had spent two absolutely sleepless and furious nights, I ventured upon an experiment. While held by four strong nurses, I gave her a huge hypodermic dose that would certainly have been unsafe with the sane. Almost instantly the woman dropped on to the floor, in a rather alarming sleep, which lasted seventeen hours without break. In some anxiety myself, I sat by her side for almost the whole night in that padded room. When at last she woke, she was perfectly sane and ate a good breakfast. During the remaining fortnight of her stay, she was apparently absolutely normal in sleep, food and conversation, though she refused to speak a word to myself until the day she left. Then, rejecting my proffered handshake, she scowled at me and said. "Look 'ere, Mister Doctor, if you go and play that trick on me when I come back again, I'll just *kill ye*'—and love it too! So don't ye' forget it: Mrs. Muggins won't."

Surely we may call this a case of possession? She knew she was mad, she meant to be mad, and she dared her benefactor to cure her next time! She was more vicious than mad and knew well how to malingering as excuse for exhibiting her enormous physical power.

I recall yet another case, a private patient, which impressed me strongly as an instance of possession, though it has no special legal interest. Miss Macpherson was a lovely girl of

seventeen, the only and cherished daughter of a non-conformist minister in a highly respectable suburb. She had had no trouble that her parents knew of, and though interested in her father's work she had not helped him especially, and none of his flock belonged to the lowest class. Her case also was one of acute mania, and I thought at the time I had never heard more blasphemous words than those flung incoherently from her pretty mouth. Her father vowed it was quite impossible that she had ever heard such language. I remember how, on her first admission and while he was bidding her farewell notwithstanding her ignoring of his presence, I, to relieve his distress, assured him that these cases always recovered, and often quickly. He asked how long it would be, and I replied—perhaps with more assurance than was strictly justifiable—"Possibly three months." The girl was not violent and she ate fairly well though capriciously, but she slept very badly. She showed no sign of mending and her ceaseless chatter was quite horrible. Yet exactly three months to the day after her admission, I found her perfectly recovered, her shy modesty well matching her real sweetness of feature and expression. She had no recollection whatever of the past three months, nor of coming to us; and she was contented with the assurance that she had been ill with a low fever which had kept her unconscious. She soon went home, and I saw no more of her. But the case remains in my mind as coming very near the old notion of possession. Perhaps, had I believed firmly in an exorcism by faith, and, instead of prognosing a duration of three months, declared that the evil would depart from her there and then, the miracle might have been wrought. Or again, had this girl's stay at the "Avenue Asylum" been in the winter—in which months only we held our balls—a little dancing might have done wonders: though I am not sure that her Calvinistic upbringing would have allowed it.

Instances like these must be familiar to all alienists. But, because my experience was so limited, individual cases made

the deeper impression, and have made me frequently remember them.

I was now quit of Lunacy, and did not regret it. Knowing I stood well with the Commissioners, I might possibly have found other openings; but Dr. Starling could hardly have said a good word for me. A little later, after travelling round the world, I sought a reconciliation with the kind-hearted, well-meaning gentleman, even bringing him some curiosities of special interest to his scientific mind; but he refused to see me on the score that, so he wrote, I had calumniated the admirable Miss Youngmans' character. Yet the worst I had said of her, along with unqualified praise, was that he gave her too much authority, and that in using it, she exceeded both letter and spirit of the Law.

## CHAPTER V

### CIRCUMSCRIBING THE WORLD

**M**Y father, as many will recollect, was an unflinching idealist. With his new home at Bordighera at last built and furnished, his hope was that like some chief of a clan, he might keep his children near him, whatever their work. One son was to be a doctor, the second a schoolmaster, the third an architect. The fourth, Maurice, who had died at Porto Fino in 1879, would, it had been hoped, do great things for the Church, even though bishoprics were none too plentiful on the Riviera. If I write jestingly, it is in all reverence, knowing it was only the paternal love for us that, now and again, conceived such happy impossibilities. Anyhow, my own feelings were much attracted by my parents' belief that somewhere near there must be openings for an English doctor, if only the necessary capital were in hand. Then a friend of my father asked him if I would take two lads of eighteen and nineteen for a tour round the world. Their education had been haphazard, and it seemed unlikely that Oxford or Cambridge would advantage them. The offer was tempting; for besides the delight of travel that could never be again possible, it might provide a little money for beginning practice. I agreed to go, provided I had a fee of £500. Mr. X declared this preposterous. But I knew he was extremely wealthy and suspected that these orphan-wards of his had ample expectations. Moreover, I was sure he would give much to secure a son of George MacDonald. So I was obdurate. At last he begged me to call upon him in the City. Then I felt sure I could get the better of this moneyed magnate. He was sternly gracious. He told me of two other young doctors who were willing to go for their expenses alone. My response was that I also had more than one friend who would gladly accept those terms; but that

for myself the fee would be £500, nothing less. My suspicions had been well founded: the penniless young Doctor of Medicine outwitted the millionaire, who then replied with a heart-rending sigh, "Well, then, so be it."

Nor do I think I was extortionate, although I am not at all sure that I would not have accepted the offer without any fee. My services had no predicable market-value: and I knew that, even if the fee was to come out of his own pocket, Mr. X would never miss it. People used to talk of my luck in life: yet it was, at best or worst, but a sure and quick weighing of opportunity. It was much the same whether I was dealing with a homicidal maniac, the vindictive captain of a steamship, or with this kindly merchant-prince: and indeed—so it seems to me—with many another incident yet to happen. I imagine, too, that my quick decisions were strengthened by a more or less subconscious apprehension of Divinity shaping our ends, whatever rough-hewing might be in store.

So the ensuing eight months were spent in close companionship with two indolent boys, who had little interest in sport, and the poorest faculty for admiration, unless it was hidden under their affectation of boredom. They had never been at any school, and were not yet awake. Perhaps I was not the sort of person to open their eyes; and I fear their guardians were not very well pleased with my endeavours. They thought I had been reckless in expenditure, though the whole cost had fallen well within the figure which I had advised them would be likely.

Certain points in this trip are worth recording: and a few extracts from the letters cherished by my mother will serve better than memories necessarily faded in colour and precision. Possibly their worth may be impaired by certain platitudes and conceits proper to a Victorian mode; although their writer's enthusiasm over anything beautiful is worth comparing, I think, with a differing mode and speed of to-day. I, this ancient person who now write, am hardly the

same as that young man whom I thought I understood those fifty years ago; and therefore I may, without egoism, testify to a certain merit in the letters as well as their accuracy in detail. Also, being effusions to the mother whom that young man loved more than anyone in the world, they are probably less bumptious than their antique, immature words might suggest. I shall give only a few extracts. Those I have chosen have this interest that, in spite of their descriptions of places and peoples treated by others far more skilfully, they express certain unchangeable feelings for Beauty and Art, analogous surely to that clue with which I have never, as I daringly claim, entirely lost touch. Seeing with eyes as they then served me, and feeling with a youthfully adventurous understanding, they must rank with other eye-openings I have already intimated, and with others yet to come. Some bits, too, seem quite amusing, and suggest that the two lads may not have been overburdened by my moralizings.

So I set down these scraps, letting them hang together as best they may. The old world itself looks amazingly like a patchwork, though its antagonistic fabrics cannot be torn apart without disaster. So, if this trip round the world is but scrappily told, it may indicate something of my life's clue and less definitely realized purpose.

*To my Mother*

"SHEPHEARD'S HOTEL,

"CAIRO,

"December 2, 1882.

". . . Such a business we had landing at Alexandria, fifty Arabs fighting for our baggage! But a dragoman, whose services we have retained till we leave Suez, came to our assistance, and beat them off. They meekly submit to this sort of thing, and all the Police carry whips with leather lashes. The Arabs are incessantly quarrelling, greatly to the delight of my boys, especially when Hassan, our dragoman, settles disputes by laying on his stick and sending them flying.

"Hassan considers himself a pure Egyptian. His straight,

thick nose, prominent brows, and full, well-shaped mouth, black hair and moustache and massive limbs give him a distinguished appearance. He professes the Koran, of course, but says he can pray quite as well in a Christian Church or his own room as in a Mosque. The same God is over all the earth, he says, though he doesn't believe in any future life. Certainly he is the biggest liar I ever met. He is awfully ignorant, but never is at a loss to answer a question, and knows all languages, European, Syriac, etc., equally well. However, the boys take to him wonderfully, and like nothing better than to get information out of him which is less correct in fact and decency than Murray's. . . .

"I am beginning to like the boys. They are always gentlemanly and are very fond of each other. . . . Then they are generous to beggars and never ask for any wine but claret.

"But how I have wandered from Alexandria! We spent only one afternoon there, quite enough to see the cruel havoc made by Arabi.<sup>1</sup> We saw several of the forts, huge guns lying just where our shells put them. In places the shore was strewn with Arabi's shot and shell, the Egyptians having, according to Hassan, lost their heads and fired on to their own rocks and beach! After dinner we turned into a 'Cafe Paradisio' (!) the joy being just drinking coffee to a band of hideous German women. Alexandria is the most cosmopolitan place I have ever seen: English, Italians, French, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Levantines, besides the natives, swarm; and most signs and notices are in 4 or 5 languages. Our redcoats and jack-tars are everywhere. The noise and bustle of the harbour, with the fighting, swearing and drinking of natives scarcely harmonize with a city in ashes. We had a lovely drive along the Mahmoodieh Canal, the fresh water supply of Alexandria that Arabi cut off. Lovely gardens and palatial (i.e. hideous) residences line the riverside avenue along which we drove. . . . The boys asked whose each house was that we passed. Hassan was never at a loss, though at last he grew hard up and actually hesitating a little said, 'that belonged to a lady whose husband was once the son of a Greek gentleman of business very rich and respectable: O, yes!' . . .

"In old Cairo the Coptic Churches interested me immensely, one ever so high up in the tower of a Roman fortress. In another there are some very good panel paintings of gospel history which the priest said were of the 10th Century. I can hardly believe

<sup>1</sup> In the insurrection he organized after his defeat by Wolseley at Tel-el-Kebir on September 13, 1882.



this, for, if so, they are in advance of anything that Italy produced at the same period. In a chapel adjoining, dedicated to St. George, is a heavy chain and collar where they fasten mad people before the shrine of the Saint. They soon get well, the priest said; but then, it is always hasheesh that drives them mad. Underneath is a tiny chapel, scarcely high enough to stand erect in, with two aisles, in each of which there is a recess, hardly more than three feet high. In one of these rested Mary and her Baby and in the other Joseph, when they had to hide from their pursuers. Mary and Joseph must have been considerably below medium stature! . . .”

*To my Mother*

“S.S. Canton,

“Sunday, 7 Jan. 1883.

“. . . We had a beautiful sermon from the new Bishop of Adelaide, extempore, poetical and simple. . . . I have just had *such* a talk with the Bishop. I found him on deck after dinner working the punkah to relieve the little nigger who had been at it all dinner time. So I began to talk to him. Soon he asked me if I were related to George MacDonald. I said he was my father. His name is Kennion. . . . The Archbishop had told him he must read *Thomas Wingfold*, and then he read all he could lay hands on . . . He told me that it was reading *Sir Gibbie* that made him refuse a very rich London living that was offered him, although he was poor—a very different thing, he said, from a Colonial Bishopric. . . . A most lovable man.”

“JAYPORE, RAJAPUTANA,

“24 Jan., 1884.

“. . . On our way here we stopped 24 hours at Ahmedabad, such a town as you would want to spend a month in. Even C— said that it licked Cairo to fits, pleasing me thereby vastly. . . . Every house and hut, be it ever so tumble-down, has its outside woodwork elaborately and most beautifully carved. . . . though, perhaps, the Egyptian mosques are more inspiring. The love of constant variation in form and colour must be stronger in the Hindoo than in the Arab; but I am terribly muddled about Indian history, and especially about Moslemism. The striking point about the Moslem architecture here is the love of stone fretwork screens, even the walls of tombs being perforated with

the most lovely and ever-varying Arabesque patterns. Windows of perforated marble give a beautiful light, quite as magical in effect as Gothic stained glass. One especially I must tell you of, though being built up on the inside one cannot see the light through it. The window has a large central tree whose branches and foliage intermingle with those of two smaller palm trees. . . . Here is a sketch of it.

"I must just give you an idea of a scene I shall never forget. A group of ruins, variously dilapidated, surround a lake to which steps descend on every side. It is 5 miles from Ahmedabad and is called Sarkej. The Architecture is almost pure Hindoo, though here and there a Moslem arch is seen. It was built A.D. 1459. At one end of the lake was a mosque with horizontal arches and innumerable small cupolas, but no minarets. On another side was the façade of a once mighty palace, now little but an elevation of columns, cross-stones, and a second storey of columns again. Through these the setting sun shone in all his oriental glory. On a third side was a similar building supported by one huge span of a moorish arch. Two great stones occupied the centre of the lake on one of which lazily lay a horrible alligator. . . . The full moon gave an enchanting light to the mist rising from the water, and as the sunlight faded the old palace became pure silvery white, in strange contrast to its previous blackness against the angry sun. The old building looked still majestic in the strength of its immortal art . . ."

*"Feb. 7th, 1883.*

". . . I should not worry you with many of the things I've set down in my diary, but that in writing to you, dear Mother, my feelings must crop out, and somehow they belong to the magic of the sights themselves. For instance, yesterday we went all over the Palace of the Great Moghul Akbar named Futhepore Sukri. It is all red sandstone and more than anything else has given me sense of the Moghul's greatness. In many of the buildings, nevertheless, the Hindoo architecture predominates without any spoiling by the Mohammedan. You would marvel to see how susceptible this sandstone is to the most delicate carving. Thus one of the Sultana's Palaces within the walls of this great one, is full of treasures. It was built for the Portuguese wife of Akbar and there are remains of Christian frescoes on the columns and walls; over one window in a lunette are two splendid wings widespread, no doubt part of The Annunciation. Then again there is the Mosque which is an exact copy of the one at Mecca;

at one end is a gate 130 ft. high. On the left of its arch is an inscription eulogizing Akbar, and on the other side is the following or thus they translate it: 'Isa (Jesus) on whom all peace, said "The world is a bridge, pass over it but build no house on it"—The world endures but an hour, spend it in devotion.' I suppose this was the teaching of Miriam, the Portuguese Sultana; but she must have had a lonely life of it amongst the Mohammedans and Hindoos. . . ."

*To my Mother*

"JUBBULHORE, N.W.P.,  
10th Feb., 1883.

". . . We have had our hardships though they are small ones! After travelling since 2 a.m. from Cawnpore, and arriving here at 1 a.m. we found Lord and Lady Harris here, whom we had met at Jeypore and Delhi. Well, we both drove to the only hotel: we arrived first; but they had telegraphed; so we had to sleep the night here on fairly broad benches. Thank goodness, the Indian stations are all splendidly fitted. Many have bedrooms. Even here, after a wretched noisy night I had a lovely shower bath, and a breakfast consisting of a chop, a steak and tomatoes, two eggs, curry and rice, bread *ad lib*, and coffee, and a punkah-wallah to frighten the flies away. Everything was first-rate.

"Then we engaged a gharry, a wonderful little vehicle like a growler with the windows knocked out; with two strapping little Arab horses, doing their best to split the rest of said gharry in two; they nearly killed us coming home. . . .

"We had a boat on the still green water that dawdles between the perpendicular rocks of pure white marble, blackened at the summit. In a shady corner, we plunged into the water, and enjoyed the cool for no more than two minutes. The stream dashes between the rocks down a really fine waterfall; but so deep is it—the rocks towering over 100 ft.—that the water looks quite stagnant and is scarcely ruffled by the fall. The country around is green and many spots look quite English. . . .

"We had an exciting drive back; and were it not for the plucky driver we should have been where you'd never have met me. One horse jibbed and bolted, after doing his best to smash the gharry with his hind legs. Then the pole chain came undone. The driver ran them under some trees, jumped down, fastened the chain (the horse kicking the while) and led them back to the

road. But he dared not leave them while he mounted ; so he started them off at full gallop without him. Thinking we were left to these wild Arabs I seized the reins from the front seat through the window ; but before I had succeeded in unfastening the knot that held them, there was the man on his box again ! How he managed it we could not tell, so quickly was it done. We drove the eleven miles back in one hour and five minutes ! We tipped that coachman, you may be sure ! . . .”

“BENARES, N.W.P.,

“11 Feb., 1883.

“. . . After a cold bath, a change throughout, a good lunch, and a talk with our native Portuguese landlady bedecked in lilac silk, condescending smiles, and officious advice, we boarded the ubiquitous barouche and pair, with the inevitable half-broken Arabs. We reached in comparative safety the so-called *monkey-temple*, Monkeys swarm all over the building inside and out ; and the trees around are cumbered with them. They are very tame, perhaps because a live goat is sacrificed to them every day. But their manners are bad. They snatch : and the big ones bully the old and infirm most horribly. Yet the mothers are fond of their babies. They all look horribly wicked, selfish and cruel. . . . Then we went to see the great Observatory built in 1695. . . . From the top we had a grand view of the Ganges and the ghats leading to the water. Here they all bathe, and burn their dead, both of which ceremonies we are to witness. I don't like the idea at all ; but the hope of this and the monkey temple have been great support to the lads. . . .”

“13th Feb., 2.30 p.m.

“. . . This morning we went to the Maharajah of Benares' Palace—furnished like a Brighton lodging-house. His Highness is very proud of his European furniture. He is particularly gracious to the English, and on hearing of our arrival, he sent his son with apologies that he could not receive us himself. . . . I thanked His Highness for his gracious permission to visit his noble palace, and trusted the indisposition of His Highness the Maharajah was but temporary. He then told me of his father's bad eyes from sitting up at night over his prayers. We conversed for some time, he very slowly but in good English. He shook hands with us. Oh ! the thrilling moment when one first holds royal blood by the hand ! He is a descendant of Cheit Singh whom Warren

Hastings was accused of dealing so harshly with. He still retains a certain amount of kingly authority, being lord over some 200 villages. In his own Benares he is nobody. Yet he is gracious to all the English. His palace is sacred; if you happen to die there you are exempted from becoming a donkey in the future life! I suppose living there accounts for his posing as one during this life. . . .”

“DARJEELING,  
“18th Feb., 1883.

“. . . We rode this afternoon to get a view of Mount Everest, but clouds prevented our seeing anything. . . . We are here 7,000 feet high surrounded on all sides by the green out-lying spurs of the Himalayas. Early this morning, quite unexpectedly, I discovered high above me a thick bank of clouds, extraordinarily sharp and brilliant; and then, to my amazement I discovered they were mountain-peaks, snow-clad. It was Kinchinjanga!

“The people here are funny. The women wear enormous necklaces of silver and beads, and great coronets over their massive black hair, which falls down their backs in two great plaits. They paint their faces, and often in two colours, red and blue. Men and women wear coats of brown blanket with sleeves half a yard longer than their arms. The men wear parti-coloured boots reaching to their knees. They are obviously Mongols, but more stupid looking than the Chinese. They speak a language so impossible that even themselves can't understand it! I tried to try it on them—so I know! Another proof of their stupidity is their honesty. If they find anything they will go half crazy till they find its owner; and they sell pure milk. They are all Buddhists and the women thump the men. They say their prayers wholesale with a machine like a great rattle; one turn of the handle and a world of hypocrisy is saved. I bought one of a fellow ploughing. It is thin repoussée silver, set with turquoise chips, and packed with a parchment reel covered with Sanskrit prayers. They are always laughing. . . . A woman, they say, thinks nothing of carrying up-hill a piano on her back. . . .”

And here I suddenly realize the need to keep these cullings within bounds, although each had been to my mother just a record of how treasures, priceless and multifold, were being heaped upon her son. To her, the mere fact that I judged

this or that trifle worth telling to her might be more significant than more brilliant descriptions. It is trivial points rather than the weighty which bind together a human story. So, in selecting sketches to give some idea of my travels, a transient poetic touch, meant only for my mother's happiness, may give verisimilitude to substantial happenings which I could hardly present truthfully in more rigid word; and thus my crudities may be pardoned.

I am quite sure this world-tour was extraordinarily educative—even if its method was something like an army crammer's. Particularly so, to mention one point, was the few days spent in Canton; and yet, accepting short cuts as inevitable, I must leave out nearly all the letters that tell of that mystery city. Its visions even now come back to me at times as if I had lived for years among a people inhabiting some other planet than ours, and yet so quickly ceasing to be alien! Even their worship, their conservative instinct for Beauty and the laws of its art; their materialistic conceptions of immortality; even their fatalism, found place in my avid imagination, thence in memory's barn. But, to recall more concrete impressions: the pathetic community of old men, past all active use, marooned with the lepers and their own miseries; the sweet thousand-years-old crafts still holding their people together—families and streetsful—in happy monotonous vitality; and even the pompous tyranny of mandarins and the infamous travesties of legal justice; all sank deep into my very being: indeed, I repeat, they became my own—almost as if I, an infinitesimal grain of a barbarian, were bound up in that strange and horrible, yet familiar civilization, the happy slave of Authority.

But still, I must give a few disjointed scraps about Canton.

“CANTON,

“*April 2nd, 1883.*

“. . . It is jolly to see all the manufactures carried on by the retail vendors, working at dyeing or stamping, carpentering or carving ivory in their open shops. We saw silk weaving and

jade cutting; a cat and dogs' meat restaurant; one temple containing only a recumbent gilt buddha covered with blankets, with a monk at hand selling joss sticks. . . .

"From the highest point of the city, which is a turret for military observations on the walls, we gazed on the vast expanse of grey unvaried roofs, below which all is teeming with life and colour, death and dirt, streets with astounding names (e.g. The Avenue of Benevolence), tanks teeming with stagnation, temples made hideous to corrupt what was once one of the noblest of religions. One cannot help wondering how much the all-creating Love is working in this ant-hill of human strife. Are they growing better? I fancy Love, no less than Life, must live by growth, else would it cease and all creation collapse. . . .

"The only temple where we saw many worshippers was the Temple of Horrors. Here are quantities of wooden painted figures, nearly life-size, arranged in groups, all of which portray the most horrible tortures imaginable. . . . And here were men and women burning joss sticks before devils, while the monks cast lots to ascertain the success of any business the worshippers might be anxious about. There were devils boiling their victims, sawing them asunder, grinding them up in mills, etc., etc., all too grotesque to be realistic. Yet the temple was crowded.

"Then we went to the Old Men's Home, where the lepers are shut up for life-sentence. I suppose it did not matter if the old men became lepers also. I left my palanquin, and learned more in a few minutes of that most horrible disease than I ever read. . . . They seemed very happy at the interest I took in them.

"The City of the Dead consists of small houses of one or two rooms in which are ranged the dead in their coffins. They remain here sometimes for many years, as long as the friends can pay the rent to the monks. Only the very rich can afford the luxury of not burying their dead. A man, if he is afraid his sons will not give him this luxury at death, will buy a coffin and hire a room for himself in this loathsome place. We saw some such, waiting for their grim tenants. . . ."

*"4th April.*

". . . Next we had to see the Temple of the God of War. The carving about the roof and vestibule is gorgeous, but not beautiful to us barbarians. The usual three enormous Buddhas occupy the altar. They form a sort of Trinity in Unity. There is the Buddha who has always existed in the blissful heavens; there is the Buddha who came on earth and went through the temptations under

the Bo-tree, the victory over which has saved the world, and there is the Spirit of Buddha still dwelling in the Church. So I gather; but one cannot help suspecting that Christianity has had some share in fashioning the dogma. . . .

“The love of the wealthy Chinese for old china, bronze, etc., must lick ours to pot. Ah Cum [our dragoman] took us to the house of a friend of his who showed us two vases: one red—deep and rich, so that you could look right *into* the colour. He said it was 600 years old, and he would sell it for £200. One other was blue, almost more lovely, and still older: he asked £600 for this. He would not keep these at his shop. I bought of him one or two pieces of old jade—one remarkably good, I am told. . . . Then he took us to his house—a charming three-walled house, the fourth side open to his exquisite garden—just like a willow pattern plate set free by some fairy from its enchantment, so that the trees now waved in the breeze again, the birds flew away, and the water-brooks all tumbled about in an ecstasy of freedom.

“But it is stagnant water that the Chinese delight in, green and smelly, with little bridges over it wherever practicable. I suppose they hate fresh water as they abhor everything new. They seldom wash and never drink water.

“Here is a question for solution: is lack of imaginative power at the root of all conservatism, as well as Chinese stagnation? The Chinese, of course, are proverbially unimaginative, in spite of their religion’s realistic horrors. . . . Still, they have not yet degraded Buddhism to the depths in which the Nepalese wallow, to judge from the disgusting carvings we saw at Benares. But the educated Chinese scoff at all religion. . . .”

Having now negotiated the short cut, I must select some bits that tell of Japan’s dealings with me; and I do so with no fear now that my letters will be dull reading:

*To my Mother*

“S.S. *Genkai-hara*,

“SHIMONOSEKI, JAPAN,

“21st April, 1883.

“. . . This old hulk of a wooden steamboat shakes so that I can hardly write. We have just left this harbour at the entrance of the Inland Sea—the most beautiful sea in the world. We have land on all sides of us, mountainous, covered with firs and



larches, with terraces mapped out in bright green and yellow fields. Constantly we get close up to some little village on a bay filled with junks with their great square white sails. The villages are a marvel of neatness, all low, one-storied chalets, trim and clean. We entered one in Nagasaki yesterday; it was over a shop where they were squatting all over the floor working tortoiseshell, the ceiling so low that I could only just stand upright. The floor was covered with grass-mats, and everything spotless. I felt as if inside some picture on a Japanese fan—only the perspective was all right! The streets were wide and paved with huge flags, over which we rattled in our jinrikshaws, on each side rows of large dolls' houses. The people are small and not so good-looking as the Chinese, but as different as are the two nations in themselves: versatility *versus* conservativeness. . . .”

“KIOTO,  
“April 24th, 1883.

“. . . After dinner we walked out to see some dancing girls. The city was now almost dark, though dimly lit here and there by oil lamps. But 200 yards before we reached the theatre great red paper lamps were suspended at frequent intervals from bamboo poles. . . . A quiet, happy and eager crowd were waiting outside the theatre. . . . We were accommodated with chairs in the centre of a gallery at the back of the house. The pit was soon filled with squatting, smoking and tea-drinking spectators. The sides of the house were hidden with curtains, required by the performers. The side curtains soon parted and revealed on each side a single row of eleven pretty maidens, with tiny mouths and very red lips, their faces and necks painted almost white. One looked precisely like another. Those on the left were dressed in blue gowns and rose-coloured petticoats, while each held a musical instrument, drums, triangles, guitar-like instruments, the strings being struck with a plectrum, shrill whistles. The girls on the right were less gaudily dressed and had no instruments but their own voices which soon began to charm the audience with their sweet strains. To our uneducated ears the music seemed tuneless and timeless. Some of us were stupid enough to style it catawauling. Still the drums and guitars or triangles rang out in the greatest precision; with now and again the suggestion of an air . . .

“After five or ten minutes of this overture, the curtain was drawn and revealed the well-lit stage. The scene represented a tree on one side whose branches stretched across to the other.

Now the dancers are entering the side platforms of the musicians and shuffle-trot on to the stage. They are all evidently twin sisters to the musicians. They too have palish-blue gowns and rose-coloured petticoats reaching the ground and figured daintily in white. . . . They then commence their entirely peaceful, slow and stately dance. Now forwards, now backwards; anon changing places and curtsying; posing the while their pretty arms and at times all clapping their little hands with one accord. Every step was as precise, and the co-ordination between the twenty of them as perfect as you could see in a Paris ballet. I thought it the perfection of aesthetic dancing.

“Soon they tripped off the stage as though a happy thought had just struck them. Scarcely had they vanished, when the scene lifted and there they were again all sedately standing on a wooden balcony across the stage. A gate spontaneously opened and steps fell to the ground; down tripped the maidens two and two and hand in hand; and so their dance began again. Each seemed to forget herself in the grace of motion and divinity of form. Away they tripped up the steps, which rose after them as the gates closed. The balcony parted in two; the dancers ascended into realms unknown, while the foundation of their building was swallowed up in the earth. But then behold! behind the balcony was the prettiest scene ever seen on a stage. The stage was now a blaze of pink azalea blossoms and yellow light. From the ceiling were suspended branches of the flowers and little lamps. In tripped the dancers once more, rather more lively because each held a branch of azalea blossom which she waved over her neighbour’s head, then placed it on the ground before her and made to it such a profound obeisance as only a Japanese understands. Then they all rise, divide into two lines and run down the side platforms past the musicians and away. . . . That dancing made me happy and hopeful for Japan. I was sorry to leave it so soon; but others waited outside to take our places. Dance on, ye gentle maidens! May I some day do as much for my fellow men, as you do for yours! . . .”

“KIOTO,  
“28th April, 1883.

“. . . They [the Japanese] laugh with a childlike, merry ripple, never a touch of vulgarity in it, though the inciting cause may be only six pale-faced bearded foreigners. The little children flock out to see us pass and make us stately bows, in simple cour-

tesy, though as soon as they have shown their respect, they laugh heartily, clapping their hands and jumping with delight. . . . One sees on every side their keen love of nature. Just now the country is covered with the most lovely white and pink and crimson blossoms. One of the duties of the morning seems to be to gather branches laden with flowers and put them singly in vases to pleasure the eye all through the day. A barber tempts customers by the beauty of the flowers he can give them to look at while being shaved, rather than by mirrors for the contemplation of their own adored moustaches. Then their cleanliness beats anything I have ever seen. . . .

"I have bought for you such a lovely crêpe silk dress length, grey with a warm blue little pattern running over it, just the same so it seemed to me, as those sweet little dancers wore with such grace. Such a lovely city this is—the ancient capital—just the opposite they say, to the new one, Tokio. . . ."

"TOKIO.

". . . The most extraordinary and in a way the most beautiful place I have ever seen is Nikko, set in the most romantic mountains wooded with cryptomerias, tall cedars, with rivers rushing about, up and down hill, everywhere, and all once volcanic. Here the first Buddhist Temple in Japan was built in the eighth century, by the Saint Sho-do Sho-nin, about whom the most entrancing of religious fairy-tales exist. Thus, when he had to cross a raging torrent, he had only to pray, when on the opposite bank there appeared a Celestial Being with a necklace of skulls and dressed in a blue and black toga. Then the God or Demon sang across the torrent that a bridge would follow his words; and he flung across a pair of green and blue snakes. Instantly a bridge, long and strong and high arched, floated across and, like the rainbow itself, vanished in the mists of the mountains. To add conviction to this unquestionable miracle, there is now at the upper end of the one street of Nikko an almost semi-circular scarlet lacquered bridge with golden plaques at all its jointings. It springs from splendid massive piers of stone and looks glorious with its rushing waters below and the dark green of a cryptomeria grove on the farther bank. It is 84 feet long and 18 wide; but though it is no older than the 17th century, it is quite as sacred as the Rev. Sho-do Sho-nin of a thousand years before. No one is allowed to cross it but the Sho-gans and pilgrims. . . ."

Our three-hundred-mile jinrickshaw journey from Kioto to

Tokio was so entrancing that no words can tell of it. But the letters shall give two more points. One I may name "The fighting dance in the sky," and the other "The Coolie Poet."

". . . After some miles through mountainous country, we reached level ground, about midday, and found ourselves on the outskirts of a little town—one long wide street of the toy-like houses. . . . It was a perfectly delicious day with hot sun and invigorating wind. As we came near these little houses—and all Japan is but a land of toys for the Japs (who never grow up as far as I can see) to play with—there gradually came to my dull ears the most delicious music. Sometimes I thought it was like distant chimes or a great organ, yet really it was aeolian. It got louder, and we stopped to ask our man what it was, but all he said was 'By-m-by shall see.' Yet we all felt we *must* stop and listen. Then it occurred to me that what I had written about the Japanese music at the Theatre was quite foolish; for, I thought, if one cannot understand a people's language, it is only to be supposed that one won't find any meaning in their music. This music, however, which now met us, almost embracingly, seemed to come from the very skies, and I couldn't help thinking that perhaps the language of the Heavens should be equally intelligible to 'All peoples that on earth do dwell.' I was reluctant to miss anything of this entrancing music, though I cannot say it had any more definite airs or rhythm than the Ballet music; so I made our coolies take it easy, and just walk us along the street. Here, a curious point struck me. While in many of the open houses we saw women at their looms, there were no men or children anywhere about; and the villages generally swarm with happy people—all children, whether old or young. However, by the time we got to the end of the street, the road turned aside and in a few minutes we found ourselves in a wide open space, at the further end of which, set in a grove of trees, stood a colossal bronze Buddha, at least 60 ft. high as I guessed. He was looking down upon the scene with the same eternal benignity that is characteristic of all these Buddhas. But we, as well as he, were entranced at the scene before us. All the population, except the women (the poor dears, though they never seem to share the men's and children's pleasures, yet look so sweet and happy!) were making holiday and kite-flying! Then I knew that the aeolian strains all came from the wind playing

through the taut lines of these soaring toys—dragons and fish, drums, snakes, and birds with tails of every impossible kind. The colours of the kites of course were more or less crude reds, blues and yellows and lots of gold, though up there in the sky, their harmony was quite one with the aeolian music. The fliers seemed to be playing some game with their captives, trying to cut through one another's strings, which, being glued over with powdered glass must be pretty sharp; and perhaps, I don't know, it adds to the music. Even my boys, I think, felt that they had for once in their lives got into the fairyland they scoffed at, and were fascinated by its strange magic. Occasionally a Jap holding on for all he was worth to one of the biggest, most fiercely tugging kites, would pull a smaller string and thus let free from his aerial dragon's mouth a whole battalion of butterflies which fluttered away rejoicing in their release from captivity; and I'm sure they had their own tiny songs to sing.

"I think, after this, you will see what I mean in speaking of Japan as a fairyland where the people's chief business is to find the fun and poetry of life. Indeed I could not help feeling, even more here than in India, how utterly stupid we Westerners are in taking it for granted that what we think are our great blessings, e.g., a House of Commons, not to mention railways and telegraphs, would necessarily do as much good to these extraordinarily different people. It even seems to me, while I am here in Japan, that it is absurd to teach them Christianity. Of course a Jap—so McNair, the missionary who, you will remember, is with our party, tells me—will without hesitation embrace Christianity or anything else to oblige a friend; but when you find a people like this absolutely imbued with the idea that art is the chief reason for life, and have absolutely nothing of what we call a moral code, I don't know what missionaries have to build on. . . . Yet the more intellectual Buddhists here, especially the protestant sect of San-Shiu, are splendid people in their conduct and devoutness, I infer. But most of the people are just Shinto, and their worship is little better than the propitiation of mythological Fairy-tale heroes. . . ."

Now comes the incident of the Coolie Poet; and for me it will "never pass into nothingness."

". . . As we left the teahouse for an extra-early start, it was again an intoxicating morning and the azalea-covered hills were aflame with the sunrise. Our jinrickshaws stood ready packed and

waiting for us. In the verandah was hanging a basket with a fern shooting up with young green fronds. It had just been watered and its sprawling roots were dripping. Close around it stood all our twelve coolies, one of whom was haranguing his eagerly listening fellows in sing-song almost rhythmical voice. Waiting till the monologue ended and his audience had resumed their incessant chattering, I asked our dragoman what it was all about. The fellow, an amusing enough rascal, and more than a little tainted by western vulgarity of mind, or pretending to be, despised the coolies as a caste tolerated only because they could trot 40 or 50 miles a day at 10 miles an hour. He tried to dismiss the subject as being 'only coolie fool-talk.' Yet on my pressing him, he told me it was 'silly po'try stuff made to pass time.' Further and persistent enquiry led to his explaining that the fool's jabber was only about the fern torn from its home but now uplifted nearer the sky it had always longed for. 'Its poor blind roots go grubbing around and weep sad tears, because they can no more hide their nakedness and sleep on Mother Earth's damp pillows!' So I tried to tell my boys and the others how queer it must seem to us well-educated men that this ignorant and despised caste were possessed by the same sense of beauty that seemed to pervade all Japan; that one of them felt he'd got to tell a fairy story about the fern, his fellows all happily listening; and how we saw the same thing everywhere, if only in the fact that every Japanese could draw. I reminded them of the copper-smith we had seen in Kioto graving on a vase a little flowery branch, while before him in a vessel of water stood a bit of cherry blossom for copy. But I might as well have talked of our glorious railways to these coolies! McNair at least, a very dear fellow, liked to hear me talk in spite of my heterodoxy, and chiefly, I think, because of Father's books which he knew something about.

"Of course I bored the lads. Yet I was so far sincere in my convictions about the superiority of these common coolies to our own lowest orders, that the same morning, if only to share a bit of fun with our biped horses, and to show them my fellow-feeling, I made one of them take my place in the jinrickshaw while I took his in the shafts and trotted a few hundred yards with my passenger. The coolies took it as a first-class joke, and I think liked me for it—to judge from their happy laughter. But it shocked our dragoman and disgusted my white-skinned compatriots, even the missionary—although I explained that I could not bear to feel that a fellow man must do for me what I,

in some ways his superior, would not do for him. Yet I certainly shall not drop dead from sudden heart-failure before I'm thirty, which is the invariable fate of these coolies. But what matter? Here, if Life is just a jolly holiday, Death is only a joke—better luck next time! . . .”

We had only four weeks in Japan, and then crossed over to San Francisco. There I think the boys were at last interested in the discovery that wealth did not necessarily imply good form and refinement: the wonderful city was still very young. But in Chicago a horrid object-lesson awaited us, one much enjoyed by two of us, though that astonishing city had not then earned the present absurd reproach that its population comprises only millionaires and criminals.

We had brought introductions to prominent people everywhere, and so got access to a certain industrial Hell, a great bacon factory, which I really believe opened my young friends' eyes wider than anything else on our tour. We were most courteously made intimate with the horrible ingenuities of the factory's mechanism. Pigs were driven in continuous Indian file up an inclined plane, to the topmost storey of the building, and in such way that the last act of their life was the storing in their pitiful bodies of as much gravity as, by a series of overhead rails, would carry them down to earth again, but now canned as bacon. I counted the rate of their rapid entry, one by one, through the little door at the top. Immediately inside this door the fat beast was slung up by his hind legs and struck in the neck by the fatal knife, then dropped no less instantly into a cauldron of boiling water to skin and clean it, and so on till each white eviscerated corpse flung itself, still travelling by its own gravity, through swing doors into the refrigerating chamber. The rate was eleven pigs per minute, giving them hardly time to expire before they found themselves confined piecemeal in sealed and artistically decorated tins. The whole thing remains in my mind until this day as a foul nightmare.

I remember asking the lads whether this bacon factory

was not rather like the way commerce exploited its city multitudes: seeing that every factory hand in his growth up to manhood may be said to store life energy, so that in his turn he must feed the worms; and only for the support of our wonderful civilization. Certainly in Porkopolis (though Chicago then disputed this honourable title with Cincinnati) the services rendered by its curly-tailed quadrupeds to its tailless bipeds were not much worse recompensed than were the cotton-spinners of Lancashire a century ago, when healthy little children were driven into the mills to emerge dead, or, though hardly more than children in years, transformed into decrepit old men, the divine life transmuted into dividends. Now, however—and in later years I made intimate study of such industrial conditions—things are better so far as physical health and higher wages are concerned. As to education? Well, witches still drive away the good fairies, and philanthropic busybodies in the service of an ogre called Science seek to prevent all suffering to children by forbidding their incarnation.

When at the end of this tour I hastened to the house in Bedford Square taken by my people for the summer, I found they were all away in Scotland; and only a servant welcomed me. But along with a letter urging me to join them in Edinburgh, I found a little duodecimo volume, whole-bound in green morocco, named *A Threefold Cord*. It was a new collection of poems by my father, his brother John, and my godfather; and to my joy it was dedicated to myself. If I quote my father's words, it is, I am sure, less in vainglory than because, though I have but falteringly responded to them, my father's hopes expressed in the sonnet are so wonderful in assurance:

“First, most, to thee, my son, I give this book,  
In which a friend's and brother's verses blend  
With mine; for not son only—brother, friend,  
Art thou, through sonship which no veil can brook  
Between the eyes that in each other look,



Or any shadow 'twixt the hearts that tend  
Still nearer, with divine approach, to end  
In love eternal, that cannot be shook

When all the shakable shall cease to be.

With growing hope I greet the coming day

When from thy journey done I welcome thee

Who sharest in the names of all the three,

Take thee to them, with hope fulfilled, and say,

Let this man be the fourth with us, I pray.

“GEORGE MACDONALD.

“Casa Coraggio,  
“May 1883.”

## CHAPTER VI

### FLORENCE WOOS AND REJECTS ME

THE family sense, intensively cultivated, is stronger in large families than in small. Certainly my own feeling of gravitation towards the old home life was tenacious: possibly the sense of my inadequacy invited the consolation that only a mother can give. Nor am I ashamed of the admission. "What common people," my father would remark, "think about strength and weakness is poor stuff—like the rest of their wisdom. It isn't the betrayal of feeling, but the shirking of duty that constitutes weakness."

Again without work, I welcomed my mother's suggestion that Bordighera needed another English doctor. They assigned me a little consulting-room on the ground floor of "Casa Coraggio," where at its portal my name appeared on a marble slab, which I declared might serve for a tombstone, pending my failure. I was to pay only a small sum for my board.

Another point influenced this decision: I should have my summer free for study: e.g. with Lister or at the great continental schools. Especially I wanted to see Charcot's wonderful, if horrible, doings at La Salpêtrière. Also I could visit the fashionable spas and possibly learn something in those luxurious penitentiaries for gluttons. Yet such things were impossible unless the colony of English increased by leaps and bounds.

But, though my parents were its central attraction, the fact remained that people never believe in a man while still in his old home. When it was suggested to a certain lady that she might safely consult me about her son, she discounted me, saying "Why, I knew him when he was a little boy!" Indeed, before the first winter was over, I knew I could make no livelihood there. But those few months had

their pleasures, though the most memorable are the hours with my father in his study. I began once more to read the Greek Testament with him. We talked much—so fine a listener was he!—and I realized how and why the Gospel's message was to him, and must become to all men, Life and the only secret of more Life.

But I was unlike my father in many ways, and was never a devourer of books. I soon lost appetite in any intellectual effort not instigated by some arresting point. Thus, for instance, the eighteenth-century revolutions, or the renaissance of our own poetry, opened to me a closer understanding of human nature; and I may claim to have read well upon these subjects. Yet, in spite of having the run of his large, richly various library, I learned more from contact with my father than from all his books. Nor were we by any means always and entirely in agreement, even if in perfect understanding.

A most surprising occurrence, one quite canonical in Nature's ordinances yet never anticipated, then changed everything. I fell in love; but, falling short of the maid's ideals, I was properly rejected. This, together with the discovery that success was impossible to me at Bordighera, determined me to act upon the urgent advice of my old Professor at King's, Dr. Burney Yeo, who knew the Continent in relation to our profession's needs better perhaps than anyone in London; and I settled down in Florence. Although I there lost all my money, I won much. For Florence holds something more than her beauty, her history, her salubrity, or even her heavenly Chianti can explain; something that, awakening a thirst for her water-brooks of loveliness, seems always more than her history explains.

I had little opportunity of making friends with its own people; yet, being so small and lovely, it retained, I thought, better than most places busy with progress, much ancient simplicity: and so poignantly that one felt and breathed something of its old, ardently glowing life. Tuscan colour,

I was assured by the artists, was quite as idiosyncratic as Tuscan speech, at once soft and emphatic in its harmonies. If I had no ears for hearing this music of speech, I had eyes for all magical colourings; and I could not but honour Florence for her tumultuous history and her passionate Art.

A letter written to my mother at the time and suggesting all this seems worth quoting:

*To my Mother*

“Oct. 15, 1883.

“. . . I found myself at last in front of the little church of San Miniato. There before me was hung a most wonderful picture, I myself seeming to be only hidden away in a dark corner of it, in a peaceful dream. I had had a long day of what you will remember Thoreau calls ‘the quiet desperation in which most men have to spend their lives’; and at the end of it I had got up there, hoping to discover something of Florence’s magic; for as yet, it had never gripped me. But I was disappointed. The nearness of the city was made very plain by the vesper janglings of innumerable campanile bells. Their conflicting harmonies floated up from out a sea of dead-grey mist, seething up to my very feet, and encircled by jutting headlands and peninsulas. I could dimly see here and there the tops of campanile or tower. Yet the city herself lay dead, wrapped in her shroud of leaden mist, with lead-blue hills around; and above, a sky, leaden also, even though here and there a streak of more precious metal glowed. Further west too there was a suggestion of a red-gold glory. . . . It was, however, at best dreary, seeing that I had set out to find a jewelled city of radiant colours. . . .

“But then began a transformation. A wind suddenly leapt out of the west, and, even before it reached Giotto’s Campanile, it clove that sea of cloud lapping at my feet, so that right into its very deeps it became tintured with the rosiest blush of splendour. Instantly too all the billows fell away from the Campanile, so that her white purity seemed transparent with the same blush upon her—as if in joy at seeing her dear lord, the Sun, once again. Then one tower after another rose out of the vanishing sea; the headlands stretched further and further inwards until they met those of the opposite shores. At last nothing was left of the sea but a few little lakes embraced by the hills around.

"In a few minutes the breeze sprang into leaps and bounds, scattering before it all the up-gathered clouds, both of earth and sky in soaring rosy waves. And there at last lay the desire of my heart, *Florence at the feet of San Miniato*, all a-gleam in fiery rose colour. In the midst of its towers sat, something like a huge broody hen, the red cupola of the Duomo; and close by it Giotto's Campanile—that loveliest tower human thought had ever reared for enduring protest against vulgarity and greed. A little nearer and to the left rose the Palazzo Vecchio's tower seeming to typify, on the other hand, a righteously inspired Brute-Force. I had known them all from below; churches of St. Francis and St. Dominic, the Bargello, the Badio—all significant of the spiritual and temporal powers of Religion and her handmaiden Art.

"Then again, Mother, in and about these stately churches and palaces ran the far older Arno, radiantly coursing under her gracious bridges, along her sturdy embankments, out into the green fields and woods; among vine-and-olive-clad hills, with their shining villas and villages—away and away, as if she, at least, would not lose sight of her new Jerusalem. . . ."

I furnished simply yet prettily a little flat in the Via Rondinelli, with my name-plate at the entrance. My eldest sister, exceptionally charming and gifted in social ways, came with me and did far more than I thought possible to win me some intimacies. But we both got plenty of fun out of our attempts to make people believe in me, as the following letter suggests, though it anticipates events:

*To my Mother*

"VIA RONDINELLI,  
"FLORENCE.

". . . My dinner with Miss M—— was such as you may imagine. We laughed madly and incessantly during the whole time over a joke of a French gentleman, who said *à propos* of the cheese called *Stracchino*, that he should buy some *petit fatigué*! . . . Two French ladies then banged at the piano till I was as deaf as a post. . . . The Captain had a charming wife, the only *lady* in the room. Hungarian she was. She spoke English, French, and Italian all equally well; dark, tall, *svelte*, but not pretty. She joined her rich voice to four other ladies' tuneless shrieking.

She and I exchanged looks sometimes though we hadn't spoken. The lady who accompanied them had (1) a wasp-like waist; (2) a red velvet body, (3) shoulders that projected beyond each end of the piano, and (4) a crutch. . . . I felt as if in a screaming farce the whole evening. Lady S. can have no notion of the sort of society she has introduced us to. . . .

"I've got a pet dog. He's not a beauty. I don't love him for unfortunately he's my master. He has a voracious, never appeased appetite. As I walk abroad in search of the beautiful he is always a little in advance of me, and each child of Beauty that appears in my path he rushes at and devours. So I never have any but his company. If I look behind me, I see the ghosts of the children he has swallowed passing further and further away, some of them crying as though they would have liked to stop and speak to me, but for the ugly dog. His name in English is *Circumstance*, in French *Faute d'argent*, in German *Höllenhund*; but in the language of the spheres it must be *Self*. He's not bad company so long as you don't thwart him. If you worship him he will make money for you—at least I hope so! . . . But my metaphor grows rather *cynical*, as the pet dog must. Though quite hateful, he runs happily with me. . . ."

I had many introductions, chief among them being one to the Misses Susan and Joanna Horner, who wrote that delightful book, *Walks in Florence*. We even became intimate with some charming Italian people less nervous in their hospitality to foreigners than is usual. Then I found the many art-students more interesting than professionally useful. A brother and sister, long resident with their mother in Florence, asked me to give in their studio some lectures on Anatomy in its relation to Art; and they sent out invitations broadcast for an introductory *coup d'essai*. I had never before done any such speaking, yet somehow I felt I must do it, if only to make myself known. The numerous acceptances, however, filled me with dismay; for I then realized, almost too late, that I had nothing to say!

A fortnight passed and still I had not even an idea of anything worth saying. My sister began to share my fear and my misery. We even discussed the possibility of my

withdrawing, on the plea that, in a word, I was convinced that anatomy could be no help to draughtsmanship, and might even be harmful. Yet then, on the other hand, I recall an urgent feeling that I had some quite definite message to give on this very point, seeing that, as I at last put it in my lecture, "Form is the very soul of substance, the vivifying force and law of all structure." Indeed, ever since my student days, this same idea had been strengthening its grip upon me, however trite its predication may seem. And now, suddenly remembering what I had learned from Huxley and John Hunter concerning the beauty of some minute animals without any anatomy for their justification, I rushed to my sister just at bedtime, and exclaimed: "Eureka! I can do it!" Then instantly I began to write the lecture. I wrote and wrote far into the night, never resting till the whole was done; and it needed no amendment. I had the strangest feeling that I myself was scarcely concerned in the ordering of my ideas, their sequence, the summoning of illustration from the Florentine galleries, from the Elgin Marbles, and from my own witnessing in Japan of games truly Olympian in their assertion of the human form's beauty. I do not pretend that subconscious cerebration accounted for what, a few hours before, had seemed an impossibility; but I remember well my surprise, even while my pen was running, as to where it all came from. To-day it is recognized that mental work done entirely subconsciously may be good; though far more is worthless. So I am not unwilling to think it possible that something more than memory or conscious thinking came to my rescue from a very awkward predicament. Indeed, it has often been thus with my adventures—seemingly at first foolish, yet brought to wise fulfillings.

The lecture made a good impression, and I was begged to print it.<sup>1</sup> My father sent a copy to Ruskin; but that most

<sup>1</sup> I kept no copy. Yet last year my friend the late Miss V. Cavendish-Bentinck found it, beautifully bound in vellum, among her mother's

lovely soul was already more clouded than my father knew; and he only acknowledged its receipt.

After that success, I would take my class round the galleries chiefly to show them how a knowledge of anatomy might be responsible for incorrect technique. I contrasted the creations of Praxiteles—who, in the days of universal cremation, could have had no intimacy with the cadaver—with the notorious Hercules of Bandinelli. To-day I am not sure that some most modern sculptors should not be classed with that egregiously coarse carver of stone, in spite of their too self-conscious symbolic intent. "Yet," as I then wrote, "we dare no more question the necessity of correct technique than a poetic spirit dare repudiate his need of perfect health, mental and bodily, if he is to serve faithfully and humbly as an acolyte of Beauty."

One item in this lecture *à propos* of the Olympian games is, I think, worth quoting, because it links my experiences in Japan with those of Florence, as far as Art is concerned:

"... There is a little mountain island in the Inland Sea of Japan called Yenoshima, and inhabited by fishermen and shell-collectors. At low tide it is connected with the main-land by a neck of golden sand jewelled with glittering shells of many colours. Only half a mile in circumference, it is covered with Buddhist and Sinto temples; riddled too with gigantic caves in the gloom of which surpliced priests chant anthems throughout the day before the shrines of their deities.

"One evening I walked along the shore in the rosy light of the setting sun, and the almost apple-green gleam of a huge rising moon. . . . On the neck of sand was a group of men, women and children dressed in perfect-shape gowns of dark blue cotton. Some were chatting eagerly, others igniting candles and fixing them in red paper lanterns. I found they were all preparing for a wrestling contest; and in a few more seconds, a wide ring, mostly women and children, had been arranged on the sand. . . . Within were squatting eight men stripped; one and all the most magnificent examples of well-proportioned muscularity I have

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books and sent it me. I read it as a thing forgotten, but I think it quite true, notwithstanding some pretentiousness.



ever seen. There was no exaggeration, such as one always sees in professional acrobats, no over-development of the calves such as the University oarsman delights in: all harmony, repose and potential energy.

"But when the contest began my eyes were rivetted in simple wonder at the beauty of the human form—such as I had never realized before. I understood that the contest was an almost daily event after the day's work was done; there were no prizes and little glory to be won. No sooner had one Hercules thrown his man than another, already stripped, sprang from the ring to tackle the victor, who consequently was compelled to wrestle with one after another until he himself was thrown. Then there was much merriment among the women and children, although the wrestlers were often thrown amongst them with no little violence. It was noble play; not one ever lost his temper, though many of the falls looked serious enough. Each man was an anatomical study: he might well have sat for a Phidias as type of a Hercules, though more likely he would have been only remembered. The contest continued for a couple of hours by the brilliant light of the moon tempered by the ruddy light of the lanterns and the shadows they cast. . . ."

Here, in justification of the claims I made, I recall a passage in Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (Chapter XII), which I certainly had not then read. No less because of its bearing upon that dictum of John Hunter which did so much for me, and upon Spenser's word, "For Soul is form and doth the body make," the Master's word has a worth we hardly dare reject:

"It is by a beautiful ordinance of the Creator that all these mechanisms are concealed from sight, though open to investigation; and that in all which is outwardly manifested, we seem to see His presence rather than His workmanship, and the mysterious breath of life rather than the adaptation of matter."

What would not some of us give now in this year 1932, abounding in perplexities and psycho-analyses and floutings of Nature's laws, yet crying aloud for help; what would we not give to hear Ruskin's voice again!

Meantime, as I taught more than I knew, so was I led into new departures. I got hold of Pierre Gratiolet's treatise

on Symbolic Expression, studying it carefully along with Darwin's "Expression of the Emotions," and ended my course with four supplementary lectures which I named "*Ars Naturae*." In these I claimed that throughout the story of living nature Symbolism was the basis of all expression; and I gave the emotions a first place as incentive to our physical, intellectual and lingual evolution. Nor have I ever abandoned these convictions.

Meantime I had no patients and much appetite:

*To my Mother*

"VIA RONDINELLI.

[*Undated*].

". . . Lily wonders how we are to go on at this rate and only two-three patients. . . . I am going to find out which of my uncles will fit the eye of a needle. Failing them I shall have had good fun, and shall be none the poorer, except three stamps and a little ink and paper. Here are some lines Lily and I have constructed together:

'If boasting enough and to spare,  
Of your wealthiest relative borrow:  
If hungry and haggard, go share  
His crust who has none for the morrow!'

It is to be one of a collection of 'Life-maxims' as our book is to be called! . . ."

Nevertheless, and in spite of some avuncular help, which I was able to repay very soon, I was driven to abandon all hope of Florence. I suspect patients are doubtful of a doctor if he has any other interests than their ailments. I recall one of my few patients in Florence, a lady, who enlarged upon the devotion to science of her usual adviser, an American then away for his holiday. One morning he had come joyfully into her room, she said, with three huge books in his arms, saying he had been sitting up almost the whole night thinking about her stomach and her liver, searching medical literature for the parallel of her case, and, thank God! he had found it, and could at last cure her. He then

gave her a fresh prescription which, for my guidance as a younger man, she showed me. It named the ingredients of a useful pill, only aloes and rhubarb! Anyhow, her absurd praise of a demi-quack strengthened my suspicion that, not till a doctor has made his practice, must he have other interests in life. Yet it was rather my deafness that defeated me. So far, I do not think it interfered with my stethoscope's efficiency; but a patient's weak voice and the subdued speech of nurses and friends in the sick-room put me at grave disadvantage. Deafness, moreover, suggests stupidity: so different from blindness, which never interferes with intellectual converse.

I now abandoned Florence and with it all hope of my profession. Concurrently I began to suspect I had some facility with my pen and might live by literature. So while I was still in Florence I wrote a novel, dealing with "Provident Dispensaries," socialists and anarchists, and all the horrors of existing poverty; with intrigues of political danger and questionable ethics. The story, after ruthless use of the blue pencil by my mother, was commended by several publishers, but not one would accept it: and rightly; though the plot was laced with enough criminal complexities for even this present day's taste.

But my parents never quite realized how much I was physically handicapped, and were troubled at my apparent vacillation. This letter from my father, so characteristic of his ideal wisdom, suggests their difficulty in accepting hard facts as inexorable:

*From my Father*

"BORDIGHERA,  
"April 6th, 1884.

"MY DEARLY LOVED SON,

"It puzzles me a little that you to whom God has given much spiritual insight, should be so changeable and troubled by the appearance of things. 'In quietness and confidence shall

be your strength.' 'Wait on the Lord.' You are so impatient! You will hardly give Him time to do anything for you. You are so easily troubled, your faith in Him seems so much in the abstract, that when it comes to the matter of next month or next year, you are full of doubt. . . . Goodness perfect is at the head of your affairs. . . . Do not be always speculating on your future and thinking what you shall do. It is great waste of brain tissue, to say nothing of spiritual energy which can afford to wait that it may grow. . . . When the hour for decision arrives, one moment's clear untroubled thought will do what weeks and weeks of brooding beforehand will only make more uncertain and difficult. . . ."

And the hour for decision was very near—but in ways none of us imagined.



BOOK IV

THE BULLET'S BILLET

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The first of my first...

Now, however...

A few months...

BOOK IV  
THE WILLETTS' VISIT

## CHAPTER I

### THE EBB TIDE

SO I came to London again, with ten pounds in pocket and a conviction that work of some sort must be waiting for me to do it.

The best of my friends at King's College, Professor John Curnow, who held the Chair of Anatomy and was Physician to the Hospital, took to heart my predicament; and I wish I could fitly record my gratitude. Brilliant in academic distinction, the best teacher of Anatomy in London, his advice, as Dean of the Medical Faculty, was always wise and sympathetic, though he failed perhaps to inspire his students with self-reliance. Unfortunately, as often happens with a man academically rather than socially well-bred, a certain tactlessness in self-assertion forbade the success in every way his due. A few years later I would put good fees in his way by seeking his help over puzzling cases; but, in spite of his clinical experience and learning, he inspired no confidence. He died in middle life unmarried, his great possibilities all wasted.

Now, however, remembering my aptitude for teaching, he made me his "Assistant Demonstrator of Anatomy," though he could offer no pay. I accepted the work as a stop-gap; and I was made happy by the sharing of rooms and economies with my brother, Robert Falconer, six years my junior, and then articed to a firm of architects. Toasting sausages and brewing tea together, I got, for the first time, close intimacy with a strong character sweetened by an almost womanly genius for sympathy. He rapidly became a successful architect, though in his boyhood he had been even less brilliant than myself.

I am tempted, while opportunity offers, to say more of him; for in his fiftieth year, full of life's joy, abundant work



and splendid health, he was taken from wife and sons. Of all her boys, he was perhaps the best loved by our mother: and rightly, so tender was he with her, so tactful in settling the trivial differences inevitable in large families. A keen sportsman too, I have witnessed his fearlessness and instant action in any danger. Correspondingly, he had a masterful faculty for organization. When the late Lord Moulton stood for Parliament in 1885, he made my brother his agent, though without experience and knowing little of politics—the result being as creditable to the candidate's insight as to this young architect's tact and acumen. A few years later I thus wrote of him to my father:

*To my Father*

“Easter Sunday, 1893.

“. . . I dined last night with Bob at his club. How guileless he is, rushing to anybody's help! His only fault is his universal tolerance. We were discussing Chamberlain and the [Boer] war. I declared—perhaps in my tritest style—that the only peace for those who fought for it was ceaseless warfare; and that the only excuse we have for existing at all, was that, though always falling, and often bleeding, we still fought on for the sake of a peace that could never be ours. He seemed a little puzzled, and said that the only trouble was that many of us don't know why we have to fight or what it's for. His trustfulness and love for his neighbour make him always willing to give all he has to anyone needier—dog or human. And we know how he can fight! What more he has to learn in this here school of impositions and canings I don't know—unless it be that *not* all of his friends will go to Heaven. But they don't harm him. Some of them you wouldn't allow inside your house; but of course I never say so. . . .”

*À propos* of friendships, I thus wrote to my mother, also some years later:

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET

[Undated].

“. . . I do hope that, however repugnant to my feelings a pig may be, I shall never be so mean as to quarrel with it for being

just what God made it. Yet, as I belong a little higher in the scale of evolution, if that pig comes trotting into my wife's drawing-room, I shall kick it out; not even stopping to argue the point with either pig or the S.P.C.A. At the same time, my sympathy with the poor pig is strong; for, after all, he isn't a toad—and perhaps I am. Sometimes, in moments of desperation with myself, I feel that I need forgiveness for being precisely what God made me. Still—well, Mother, I'm not going to have a pig in my drawing-room however curly his tail—or immaculate his swallow-tail, or his moustache or shirt-cuffs. . . .”

But, reverting to those down-at-heel days, I was presently offered by Lord Mount-Temple the secretaryship of the Anti-Vivisection Society. Its £400 a year was tempting; or would have been had I, like my father, been in entire sympathy with the Society. For myself, though I accepted as incontrovertible certain gains to science from experiments on live animals, I was in large agreement, and still am, with those who, claiming that man's life is the same as horses' and dogs', dispute our right painfully to exploit them for the relief of suffering or the increase of knowledge. Indeed, had not the anti-vivisectionists weakened their claims by denying facts they did not like, it is possible that I might have joined them. On the other hand, the defendants crippled their case by affirming that their experiments entailed no suffering, well knowing the contrary. A year after this, I saw much of the terrible diphtheria: and again later, I could affirm from my own clinical experience that its antitoxin was saving multitudes of children who, but for its help, had died in uttermost anguish. The bacillus of diphtheria had been isolated by Klebs in 1875; but it was not till 1893 that its inherent antidote was proved by Behring. In 1896, I first used it on a patient in Birmingham to whom I was urgently summoned, the child being at death's door. Formerly I should have tracheotomized her, although with little hope but to lessen the terror of slow suffocation. I was, however, angrily opposed by the general practitioner whom I had to meet; but I made my

injection. In twelve hours the fatal membrane began to peel off, as I had promised it would, and the child quickly recovered.

Consequently, whatever my sympathy was with the anti-vivisectionists, I now felt that no man who could whip his horse to bring the doctor quickly to his ailing child can logically oppose vivisection. For the nag, into whose blood the Dragon Bacillus is introduced to breed a St. George for its extermination, suffers less from the pathologist than does a cab-horse from its Jehu's whip. Yet I can still honour an anti-vivisectionist, even while I bid him carry sounder grist to his society's mill.<sup>1</sup>

One point in those, my most precarious days, I must consistently record; even if in this day of psycho-analysis it seems no more than evidence that I had not succeeded in submerging inherited instincts of superstition. Especially do I note it because it concerns the clue that I find running through all my experiences, with the hopes and doubts they discovered. I refer to a certain attitude of mind, which held me patiently, attentively expectant; and it must take its place along with many another conviction, subconscious perhaps rather than logically justified.

The point is this: although I had lost hope in my profession, there would grip me at times a belief that, if only I had a hospital appointment, I should make a name and succeed. But I was quite adrift from my *alma mater*. Moreover, the Fellowship of the College of Surgeons, or Membership of the College of Physicians, one or the other, was essential to a staff appointment on any general hospital in London. Though I held the London M.D., then considered the first in the world, the old rules prevailed; and in my own case, the higher surgical diploma had been impossible for lack of means; and the physicians' attestation was made

<sup>1</sup> Later I set out my views on Vivisection at some length in the *Nineteenth Century*; and the article was reprinted in a volume of essays, *The Ethics of Revolt*, 1907.

impossible by my deafness. Even if I had won either of these, I do not see how King's could then have needed me.

So it was in an expectant spirit that I wrote to my mother, who, with my father I thought, still blamed me for want of faith in the supreme ordering.

*To my Mother*

[*Undated*].

“. . . I am at least learning that, if I am hedged about by scaffoldings and rough hoardings, with 'No Thoroughfare' placarded everywhere, they can't keep me from peeping through their chinks and crannies. And these sometimes gape wide enough to give me sight of a glorious cathedral in process of building—not so very far away either, nor so angelically crowded with workmen but that I somehow *know* I ought to be taking hand in the mighty work—if only as a sweeper up of rubbish. . . .”

I admit that I would find myself praying; and, I feel quite sure, in real conviction. I do not understand even now the solace which truly devout people, like my parents, find in a *routine* habit of opening their hearts to God: their very lives do this for them. Yet I am always wondering why, generally speaking, we feel ashamed of discussing such matters openly and fearlessly. I am inclined to think our reticence comes from an instinctive humility that overwhelms us whenever we have, for Truth's sake, to aver our dependence upon some Kingdom of Heaven as the source of all Life. Or perhaps, among young people the hatred of humbug makes them shy of inviting its suspicion. I certainly gather from general impressions these Reminiscences suggest that men and women as they grow older accept more willingly the pleasanter way of condemning no one, though when young their enthusiasm for sportsmanship and honest dealing may be very willingly and not unfaithfully proclaimed.

## CHAPTER II

### NEW FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

ONE day in the dissecting-room at King's Professor Curnow came up to me with the *Lancet* in hand. Pointing to an advertisement for a House Surgeon to the Throat Hospital, Golden Square, at £100 a year, he drew me into his private room and said:

"Don't you miss that, my dear Mac! It ought to fit you 'like the paper on the wall,' as quoth the reach-me-down tailor! It's a nasty hole, of course. But you'd learn the new specialty there better than anywhere else."

In his disparagement of that hospital, he expressed no more than the profession's attitude towards laryngology—a word then new. Yet I saw instantly that here lay my opportunity. My friend gave me an introduction to Morell Mackenzie, who had founded that Throat Hospital, and was now, as its Consulting Physician, practically dictator of the Lay Committee. I called upon him in Harley Street.

Never have I seen a physician's waiting-room, perhaps the largest in that street, so packed with patients as this. Later, I found that he never gave fixed appointments. Each must come and await his convenience. If you were titled, you would be seen with little delay. If a popular actor or singer, it was only reasonable that you should wait till noted by other patients: you were first-rate advertisement, and so paid no fees, unless on the truck-system in boxes and stalls at the theatre. If you were of no importance, your only chance lay in an initial five-shilling refresher to the butler. But a poor curate or widow with no money—and Morell Mackenzie had multitudes of such—must come early and wait perhaps three or four hours; probably paying no fees, yet swelling the specialist's glory. Towards one o'clock a pile of sandwiches was placed on the sideboard, because, so his

enemies said, by that time his patients' throats would be too sore and dry to eat them. A year later, when I took charge of Sir Morell's practice during his attendance on the Kaiser Frederick in Berlin, I asked the butler what the letter "G" stood for on his list of the day's patients: "That there letter stands for *gratis*," he replied: then added, "They never gets well, they never forget to come, and they don't pay nothink!" The clever fellow was indispensable to his master and, so some said, lent him money at usurious interest.

Well, I waited my turn for two hours, marvelling at the sumptuous furniture, as well as the anxious faces, each suddenly hopeful every time the butler appeared. At last I found myself with the great man, at once discovering his extraordinary charm. I told him of my deafness and failures. He listened well: I sometimes think only the big-hearted can really listen. He said: "My dear boy—but let me see your hands." After a moment's inspection, he continued, "They are made for surgery: it is the very work for you. Send in your testimonials, and I will see that you get fair hearing."

*To my Mother*

"PEMBROKE SQUARE

[Undated].

". . . I have applied for the post at the Throat Hospital. Morell Mackenzie, who has the appointment virtually in his own hands—he built and endowed the Hospital—tells me I am almost certain to get it, although there are numbers of well-qualified men applying for it. . . . I have not spoken of this before to you, lest you think I am running after strange gods once more. . . . When I told Mackenzie that I should hardly hear a patient with loss of voice, he said, 'O, *that* hardly matters!' In fact, he was uncommonly kind, not even charging me a fee for waiting two long hours with seventeen patients! . . ."

Four out of nearly a hundred applicants were notified to attend the Committee, I one of them. I had, of course, mentioned my deafness when submitting my testimonials,

and I dreaded greatly lest it should seem absolutely disqualifying. The Chairman, R. Courtenay Welch, was at that time the most successful Army Coach of the day, and later founded the Army College at Farnham. He held this Committee in an iron hand, but always in touch with Mackenzie, and so tactfully that his autocratic decisions were invariably accepted. Nevertheless, some years later a certain annual meeting of subscribers managed, by a handful of faggot-voters, to override the Committee's ruling on a critical point: the result being that I, having then a seat on the Committee, resigned on the spot along with the Chairman. This led to the resignation also of our President, the Duke of Sutherland, who had accepted the post at my instigation, and of the one Patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

It is Eternity, not Time, that measures our most anxious moments; and the other three applicants had to be interviewed before I found myself at the far end of an interminable board-room table, confronting ten or a dozen of the Committee—all nominees of the Consulting Physician—who must decide upon the ruin—or possibly the salvation—of a terribly anxious wastrel. Yet with the Chairman's first word I was at my ease.

"We understand," said Mr. Welch, "that you are a little deaf, Dr. MacDonald. Can you tell us candidly if in our Hospital's work you would ever find yourself in any difficulty? You hear me now?"

"Every word, Sir," I replied, "though I admit I should probably not find it easy with most people at this distance. As to patients, there would be some who had completely lost their voices; and I should not hear these at all."

"Surely that would be serious?"

"O, hardly, Sir. I should save time, use my laryngoscope and diagnose the malady."

Morell Mackenzie, who had introduced the instrument to this country, exclaimed quietly, "Hear! Hear!" I imagine

he saw at once that I had sufficient acumen to handle any sort of instrument, whether a chairman or a tonsillotome.

So I was elected. But on the day before I took up my duties one of my severest ear-attacks seized me; and I began the work ill and deafer than ever. My duties covered six afternoon and four night clinics in the week, seeing perhaps 100 out-patients a day, doing most of the work before the visiting staff appeared; keeping watch over the wards and giving anaesthetics or other assistance at operations, which were for the most part amazingly ill done. Then minor operations, such as on tonsils and adenoids, were constantly in hand: our hospital being the first in England to realize the importance of and to remove thoroughly these enemies of children. With deafness almost forbidding and ominous earache, my first three weeks were the hardest I ever mastered. But for the careful feeding and encouragement of the Matron, Miss Phoebe Winn—who, she confessed, looked upon me from the first as a wreck, even while marvelling at my quickly acquired skill and my doggedness—I doubt if I could have held on. I married that admirable lady two years later, although she fully believed I should not live very long even with her care. We had no children and she died thirty-nine years later in her eighty-second year.

Before six weeks were passed, I was again prostrate:

*To my Mother*

[Undated].

“. . . I have not written to you for so long because I have been ill again—quinsy this time, as sharp as ever, though after five days in bed I am up again. . . .

“I have been most beautifully tended by Miss Winn and her nurses. She is an ideal nurse. Powerfully built, gentle as *any* woman need be, in spite of a rather defiant mouth, sensible on every practical subject, devoid of sentimentality. . . . Mr. Hovell, the only friend I have made, attended me. But the day before the thing broke, I was very low and swallowing had become impossible; so Miss Winn sent for Dr. Mackenzie. At 11 p.m.



in came the great M.M. . . . 'Ah,' said he at once. 'You haven't been treated as *I* should have done.' He did not stay two minutes; but as soon as his prescriptions were made up and one dose taken, I swallowed a whole pint of soup jelly. . . . Two hours after, another dose, and I drank two tumblers of milk, all with great difficulty but *no* pain. I felt that the great Morell was an angel in a frock coat—and *plenty* of side on! Everyone has been so kind doing my work for me. . . ."

But in spite of, or because of, my energies, I soon won my superiors' enmity by secretly operating on some patients; in so doing justified, I thought, by their failures. The particular operation which tempted me to this infraction of rules was the removal from the vocal cords of warts which produce partial or entire loss of voice. Such operations need skill, but involve little risk; and, thanks to cocaine, discovered only two or three years before, they give no pain. Chloroform only increases the difficulties.

Such transgressions had of course to be secret; though it was only after repeated failure by one of my chiefs that I first took such a case in hand. But this sort of thing happened oftener than was discreet, and I found myself heading for destruction.

*To my Mother*

"THROAT HOSPITAL,  
"May 6, 1886.

" . . . I have again removed warts from a patient's vocal cords! and them sacro-sanct to the senior physician! I craftily left one or two for him to remove later *if he could*, but I said nothing. Yet he smelt a rat—viz. Me!—and asked me if anything had been done. So I had to confess. I thought it would be a fresh charge against me. So I called on him in Wimpole Street, with a butter-knife and half of the best fresh in hand; and I actually got his permission to finish the case myself! So he at least can never say a word against my fitness. . . . I have done tracheotomy in all three times now—which is pretty good, apart from the incidental point that it spells three lives saved. It is anxious work—kill or cure. But that other operation on the vocal cords depends entirely on delicacy of handling and sharp vision. It would not

restore life to the dying—only voice to the voiceless, though a clumsy hand like Dr. ——'s may leave a voice worse than ever.

“ . . . By the way I had a bit of fun with Dr. Whistler, who nearly drives me silly with his dilatory fumbling. He visits the Hospital on Thursdays and keeps me going from 2 to 7, though between us we don't see more than forty patients. But last Thursday was the private view of his brother, Jimmy Whistler's ravishing daubs, and he sent a note round asking me to do all the work for him. I felt sure it must be because he wanted to see the *Nocturnes* and all the dear, fashionable people who fall down and worship his brother. So I calculated to astonish him. I had a ticket for the show; and by four o'clock I had done all my own as well as Dr. Whistler's work.

“I took with me an American doctor who is studying here, and we trotted off to Dowdeswell's. Behold! there was my master, sure enough! and greatly did he marvel at sight of me in such *galère*. The Yankee marvelled even more at the *Nocturnes*, when at last we had fought our way in, though we got frightfully entangled in the ravishing clouds of golden hair floating around the heads of pretty actresses and naughty ladies. Dr. Cyrus B. Wotten is a very simple Christian; so as soon as we had had our fill—enough being far better than a feast—I thought I'd show him the reverse of Whistlerism, and took him to Holman Hunt's show. There he spotted the beauty right enough. After a bit he said, ‘Say, Doctor, those *Nocturnes* might eventuate from a can of ginfizz and a six-shooter slushing around a saloon-bar! But my! I want all there is of your H. Hunt. Do tell!’ ”

In spite of Dr. Whistler's apathetic kindness to me, my sins, and my wriggings out of their wages, multiplied. Nor was it difficult to understand the staff's determination to be rid of me. Thus, late one night I did an urgent tracheotomy. But although, if I had waited till the Staff-Surgeon could arrive, the patient would have died, I was haled before the Medical Board and reprimanded; and this although the surgeon concerned had, in the first place, complimented me on my technique and approved my operating.

On the ensuing visit of this aggrieved surgeon to the Hospital, and after I had, as usual, done most of his out-patient work, I begged a few words with him in one of our

communicating ante-rooms where special examinations of patients were made. His instant refusal so angered me that there and then, in the general room, where the row of clinical lamps and tables stood, with a dozen patients, their friends and a few students, I said that, as he preferred to have my remarks in public, they might be entertaining to everyone. Loud enough for all to hear, I summarized the points in this tracheotomy, its urgency and successful relief; reminded him that he had endorsed my action and even complimented me; and then of his charging me before his colleagues with doing an unsanctioned operation.

Anyhow I felt that my doom was sealed, though I called upon Morell Mackenzie lest he should not have heard the real facts. He was sympathetic, but only suggested that the General Committee might have to enquire further into the matter. Yet somehow he led me on to telling all I knew, more particularly of the two senior physicians' omissions, chiefly, I said, because of their age. He wanted details. So I told him how one of these physicians had the previous afternoon diagnosed "*sub-acute laryngitis*" in two patients who at a glance I realized were very seriously ill; how I managed to smuggle them into one of the ante-rooms and strip them; and how the stethoscope revealed in one *acute broncho-pneumonia*, and in the other extensive tuberculous disease of one lung, as well as beginnings of it in the larynx.

Mackenzie made little reply beyond rising quickly from his chair, his way of dismissal, and briefly thanking me for calling. I took it for granted that nothing would be done to avert my fate.

But then occurred further trouble :

*To my Mother*

"THROAT HOSPITAL.

". . . I am in another scrape! Did I tell you of a case of cancer of the tongue, as the Assistant Surgeon diagnosed it, on which he was going to perform a very dangerous operation, though he

is quite incompetent for it? The girl had been told she must come in at once to save her life. I suspected very strongly that Mr. — was mistaken; and on the sly, I prescribed big doses of iodide for her. When the next week she came with the ugly ulcer on the tongue almost healed, I told her, as Mr. — had not yet come, that there had been a little mistake and her tongue was to be cured without any operation. That was three weeks ago, and from then till now Mr. — had forgotten all about it. Yesterday however he began questioning me as to why she had never come into the Hospital. I told him; and now, if you please, he is to bring this matter before the Committee. . . .

“Yesterday I called on Miss Octavia Hill. She was very sweet. We had a nice long talk about the unemployed; and she wanted to know all about my work. . . .”

But the result of that Committee meeting was more sweeping than I had imagined. It was unanimously resolved that the two senior physicians had passed the age-limit and must be asked to resign, as well as Mr. —, the incompetent surgeon.

### *To my Mother*

#### “THROAT HOSPITAL.

“. . . It seems to me that wherever I go I must make trouble. I have done nothing but set people at enmity with one another in this place. Last night we succeeded in compassing the ruin of one man; and now I cannot get Mr. —’s white, guilty, handsome face out of my mind. He was on trial before the Committee yesterday for his lies about my conduct and his slack work. . . . The poor culprit, such a good-looking man, is now ruined! and he has the most charming wife and sweetest children. . . .”

The Medical Board, however, indignant at the Lay Committee’s infringement of their rights, resigned in a body. To their dismay, their abdication was accepted, one only remaining, T. Mark Hovell. Soon after he was elected Aural Surgeon to the London Hospital.

I think my own conduct was but the determining point for changes already decided upon by the Committee, and moreover they felt that on the inevitable retirement of the

two senior and eminently respectable physicians, it might advantage the Hospital to change the staff altogether. Two friends of Dr. Mackenzie were promptly available and then I was offered the junior of these new appointments.

My opportunity had at last come—and very wonderfully. But a fresh difficulty had now to be faced. It was necessary that my name on a brass plate should smile upon some door in the Cavendish-square district, where the exalted of the profession congregate. My uncle, George Powell, saw at once that my future was assured, and gave me a hundred pounds, admitting that I should want more, pending my discovery by patients. But I had no need to appeal to him again. Nor would he ever accept repayment.

Nevertheless, even a consulting-room in Wimpole Street could not give me a place among the really elect. The Throat Hospital, in spite of its new and irreproachable staff, was still looked upon by a carefully censorious profession as simply *not respectable*. The distrust of this newest specialty in medicine was chiefly due to the prevalent disapproval of specializing in general; for it was considered that all qualified practitioners were competent for everything. Moreover, this instinctive distrust seemed to be endorsed by the indubitable fact that most, not all, of the earliest specialists were of questionable character. Yet the public demand for better treatment was urgent, and a few clever, commercial-minded men were quick to follow Mackenzie's lead, though they lacked his brains and skill. A house in Harley Street was enough for clergymen, actors, costermongers or chorus girls to hail them as beacons of science. But Morell Mackenzie was no qualified quack. He was already a physician on the staff of a London hospital when he founded the Throat Hospital in Golden Square. Perhaps mismanagement, perhaps want of leisure, accounted for his losing control of its finance and staff; yet it served him well in strictly correct advertisement as also with multitudes of patients who could pay no fees. Nevertheless, none of higher rank would

meet him or his followers in consultation. In a word, the profession's hand was against Morell Mackenzie; and the Celt, with his racial pugnacity and something of the free-lance's fierceness, did not refuse to fight for his wonderful laryngoscope and himself. But presently a more momentous battle had to be faced—one where his latent capacity for real heroism came to light.

## CHAPTER III

### THE KAISER'S CASE

EVERYONE professionally intimate with Morell Mackenzie would allow that personal charm, hardly less than his marvellous skill, accounted for his success. His flair for reading character tallied with rapid clinical diagnosis and instant action. Quick in resenting affront or dissent, his swordsmanship was fierce; yet his tactful, often devoted sympathy won for him, in spite of an autocratic demeanour, the unswerving admiration of friends, pupils and patients. These typically Celtic characteristics largely explained not only the fact of his setting a Prince on his throne to whose wisdom all Europe looked for peace and mutual condonation, but also the price he alone must pay for it. Probably moreover, such qualities unfitted him in a measure for plodding laboratory work or profundity of thought. The Teutonic mind is better adapted for stalking a bacillus or compelling acceptance of some plausibly philosophic house of cards. Yet Mackenzie's optimism in research, along with his versatile opportunism and facile pen, had already marked his distinction. Nevertheless, his scientific labours were checked by the multitudinous patients who, in spite of professional opposition, swarmed and robbed him of leisure. Theoretically specialists ought to get their patients through the general practitioners or consultants seeking their help in exceptional difficulties. But Mackenzie's independence irritated a profession which in that day seemed to resent all new ideas unless emanating from Vienna or Berlin. For myself, who owed so much to him, I, like all his intimates, took it for granted that this mistrust came from jealousy and prejudice. Yet later I had to admit that a reckless aloofness from professional ethics explained the antipathy of some who, satisfied with their own achieve-

ments, could not believe there was any need for specialists. On the other hand patients all too readily would run after and applaud any newly fashionable practitioner claiming special knowledge. The frail foundation upon which a great reputation is often built is amusing, especially to those who know best their own limitations. Once, it was said to me that Sir So-and-So, a Mayfair upstart, was so marvellous that he need never use his stethoscope: one glance told him that he alone could cure you. While patients are thus easily led by suggestion, it is small wonder if a physician sometimes deceives even himself concerning his merits. So it was in some measure with Mackenzie, I think; though his abilities were indubitable. His kindly heart would find it impossible to express an opinion that might jeopardize hope. While he did surgical wonders never before deemed possible, some of his ways were more than questionable, and accounted for the ostracism which he found so galling. The great physicians of the day were as incredulous of this new specialist's claims as, ten years earlier, the surgeons had been of Lister's. And when prolonged, expensive courses of Mackenzie's treatment failed, they, rightly or wrongly, connected them with his social extravagances, and refused to meet him in consultation. They ignored the facts that he had freely given to his profession all his discoveries, and that from countless poor patients he took no fees whatever.

Perhaps the profession had no alternative. Yet even myself, a person less open to attack, had to face incredibly stupid opposition from some of the most honoured, and even after I was invited to join the staff of King's College Hospital. I do not know that anyone refused to meet me, though it often happened that when summoned for consultation with one perhaps of highest rank, my assured treatment of a malady about which he knew nothing whatever, would be discounted. Indeed I could tell some amazing stories to instance this distrust. Once I was compelled to demand an open apology unless my traducer, Surgeon to one of the



greatest hospitals, preferred an inevitable alternative: like a sportsman he chose wisely. During a lecture to his students he had incidentally denounced all throat specialists along with the "hypothetical adenoids on which they fattened"; though the importance, he said, of these growths was almost *nil*. He then produced a patient of my own, naming myself as one offender, and claimed that there were no symptoms of the growths I proposed removing. Nevertheless the boy's father, an intimate friend from whom I could ask no fee, brought him back to me; and a few days later I sent the censorious surgeon the adenoids I removed, in the hope that he would realize their legal value, even if he was ignorant of their clinical importance.

It was this sort of thing, and far worse, that Morell Mackenzie had to face. For professional animus encompassed his ruin: and only because he had, in obedience to his Queen, opposed all professional etiquette, faced almost intolerable insult in Berlin, and had circumvented the machinations of Bismarck. Indeed the whole story is worth telling, there being few now left who could testify to its facts. They prove Mackenzie's treatment and demeanour from first to last to have been irreproachable, so far as they concerned his royal patient and the German Court Surgeons. The grievous injustice done him at home as well as in Berlin, makes it imperative that I should right him.

Mackenzie's career in itself is good narrative. Thanks to a power of work as rapid as it was intense, the founder of our specialty had already and greatly distinguished himself. To have written the *Jacksonian Prize Essay* for the College of Surgeons, wherein he gave the earliest descriptions and drawings of throat-diseases, at once set him in the first rank. The little mirror called the Laryngoscope, invented by Manoel Garcia, a teacher of singing, had already been toyed with by Professor Czermak in Pesth. To him went Mackenzie, while studying on the Continent. Realizing immediately the instrument's great possibilities, he intro-

duced it to his own country. Soon the young specialist produced a text-book dealing with nose-and-throat diseases which proved his wide experience, as well as his research into foreign literature. The book was at once translated into German and French.

Dr. Mackenzie was happily married in 1863 and, established in a modest street off Portland Place, soon realized the joy and burden of a family. Suddenly he removed into the largest house in Harley Street. An intimate friend of his told me how, when he first showed his wife her new suite of drawing-rooms, his injunction astounded her: "My dear, now you have a new duty in life: fill these rooms!" She succeeded, and the Morell Mackenzies became notorious for their choice dinners and *At Homes*. There the greatest singers and instrumentalists, the most popular actors, artists and writers, with aproned ecclesiastics and starry diplomats, would contribute to the crush and noise, the sweat and boredom of these absurd gatherings.

*To my Mother*

[Undated].

"... Mrs. Morell Mackenzie is a very pleasant woman—handsome and finely built. She dresses well, though she is constantly fingering her showy bracelets and necklaces. They have a dinner party every night—at least a dozen guests. I have been twice. As a rule, when everyone is laughing Morell looks up and round with solemn face, as much as to say, 'I see the joke, but Morell Mackenzie smiles not.' If he does unbend so far as to straighten his lips and elevate their corners, he looks about from one to the other, as one who should say, 'I smile, and Morell Mackenzie smiles: Morell Mackenzie and I are one—more, I created Mackenzie and saw that he was good!' I have never seen a more self-satisfied man; still no one can help admiring and loving him . . ."

But if the drawing-rooms were to be filled, the three consulting-rooms with the huge waiting room must be crowded also. A little later Mackenzie, anxious to help me, said

almost bitterly: "Mind and keep clear of the social dodges. Every guinea you win by them will cost you two." Yet he never got quit of the society-lure.

His success and popular reputation had increased so amazingly that he was sought as the only man able to solve a Royal Dilemma, though it led to his making more enemies—now in Germany as well as at home. Even though securing the particular point for which his exceptional services were sought; even though a title was bestowed on him by his Queen and the dying Emperor Frederick decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Hohenzollern Order; he lost irretrievably his health, his reputation and his practice. The fee granted for his services to the Kaiser (£12,000, it was said) barely saved him from disaster. A lifelong sufferer from asthma, he died a broken man in 1892, and only 55. Yet no physician ever before could claim to have set a prince upon his throne: he a foreigner too, who had to fight tooth and nail the Crown Prince's Court advisers, and subsequently to face the censure of his profession at home for the unprofessional enormity of holding to an opinion of his own.

Looking at the story quite dispassionately; reading once again the published documents regarding the case along with my memory of the events as they occurred, as well as, a little later, the account of them told me by Sir Morell himself and also by his absolutely truthful assistant in the Crown Prince's treatment; I repeat that our chief, most learned throat-specialist was right from his first step till his last vigil beside the dying Kaiser: right, even in his too popular yet fully documented history of the case.<sup>1</sup>

A brief sketch of the case will be acceptable, I think.

The German Crown Prince began to suffer in his throat in the autumn of 1886 apparently after exposure to cold during one treacherous sunset on the Riviera. The ensuing hoarseness never disappeared and his advisers in Berlin,

<sup>1</sup> *Frederick the Noble*, Sampson, Low and Co., 1889.

then far behind Vienna and even London in the use of the laryngoscope, gave him no relief. The Crown Princess, our own Princess Royal, urgently desired advice from the English specialist, known already throughout Europe as the chief authority. So, late at night on May 18, 1887, a message was brought from the Queen, then at Windsor, asking Dr. Mackenzie to go immediately to Berlin to examine the Crown Prince's throat. From the 20th of that month till the Kaiser died on June 13, 1888, Mackenzie had chief control of the case; while throughout, he had to face the inexperience and clumsy surgical interference of his German colleagues, as well as their intolerable personal insults. The worst of these opponents was Professor von Bergmann, a great military surgeon, and Gerhardt, a physician who, though making no claim to be a specialist, had some experience with the laryngoscope. No other real specialist had been summoned, though Gerhardt had discovered a small growth in one of the patient's vocal cords. All were agreed that a portion of the growth should in the first place be removed *per vias naturalis*, for microscopical examination. As none of the Germans felt competent to do this, they asked Mackenzie to operate. But knowing nothing of what would be required, he had brought no instruments and had to use the cumbersome forceps there available. Indeed one of Mackenzie's great if simple discoveries was the angle at which all laryngeal instruments must be made; and his designs have never been altered for the better. So the English specialist operated, and the chief pathologist in Europe, Professor Virchow, pronounced the growth to be "*pachydermia verrucosa*"—a benign wart—although his published microscopic description made some of us at home more than doubtful. In spite of this verdict and regardless of Mackenzie's claim that there was "no *positive* indication of cancer"; ignoring too the generally prevailing opinion that without proof of malignancy, no operation involving grave risks was ever justified; von Bergmann persistently advocated

the total removal of the larynx: an operation which in that day had been almost invariably and immediately fatal. More: in this, the Crown Prince's case, it was emphatically disallowed by the very surgeon who had most frequently attempted it, viz. Dr. Hahn. Nevertheless it soon became obvious that the growth certainly *was* cancer. Even then, the external operation would, apart from its fearful mortality, have been less than humane, because of the misery involved by the mutilation and the almost certain recurrence. Nowadays the same operation in experienced hands, does not involve great risks, while the probability of a permanent cure is far greater.

Yet when all was over, the German doctors villified their English *confrère* by publicly stating that (1) he had *promised* a cure in the first place, and that (2) he had vetoed the operation that alone would have saved the Emperor's life. As a matter of fact, the utmost Mackenzie had ever said was this: that *if* the malady was only a wart, as Virchow had pronounced it, he could cure it without external operation. Moreover, the Crown Prince himself, when the facts and statistics were set before him, refused the external operation.

Then, when all was over and Mackenzie safely escaped from Charlottenburg, it was required of him from exalted Quarters at home that he should publish a full statement of the case, and in a form that could be as far as possible understood by the public. For State reasons this was considered advisable. So the book was published—a straightforward, precisely documented summary, though too popular in style to please the profession and too minutely technical for general reading. Its author was openly censured for it by the College of Surgeons, whose scolding, it is very evident, was instigated by annoyance that a mere specialist had exposed the surgical blunders, the extraordinary inexperience and the petty animus of so great a Surgeon as von Bergmann.

But apart from the professional reprimand, it was hardly

to be expected that the book could be read by the layman wisely, even if dispassionately. He would conclude that, "after all, Mackenzie was wrong and the Germans right: had he not said the disease in question was *not* cancer, when it proved to have been, from the very first, precisely that?" Yet, let me repeat, the most Mackenzie had avowed was that *the evidence in the earlier stage was not sufficient to justify a diagnosis of cancer*; and that, even if the growth had been indubitably malignant, external operation would be unpardonable. In these opinions he was entirely correct, even if to-day, with our advances in technique, they would need modification.

But there were certain points that Mackenzie could not publish in his defence. For behind the scenes, and cruelly involving the royal patient's interests, there appear to have been at work State-juggleries—though these have been strenuously denied—juggleries however, which Queen Victoria sought to frustrate through Mackenzie's more favourable opinion on her son-in-law's case. It seems clear that she and the Princess Royal credited the often cited Hohenzollern law that no one with an incurable malady could ascend the throne. Also there is ample reason to suspect that Bismarck, no friend of the Crown Prince's liberal statesmanship, thought the grandson of William II would be the more serviceable tool in his hands. In the view of some, colour is lent to such suspicion by the manner in which Bismarck, on the Kaiser Wilhelm's death, urged the immediate attendance in Berlin of his successor, then lying at San Remo, seemingly too ill to travel. It is assumed that the Iron Hand looked for one or other consequence of his summons, either favourable to his schemes, namely that the new Emperor would succumb on the journey, or if he refused to travel, that a regency could be nominated. But the patient faced the journey, Mackenzie in charge, and not only ascended his Throne, but made his influence of some account during its brief tenure.

Surely any layman will see that Mackenzie's verdict was correct even if it had to appear equivocating. But an even more powerful inducement to regard the case favourably, could not have been ignored by anyone. I had it from Mackenzie himself, and there must be others still living who will confirm the statement, that Queen Victoria had said to him—when or how I do not know—that *if he could see his way to declaring that the Crown Prince's affection was not cancer, she would consider herself under personal and lasting obligation to him*. Few men could have resisted such an august appeal—tantamount to a command. Fortunately Mackenzie's guarded opinion not only served his Queen's wishes, but was literally correct.

I am permitted to append here a letter written by the Empress Frederick to the late Lady Ponsonby, which is much to the point.<sup>1</sup>

*From the Empress Frederick to M.E.P.*

“SCHLOSS,  
“HOMBURG V. D. HOHE,  
“May 17th, 1889.

“. . . As to poor Sir Morell Mackenzie; I am sure all you say is quite right and I understand it perfectly. The *disastrous* thing for *me* and for my whole cause is the way in which Bergmann and Gerhardt are fêted by their English Colleagues. These I now know behaved *shamefully* to my husband and to me, and have done us all the harm they could and have abetted and aided all the endeavours to injure *me*, both with my son and the German public, which were made by the Bismarcks—father and son and their *whole* family—and the *present* Court.

“I am now constantly told that the English public and medical profession are quite on the side of Bergmann and of Gerhardt, who, though State employees, in my *eyes* in no way represent *German* science, as we have many *far* better and more eminent men. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> From *Mary Ponsonby, A Memoir. Some Letters and a Journal*. Edited by her daughter, Magdalen Ponsonby, p. 273. John Murray, 1927.

Surely no professional man was ever so talked about and villified as Morell Mackenzie, and the fact that he had done what his own Sovereign had asked of him, could not save his reputation or pay his rent.

It is said that while the Kaiser lay dying, the Schloss was surrounded by Bismarck's spies lest Mackenzie should escape and the world obtain authentic, incriminating documents of his patient's case. The English specialist himself had to be smuggled out of Berlin, because the people were infuriated against him. He came home a very sick man, with asthma in constant grip of him and his nerves shattered, thanks to his day-and-night bedside watching. Nevertheless his optimism took it for granted that his old energies and practice were waiting for him, though chiefly he longed for the rest of his charming country house at Wargrave. The public, however, like other juries—"uneddicated, vulgar, grovelling wretches" as Bumble put it—had found him guilty. His patients sought other help and the banks of the Thames proved the very worst place for his asthma. Not even the honour of knighthood recompensed ruin. Morell Mackenzie died with a broken heart, having given all to serve that fellow-man, one wearing a crown, of whom he wrote :

"He was the noblest specimen of humanity. . . . No one could know him even slightly without loving him; no one could be more intimately acquainted with him without remembering him as one of the most large-minded and noble-hearted of men. . . . the example of a stainless life and a beautiful death. . . ."

I may fittingly close these tragical incidents by quoting from a letter to my mother, written in February, 1892, advising her of Sir Morell Mackenzie's death :

". . . What a failure his life has been! Poor man in every sense of the word! With a noble heart nigh ruined by an insensitive conscience; with a deep love for all that was good and refined, and an ardent desire to be well spoken of by his fellows; with one of the finest understandings I have ever met; all the things



indeed that are worth living for! Yet, if ever a man died broken-hearted, Morell Mackenzie did. And then, in place of his successes and choice social pleasures, he had to face universal distrust and a vanishing practice. . . . Yet he was one of the most lovable men I have ever known. The sadness of it all! Broken-hearted, believing in nothing, not even in himself any more! But if the God of our faith is God, this man will not be hard to save, will he?

"They have offered me his house at a price; but wiser judgment prevails. There is all the money I can ever want to make in this No. 85 [Harley Street] and I have no ambition to make £10,000 a year. . . ."

Nevertheless, I did it. And, more important, I have now had my say about this friend, whose instant sympathy with my disabilities and possible abilities was the turning-point in my career. I think his life may be summarized in an aphorism: *Success never spells justification, Failure still less reproach.*

I am constrained to add a few more words concerning the general attitude of my profession towards those of us who infringe professional etiquette, or towards some whom, being "unqualified," we class as quacks. It is little realized how much patients need protection from the fallacious offers of dishonest men and press advertisements; and it is primarily in the public interest that our "General Medical Council" was given its authority by Parliament. It can be ruthless towards any qualified men who openly advertise their own skill, or who, thinking they have made a new discovery, try exclusively to exploit it for their own benefit; and rightly so. No qualified doctor may patent either remedy or instrument, or advertise his medical publications in the general press, without being struck off the Register. Yet the law never prevents bone-setters or even the most outrageous quacks from practising and taking fees. From these the suffering public can never be protected, though they have certain restrictions: (1) The name-plate on their door must bear no misleading designation: (2) the right of

recovering fees by legal process is denied them: and (3) they are not allowed to give certificates of death. Only when they are responsible for the death of a patient by a clumsy or illegal operation does the law interfere and punish. Yet even the legally qualified practitioner is, in such like case, in no way exempt, though he has a better chance of defending himself.

But I allow that the prerogative of the G.M.C. is sometimes harshly exercised. A recent case was much to the point and widely discussed. A certain Dr. Axham's name was struck from the Register, in that he had helped Sir Herbert A. Barker, an unregistered bone-setter, to perform some of his operations hardly possible without an anaesthetic. The benevolent doctor would have been wholly within his rights if, for instance, he had employed Sir Herbert A. Barker, as an unqualified assistant: and as such sought his help over a dislocation, while he, Dr. Axham, undertook the greater though less skilful responsibility of giving the anaesthetic. A case like this makes the public think the Council is prompted by a trade-union spirit; or, if not that, by antipathy to a man who, in certain surgical skill was, although legally unqualified, able to do what was beyond the experience of many illustrious surgeons.

Nevertheless the supreme Council strives, I do think, always to be fair. Even in this notorious case it probably believed it was prompted solely by the public interest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The osteopaths, the newest fashion in outside-brokers of medicine, profess indignation that, on the strength of the limited education implied by their own college-degree, we do not put them on the Register or bestow upon them our own diplomas; and the public ascribes to trade-unionism our ignoring of such claim, even though these practitioners are absolutely free to practise so long as they do no mischief. One wonders if a laity so anxious for justice would accuse the old universities of trade-unionism if they declined to bestow their D.D. degree upon officers of the Salvation Army! Even if osteopaths' statistics of cures exceed those of legally qualified doctors as much as Salvationists' statistics of souls saved exceed those of the most learned divines, the fact would not affect the argument. But fancy Salvationists clamouring for such rights!

It still remains the profession's duty to protect the public from the quack, if for this reason alone: that the paramount danger of advertised cures is their hypnotizing the sufferer into constant brooding over his ailment. Whenever it defeats medical science he seizes upon all the outrageous promises—one and all—of the newspaper-advertisements. The cleverer the lying, the more do they *suggest* to a patient yet another hope: the higher the cost, the greater the reason for emptying his pockets. "I love a ballad in print o' life, for then we are sure they are true," said Mopsa in the *Winter's Tale*, long before the Press had taken possession of our wisdom; and again, in Mark Antony's matchless oration, Shakespeare shows how well he calculated the power of suggestion.

On the other hand, suggestion is of real service as an ancillary in all treatment; and not less so, that quackery of every kind lives upon it. But when such quackery in fleecing the public makes life harder for the honest man with no blatant trumpet to support him, it is not surprising that he protests. And it is a little unkind when the public think he is prompted only by a trade-union spirit.

BOOK V

THE THROAT SPECIALIST



## CHAPTER I

### DISCOVERIES AND FORBIDDINGS

TWO definite consequences resulted from Germany's incalculable loss and Morell Mackenzie's fall. One was the long-delayed recognition of the throat specialty by the profession, so that the great hospitals reluctantly began to make special departments for the throat. The other was a strange nervousness on the part of patients lest their trivial ailments prove similar to the late Kaiser's, so that they came rushing to the specialist for reassurance and cure.

But to my ineradicable remorse, Mackenzie's return ended our intimacy. When first he was entrusted with the Royal case, he had promised to make me his assistant. But he had to reconsider this because of my deafness. So my staunch friend, the late T. Mark Hovell, became his coadjutor till the end. However, during the last months, when Mackenzie was kept at San Remo and then finally at Charlottenburg, I shouldered his great practice, and astonished him by the way I held it and the fees I earned. My share in these—a third of the total—was an enormous help; but even greater was the discovery that I was not handicapped very seriously, and that patients trusted me. On Sir Morell's return I found myself in a difficult position: for many of his patients refused to return to him, seeing that I had, as they thought, treated them more expeditiously and not less successfully. Unfortunately, misinterpreting my independent success, and knowing nothing of the way I ignored his patients' appeals to me, he became less friendly, making it impossible for me to explain my rapid popularity, my brougham and pair, my tastefully furnished house in his own street.

These months of European anxiety over the Kaiser's sufferings and all they involved, were for me full of surprises.

My clinical researches and teaching at the hospital brought patients to me so rapidly that the purely scientific work I had hoped to pursue, soon became impossible. All through my residence at the Throat Hospital I had seen that one organ, whose maladies were as yet unexplored, was the nose. So I took up their study, and the profession soon discovered that I knew rather than guessed; besides having a gift for teaching and sure manipulative skill. Moreover, I must have had a certain flair for success that neither my deafness nor my still desolating migraines could nullify.

No sooner was I changed from house-surgeon to visiting physician than I was ready with a course of lectures on "The Forms of Nasal Obstruction." I advertised them in the professional journals and qualified students flocked to them. Then I published the lectures, and the small book rapidly went into second and amplified editions. For the profession was now asking for news on such points. The book's favourable reception was the first link in a long chain of good fortune. Thus, a medical practitioner at Dunmow was a victim of hay-fever. He read my book, consulted me, and responded to treatment I had already experimented with, so that his life-long misery was practically cured. One summer day, when he was attending a patient at Easton Lodge, Lord Warwick's seat, Lady Warwick remarked on the fact that his hay-fever seemed to be cured; and then, to convince her further, he buried his nose in a bowl of roses without any of the hitherto inevitable sneezing. He told her of a new man who really cured such things; and she at once sent his name to her brother-in-law, then the Marquis of Stafford, later His Grace of Sutherland, and father of the present Duke. He immediately consulted me. Then and there I removed two unusual forms of nasal obstruction, which had been overlooked by more than one specialist he had consulted. His hay-fever was immediately arrested, thereafter giving him scarcely any trouble. In that day hay-fever was almost confined to the well-to-do

and intellectual classes; and, as I had not yet come across it in hospital patients, I had had little experience with it. In later years hay-fever, and other kinds of sneezing with the allied asthma, became very frequent in the out-patient departments. Whether this was consequent upon the poor becoming as luxurious as the wealthy, or due to the death-duties compelling the aristocracy to seek gratuitous advice at the hospitals, I am not sure. Anyhow, my little book and my exalted patients brought me practice with phenomenal speed.

Yet I was ambitious for purely scientific work. I initiated some laborious experiments that should prove what had been already suspected, namely that the nasal passages and chambers had functions even more important than smell and taste. But, what with hospital work, the clinical teaching, and my already large private practice, I had no time to use the physiological laboratory at King's College for my research, although I have little doubt I should have been welcomed there. Accordingly, I fitted up a room over my stable as a laboratory and spent all my spare time and money on its equipment. There my youngest brother, Mackay—who had just taken his M.B. at Cambridge—and myself would work into the small morning hours, alternately submitting our own nasal organs to uncomfortable penance, and checking the observations. The result of these experiments will interest even the lay-reader, seeing that they absolutely established the suspected facts. The first was that the inhaled air, on passing through the nose and before reaching the throat, bronchial tubes or lungs, is completely saturated with moisture. It used to be taught that the lungs give moisture to dry air, whereas, as we proved, it is already saturated by the nose before it reaches the lungs which consequently can give no more. The second point is no less important; the external air, however cold (and I experimented with various temperatures, the lowest being 25° F.), is raised by the nasal mucous membrane, and before



reaching even the throat, almost to the blood temperature. But the third point was more surprising, if less important. We proved that within the highly intricate nose-passages there is considerable absorption of oxygen and exhaling of carbon dioxide, showing that in relatively minute degree the nose does the same work as the lungs. My experiments stopped short of examining the filtering power of the nose; for this would have involved more bacteriological skill than I had yet acquired. But we both hoped soon to be equipped for extended experiments.

And now I made a blunder, largely because I had been for so long out of touch with my old hospital: I overlooked the fact that such scientific work must be done in some accredited physiological laboratory and then given in the first place to one or another learned Society, before it can be accepted by the profession. I published my experiments in a little book, hardly more than a pamphlet, although the elaborate apparatus was fully described and illustrated, and all the mathematical calculations were worked out in unassailable detail. The book, of course, was sent to the medical journals for review, and copies presented to the leading physiologists here and in America. But, beyond brief reference to it in the *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal*, my work was absolutely ignored. "You have just missed a colossal opportunity, my dear boy," said Morell Mackenzie to me, after reading the brochure; "it ought to have been given to the Royal Society." But, besides this mistake, there were other points that, in the profession's mind, disqualified my work: I was still suspect because a throat specialist and a colleague of Morell Mackenzie. A more serious objection lay in the feeling that such experiments, if done in a recognized laboratory, and using the nasal organs of, say, dogs, with the glass-and-rubber tubings stitched into their nostrils, would have been more acceptable than deductions arrived at by a pair of amateur physiologists using their own noses, which, however correct in

deportment and function, were like their owners, in somewhat doubtful odour.

Yet in one trifling way, my physiological experiments got their dues, even if my hand in them was ignored. By that time I had a large following of pupils at the Throat Hospital; among them Americans, Germans, Swiss and Italians, all qualified doctors. In my desire to teach all I knew I was perhaps indiscreet, if only because some of my conclusions were not yet mature. It so happened that a certain student, who with his country shall be nameless, on returning to his own laboratory, copied, but with more elaboration, the experiments I had described in my lectures. His conclusions were identical with my own; and he published them as if emanating solely from himself, not even mentioning my name.

Such ignoring of this labour might have disheartened me, had I not been by this time quite happy in the way students flocked to the Throat Hospital; largely, I do think, because I had something to give, and gave it to the full.

The fact that I numbered among my pupils in this dubious hospital some of the most illustrious in our profession, proves that our endeavours were recognized. Two, for instance, I still count among my best friends: Sir Humphrey Rolleston, Bart., now Regius Professor of Medicine in Cambridge, and Sir Charters J. Symonds, Consulting Surgeon to Guy's Hospital, who already, when he came to the Throat Hospital—especially to see my work—was on the staff at Guy's. Both of these men, one many years younger than myself, the other a few months older, are still full of intellectual energy. In passing I must quote some words in a letter to my mother, in which I give my impressions of my new friend, the Surgeon to Guy's; and a fifty years' intimacy advises me that if I were to write of that great Surgeon to-day I could use no truer words. I had transferred to him an extraordinary case which came within the province of the general surgeon rather than the specialist.

*To my Mother*

" 20 Nov. 1888.

“. . . Mr. Charters Symonds is such a delightful man . . . one I hope to keep as a friend. . . . Of the new school, intellectual and deeply human . . . something more than a mere, if brilliant, carver of human flesh, as too many of my teachers at King's were. . . . He is as gentle with his hospital patients as though they were lords and ladies, yet with the quick judgment and instant action so essential to the surgeon. . . . I have to go over to Guy's frequently to see the patient he has relieved me of—one where removal of the larynx would give the patient just one chance. This operation, I feel, ought to be done only by a man constantly at general surgery. I should like to tackle these big things; but it is a matter of principle. . . .”

Although many younger men such as these were studying the new specialty with us, a few intending to make it their career, the Throat Hospital remained under a cloud for many years. Moreover, as already hinted, we had to face an opposition so fierce and unreasoned that it blinded many—even the most distinguished. Thus, soon after I had been invited to build up a Throat Department for King's, one of my new colleagues, a surgeon to whom I had once been dresser, came to see me remove adenoids, an operation still derided by many. I could not fail to see that my rapid technique made him nervous for the little patient; and when all was completed in a very few minutes he kindly took me to task as to the extreme danger involved in my method! His objections were perhaps in a measure pardonable, seeing that he then confessed himself as very sceptical concerning any mischief ascribed to adenoids: “After all,” he argued, “the open mouth is sufficient for all natural requirements!” He turned away rather abruptly when I assured him I had already operated on over two thousand cases and never one patient the worse. But occasionally it actually happens that the public realize the truth of some medical proposition before the profession is quite aware of it. At any rate, thus it was with one class of hospital patients whose

sufferings justified our special work. I refer to the elementary school-teachers, whose voice-troubles well instance the way social progress initiates new diseases. The number of these teachers who came to my clinics was surprising. Mostly women, they suffered from hoarseness which, but for the week-end rest, would have thrown multitudes of them out of employment. It was due unquestionably to faulty voice-production and excessive work, and was so peculiar that, from inspection with the laryngoscope alone, I could name the patient's profession: the pathognomonic being two minute corns or warts opposite one another on the vocal cords' sharp edges. I soon became skilful in the removal of these excrescences, with the instant restoration of the natural voice. I recall one amusing case that justified my claim of diagnosing a profession with the laryngoscope. A child of ten was brought to me because of her hoarseness. After a moment's glimpse at the vocal cords, I turned to the students, to whom I had just been speaking of what I called *Board-School Laryngitis*: "Gentlemen," I said, "you may laugh at me now, if you like! I confess that, had I seen only this little maid's vocal cords with their two little opposite warts, and without knowing her age, I should have vowed she was a teacher." Then I asked her mother whether she shouted more than most children. The reply was that the child's favourite game was to get her young playmates about her and "act teaching of 'em. And she do yell at 'em proper, Sir, so that I fair wonder how she gets sich a voice from her little chest!"

Thus did exception prove the rule.

I then set about a systematic tour of the board-schools, especially in the East End, being asked to visit some of my patients' classes. Then I knew; for all these teachers practised a peculiar, idiosyncratic screaming at the children. Although the legal maximum in a class was sixty, the numbers very commonly exceeded this: more than once I counted over a hundred in a class, with a second, nearly as large, in the

same room. I tried to secure official recognition of this fact, but was snubbed. A certain much honoured Inspector of Schools was intimate with one of my oldest and best friends, Miss Frances Martin—she who gave her life and means to the founding and support of the Working Women's College, renamed since her death in 1926 "The Frances Martin College." She arranged for my meeting this Inspector at one of her delightful little dinner-parties. I buttonholed him over our port, told him of my teacher-patients and how the illegal numbers almost necessitated that peculiar screaming at the children which I myself had so frequently heard; and I said that more than once I had counted over a hundred in a class. The Inspector grew more and more irritable over my story, and at last rose to join the ladies, saying that when I could be more accurate in my facts he would be pleased to listen to me: it was *impossible*, he declared, for any class in London to exceed the legal sixty!

So nothing more could be done.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously enough, just at this time a correspondence began in the *Daily Telegraph* concerning the excessive class-numbers in some of the great public schools. In spite of being aware that it would be a breach of professional etiquette, I also wrote to the *Telegraph*, telling of the conditions I was intimate with in the elementary schools, and the dire consequences to the teachers. To my amazement,

<sup>1</sup> My friend, Miss Rose Goodwin, to whom I am indebted for some wise criticism of these pages, recently wrote thus to me (January 1931): ". . . Take my own case . . . over 200 on my registers when I was just twenty-two. Fortunately the attendance was poor; even so, in a classroom built to accommodate ninety children, my poor little folk sat three at a desk, and also on the floor. All were more or less sub-normal. The inspector, after I had struggled with this terrific number for a short time, complained that the children were not making progress! . . . I don't think I ever had *more* than 150 actually present and the numbers *did* fall off; but even then the class was impossibly large and simply wore me out. . . . The modern teacher has still much to endure, but these terrible times are over. . . ." Indeed, now the tendency in some cases appears to be overstaffing the schools.

not only was my letter given prominence, but the day's leading article was devoted to its revelations, my name occurring more than once. One consequence was that Professor Curnow took me to task, saying the article would offend the profession, and that I had better step gingerly. On the following morning, however, I received a card for one of Lady Rosebery's *At Homes* in Berkeley Square; and I was more than a little astounded that a man's name had only to appear in a leading article to make him worthy of such honour. All the same I gained nothing, or the board-school teacher either, from the *Telegraph's* endorsement of my letter. But presently I published a brochure named *Board-School Laryngitis*, which the profession took as self-advertisement, though it was purely scientific and clinical. Had I been a court-physician, it would have been acclaimed by everyone.

Another physician at King's, Sir Nestor Tirard, my old school-friend, the first to offer me the profession's social hand, and always my warmest friend, scolded me in that I could not yet afford to run risks of this sort. On the other hand, an older colleague of his, Dr. Lionel Beale, a man whose microscopic investigations early won him the F.R.S., looked at it differently. He told me that when, years before, he was chosen for the Chair of the Physiology at King's, the candidate who ought to have been preferred was Thomas Huxley, who, Dr. Beale admitted, was immensely his superior. "But," he said, "Huxley then had published nothing, while I had printed my first investigation into the liver's structure. So I got it!" Then he added: "Write, if you want recognition—anything, good or bad—but write; make your pen your first weapon." I might have replied in Macbeth's words (though my pen was hardly dagger-like) "Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going. And such an instrument I was to use." Nevertheless, if my pen helped my initial success, it did me real harm professionally when I found recreation in general literature. An instance

followed close upon my writing certain articles on the Nose for Sir Clifford Allbut's monumental *System of Medicine*. When a second edition was needed, the now co-operating editor, Sir Humphrey Rolleston, wrote altogether kindly, but hoping I should agree with their decision that, seeing I was adventuring somewhat in general literature, I might have fallen a little behindhand in recent advances; and that they ought to ask some other specialist to edit my articles and bring them up to date. Of course, I could only acquiesce; but, as I pointed out to Sir Humphrey, it was never supposed that other men's work suffered because their leisure hours were spent in dining fashionably, entertaining, theatre-going, golf and bridge parties. Yet, because I, being debarred from such pleasures by my deafness, found some solace in general literature, it was held that I must be losing interest in my work! The remark led to my rewriting my articles for the new edition. Yet, though my practice increased almost beyond my powers, old friends—relatives especially—must find fault with my relaxations and ask: "Why can't he stick to his profession?"

As will be inferred, I had no sports; and my deafness increasing, I was robbed of all pleasure in music and the drama. Before I was forty I had to abandon for ever, first my violin, then the viola and 'cello; tantamount to being turned away from one portal to the Heavenly Kingdom. In my Harley Street house I had a large billiard-room; but though friends were near and ready enough to join me, I was mostly too tired at the end of a day's work to enjoy that fascinating game, and generally preferred to be marker or onlooker. Being a bad sleeper, I would read and write during the early morning hours, which so often prove intolerably irksome.

As my father's son, I inherited also a certain instinct for speaking, even though I claim none of his marvellous power and command of language. This aptitude was inevitably encouraged by a deep-rooted sense of Humanity's

"destiny, our being's heart and home," notwithstanding the fearsome array of facts so trenchantly upheld as limits of the knowable. To those of us, who crave to get beyond the known, the poets give their inspiring sympathy, and so help us to use fearlessly our own eyes of imagination. Great painters bring us messages in colour, and carry us away and away, right out of their pictures. Musicians summon melodies and harmonies that uplift our hearts into high wonderings of Life's passion. All of which is intensely realized by many of the noblest and comes to light in their work; yet, to biologist and psycho-analyst, I may seem to utter nonsense. Once, when a medical student, I told my father that somehow I felt a time might come when I should just *have* to say what I seemed to know was true. "Then," replied that most trusting man, "you will some day find all you need for it."

None the less, I have not yet found it—perhaps because work that I could do better came to me. To-day many seers are saying all these things, less and ever less dogmatically: indeed, they have been gloriously heralded ever since birds began their songs or poets their prophecies: the need of which is in no way lessened in this year 1932, though religionists, even those of Rome, try to welcome all the new science. Indeed, one of our greatest astronomers has recently said this: "We cannot claim to have discerned more than a very faint glimmer of light at the best; perhaps wholly illusory, for certainly we had to strain our eyes very hard to see anything at all."<sup>1</sup> A few, however, have more at command than keen eyes and huge telescopes; and they are afraid lest mere science and increase of knowledge should mislead us, through a meretricious hope that something of the great mystery will soon be physically revealed. "The priest and the prophet have erred . . . they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." So spoke an older philosopher who understood the law of our gravitation towards

<sup>1</sup> *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans (Cambridge University Press).



the ultimate, yet *unknowable* truth; for the great mystery is even now, as it always has been, and for ever must be, close upon us and within us. And this urgent instinct for revelation must, it seems to me, be trusted in spite of all logic and calculation. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."<sup>1</sup> Even if Dr. Einstein prove the plummet true only with qualifications, it is certain that neither cottage nor cathedral can be built without its guidance.

In 1902 I began to test this urgent need in myself for expression; and with some gleams of hope. Dr. A. Robertson, then Principal of King's College, later Bishop of Exeter, asked me to give some lectures to students of all departments of the College. Of course I was pleased enough, though well aware that professionally it was unwise. I named the three lectures "The Religious Sense in its Scientific Aspect," and later published them along with a more ambitious work, *The Tree in the Midst*.<sup>2</sup> The claim of both was much the same: that the very driving-force of our evolution lay in this, that, while we are at once bound by its laws, we are no less impelled to rise above them; that the garden of Eden and the Forbidden Fruit symbolized teleological evolution; that man must be discontented with the gifts he has won, must suffer from the thorns and thistles, must labour with hand, invent with brain, aspire with vision of imagination, if his destiny is to be won. But my endeavour was before its time. Although it was simple enough in theory, its suggestion that the Tree of Knowledge was planted solely that man should actually rise above the Law, offended many; and not the less that religionists were already beginning to accept biological facts. To-day, at any rate, if astronomers are driven again to suspect a Master-Thought responsible for all phenomena—for things and laws so far as they are known—the admission comes very near to a predication of purpose behind and in charge of

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 7, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Hodder and Stoughton, 1903.

all vital evolution. But my book, I willingly grant, was not quite good enough. It sometimes confused hypothesis with fact, although it recognized this as a chief danger in some nobler enthusiasts; and it was inaccurate in certain details. So in spite of highly encouraging reviews, it was not a best-seller. The smaller book of lectures, nevertheless, rapidly ran into a second edition, winning much approbation from the religious press. But, since I was not a recognized biologist, it was ignored by scientific critics.

## CHAPTER II

### MANY PATIENTS AND A FEW

I AM doubtful how far the experiences of a young specialist fighting for a critical profession's recognition are worth recording. Yet the fact that my deprivation of one common essential fortified my competency will intrigue others similarly embarrassed. The Celt delights in contest for mere fighting's sake; and there soon came to me a lively consolation, similarly racial, that, namely, of transmuting an enemy into a kindly, if carping friend.

Patients came quickly, almost overwhelmingly. In two years the little house I had dared take in Queen Anne Street, though my previous year's fees would barely cover even its taxes, proved impossibly small. I had furnished it bit by bit as guineas came to hand. The dining-room, where patients waited, was finely proportioned, Adams-decorated, and the drawing-rooms were charming; but my consulting-room, when the professional requirements, rapidly and ceaselessly increasing, were installed, had barely space for a sofa. From the first, and throughout my thirty-five years of practice, my aim had been to conceal all suggestions of alarm; though nowadays, from the moment patients enter the consulting-room, they must—to give them confidence, I presume—be assailed by countless objects of mystery and fear: tactics more pronounced in American specialists' "offices" than in our own.

So I secured a large house in Harley Street, and soon had to build a second consulting-room, in which a doctor bringing perhaps an urgent case unexpectedly, could be seen without delay. Such arrangements were possible only with the help of a tactful butler. One in particular is worth grateful mention, so helpful was he when headaches or fatigue made it only just not impossible to do my work.

Now a man of some property, he is still as faithful a friend as he was a devoted servant. He came to me without references; for his former employer threatening him with his hunting-crop, the man, in absolute justice, responded with a poker, and unmasked a bully. Of his subsequent destitution, my butler told me nothing at the time. But his character was writ upon his countenance—one of humour, resource and loyalty; and when later, it happened that the colonel, his former master, consulted me as a patient, I knew he could have been no hero to me, had it been my lot to serve him as valet, rather than specialist.

Yet I had to suffer from other servants: one of whom, if only as a contrast, had a story I will tell later.

From the first the theatrical and musical professions came gushing to me in hope that I would help them murder their voices with impunity. It was not then usual to ask fees of these charming people, seeing that their presence in one's waiting-room is the best possible advertisement—one too, that could not infringe the Medical Council's etiquette. Some, however, notably Sir Henry Irving, Sir John Hare, Sir Charles Wyndham, would insist upon paying their way. Others often made me handsome presents of silver and so forth, not to omit stalls and boxes at the theatre whenever I wanted them—which was not often.

Here I recall two absurd incidents, though they concerned chiefly my search for health.

To a certain titled actor, under some obligation to me, I once quoted for his benefit the saying that "the best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse." Repudiating its worth as far as himself was involved, it led to his giving me a cob of his own, which, he said, fancied it was created solely to eat its head off; though he was too fond of the creature to sell it. He vowed, with a secret chuckle, I presume, that he should never ride it again, unless to quit the stage for good. Somehow, he forgot to warn me that the really handsome animal suffered from an incurable malady,

*laminitis*, which made it unsafe to ride! I accepted the gift, but protestingly only as a loan. On my second introduction of her to the Row, she let me down. There was nothing for it, said the Vet., but to destroy her; and my patient raised no objection, seeing that she could be of no further use to him even in the display of generosity.

But my second tale is unspoiled, prettier and quite consoling. Presently I found a nice little hack, who, with a canter every day before breakfast, set me up wonderfully and never let me down. But it proved impossible to give her enough work; and, being under fifteen hands, she was not suitable even for my wife's victoria. Her enterprises with area-railings, perambulators and quite harmless old ladies, punished me even more than it pleased her, and, as she had neither blemish nor vice, I sold her to a friend in the country. But then the mare developed a splint, which the Vet., in spite of conventional firings and rest, failed to cure. She also was named for destruction. Naturally I offered to relieve my friend of her, but first begged him to let me try and cure her myself. In three months she was perfectly sound, and worked for him safely and smartly for another five or six years. But now comes the point. My friend's coachman had a child suffering from adenoids; I offered to operate. On his master's assuring the man of my great experience, he exclaimed: "That's quite all right, Sir. That there Dr. *MacDonald*, *in my opinion*, is the cleverest doctor in all London: just look at that mare!"

Of other recreation I had little beyond the routine of attending and giving the dinner-parties then considered obligatory; or of helping at my wife's musical "At Homes"—more penance than pleasure to a deaf host. Now and again we got peeps into the real fashionable society: of one such, I wrote thus to my mother:

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET, W.,

"1st July, 1894.

" . . . We were at an 'at home' at the Duchess of Sutherland's on Thursday. I suppose it was as fine a social gathering as the world can show. Stafford House<sup>†</sup> is really a palace in its magnificent proportions. I don't know which I enjoyed most—the beauty of the Duchess, the blaze of the diamonds, or the ineffable consolation of breathing the same vitiated atmosphere as royalty, with duchesses, their husbands and diamonds, all certainly of the first water, and perhaps quite as necessary bulwarks to the aristocracy as the glorious flunkeys. For it is these who fill our middle-class bosoms with righteous awe: not envy. O no! God forbid! Nevertheless and seriously, both Host and Hostess of the party were, as they always are, quite simple in their manners—indeed tactfully sweet to guests unused to hob-nobbing with angels' naked shoulders who wave nose-tickling, gem-spangled aigrettes and Parisian scents along the golden streets of Paradise, and wonder how the devil it was St. Peter let *you* in! But seriously, both Duke and Duchess are uncommonly kind to me. He wants me to visit them at Dunrobin. But I am utterly unfitted for that sort of thing. Even if I weren't deaf, guns and rabbits and trout don't interest me as much as slums and adenoids. I've got the Duke to be President of the Throat Hospital; so, with the Archbishop as Patron, surely there can't be much wrong with us professionally or morally, can there? . . .

"I am feeling very happy just now because I have saved yet another child from the diphtheria fiend, who couldn't possibly have recovered without this new *antitoxin* remedy. It was a hopeless case, and the improvement began a very few hours after injecting the stuff. Yet I had to put a tube into the windpipe to begin with, so that the little darling might live long enough for the champion St. Antitoxin to get to work before she was strangled. . . ."

The misery of deafness in society may sometimes be outwitted by deliberately claiming the lead in table-conversation, even at the grave risk of being a bore. So, though I was not only deaf, but more keenly enthusiastic perhaps than "good form" easily forgives, I put up with myself

<sup>†</sup> Now *The London Museum*.

by punishing friends. Yet all really good talkers are good listeners; and this I most certainly could not be. Nevertheless, my intimates have always been lenient towards my belated comments, my missings of critical points and so forth. And now at last, in the peace of old age and a constant *awareness* of some near revelations, I am content to be silent on matters that gain nothing from controversy.

But I imagine, being generally in both camps, I was quick to detect the true and false in argument. Even in ordinary talk it seemed to me that the one key to every question always lay shining on the ground; and even if at the foot of a shifting rainbow, it was for every man's having. The content of my father's little tale, *The Golden Key*, simple and profound, had early made indelible impress upon me.

But to return to reminiscences. Deprived of all outdoor sport, I found that the simplest change of work may give rest from the worst anxieties, and that nothing is so recreative to the brain-worker as a handicraft, especially if, as should always be the case, it involves some degree of art. Thus my carpenter's bench or my lathe would happily banish for the time all thought of patients. Very curiously, while the hands were busy, flashes of happy understanding, and even a clear way to express them, would come sailing from out the horizon, sometimes in very clear definition. Many philosophers and teachers have been craftsmen—Jesus, St. Paul, Boehme, Bunyan. So it is conceivable that, while hands are at work, their mental coincidents may be busily brooding over plastic abstractions in an even third-rate dreamer's mind. Indeed I think the subjective necessity of some sort of handicraft, even in old age, as a mental buttress, is very real. And now, to-day, when saw and plane are too heavy for me, I find much happiness in the setting of rough gems in gold or silver.

Yet perhaps I had no very definite gift in artistry; and consequently my work was for many years more concerned than I like to admit with earning and laying-by guineas.

Although my specialty never commanded the huge fees assigned—and justly, I think—to the operations of great surgeons, it seemed right to conform with what was customary. So I claimed fairly high operation-fees, lest, if I lowered them, it might be inferred that I was not in the first rank. In justification of being what to some patients might seem extortionate, it was always possible, in spite of a *fixed maximum*, to make things easy for the less prosperous—a system that holds very generally in the profession.

While I admit that we specialists often made money too easily,<sup>1</sup> in the desire for success, I was not ethically much at fault. My old sense of inferiority had for the most part disappeared in the happiness of authority conceded: I could even be unpleasantly autocratic at times, if I found a patient hesitating over my advice. Conan Doyle amusingly claimed that it was essential to any doctor's success that he should never let patients think he needed them. Indeed, sometimes an open reminder that my advice was not influenced by commercialism, seemed to be necessary. The following letter to my mother illustrates the point; though, in explanation, I must add that my appointment-book was nearly always filled for two or three weeks in advance.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"October 1898.

" . . . I had a fine set-to this morning—a battle-royal in which your meek but brave little boy gave an army-lady one straight between the eyes and brought her to abject submission. I had got badly behindhand with my appointments; so that when this

<sup>1</sup> The system customary in the United States has advantages. There it is usual, I understand, to exact a fee calculated as 10 per cent. of the patient's income, and whatever the operation. If the population consists mainly of millionaires, this is well enough, no doubt. But here, where increasing taxation promises to abolish before long all income permanently, the system would not satisfy the Inland Revenue.



General Sir ——'s better half, the mother of eight, whose husband, I thought, must be happier at his Club than at home, found her turn had come, she was in a pretty bad temper. Being aggressively evangelical as well as typical of what I call the army-lady, she had to be rude, in spite of my apologies and explanations. She even said that 'the person's time (whom I had seen before her) to judge from her appearance could not be of much importance!' Then 'did I think I was the only specialist in London?' She was now seated in my examination-chair; but instead of taking my place opposite her as I should usually have done, I went to my desk and wrote down the names and addresses of three other specialists. Then I said, 'Lady ——, you are quite wrong. The lady who came in before you was a poor school-mistress, and her time was of far more importance to her than yours to you, with your brougham at hand. Here are the names and addresses of three specialists whom you may trust altogether, and I will gladly give anyone you may prefer all particulars of your case.' For a minute or two she said nothing, but, always sallow, turned white with anger—as if stunned by my insolence. Then, without a smile, she said, 'Perhaps I was wrong. I beg your pardon!' You see she was really a good woman, and, but for her social disadvantages, might have been a pleasant one. Then we got on happily, and of course I was extra kind. You know what a mighty admiration I always have for any woman with a big family, rich or poor. Perhaps, belovedest of them all, that's why I do wish I could do more for you . . ."

That patient became an ardent believer in me, and brought one after another of her family and friends as patients. Confidence is often built upon foundations that look surprisingly foolish; yet I may have some gift for valuation. Thanks also to inherited instincts, I nearly always managed children so as to banish their fears: and a very large proportion of my patients were children. Mothers often told me they saw at once I had children of my own: yet I had none. Unless in such ways as even the unimaginatively literal would endorse as obligatory, I never deceived any one—least of all a child. I remember especially one little girl of seven, on whose throat I was to do a small operation, and for an exceptional reason, without an anaesthetic.

She came weeping into my consulting-room, and could not be persuaded to open her mouth.

"The kind doctor won't hurt you, darling," said her mother, "if only you'll be a good child."

Whereat the little thing looked up at me with big wet eyes in anxious enquiry.

"O," I said, "if you ask me, I'm afraid Mother doesn't quite know. I *shall* have to hurt you—but not a bit more than a brave girl will bear splendidly."

Instantly her whimpering ceased, she opened her mouth to its widest, and let me give her the quick sharp pain. She did not even sob in self-pity, as she gargled away till the bleeding ceased. Like many others, I feel sure that if children had no lies told them, they would never learn how easy and safe lies become. This little one could not believe her mother's kind falsehood and so lost all courage; yet one word of obvious truth awakened confidence, fortitude and obedience.

It is strange how well I managed children, considering that I seldom heard anything they said to me! Yet I would hold delightful conversations with them as I sat on or beside their beds. Often, after an operation, I would succeed better than nurse or mother in coaxing the first attempt at swallowing food—an attempt generally followed by a rapid devouring of every spoonful. Still believing in the miracle of make-believe, I would concoct little wonder-stories, weaving into them my patient's doll, discovering perhaps that it was really a winged fairy or herself a princess in disguise. Then I would pick up the doll as if it wanted to tell me some secret, but one for my ears only. My replies would be audible of course, so that the child would listen with wondering eyes to a one-sided conversation all about the doll's adventures in some dream its owner must have forgotten. Simple conjuring—and conjuring is but fairy-handicraft—gave infinite pleasure, Teddy Bear in particular evincing a liveliness in leaping or hiding never before

suspected. But always I was keen upon making the children believe in things lovelier and truer than are told of in school-books—things best made plain by romancing. So that with these patients at least, my deafness mattered little. I have a strong suspicion that words are but minor ingredients in conversation between those who love one another; that telepathy is the handmaid of sympathy, making magic words that need no grammar to spoil them. Perhaps this is the secret of lower animals' indubitable conversing with their own kind. After all, it is not the evidence of things known, but rather an instinct concerning things unknown, that lets us feel how much children belong to some Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Paul must have meant something like this when he wrote to the Corinthians—"He that prophesyeth [prophecy being only fairy-tale to the devotee of fact] speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort." Yet later he adds: "But prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

So strong was my feeling that the child's imagination must have free play, that, a few years later, I tried my own hand at writing tales for children. They did me no good professionally, and, I trust, their readers no harm.

## CHAPTER III

### A FISH OUT OF WATER

CONSISTENTLY with the instinct to struggle out of the twilight in which we subconsciously loaf, I would in my younger days protest, whenever opportunity arose, against all the forbiddings, kind or unkind, time-honoured or new-fangled, that beset a man's elemental rights. For the elements, earth, sun, fire and water are not only his means of life, but the opportunities for exercise of his finer if immature inheritances. It would seem to me that all idea of a divinity shaping our evolutionary ends was endangered by standardized education which, advanced or elementary, tended to weaken any subconscious awareness of an all-dominant spiritual consanguinity in life. It was largely this standardization, so I opined, that made us mistake scientific knowledge for revelation, academic technique for art, ethics for religion; or, once more in brief word, the multiplication table for Truth. Loyola, who did as much as John Knox for education, claimed that only the most learned should be trusted to teach children, always hungry to be *led forth* into richer pastures; for with both of them the only object was to save the little ones from an almost certain and predestined damnation. To-day, perhaps because teachers have no confidence in this juvenile hunger or in their ability to satisfy it, curriculums have to be standardized. The intellectual world, not very different from the commercial, is dependent upon accurate *book-keeping*; and its amazing prosperity makes us look upon increase of knowledge as bankers do upon wealth: possessions being the object of progress, even though it be conceded that money and learning alike endanger spiritual riches. Hopeless of the educated world's sympathy, I would presume that the

unlearned were looking for readjustments, and sought friendships among them.

At first I was greatly drawn to the Tolstoyans; who, whether anarchical or doctrinaire, relegated money, learning and mediocre respectability to their right places—the Petticoat Lanes of things done with.

But the Salvation Army, to some of whom I was professionally useful, made stronger appeal: seeing that they sought more definitely to rekindle the Light that lighteth every man, content with leaving to Caesar the things that were his.

My endeavours in these two directions, though I only failed, are worth recording: a fish out of water may well be amusing in antics less ridiculous than they seem. It was my sympathy with General Booth that led me into the absurd experiment over a butler already hinted at:

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET, W.,  
“November, 1899.

“. . . The latest important event in the medical world is that I have got a new butler! He is quite admirable. Though a scamp and a schoolmaster, he is, by divine intervention, a Salvationist. I suppose everything unconventional has its comical side, and to-day I had a dose of it. I had gone to the front-door with the Duke, while Farmer, this butler, was opening the carriage door; and I caught sight of a gold piece slipped into the man's hand. Whereupon Farmer magniloquently exclaimed, ‘Thank you, Sir, and God bless you, Sir!!’ I think His Grace must have laughed as much at being addressed ‘Sir’ as at a butler invoking the divine blessing upon him.

“But here is Farmer's story. He had gone to the bad, abandoned wife and children, and was picked up dead-drunk on the Embankment by a Salvation Officer, who took him to Burn Street Refuge. In a day or two they persuaded the patched-up wreck to attend one of their Holiness Services. He came weeping to the penitential form, a genuine convert. Thanks to their wonderful organization, though the man had quite forgotten

where he had left his family, they found them in Aldershot, brought them to London, took two rooms for them and gave him back to his rejoicing wife and four children. They then set his still trembling hands to address envelopes—all he was yet fit for. I had at the time a patient, an S.A. Major. He told me about the case and persuaded me to give Farmer some work. Phoebe was only too glad; and we soon found that there was really nothing the man could not adapt himself to, so clever was he. . . . No one would dream he was not born and bred to his duties, and an old dress suit of mine fits him perfectly. I am always behindhand with my appointments, you know; and he manages the restless or irritable patients capitally. So far, I have not heard of his trying to save their souls. He plays the organ well. His wife, who though in education his inferior, is charming. But I don't feel quite sure of the poor fellow—he is too perfect!! . . .”<sup>1</sup>

This case led to investigating the Army's work, although it was little I could do for them. I asked my patient, the Major, whether a few simple lectures with coloured lantern-slides might not possibly suggest something of the Light, however clouded, that must be in all of us. Though very doubtful, he agreed to let me try. My first experience is worth recording.

I was to speak at the Army's dormitory in the Burn Street Refuge. There were, I think, some two hundred beds—as clean as was possible considering their use by an ever-changing crowd of wastrels. My talk and lantern were to be incidental in the post-prandial service before the men settled down for the night. I tried to show them how each one of the microscopic people of sponge-colonies instinctively does its own work—and not for itself, but its neigh-

<sup>1</sup> Six months later the Salvation Army officer advised me that the man would be safer in the country. I sent him as under-gardener at the house I had built for my mother in Haslemere; but although he actively joined the little group of Salvationists there, he soon got into disgrace and I had to dismiss him. Soon after that, he tried, through the telegraph, to personify an intimate friend of mine and get money; but my secretary was suspicious, took a hansom to the Post Office where Farmer was waiting for a reply, and just missed getting him arrested. Later the poor rascal won a long term of imprisonment, and the Army lost touch with him.

bours' good. I had been for some years collecting, thanks to Huxley's initiative, beautiful sponges of every kind; and I had them photographed for the lantern slides,<sup>1</sup> many being conjecturally coloured. With such pictures on the screen, I told these unlovely men something of the sponge-people's beauty. Of course, I avoided all "preaching," which had, I suspected, less to do with the Army's conversions than the loving, always smiling kindness along with the hot sweet tea, huge slabs of bread and butter and the refuge from the streets.

Every time I met these outcasts I was struck by a fact never to be erased from my memory. Though now and again, in street or slum, I had seen isolated specimens who repelled me by their hideous and morally ugly countenances, here in this dormitory such monstrosities were gathered together in hundreds, with here and there some individual who, though now utterly degraded, had obviously once been a gentleman. Yet now it was my task to interest outcasts for whom life had no interest. Hitherto I had never addressed any lay audience without at least the fullest notes, although professional lectures were necessarily *extempore*. Things I *believed* rather than *knew* could not, I imagined, be entrusted to spontaneity; yet now I knew that, to reach these ignorant, poisoned minds, no manuscript or reading desk must stand between them and what I had brought for them. Nevertheless, so amazing an Apollyon is self-fear that I stood up in abject, yet hidden cowardice. Indeed, knowing this would be so, I would not bring even notes in my pocket. But the point is this, that, as I rose and for a few seconds speechlessly looked into the two hundred miserables close-packed around me, instantly the pathos of their degradation and our common manhood overwhelmed me: we were all brothers. I had the strangest feeling—as definite as if actual fact—of shackles slipping off me, from head down to heels. It was, doubtless, but an emotion; but it made me quite sure that Fear, the most devastating of all calamities, can always, by Love's

<sup>1</sup> I have given the collection to the Haslemere Museum.

miraculous intervention, be banished instantly. Thereafter I was quite happy in speaking *extempore*, even if not gifted. In debate I was inevitably nervous lest, because of my deafness I should go astray. But often it looked as if I had some faculty of "sensing" the trend of a discussion; and I would be told afterwards that no one would suspect I had not closely followed its points.

On this first attempt I held these wastrels listening intently for nearly an hour, and the Major assured me that never before had he known this sort of audience kept so "spellbound." Always would the officers have more or less trouble with these wave-tossed derelicts, unable to listen to anything for more than ten minutes; while often they had to turn some out by force.

After six of these lectures, I asked my friend if he thought they were of any use beyond keeping forlorn men quiet with the lovely pictures. Then I got a snub so funny and so decisive that I relinquished all such attempts with this sort of audience. He told me, but in entire kindness—as is the way with these Salvationists, all of whom have something of saintliness—that my addresses were "quite all right if one of us is at hand to tell them afterwards what you mean!" I had thought I was doing precisely this thing—showing them what love and service and beauty meant! But the officers believed that without references to liquor, blasphemy and hell-fire, my words lacked force and *holiness*. So I ceased to talk any more in that Burn Street Dormitory. As solatium I asked my friend, the late Lord Strathcona, to give them an organ; and he responded with his usual and large generosity. I can well believe the music was more successful in touching the poor sordid hearts with divine emotion, some sense of a loveliness behind all their passive misery.

Yet, in spite of being so indifferently qualified, I was often asked to speak, especially at ethical societies, but sometimes in places of worship, mostly nonconformist. Once, however, my friend, the Rev. Canon H. E. Nolloth, D.D., when vicar



of Beverley, asked me to preach in that most glorious of Gothic Minsters. Several times, also, I took the pulpit on Sunday mornings at King Edward's, Cambridge, where once Frederick Denison Maurice was incumbent. Later my brother-in-law, the Rev. Kingsbury Jameson, big-minded and ardent for reformation, held it for many years, making it a chief point to get notable laymen to preach for him. By curious anomaly, that church and its parish are under no episcopal jurisdiction. In the atmosphere of Cambridge I probably found it easier to make myself understood than in Yorkshire, where, I fear, I was disappointing; largely because my subject, being Forgiveness, could not, during the fearsome years of the Great War, be acceptable. If I exaggerated my abilities for such speaking, I had this excuse—that I entirely believed what my father had lived for. Yet often I had sorely to repent the miscalculation of my abilities. Blunders often disturb conscience more than sins, just as they worry a house-breaker when lagged. Sins may some day be forgiven, blunders remain irrevocable.

But I had some happier opportunities. Thus my speaking was keenly accepted at the Mansfield College Settlement in Canning Town, where for a few years I used regularly to gather big audiences; though a day's outing every summer in the garden of my house on Kingston Hill—whither in 1902 we went to live instead of Harley Street, which I then kept solely for professional uses—possibly did far more to cheer them. My wife made of this summer festivity a joy to many starvelings, both in expectancy and memory. My brothers, Ronald and Bernard, with other friends helped us much: as for instance in impromptu little plays, music and games, as well as in serving at the two big feeds we gave them on the lawn. At Toynbee Hall, on the other hand, I was not a success—chiefly, I think, because I did not handle the political agnostic with the tenderness due to him.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET, W.

[Undated].

“. . . The danger of this reverence accorded to intellect just now—in which Canon Barnett entirely agrees with me—is that it discredits those instinctive *feelings*, which, to me and you and Father, are more revealing than the words of all the wise men of Athens. Are not these seeds of wisdom sown in our hearts to be fed by the winds of God blowing where *He* listeth, perhaps even by the rains of our tears, not forced in intellectual hot-houses? Don't you love this saying of Ecclesiastes: 'He hath made everything beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their hearts—[not their intellects, Glory be!]*]*—so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end'? That is what I always want to maintain against the wiseheads of learning. . . . When I lectured at Toynbee Hall I had a splendid and most understanding audience; but I was turned down because, though my subject was 'The Philosophy of Faith,' I touched here and there upon religious questions! whereas it was intended that these lectures should be purely scientific or intellectual! . . ."

More amusing, if no more profitable, were my adventures in comradeship with the Tolstoyans, and my intimacy with Vladimir Tchertkoff, Tolstoy's greatest friend, with whom, it will be remembered, that mighty, unstable intransigent finally left his home to die.

Once an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard, Tchertkoff had been exiled for publishing a defence of that sect of Dukhobors which claimed to follow literally, in social and individual conduct, the Christian Beatitudes. Tchertkoff had to choose between Siberia for a number of years and permanent exile with confiscation of his estates. He preferred the latter. His mother, however, was wealthy and, though an "evangelical," was, I take it, the support of that delightfully absurd community of multifold dissentients, whether Siberian criminals, or English extremists, which her son established and autocratically controlled. I was happy in meeting this lady once when on a visit to London. She

seized the opportunity for imploring me to rescue her son from his free-thinking and the inevitable "wrath to come." I tried to show her that, so far from being an unbeliever, he was, in his own domain (known as Tuckton House, Christchurch, Hants), following Christ's teachings, even if he could not accept Church dogmas. And I think she was in a measure comforted.

Yet his religion was only ethical; and his numerous guests and dependants had to repudiate all the customs and conventions generally thought necessary to social happiness. Vegetarians and teetotallers they *must* be. All were equal, so long as they did not entertain theories that clashed with their host's. One could easily suspect that a complex for the knout's persuasiveness, even if submerged, might still lie in shallow waters. The only person unshackled by this non-conformity was Madame Tchertkoff. She had her boudoir, tastefully furnished, and a grand piano at which she would gloriously sing to me passionate Russian peasant-songs. She took her meals alone, and, her invalidism unquestioned, was allowed animal food. The rest of us, English guests or Siberian refugees, of whom there was a constant influx, fed in the kitchen. Each filled his own plate from a dish of beans or the huge bowl of vegetable soup which the cook constantly replenished from her stock-pot. The deal table was bare but clean. Yet the knives and forks needed no ill-bred inspection to discover blemishes not quite insignificant. Nor was it obligatory to use those substitutes for fingers: indeed, my host's son—a lad of sixteen, enthusiastic for Reform and the New Art—sucked his soup from the bowl with gibbous lips, and so audibly offensive was his eating that I saw the wisdom of an evolutionary improving upon Nature's providings.

At my first meal I was certainly out of my element. While Vladimir Tchertkoff was lavish of his transcendental philosophy, grandly and simply maintained, he failed to see that I, too conventional to reach across my fellow-guests and grab at the beans, got nothing to eat. Yet the cook, for-



VLADIMIR TCHERTKOFF AND TOLSTOY



tunately English, understood my difficulty and kept me supplied. Knowing I was to address a great meeting of Socialists in Bournemouth one or two hours later, she guessed I might be hungry.

At that meeting of advanced, self-sufficient thinkers I was still a fish out of water. My subject was "The Evolution of Religious Instincts." Tchertkoff was in the chair. One of the audience rose while I was still speaking, and asked, in a voice trembling with passion, how I dared tell rationalists like themselves things I knew to be false. But the chairman smoothed away all friction with his tactful eloquence, and led the audience into apparent agreement with what both he and I stood for. Later, my friend almost quarrelled with me, and his liking waned. For, in a subsequent talk, so strenuously did I uphold the need to man of a personal God—not merely the concept of God—if our religion was to help us through the anguish of a life for which He was responsible, that Tchertkoff's philosophic anger, like the working-man's at the lecture, was set blazing. Then I remembered what the knout had been to my friend's forefathers, and was glad not to be a Russian peasant. But all who really knew Tchertkoff admired and loved him so extraordinarily that few of his guests dared question his claims; and when he visited us in Harley Street, he was as charming in manner, as deferential in conversation, as he was perfectly tailored.

In this man, it seemed to me doctrinaire infallibility was quite as insane as punishment by lifelong torture in Siberia for repudiation of the State's unjust decrees. To-day Bolshevism is no nearer securing to man his rights—unless he has none—than was Czardom. Nevertheless Tchertkoff, during his exile, was scattering some limited sense of the Gospel all over Russia. For at Tuckton he had installed a printing-press; and the colony's chief business was the reissue of Tolstoy's works on thinnest Indian paper. With the Russian's marvellous instinct for circumventing the law, my

friend smuggled into his beloved land millions of these censored books, distributing them among the peasantry as free gifts. He even wanted to translate and similarly issue my own little book on *The Religious Instinct*, and he automatically bowdlerized it for copy. But after our quarrel the matter was dropped.

A little incident is worth noting here because it illustrates the absurdity of doctrinaire claims when nonconformity, *quá* dissent, is upheld as meritorious. With Tchertkoff all life was sacred: we had no more right to destroy even the humblest inhabitant than, say, the Czar had any right to compel his subjects to kill his enemies. The subject cropped up at breakfast after the first occasion when I addressed his followers. It had a peculiarly personal interest for me, because a lively fellow-creature, with convictions of its right to live upon others—hitherto Siberian convicts—had chosen to share my bed and deny me sleep. Without, of course, hinting at my discomfort, I asked my host if he would have any compunction in circumventing a flea's interference with a child's rest.

"Yes," he replied in measured emphasis, "and no! for we never kill even an insect. But in such a case, I certainly catch the innocent thing—and I have satisfied myself that a finger-and-thumb's grip doesn't damage or even hurt it."

"And then?" I asked.

"We keep a match-box, with a perch conveniently fixed, and carefully put the flea in it. In the morning we set it free in the garden."

"But it's *not* a vegetarian," I objected.

To which there was no response, unless this question sufficed:

"But have you seen my son's poultry yards?"

I was then conducted over the whole grounds; and the boy showed me with justifiable pride an enclosure in which hundreds of magnificent cocks were crowded, but no hens. They kept poultry for the sake of the eggs; but, as a certain number of cockerels were incontinently hatched out and must not be eaten, they were kept separate and in perpetual

conflict: this being sanctioned because not contrary to their nature. I extorted the equivocal fact that as soon as the cocks became too many they were sold; and, being exceptionally fine, thanks to careful cross-breeding, they were supposed to be ensured against roasting or boiling.

My last meeting with Tchertkoff was delightful, if astonishing. I was once again lecturing to his Brotherhood in Bournemouth, but as I had to leave early the next day preferred staying at an hotel. He was so far anxious to rectify our differences that, although he had absented himself from the meeting, he brought a Russian peasant to me in the early morning and allowed me to do a small operation on him. He then took breakfast with me, though the patient was sent home. Tchertkoff's clothing must have amazed the hotel guests. But that a certain grandeur of demeanour, in spite of shocking shoes, the repudiation of a shirt, the homespun, well-darned knockerbockers and a pullover for a jacket, proclaimed him the aristocrat, I think the manager might have protested. The morning being cold, he had added to his absurd raiment a red flannel chest-protector pinned *outside* his pullover! After doing full justice to the breakfast, he went with me to the station. But no sooner was I seated in the train than up comes my patient, the young Earl of Malmesbury who, accosting me, entered the same compartment and my guest resumed his denunciation of English villadom. When the train started, however, Lord Malmesbury, sportsmanlike and wide-minded, as I already knew from chats in my consulting-room, was amusedly curious about my friend. Though he had never seen Tchertkoff, he had been driven into correspondence with him on certain municipal shortcomings which the exile had hoped the Earl would use his influence to get rectified. Particularly was Tchertkoff annoyed at the rates being burdened with a town band, which it was impossible for himself to enjoy. But even a Russian may lack humour; and this true and great mind had a flair for wrangling polemics.



## CHAPTER IV

### CRANKS AND ANGELS

**A**LL things are interwoven. Friendships, chosen or chance, weave themselves inextricably into an enduring fabric that, strengthened with sympathies and sorrows, adorned maybe with touches of imaginative colour and humour, is folded up in some cabinet of memory, awaiting only the turn of a key to reveal its worth. My mother in her carefulness against moth and rust kept the key so safely that the fabric seems to argue for memory's indestructibility. If my metaphors are somewhat kaleidoscopic, they match well all the cherishings of that wonderful woman. Certainly these letters, in spite of their fading ink, remind me of many a priceless friendship which, through them, I now find I had never forgotten;

“But like the summer birds fled o'er some sea,  
The days of old come back to me”

so vividly that I must here reproduce more of them, adding here and there a touch of truthful colour sanctioned by unaided memory.

But the letters, noteworthy simply as they stand, suggest, nevertheless, that their reminiscences require some portraiture of their writers' friendships.

In 1895 I was beginning to feel the stress of work almost too great without frequent refreshment from sea-air and sun. So I built a country cottage on the Norfolk coast, a few miles from North Walsham, my architect brother designing it. Almost on the seashore, constantly gnawed at by waves whipped into hunger by winds straight from the North Pole, we could bathe in open privacy or bask in the sun: and the invigoration was wonderful. Even my hearing would be better for it, and I used to think, when U.V. rays were

already recognized as "actinic," and vitamins were unknown, that if I could but get a few months of such treatment my deafness might be arrested. Indeed, I was constantly advising parents that their children should run about nude in the sunlight. In that ancillary home we fortified some friendships that, begun in the turmoil of competitive life, could never otherwise have "stretched forth the curtains of their habitation." We spent some summer vacations there; but even in December that storm-swept, featureless coast would tempt us to brave its severity.

*To my Father*

"BACTON,

"Dec. 7th, 1895.

". . . We came down on the 4th to give our rheumatism a whip up. This time your 'North Wind' has been blowing a hurricane. Two nights ago a three-masted Norwegian schooner, 400-ton, went to pieces almost opposite us, the shore being piled with wreckage. All hands were drowned—save one, lashed to a spar, who recovered consciousness just to let him smile his gratitude, and then die. They sent a rocket over the tormented ship; but all it did was to let us see the ship split in two and understand the tragical cries of the men. The cargo was ice for the fish-curing at Yarmouth; and the huge blocks hurled about by the waves must have killed some. . . . Now they are laying out in the field next our paddock masts and spars and all sorts of wreckage, in lots to be sold by auction. . . . But the sea still roars on, as if furious to get back the plaything it destroyed. Yet on the other side of the road a plough goes peacefully throwing up its little waves of kind earth, followed by crowds of sea-gulls settling now and again on these earth-waves to pick up the worms. . . .

"The night before the wreck as we drove from North Walsham—a coal-black night in spite of a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -moon being already above the horizon—we were not more than two or three hundred yards out of the town when we stopped and the coachman came to the window, saying it was so pitch-dark he could go no further. . . . And then, two minutes later, everything was suddenly as light as day. The dense clouds which had completely swallowed up

the moon, had in those two black minutes wrapped the earth in a pall of snow, on which the moon now shone radiantly. The transformation was extraordinary and could only happen in this or some other Fairyland of North Wind. . . .

"I have bought in North Walsham a pair of horses, greys, fine upstanding creatures, 16.3, with some blood and plenty of courage. The dealer vows they are young lions. I have not driven them yet in town, and I don't know if they will like the traffic. But one is good to ride and a fine jumper, so she ought to surmount all difficulties there! . . .

"Here is a nice story for you, though I'm not sure it is quite proper for Mother. A young, unmarried clergyman had recently been given a living by a well-known duke, but he was not well-informed as to usages in good society. So, when he was invited to visit his Grace for a few days, he found himself in an astonished state of nerves. He asked a more experienced friend than himself for a few tips; for instance, as to what clothes he should take. The advice was minutely detailed: 'Of course you take your swallow-tail; and then, if you were a real toff, you'd take your servant with you!' The young clergyman was careful upon every point, took his dress-clothes . . . *and his parlour-maid!* . . ."

My father's reply, concise as all his letters were, was yet characteristic:

"Dec. 11, 1895.

". . . Best thanks for your nice long letter and funny story. Do you know, if I believed it, I could be sorrier for that clergyman than for all the crews of the wrecks you report . . . at least those who went away in the storm. . . . I am writing as usual in a hurry, for which I have no good excuse such as yours. I wonder indeed that you can write at all—not to say such nice long letters. . . . What a story that was about the tetanus patient! . . ."

The reference to the "tetanus patient" is worth explaining, as I had it from its direct source. The story, for its scientific importance, was subsequently printed, minus the human interest, in the medical journals.

*To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET, W.,

"9th Nov., 1895.

". . . Here is an absolutely true tale, though I cannot recount it in the charming manner of Helen Tirard.<sup>1</sup> . . . She, her husband and family were in Arran for their summer holiday. On one occasion only did they go to church. After a wearisome prayer of an hour the minister concluded by praying for a little boy then dying of tetanus (lock-jaw). So when service was over, Tirard, thinking that medical science in that land might not be quite modern, went into the vestry and ascertained who the child was. He started off with his wife immediately, and found the cottage two miles away surrounded by women, who told him it was of no use as the child was dead. With some difficulty he persuaded the mother to let him see the patient, whom at first sight he also thought to be dead; but by the use of hot baths, etc., the child was brought to some life again. The case was a true one of tetanus, from which, as you know, hardly anyone ever recovers. But Tirard meant to try. This last summer it had been shown that, by the use of a certain animal substance, in its nature like the diphtheria antitoxin, animals with tetanus may recover; but it had never been used on a human patient in England. The rest of the story was most graphically told; how the telegraph people in Glasgow were persistently worried—one office after another all being in piety closed, as it was the Sabbath; how at last someone was persuaded to send a message to London; and lastly how the telegram just caught the only man in London who had any supply of the remedy. Then, because there was no boat, it could not arrive by post until Wednesday morning. But Mrs. Tirard tackled a Mr. Coats who had a steam yacht and made him get up steam and cross with her husband in a fearful storm to Ardrossan. The child was, one way and another, kept hanging between life and death, until the remedy arrived; the whole island in intensest excitement. But at last the tiny, precious bottle arrived. For another day and night they waited in dread suspense, fearing that he could not live long enough for the antidote

<sup>1</sup> The wife of my most intimate colleague at King's, Sir Nestor Tirard, M.D., previously mentioned, Physician to our Hospital and the Evelina Hospital for Children; he was knighted for his research work in Therapeutics and his wide scholarship. His gifts in water-colour sketching were almost as notable as his professional distinction. He died in 1929.

to take effect; yet by Wednesday evening he began to mend, and is now alive and in perfect health. Don't you think it a very dramatic story? . . ."

But to return to the horses. The mare developed a splint, went lame and had to be changed for a roan gelding who, except in colour, matched the other better. I named them after the pair in my father's story *At the Back of the North Wind*.

### *To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET.

". . . As the new one is a roan, the two will be Diamond and Ruby. I have been driving them this afternoon and am charmed with Ruby. He is only five years old, and strange to London; so, being full of spirit, and a little stupid, he is not altogether easy. However, he has not Diamond's charming way of jibbing at every coster's cart that crosses his path. . . . The grey will remain my favourite, I feel sure; and his immediately discovered affection for me will perhaps, in spite of his playful antipathy to costers, be counted to him for righteousness. . . ."

Diamond worked hard for us and died at a good old age, though up to the last he was "gay-hearted like a young lion."

While writing of our place in Norfolk, I must put in a word about another friend, a fox-terrier, with whom I may some day talk over old times. His highly developed telepathic consciousness made him singularly aware of what was afoot in his master's brain. We always conversed easily, though doubtless I often seemed to him very stupid.

Jack was as fine a sportsman as "e'er my conversation coped withal." He was a bold swimmer provided the water was not salt. I never knew another dog take a swim for his own refreshment, as he often would do in Regent's Park and without the inducement of retrieving a stick or a vanishing stone. But he was afraid of the sea. Nothing would induce him to face it, even when a stick was thrown for him into dead-calm water. Nor would he accompany me when I went swimming—the only sport in which I was quite an

expert. One day, however, after a very rough storm, when, with an ebbing tide, the waves flopped over the wide sands, and ceased to be formidable, I went to bathe. The ladies, among them my wife, vowed it was too rough, and contented themselves in watching me as I waded out perhaps twenty or more yards before I found water deep enough for swimming. Jack watched my occasional disappearance beneath the breakers with much anxiety as he ran to and fro, yelping and whining. The onlookers said he stood up on his hind tiptoes in wet sand, aghast whenever he lost sight of me. But as soon as I reached deep water and took a header into a wave anticipating its fall, Jack's fear for his master overruled all fear for himself: he bounded after me into the thick of the breakers. Yet, realizing when he reached me that his master could take good care of himself, he at once made for the shore. But never again was he afraid of salt water, and often would rush into breakers too heavy for me, and only perhaps to rescue a bunch of seaweed! Surely no man—no, nor woman either—could more signally prove love's dominance over all the precepts of wisdom. Jack, old boy! when we meet again, it may be in the invisible Styx, and you, the stronger swimmer, will save your old-time master.

As for the little rest-house by the sea, its distance from London proved prohibitive and I sold it, even though still convinced that sun-baking on its sands in the invigorating wind always for a short time improved my hearing.<sup>1</sup>

But now there crowd into memory other friends than four-footed, yet no less true. I should mention one or two if only for their rare gifts; but, because they are largely responsible for these reminiscences, I cannot put them on one side.

William Nicholl was a Professor of Singing at the Royal Academy of Music. A Scot by birth and education with, I

<sup>1</sup> Aural surgeons kindly note the above. I must add, in answer to their possible enquiry, that my deafness was labyrinthine.

think, no traceable Celtic strain, he was born into this three-dimensioned world automatically provided not only with a profession—that of engineering—but also with an overruling passion for music. When so small that scaling the piano-stool was an adventure, he would, wholly untaught, play on the keys any new anthem he had heard at church, or a little later the more notable numbers in some oratorio. He was, however, sent to his father's engineering firm in Calcutta, where he was soon given a partnership. He married a Glasgow lady, who became the most lovable of all my wife's friends. They were blessed with a large family, all of whom have made their mark in the world. But before Nicholl was thirty, he knew he must abandon engineering for work he better understood. With his wife's encouragement, and retaining but a small pecuniary share in the business, he came home. Notwithstanding the most importunate tenor voice I had ever heard, for a few years he had a hard fight to live. Not only did his family multiply, but his and his wife's generosity was reckless. He could never keep money in his pocket if anyone else wanted it; and most of his friends did. When Sir Alexander Mackenzie, in 1888, was elected Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, in succession to George Macfarren, his first task was to cleanse the Augean Stables; and my friend became one of its professors of singing. I had already many vocalists among my patients, all reasonably apprehensive about their throats, seeing that their trainers were for the most part more interested in vocal gymnastics than true music.

Nicholl first came to me as a patient, though his vocal organs were as perfect as was in those days his untutored production.<sup>1</sup> Curiously plain in feature, all who had ears for music—as well as eyes for transfiguration—recognized

<sup>1</sup> Later he fell into the hands of a quack who promised to make an operatic singer of him, one result being the trainer's enrichment, the other, ineradicable harm to his pupil's voice. Probably no man can do more than he is gifted for, and only one here and there does as much.

the beauty that shone from his countenance whenever, playing always his own accompaniment, he demanded of his soul its expression in music, Scots or Irish, German or Italian. Once, when summoned to Buckingham Palace, he so captivated Queen Victoria that she demanded an encore of a song I particularly loved, *Lucia*—by Tosti, I think. As he resumed his place—for even there he accompanied himself—the Queen rose and stood beside him, the Court also rising, though he still sat at the piano. Such an anomaly, I was told, had never before been seen at Court. I do not doubt that the Queen herself was carried right out of her regally dimensioned world by the pure music, as well as by the light illuminating the singer's face. William Nicholl was among my few best-beloved friends; and that, not because of intellectual sympathy, but because his genius made me *believe* in it and in him, his music being often rare solace for the loss of my own violin. All I did for him was, now and again, to give professional advice seldom needed. Once or twice perhaps "to give the kiddies a spree" he would borrow a five-pound note, which, naturally and most happily to both of us, would be quickly forgotten.

Incidentally, let me insist upon the fact that this man's voice had never been *trained*. He would speak in bitter shame of the mischief often done to voices of natural beauty and strength, even by his own Academy. I used to see very frequently what I named "pedagogic laryngitis"—an affection insidiously creeping over the vocal organs, perhaps some miner's from Wales or Yorkshire, his training paid for by fellow-workmen. The only treatment for this dire malady was rest from all instruction, perhaps for many months. But such advice would be taken amiss by certain professors. One of these, after I had written very fully to him about his pupil, called upon me in a fury, impertinently exclaiming: "When you give rotten advice like that, you touch my pocket!"

One day William Nicholl came to me after a Board



Meeting at the Academy, at which the term-end adjudication of pupils' medals had been settled. He told me that after the winners had been finally selected he put this question to his colleagues: "Would Miss —, the girl who has won the gold medal of the third year, have won the silver medal of the second had she been competing for it? No! Or was So-and-So, who had been adjudicated the silver medal, good enough for the copper one (awarded at the end of the first year)? Positively again, No!" That such conclusions were justified, some readily agreed; but they all looked pretty savage, he said, when he then asked whether their methods might not be responsible for their pupils' deterioration in voice. A brave man that, even if his questions were tactless and useless. But to-day all the training is, I believe, wiser.

Here is a letter from William Nicholl which, explaining itself, is worth reading:

"CASA CORAGGIO,  
"BORDIGHERA,  
"16 April, 1898.

"MY DEAR GREVILLE,

" . . . Well, dear old friend, I am having a good old time of it, I can tell you. . . . I see a great deal of your good folks here. Indeed, they simply overpower me with kindness. Perhaps you've heard of the Theatricals last Monday and Tuesday. To see and hear your Mother and Mrs. Godwin on the stage was an experience I shall never forget. [My mother being then 76 and my aunt, Mrs. Godwin, 81!] I offered to engage both for a London Season and saw my way towards making a fortune, but alas! the sprightly young things did not jump at it. . . .

"Your dear father looks splendid so far as his face is concerned. . . . I think he likes having me here. I give him all my stale Savage Club jokes, and it does one good to hear him laugh. Then he enjoys my songs so much, and it's such a privilege to talk to him and hear his beautiful ideas of life and its responsibilities. . . . Of course I sang at the entertainments and all the girls (bless 'em) went down on their ickle marrow bones and worshipped this over-inflated tenor. . . . I hope my dear wife has been a good girl and not over-tired her strength. It's hard lines for her to have all the work and let me have all the pleasure;

but I guess the tables will be turned in the next world. She'll be a nice, well-dressed angel and I'll be hard at it stoking—if I'm not *stoked*.

“A rivederla, caro amico,  
 “Aye yours,  
 “WILL NICHOLL.”

This contemporary scrap of my mother's to me adds its touch of colour:

*From my Mother*

“BORDIGHERA.

“. . . We had a delightful party last night of Mothers'-meeting-sorts. Forty at least of our well-to-do friends came dressed as laundry women, flower girls—factory girls, blind beggars and tramps—gardeners and char-women. Aunt Charlotte [i.e. Mrs. Godwin] read Tennyson's *Cats*<sup>1</sup> to them and afterwards their conversation was just killing, all sympathetic with their types and knowing each of them intimately. . . .”

But to return to my friend; he was undoubtedly a successful teacher and had an enormous circle of pupils, though he was not widely known to the public. His voice was in fact not quite big enough, and when the quack foreigner succeeded in producing some increase of its volume, it lost the sweetness and pathos so signally his own. He died young, having been all his life one of those easy-bleeders, whose constitution seems unfitted for old age. His eldest daughter, Elsie, my dear friend always, then still in her teens, managed by her skilfulness in teaching, her tact and great charm of person, to carry on most of her father's work, and for some years was the chief support of the family, until they inherited a sufficient property. She died in 1929 of scarlet fever. She also was far more than a great singer. Her keen eye and sunny smile knew only loveliness, and her optimism did much, I cannot but think, in educating her pupils' voices. She could not let the one deep grief of her life master her;

<sup>1</sup> “The Spinster's Sweet-Arts.”

she had not married, though many a man must have loved her. Always mothering her brothers and their wives, with their troubles, children and joys, they knew more of her worth than do many when such angels knock at their doors. So she and her father, simple-hearted wanderers from the Kingdom, sought it again all unconsciously, doing more than anyone knew for their world's redemption. Friends such as these, their names now almost forgotten, helped with touches of pure joy to hearten one labourer overburdened and almost too weary. They were bright stars on a dark road, justifying the ineradicable beliefs in the fairyland of my childhood. Many of us adventure that road; yet in spite of seeing eyes, we all too willingly, indolently, submit to Authority, "beating with a staff the child that should have led him." Learning, success, political and theologic systems, or what not, blind us; yet such friends do light up for us this only road. For me, along with guides like Octavia Hill and Ruskin, Lister and my father—yes, even that tragic failure, Morell Mackenzie—they kept alight the fairy lamps of my childhood. But we seldom find niches for our saints till we have all but forgotten them. And there was another, chief of them all, of whom I must write at greater length, if I am to present the best of my Reminiscences.

But for the present, I must tell of another whom it was my privilege to know intimately, Dr. Helen Webb, who only in 1926 also passed into the fuller unknown. My friendship with her, first professional, then in a certain movement aiming at social reconstruction, gave me better opportunity for studying her character than some had who were more often in touch with her. Singularly unself-conscious herself, she realized to the full how important was the education of character in *leading the young out from their potential selves*. Her Quaker upbringing, although she was Irish, accounted for her words' choiceness and quiet, whether spoken or written. For always she revealed wisdom instant and sure, with an almost *ex cathedra* touch of finality: and

this notwithstanding a wit and tenderness, which her immediate subject might seem to forbid. The penetration of her eyes read everyone's soul: and I think her quick insight into character was due to her simplicity of heart no less than to her hatred of duplicity. Although she held in true valuation all that a physician should know of medicine and hygiene, as well as of psychology even in its fashionable and truculent claims, her intrepid spiritual faith would scan the universe without any fear. Little as she would have allowed it, she was as much a poet as a woman of science; and Beauty was infinitely real. Though its evasions and prostitutions at times might jeopardize a sane vision, it was revelation of the unpredicable to one whose word was precise as a text-book.

Helen Webb's sedate sweetness consorted well with a certain intellectual expectancy. It seemed to me she was always aware of the something still waiting to be learned from flower or child, untaught or undisciplined; for the larger any mind, the keener is its instinctive hunger. Indeed, generally speaking—and my opportunities were not few—I found women doctors readier than men to trust the specialist's wider experience; though it does not follow that women are in every way wiser. The average male practitioner would frequently dislike and distrust the specialist, even while seeking his help. But women, more plastic perhaps to suggestion, are, apart from medical science, more willing to be told what they do not know. Even if politically women are the more conservative, they are more generous in service, while perhaps more careful of money. Helen Webb certainly, because she loved accuracy and wisdom, was always ready to weigh and value anything she had not known.

The memory of our first meeting remains vividly with me. There was something unusual in the way she helped me over the operation we had in hand. Her quick understanding of where help was needed suggested a realization that the surgeon's ease counted for something in a patient's safety.

A deficiency perceived, aid was instantly forthcoming; and it was a recalcitrant tape in my linen overall that, claiming her attention, won my heart. But then, the saints be praised, she was Celtic!

Again, Helen Webb's intuitive vision—whether of the true in Art, or of character in infancy, or of any good there might be in political exuberance, or even militancy—made me regret that she wrote so little for her profession: the more so that this faculty of vision was dominated by her Quaker literalness—her *yea* and her *nay*—so that in her teaching, her words could not easily be forgotten. Her warnings, when writing of mental hygiene or meddlesome psychology, should be heard by every nurse and mother, too anxious about the temporal and environmental. Dr. Webb's instinct for what is true and beautiful was like the child's before his taste is vitiated by those golliwogs and other jazz-horrors whose malevolence could never last. This "perfect clear perception," her poetic insight, made her meticulously precise in estimating the worth of small unnoted facts. Her keen study of infant character revealed to her the little mind as a palimpsest sensitive from the very first to environmental gravings of unsuspected suggestion. Thus she puts it:

"That which anyone sees or does or hears, or in a way becomes aware of, makes at the time a real change in the very substance of that person's brain. Every time the same thing happens again that change in the brain becomes more marked and permanent. As the result of this, *the brain builds into itself all the influences which surround the child. . . .*"

A keen student of William Blake, she always, I suspect, had his aphorism in mind, "We become what we behold."

When this truth is generally realized legislators will look with horror upon the poison lurking in cinema shows—not so much its silly crimes, mock heroisms or sickly sentiments, as the impressions ineradically stamped, thanks to constant repetition and mental passivity, upon the young mind by inane pictures of luxury and false values. For in adolescence

the mind is more susceptible to hypnotism and suggestion than at any other period. The social world, however, is never more than a great nursery, with money-grubbers for its nurse-maids.

Much has been written for young people on the relation of sex to life. Some of it, in setting forth the wonders of generation as if life were mere mechanism, would be offensive, but for its absurdity and ignorance, yet made it necessary that Dr. Webb should tackle the subject, in answer to the child's quite normal curiousness. Too wise to begin with an impossible explaining of secrets which Dame Nature, whether in flower, beast or man, so reverently hides away, or reveals only in loveliness, she begins talking of the spring-time and how things awaken from their winter sleep in form and colour, the magic fruit even now at work in obedience to the untold Idea. She does it all with a wise and tender grace, so that it shall dawn upon the child that spring's ways are very like his own beginnings and rejoicings. Then she leads his questioning mind into the mysteries of fertilization and nativity, and so compels him to think for himself. "Wonder is the seed of knowledge," said Bacon, and Helen Webb knew better than to let any harsh instruction dim the child's far-searching eyes. His curiosity, she claims, must be respected and satisfied: but "great is the loss," she says, "to both mother and child if the subject is not personally discussed between them"; for, rightly handled, it strengthens all the love bonds. Her book on this subject<sup>1</sup> should be studied by every woman—every man, too—who realizes that in the home lies the secret of a nation's welfare and greatness. In her teaching of sex facts she enhances their sanctity and preserves the young mind in its wisely wondering, priceless modesty and in such way that, if he lose his way in noisome, mocking jungles, he need not be harmed.

All this suggests how Helen Webb's faith and teaching supported my own conviction that fairy tale safeguards a

<sup>1</sup> *Life and its Beginnings*, Cassell, 1913.

child against dangers lurking in text-books, whose discipline nevertheless is absolutely necessary for strengthening individual character.

It may seem inexpedient to set this dear and intimate friend alongside my "cranky angels." No one I have ever known has more certainly convinced me that law and freedom are mutually comprehending, self-implicating indeed; that both Swedenborg's and Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* hold truths at once so profound and simple that all the schoolmen should claim them as axiomatic.

Nevertheless if, while sure that she cultivated no paradoxical complex, I do place her with some of my lovable and cranky friends, I am also sure she will give me one of her rare, quite heavenly smiles, and bid me write of others she and I have known, whose eccentricity made them even less earth-bound: some so freakish that, if judged by necessary codes, they might look too shabbily anomalous for any apologetics. And yet I hardly dare give them other place than beside the angelic. With one of these eccentrics I became intimate professionally; and the other was one of my secretaries—a lovable fellow. Many an angel is laughable, some, thank God! almost naughty.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"Boxing Day  
[But undated].

". . . I think you would have been astonished at the absurd predicament I found myself in on Christmas morning. You might then have seen, between nine and ten o'clock a.m., a fashionable specialist wandering about the dirtiest streets of Gospel Oak, and evidently in some distress of mind because of a bulgy Gladstone bag he was carrying. Perhaps, dear Mother, if you had given him a second glance, you might have seen that your eldest son was still a big baby. For that bag was packed with nearly 50 dolls, of all sizes, exquisitely dressed, many with take-off frocks, etc. He was hoping that in that poor district

he might find a few disconsolate children without any Christmas joys. But alas! (or fortunately) although the streets were already teeming with children, they were all happy with plentiful dolls, horses, engines, you know the lot. So I couldn't find pluck to distribute my superfluous gifts. After about an hour's disappointment I was on the point of going home with my bag not once opened, when I caught sight of a Salvation Army sister. I went and told her I was in great trouble; and though it was not because of any definite conviction of sin, as she probably hoped (!) I thought she must be a messenger sent for my distress. The pretty, sweet creature looked astonished, almost a little frightened at my deplorable respectability. Then I told her I was a doctor; that a patient had made me a present of this bag of lovely dolls to give to poor children and that I had come there to find children in need of them. She took me to the S.A. barracks. There, like Christian safe at last from the Slough of Despond, I unloaded; and she told me what help the dolls would be to their Christmas Party of children that very evening.

"But more interesting than this funny episode is the patient who gave me the dolls. I don't think I ever told you about her. She is a little bit of a woman with a curiously large head, handsome in feature, but not looking very intelligent. She has the tiniest hands I ever saw on a woman, beautifully made too. Her husband, a solicitor, first brought her to me a few years ago—though she is now a widow. They had no children and he left all his property to her. He had been at pains to instruct her how money must be religiously reared! She has over £1,500 a year and her only trouble is a cousin of the dear departed who does all he can to persuade her to invest her money in some concern of his own. She thinks it is rotten, but hardly has the heart to refuse him. I think I have been able to fortify her a little against this artful dodger. She is entirely happy with two dogs and a parrot. The chow and the pug each has its separate weekly allowance in pocket money and a separate cash-box. This is all told me in absolute seriousness; for the little lady—quite uneducated, one would judge from her speech—has not a spark of humour in her. She has explained to Pug and Chow how they must take their share in the Mansion House Fund. The way they do this is by omitting to order, when she takes them round to the butcher's, their usual allowance of liver. . . . I must ask her if the parrot also has pocket money! I am sending her somewhere abroad for the winter. . . . Her devotion and goodness of



heart are not the less angelic that she is so absurdly like a Dickens character. . . .”

I should mention that the fifty dolls I had to distribute came at the last moment after a consignment from her of many more which she had already dressed for me to give to the Mansfield House Settlement in Canning Town. But, on her return in the spring, she came to me in angry annoyance: I had never told her that Mansfield House was “dissenting,” or she certainly would not then have dressed dolls “for those sort of children.” She assumed I had been at pains to hide from her the distressing secret. I did my best to make her understand; but my confession that the Salvation Army also had helped to make her charming charity bear good fruit did not relieve her conscience. Thereafter she dressed no more dolls for me. Yet she gave me her husband’s gold watch and chain, telling me I might sell them for what I could get and give the proceeds wherever I pleased. She was amazingly generous; and hardly any the less that her objection to Nonconformity was adamant.

During my thirty years of practice secretarial help became an absolute necessity. I resisted having a telephone in my house as long as possible, seeing that my deafness made it almost useless to me. But I had to submit, though a secretary then became necessary during my consultation hours. It was difficult to get the sort of help I needed until I found a man of singular abilities. Incidentally I wrote of him thus to a friend in New York who, while visiting us in London, had been much intrigued by the man’s personal shiftlessness and devotion to myself.

“. . . You will, I know, remember my secretary K— W—, if only because he helped me in one of our English difficulties: viz. in reciprocating your own lavish hospitality. This morning he did not turn up. Telegraphing to his diggings, I learned that he had dropped dead on getting out of bed—aneurism I presume. When he came to me first his reputation was, to say the least, very shady; yet I took him at once. A man’s face is

my best testimonial, and I saw at once he was one of those brilliant Irishmen who can do anything they like, if only they *do* like! . . . He had gone through the whole medical course in Dublin and passed all but his final, when, as ill luck would have it, his father died and he came into some £2,000 or £3,000. He told me it was not enough to invest and he meant for the first time in his life to have a good time; and a jolly *bad* time I imagine it was. Then he became destitute. After being an unqualified assistant to more than one doctor for two or three months at a time, he took to drink and sank down to being a billiard marker. You yourself discovered his unusual gifts and amazing memory . . . I told him once he was a pantechnicon of inaccurate information. But he had no ambition. He needed only to pass his final; and with my books at his disposal and plenty of spare time, he would have had no difficulty in passing. I offered to double his pay directly he was qualified; but 'he couldn't be bothered.' Later and quite casually I found he was a cousin of the Countess of —, a patient of mine. I even interrogated her as to whether this could be true and if his father had been an Admiral. She admitted both possibilities, though she assumed an air of not being in the least interested. . . . Don't you see the advantage of an aristocracy? They are relieved of so much personal inconvenience!

"K—— W—— was simply devoted to me; and my time is so cut up that it is difficult to find a secretary who will do all I want. He would stay the whole day, even till midnight if I wanted him—as you will remember; was always punctual and never the worse for drink. He was marvellously quick at his peculiar note-taking. I would say, for instance: 'O, tell the man not to be such a —— fool, and there's an end of it,' and lo! there at night lay meekly waiting my signature a beautiful letter innocent of all my naughty words! . . .

"But the most extraordinary thing happened this afternoon. Wanting to look up an old case, I went with my butler into W.'s office and proceeded to open one drawer after another of his desk—nine in all. *We found everyone of these drawers packed full—not of papers, but—you will never believe it!—cold buttered toast!!—*mostly mouldy. It is literal fact. The explanation is this: Every afternoon they sent him from the pantry a tray with a pot of tea and a plateful of hot buttered toast. Apparently he was never hungry then; but, being unwilling, like every Irishman, to hurt even the parlour-maid's feelings, rather than send down the

toast untasted, he packed it away in those receptacles for learned records! It is hardly credible, is it? But my butler knows it is true, as he had to clear up the mess! Poor fellow—perhaps the cold buttered toast will be counted to him for righteousness by St. Peter. He was a R. Catholic, of course, but an absolute agnostic—the two phases, I understand, not being incompatible in the green little island. . . .”

This secretary was a most true friend, though I doubt if he was any more interested in my cogitations than a child would be. The inquest proved my surmise of aneurism to be correct. He must have known of it, but had never told me; and possibly it made him indifferent about his prospects.

BOOK VI

MEMINERUNT OMNIA AMANTES

was ordered to retire to his quarters. The next morning  
I was ordered to march with the 10th Mass. to  
the camp at Fort Mifflin. The 10th Mass. was  
ordered to march to the camp at Fort Mifflin  
on the 21st of September. The 10th Mass. was  
ordered to march to the camp at Fort Mifflin  
on the 21st of September.

The next morning we were ordered to march  
to the camp at Fort Mifflin. The 10th Mass.  
was ordered to march to the camp at Fort Mifflin  
on the 21st of September. The 10th Mass. was  
ordered to march to the camp at Fort Mifflin  
on the 21st of September.

## CHAPTER I

### IMMORTAL MEMORY

HAVING now the final bundle of letters in hand, and glancing through them casually, they at once submit to the magic wand: they are transformed into hidie-holes of memory, in which one may find re-animated withered incident and circumstance, things one thought had at first appeared only for brief halts and then, away with them forever! Presently these hidie-holes which I am handling reveal a spiritual significance with assurance that nothing whatever is really lost. For not only has each its own key and door, but also, one finds, a bright window, through which, behold! the old garden once lovingly tended for its flowers and fruit. Indeed, it looks as if these might be still alive with ministration: and, oh yes! with taunting reproofs for many a neglected seedling. Then, as eyes get used to the quiet, strange light, I find other windows, some alluring, some forbidding; for clearly they opened out upon the future of this present day. At last I realize that memory holds a wider significance than has ever been given it. For, like the conscious Ego cherishing it, it can never be accounted for by a physical brain which, though an eternity of inheritance was indispensable for its elaboration, may perish in a moment of disaster. As I open the letters, passing from hidie-hole into store-room, from cellar into barn, thence into fields of untold possibilities, I see how the Ego must always have been going onwards, recovering what is lost as means for fuller giving, as solace for more enduring; even awakening to the old longings because of their urge to further adventuring. All unwittingly, I find that memory, though safeguarded and often neglected by the structured brain, which runs down like a clock after a few years of mechanic work, is still spiritual, miraculous. I can even

imagine that a new psychology will yet be devised, based upon a foundation of memory spiritually conceived and trusted. Fearless of precedent philosophy or theology, we might then speak of the *spiritual structure of life*, of an immortality that, independent of dimension or space, will never know disintegration. The notion of a One Causal Will thus will become inevitable; for, including human love and joy, grief and anger, it will inspire us more satisfyingly with spiritual desire—already accepted vaguely in some, passionately in others—to realize in that Causal Will our own consciousness.

But here personal narrative, with a touch of absurdity to accentuate it, may suggest this perpetuity of memory's chain, with its ever-multiplying links and hidie-holes, evanishing into an unpredicable future.

Somewhere in the first decade of this century, a patient came to me without appointment; and, as another had failed me, I was able to see him. Being a barrister, he was probably intellectual, yet his astonishment at my memory's retentiveness justifies my introducing the incident. As he had recently grown a beard, and it was twelve years since I first saw him—and then only once—I did not at once remember him.<sup>1</sup> His trouble being a difficulty in nose-breathing, I asked him, as my time was short, to let me, without first hunting up my notes of his case, look into his nostrils. After one second's inspection, I exclaimed: "Oh yes, of course! your father died of a mustard-leaf!" Then I summarized every point in his own case; who it was that sent him to me; why he could not take my advice; and even how his father, while recovering from an appendix-operation, had died of blood-poisoning through a nurse's careless use of a mustard-leaf. My patient declared that I had the most marvellous memory he had ever known; and, so entirely did its accuracy convince him of my integrity—just as an examiner presumes

<sup>1</sup> I do not of course give his name; but should he perchance read this, he would vouch for all the details.

a lad's ability solely by an unintellectual auxiliary, his mechanical memory—that, after hesitating for twelve years, he now let me do the small operation. And he soon regretted he had deferred it so long.

My point is this: that, though I could not at first believe I had ever before seen Mr. —, a peculiar irregularity in his nasal passages instantly proved to be a key that opened up door beyond door leading to facts that I only *seemed* to have forgotten; yet which were all scheduled indelibly upon my memory.

The incident set me thinking. I was quite certainly *not* gifted with an exceptional memory, my scholastic successes notwithstanding; yet it here flashed upon me that memory might be really limitless, though some find it easier, some harder, to get entrance to its pigeon-holes. I saw how it leads one back and ever back into all manner of communicating passages and cells, from any one of which might come tumbling to one's feet multitudinous *dossiers*, some of much consequence, some of none. More than this. Memory carries us back into store-rooms of inheritance. There we find ready filed all those *instincts* gathered through evolutionary guidance that are essential to the carrying on of life; so that we look upon such instincts rather as structural parts of ourselves, than as memories of personal experience.

Nevertheless, back and back, along ever-darkening passages run the clues to the assigned functions of even our microscopic organs. Thereby one little cell remembers its work as part of a muscle, or another as part of a nerve, even though the work done is providing for other cells' far distant needs—I have in mind especially the hormonal organs—in which itself is in no way intrigued. So unconscious are we of all this work, actually ordered and done by the regnant self, that we write and talk of life as mechanical. Yet each microscopic cell is indisputably a minutely-knowing and memorized part of the whole; so that when a man is said to die, all these his outlying structures and functions being



no longer under control, no longer needed, do follow the dying incarnate Ego.

In brief word, our instincts are only inherited memories of what was devised by infinitely far-away ancestors for personal and racial security. Among such unaware instincts we may, an' it please you, classify some that border upon the intellectual, and some even that are no more than alien opinions. Indeed, it is hard to draw any hard and fast lines between keenly aware memories, forgotten, ill-stored surmises and those instincts which, however inevitably accepted as part of our inheritance, we can never be conscious of. All of this involves more than mere Reminiscences would perhaps sanction. Yet as argument for memory's immortal beginnings, they seem to me to embrace the concept that such beginnings, arriving at their personal conscious equivalent, do contribute to, perhaps account for, our on-reaching hunger and thirst. As memory has so vast an importance in our species' creation or evolution, it may well claim a place in our vaguely visioned hopes as to what is in store for us. For myself, at least, there seems to be no difficulty in believing that memory—hopelessly confined perhaps, padlocks too rusty to work, keys lost—may no more pass into nothingness than our consciousness; nor that, as I have already argued, the fact of our subconscious life and mentality being allowed, there need be no obstacle to apprehending and trusting in a supra-consciousness, leading us forward to an ever more worthy on-going.

But, because these letters carry me back and ever backwards in among lost treasures, does it follow that they are worth anything to my friends? I confess that I cannot know. Many are so far good that, though they transcend the customs of biography, they would, I think, be approved were the book simply fiction. So I offer my selection along with a modicum of personal narrative to point their place in my story. My own letters will be largely anecdotal,

though I shall let them retain some untutored philosophizing quite pardonable in colloquial correspondence. But my mother's have an ingrain worth, with their chatty, intuitive portraiture, and a wisdom always more or less unconventional. Few that my father ever wrote reveal his literary power; so little spare time had he. I shall insert also some of other friends, because contributing to the general harmony.

In the year 1891, immediately after spending all my money on the adventure of moving into Harley Street, I was struck down for three months with blood-poisoning, contracted while operating on a dangerous case. Besides unmentionable sufferings I had two fears assailing me throughout, that of losing my embryo practice and of being crippled for life. My colleague and lifelong friend, Sir Nestor Tirard, declared that it was in scorn of all prognostics, yet more likely by the grace of God and the devoted nursing of my wife, that I recovered. Many years, however, must pass before I got quit of the demon bacilli; nor did I ever regain the increased loss of hearing. Yet I quickly picked up my practice, which resumed its rapid growth most astonishingly. Certain professional friends, incredulous that I could by any legitimate means entice all these patients, would accuse me of somehow humbugging them about my deafness. Yet it was far less disconcerting in the consulting-room than elsewhere. The fact that I could place my patient in the best *light* for easier *hearing* will be understood by all who are deaf, seeing that generally we are more or less helped, often unconsciously, by lip-reading.

But there were even simpler explanations of how little the deafness proved inimical to success, irksome though it certainly was to myself. Men—and women, too, “for by your smiling you seem to say so”—hold in their characters points that bear upon their maladies; and I suspect that some never disclose the important points unless surprised by apparently irrelevant questionings. Treasures, even if hidden away in some forgotten hidie-hole of the mind, may be

inadvertently lit upon, and then unaccountably secure that sympathy between doctor and patient which has so much to do with success in treatment. But, be this as it may, I hope the real clue to the happy cure of my patients lay in this, that I did good work, and devised original operations that are now quite common. Other specialists would occasionally send me cases of exceptional difficulty, though I cannot claim to have always succeeded where they had been baffled. In fact my flounderings as a "Fish out of Water" did me more harm professionally than deafness or ill-health.

In 1893 I was invited to create a Throat Department at my old hospital. Thereafter I had two to serve, with beds in the wards and out-patient clinics, besides lecturing and practical teaching at both schools. Very soon I had a larger practice by a long way than any other throat-specialist, and I was recognized as a first authority at such Societies as the Clinical and the Laryngological. This latter I practically founded, though my deafness precluded me from accepting official positions. Also I contributed freely to the medical journals at home and in America, as well as producing a text-book on nose-diseases, then entirely original, but now long obsolete.

These details are perhaps poor excuse for printing the letters, and even less for the anecdotal comments they invite me to offer. Moreover, some who still remember my parents with deepest affection may think my mother's words too intimate for any eyes but those for whom they were indited; nor can I forget her indignation against Sir James Barrie for writing so familiarly about his own mother in *Margaret Ogilvie*. Few, I think, would now agree with her; and friends who have read these letters no less reverently, feel that, precisely for their sacredness, they ought to be given, and even for the pictures they suggest of family life half a century ago. How happily they reveal the mutual dependence, the unfettered affection, the enduring service, of children to parents and to one another! If these letters

were a hundred years old instead of less than fifty, who would say they trespassed upon ground too holy? Then why not let them serve the present day's need, if it know of any? It is just because I still love my parents, do so utterly revere their love for each other, and its consequent lavishing upon their children, that I give my mother's words to this age's young women and men, knowing that many of them must be capable of loving no less greatly.

There is yet another justification. In those Victorian days the family life was an asset in the nation's ethical efficiency. These letters suggest, not only the devotion found among large groups of relatives and closely bonded friends, but that there was, throughout, in actual operation, an unexpressed *awareness* of eternal, creating Purpose. With my father and mother it amounted to conviction, and each one of the family would in turn become more or less subject to the idea of a co-ordinating Destiny in which each was a responsible agent. Schools may awaken a very desirable *esprit de corps*: but they can never invite or offer that binding sense of consanguinity which was automatically happiness and education, recompense and forgiveness. Moreover, in the large family, along with a desire for sharing the daily duties, the urgency of being loved is discovered—and how love is won through giving. The best of education may belong to a home none too well provided with necessities, and where luxuries are rare. Before we stepped from the home door into an uncharted world, we had already learned much of life's significance; how to belong to one another; thence to the world we lived in; and maybe beyond it.

Year by year, as we grew older, our love for father and mother grew wiser and stronger: a fact none the less true that the severance from home introduced certain tragical misunderstandings that seemed insoluble. Though I lovingly keep some letters on both sides that tell of all this, I do not print them. Others also that touch upon sorrows assailing a young man—one possibly more than ordinarily emotional

and less ashamed of it than is quite common—I shall reserve ; although they reveal how steadfast were the bonds that bound him to that paragon of mothers. We had no secrets, though sometimes she was inexorably difficult when I tried to justify things that she could not approve. Yet how devotedly watchful she was ! Her love was always ready to counteract my spiritual loneliness, and always hungry to forgive !

The letters date from 1889, the year I went from my little house in Queen Anne Street to the big one in Harley Street, until my parents' golden wedding in 1901 and to the year after, when my mother died, leaving my father, now failing greatly, to the care of first one then the other of my two sisters.

This first one reads almost like an epitomized declaration of my father's faith.

*From my Father*

“BORDIGHERA,

“Jan. 20, 1889.

“. . . This is your birthday. My love to you, and the desire which is sure to come true, that you may have all the good that may be gathered in the world to which the Lord of souls sent you through us. That existence is a splendid thing I am more and more convinced, while at the same time, but for my hope in God, I should have no wish for its continuance, and should feel it but a phantasmagoria. But Jesus Christ *did* come, for no man could have invented him ; and he thought our being worth giving himself for ; and he was perfectly satisfied with his God and Father. And so I am content in God. Rather than believe in the popular God, I would believe in none—with the agnostics. . . . All congratulation is poor if not false when it is not founded on the eternal. . . . Therefore these things are in place in a birthday letter. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

My mother's letter of the same date is lost, yet my thanks for both may be given :

<sup>1</sup> I have already given part of this letter in *George MacDonald and his Wife*, 1924, p. 535.

*To my Father*

“85, HARLEY STREET, W.,

“20th January, 1889.

“. . . Your letter is the keenest pleasure I have had for a long time. It was just a bit of yourself. But I must criticize, please. . . . I believe that I am more your son than even you would admit: for, as my body is of your body, so is my soul of your soul. Without you I could not have existed. As a child even I used to have a queer dream of God superintending your putting of me together, and how puzzled He was to make things fit. . . . But the soul is not one jot the less of God that it is given entity by a process known to Zoologists as *gemination*, a budding and then a casting off of the buds for independent existence. . . .

“We are living very quietly now. People seem to think we go out and entertain a great deal! We have been to only one dinner party since we came to this house, perhaps three times to the theatre, and given one dinner party. . . . I am seriously contemplating resigning the Throat Hospital altogether. If I did, it would double my income; for the mighty ones of the Profession still paint us in all degrees of turbidity, and I am sick of it. Yet the material for investigation is so abundant that I should be bitterly sorry to go. Professional respectability is certainly, and more than a little, smirched by snobbery. One of my kindest supporters, Dr. —, said to me only yesterday, ‘D—n the profession! If I hadn’t said that when I was your age I should never have done my £5,000 a year!’ But he is quite wrong. He is not the sort you would like—nor do I trust him. I asked him the other day if George Moore’s account of Queen Charlotte’s Hospital in *Esther Waters* ought not to be contradicted in the press. ‘Yes!’ he said, ‘it ought; but unfortunately every word of it is photographically true!’ However that Hospital is now splendid. . . . Others beside your own infant Hercules are playing the charwoman in some Augean special hospitals. . . .”

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,

“21st January, 1889.

“. . . Your letter for my birthday was a real joy. I don’t deserve your love one bit. Yet love is never *quid pro quo*, is it? . . . Sweet, my beloved Mother, are we not tied together by that same bond

which holds God to His created world? Being thus in bondage, makes us all free of His universe, viz., the Heaven we shall one day know better than now.

"I live a strange life within my deaf gates, which, seen from outside, the world calls misfortunate, and pities me for the isolation they slam me into. All the same, inside those gates there are lovely gardens—almost illimitable, I think. There I can walk with all our dear ones—you who are here still, they who are there—knowing no forbiddings. I wish I could tell all who are unhappy what treasures they hold for their own; and how I rejoice in the *realities of the Possible*, that Life must be Resurrection always—all along Love's Golden Way.

"Some soon quit it, some must stay;  
Some slash out at thorns and thistles,  
While Mothers, some, write dear epistles,  
Then go gath'ring ears of corn,  
Walking with One on a Sabbath morn.  
Clearly she sees that He is King  
When His word gives clay-birds magic wing,  
Or pardons, fully and for ever,  
Sins with chains not Death could sever.

"Thus, unlike those birds, my pen  
Spreads inky wings to quit my den—  
Only to splutter, flop or flounder  
Then fall to earth, not a bit the sounder  
For telling metaphoric fibs,  
Or signing cheques for paltry dibs!

"And still my thoughts of Resurrection  
With no poetic predilection,  
Scrabble lamely on their way  
While prayers, alas! go all astray!"

Such mingling of devout ideas with attempts to express them in light fun might offend some ears, though it may possibly qualify any charge of Victorian *smugness*. Chance impromptu rhymes would please my mother at any rate, in spite of her somewhat Puritanic upbringing. On the other hand, her wedded life from the very first brought friends who encouraged her own ineffaceable wit—men such as all the

Matheson family, Lewis Carroll, and Canon Ainger, besides many a Lowland Scot whose pawky humour was always reassuring to the unconventional.

*To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET,  
" (?) Jan., 1891.

" . . . I am deep in *There and Back* [then just published] and am very glad to meet *Thomas Wingfold* again, if only for his cogent, unforgettable presentation of the question as to whether, with our narrow ideas of mere continuity, Immortality is desirable. I confess all the same, he made me wonder if I personally could be one of those who can reasonably hope they have any such article as a soul knocking about. But indeed I am not touching the question irreverently, though it must sound that way; and I confess, when I think of this butcher, or that duchess, this drunkard or that blustering cock-a-doodle, I don't seem to care a hang how they are outfitted in matters spiritual. But then, I have only to remember that splendid Galilean Carpenter to feel sure that nothing can be *impossible*. . . . Your Barbara (in *There and Back*) is quite lovely. You have put glorious stuff into the book—if you can forgive a mouse for telling an eagle that his wings do him credit! You make us ask questions, seemingly of ourselves; and then, there stand the answers true as true. Even if they don't smooth down your arm-chair reader, pipe in teeth and toddy strong, and seem to leave him still there, you surely make him a little less comfortable in his cushions. I'm not a mouse, not literary, don't smoke a pipe (because I can't), and I don't drink toddy, because I never get a chance. So I haven't much of a soul, have I? Not yet. All the same I've plenty of trials to make me whine and squeak, but not the sort to turn mice into soul-o-ists. Forgive my fooling!

*To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET,  
" 18th Jan., 1891.

" . . . I must tell you some day of delightful people I have just met professionally; an old aristocratic family, very hard-up, in a tumble-down house on the River. The father is M.P. for —. He made all their dining-room chairs himself, perfect



Chippendale copies. His wife is quite lovely, the three boys and the wedding-ring hammered by him out of an old guinea-piece, make her quite happy. They would do for you finely in a story. . . . The Hon. — is a barrister; and his wife won't spoil any of them. . . .

"The worst of my work is that, after making friends with a patient, as soon as he's cured I see him no more. . . . These boys are wonderfully agile, and are deliberately left to arrange their own lives. Their mother often sees them sitting on the top boughs of a huge cedar on the old lawn sweeping down to the river. With neither *Do's* nor *Don'ts* to spoil them, they do whatever they please. . . . She says their father would do great things in the world if he were not so lazy. Then I glance at the chairs and the wedding ring, and wonder.

"The day before yesterday I had to operate on her two boys—8 and 10. This morning I ran up to their nursery unannounced. It was empty and the little beds also. I looked round puzzled, but then was greeted with peals of delicious laughter. But whence? I could see no one till first a leg then an arm of a punch-doll came hurtling through space, hitting me accurately on the back of my head. I looked up, and there, peeping from behind the fret-work pediment of a Chippendale wardrobe, were the boys! It seems that, hearing my horses, and the nurses being at their breakfast, the monkeys had climbed up there, even shutting the wardrobe doors after they got to the top! . . . I really think you must put these boys into your next story, the wardrobe as their beanstalk? They love my simple conjuring tricks, and are all eyes and ears for impromptu fairy-tales. . . ."

In the autumn of 1891 my family was again in dire sorrow; for I discovered tuberculous disease in my sister Lily's lungs and larynx. She, throughout her life, the mainstay of parents, sisters and brothers, was superlatively an actress. She had longed to go on the stage, and more than one noted actor urged it—especially Samuel Phelps, the great Shakespearean interpreter, who wanted her to play Lady Macbeth to himself in the title-rôle. One of her chief admirers, however, Mrs. Arthur Lewis, *née* Kate Terry, the eldest, and considered by many supreme in that gifted family, gave so repugnant a picture of the stage that my sister's hopes were disallowed. Then, largely because of her

genius, my mother produced as a public venture, yet in a semi-amateurish way, her dramatization of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This gave Lilia but little scope; and her life was devoted—I dare not say *wasted*—to the interminable demands of home. She was the confidante in all our troubles, though her own heart had been nigh broken by her one and only lover. She died in November.

*From my Mother*

“CASA CORAGGIO,

“Wednesday, Nov. 25th, 1891.

“. . . Her beautiful body looked oh! so so lovely—grand, gentle, radiant almost though, more than all, peaceful. . . . Father and Bob and Mr. B.— lifted her into *La Cassa*—plain wood with one long red cross and the flowers and wreaths and garlands seemed everlastingly numerous. . . . It was in a drenching pouring rain that we put her lovely worn-out garment back to mother earth. . . . Strange that W. J. Matheson<sup>1</sup> should have been buried at the same hour! . . .

“We have been terribly dazed, dear; it was so sudden, awful for us, but for her, how blessed!—scarcely any distress, and just quietly saying, ‘I think I’m going, Mammy—to the others, you know, to join them.’ After one dead faint, she spoke as if she had seen Maimy; and then the quiet clasp of the hands, saying, ‘If God wills’ . . . But oh! my Greville, it’s dreadfully hard to bear.

“Your ever-loving Mother . . .”

In memory of that sister I insert here a letter to myself from our oldest friend, Mrs. Russell Gurney. She was almost the last of my parents’ earlier friends with whom I was intimate, as the most keenly sympathetic woman among them. She devoted her life and fortune to girl-wastrels, and at last bought and endowed the Chapel of the Annunciation in the Bayswater Road. Its walls were enriched with frescoes by

<sup>1</sup> William J. Matheson, her life-long, twenty-years older and worshipping lover, to whom she could give nothing but avuncular affection; he, who took me to Switzerland in 1876, was a brother of my godfather, and was never married.

Frederick Shields, at her sole expense, and its doors were for all time to be open for meditation and rest. Her husband, Recorder of London, had been for many years Conservative Member for Southampton, and was sent out to Washington in 1872 to settle details of the "Alabama Claims." These points are worth remembering in connection with her love for my father and mother, and her including individually each of the eleven children. Its profound sympathy gives it significance in my concept of "memory immortal."

*From Mrs. Russell Gurney*

"3 ORME SQRE., W.,

"Nov. 24th, 91.

". . . Oh! that darling exquisite child Lilia. I can feel her still sitting on my knee in her little nightgown in my dressing-room at Palace Gardens. I see her again at Genoa, still the ideal maiden, when I took her there to see her lover and to part there for ever from that chapter in her life. Never shall I forget her fragrant sweetness and resignation—and strength too. And now the blossoming Spring has come to her and we must not see her any more; not till our eyes are really opened. But oh! the Mother, the Mother! . . .

"I can't thank you enough, dear Greville, for writing me the wondrous tidings. But when one hears the River is crossed so long before her time, how different it all seems. . . ."

Yet another letter touching on my mother's grief. Four of us had now been taken; and of the eleven Lilia was the most gifted; Grace, whose music was so rare and passionate, had died in 1884 at Bordighera, where her husband, Kingsbury Jameson, a cousin of Russell Gurney's and still best of my friends, was assistant English Chaplain.

*From my Mother*

"CASA CORAGGIO,

"January 18th, 1892.

". . . Dear Son, . . . How little we know what is coming in the next surgings up of time! . . . I took up a letter that I had

last January from our blessed Lilia. . . . She says, 'I wish for you, dear Mother, a very happy new year and for myself that I may never have to wish it you on paper again.' Sweetest of Lilies, she little thought how (for us dreadfully) the wish would come to pass! And yet the more one sees how terrible and sad everything is in this sea of dismay, the more one believes that she is the best landed of us all—she and the others already gone. . . . I am sending a few of our flowers hoping they will shine on you with my love. But all power of comfort and love seem gone out of me, so that I can only say and feel that I used to feel and love before all the light had died down. I do believe in it still; but I'm no good to anybody any more.

"Dear, dear Greville, I hope you are really a little bit stronger. . . . Oh! how glad Father and I were when you first smiled on us, you dear, dear one! . . ."

From now onwards, my mother was always more or less ailing, and I knew how unfitted she was for bearing the storm after storm that was to break over her. For long as I remember, she had had an enlarged thyroid, which, since living so much on the Riviera, had increased. It largely accounted for her burdensome nervous instability; and, because it pressed on a certain nerve, it paralysed the left vocal cord, and halved her inlet for breath. But it scarcely affected her voice. Of such cases I had now had large experience, operative and otherwise, and I knew that my mother's was best left severely alone. Quite properly I did not mention the vocal-cord trouble to anyone—not even to my father, though I knew he would condemn my reticence. For when, after the examination, my mother asked me whether her throat was all right *inside*, I, in instant charity, deceived her: the knowledge that one vocal cord had struck work, even if I insisted upon its small importance, would have done her great harm. My father, I well knew, would never sanction such deception, especially if a *yea* or *nay* had been required. Once I put it to him that sometimes one had to choose between a calamitous shock from the literal truth and a merciful falsehood. He argued that a permissible equivocation would meet any case. Nevertheless, such a

loophole would be hardly more honest and might be even more harmful than the truth. In the case of my mother, my fearless *untruth* did wonders for her. In discussing a quite different instance, where the literal truth seemed to have done real harm, he sent me words of his virile optimism that possibly did not evade the argument.

*From my Father*

“BORDIGHERA,

“Jan. 8th, 1893.

“. . . Your letter to your mother was a little well-spring to her in a very thirsty land. . . . Yet there is nothing other than happiness for us all in the end; and now my prayers would rather be for strength to meet with calmness whatever trials may lie between now and then in the journey we cannot but keep going. . . .

“Bordighera keeps advancing in the loss of its virtues and repose. We shall be compelled, I fear, to open our doors only half-way before long. . . .”

Casa Coraggio was certainly becoming much of a burden. My father would give, once or twice a week, his wonderful readings, scholarly, poetic, uplifting, on some great subject; but the tax on the household was far too heavy. Nothing, however, interfered with my mother's letters to me. She knew instinctively how much I needed their support. We would entertain happy discussions, and her criticisms in matters of Art were often illuminating. Their bearing upon Victorian thought would interest some who are puzzled at our modern art-critics' repudiation of Law and Beauty; while her racy realization of the dangers in sentimentalism is surprising.

*From my Mother*

“BORDIGHERA,

“12 Jan., 1893.

“. . . I don't doubt you are right about the everlasting painter, Burne-Jones—only one is always afraid of too much schooling

and bondage of instruction under even good law (which at best must be finite) cramping the genius of a young and ardent man like Burne-Jones or any man that has *the* Genius in him. If one could be certain the law you would put him under was absolutely good, then of course—but that school is not the French surely?

“It always seems to me that the simple realism of Millet is the very highest idealism; and it’s that that makes his work appeal to everyone, whether they know anything about Art or not. So you see I don’t quite agree with you when you say George Mason’s ‘un-realism’ is sentimental; it seems to me divinely idealistic. . . . But you know more about it than I do—I am only telling you what occurs to me. And when they talk about Art, I’m not quite sure that they know much better than I do what they mean. . . .”

My reply—a long and cocksuredly uninforming epistle—is not worth giving; yet its last paragraph has a certain narrative value.

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,  
“8 *January*, 1893.

“. . . Fancy! your little boy is a big one now! I have had an invitation from Chicago to deliver an ‘oration’ at the Great Exhibition on some subject connected with my specialty! They will be dreadfully cut up that I won’t go; the whole Exhibition, even the Universe might collapse! But they’ve got Chauncey Depew. Did you read his speech at the opening ceremony? He said there were three outstanding events in the world’s civilization, 1st, the Crucifixion; 2nd, The Discovery of America, and 3rd, the Opening of the Chicago Exhibition. (Sensation and immense applause!) What a coarse joke! and from one admitted to be, here as well as in U.S.A., so brilliant a speaker! . . .

In this year there came to me, consequent upon the large income I was now earning, the privilege specified in the next letter. I may mention that my mother had enjoyed some monetary ease since her father died in 1870, and that my father had been given by the Queen a civil pension annuity. He still got good prices for his new books, besides

reaping considerable royalties on his older ones. I had hoped that my addition would equal the amount of such combined and assured income; and then, I thought, my father would have enough for all needs, even if he wrote only what pleased him best, but did not pay, namely verse.

*To my Mother*

“16th April, 1893.

“. . . I have been wanting just to say that you must not worry any more about money. You and Father have invested in some stock that should prove good, viz. the education of your sons, the eldest of whom would feel that he at least ought now to secure you against all money worries. . . . We can afford it quite well, and still put by enough to buy crutches for our old age. I shall soon follow you, I hope; and because of your deposit account in the Big Bank up aloft, the Chief Cashier will allow me an overdraft if the moth and rust have altogether swallowed up your little boy's—who mixes his metaphors, if never his drinks! . . . I am doing steadily better, and my health improves greatly, even my hearing, thanks to the North Wind of Norfolk.

“So now Father need never write another stroke if that would be better for him! Or he could set about qualifying for his due as Poet Laureate! . . .

“I have two American publishers writing to me for articles for which they pay well; and one writing for permission to publish my text-book on a royalty. . . .”

In the same year my father wrote and sent the following poem as Christmas greeting to friends. As it was never published, I accept it as a gift to my Reminiscences—a thing lovelier than anything I could ever hope to do:

“CHRISTMAS, 1893

“Twilight is near, and the days grow old;  
The spiders of care are weaving their net;  
The night will be blowing and rainy and cold;  
I cower at his door from wind and wet.

“He sent me out the world to see,  
 Drest for the road in a garment new;  
 It is clotted with clay, and worn beggarly—  
 The porter will hardly let me through!

“I bring in my hand a few dusty ears;  
 Once I thought them a tribute meet!  
 I bring in my heart a few unshed tears:  
 Which is my harvest—the pain or the wheat?

“A broken man, at the door of his hall,  
 I sit and hear it go merry within!  
 It sounds as of birthday festival!  
 Hark to the trumpet, the violin!

“I sit with those others, nor glad nor gay,  
 Sit on a bench where no one upbraids;  
 ‘Make a little room for me,’ I will say,  
 ‘Dear publicans, sinners, and foolish maids.’

“Someone is hearing my heart forlorn!  
 A step comes soft through the dancing din!  
 O Love eternal! of woman-born!  
 Son of my Father, to take me in!

“G. M. D.”

Though I could write cheerily to my mother about my hearing, there was no lasting improvement; and if I give yet another letter referring to it, it is only because it may appeal to, perhaps encourage, some who suffer in the same way.

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET, W.

[Undated] 1894.

“. . . We went to St. Anne’s for the Passion Music again on Friday in one final hope of hearing that glorious revelation. But it was only distressful. . . . I am not sure that even you know how much music has been to me; and the deafness certainly does increase, though I get quicker in lip-reading. . . . This Sunday I had to be out at 8 a.m. and drove through the Park. Such a lovely spring morning! and oh! so silent, deserted



by all noise of tired men and women, like a bit of the grave whence springs the new life. And I thought, 'Oh! if only one could hear the call of the spring awakening life in the sleeping leaves, what violin music it would be!'—sounds, I thought, of a colour-and-form-woven music. And I felt comforted by my deafness. I know most people think that one gets used to it . . . but I have been  $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of my life 'getting used to it,' and I don't appreciate it as a sign of God's mercy. . . . It may be: and after all, I would rather hear with heart than ears. If only the heart were never dulled either, how glorious it would be, even with no ears at all!"

"BACTON, NORFOLK,

"Easter Day.

". . . We have a quite perfect day, the air redolent of the honey in wild rose and honeysuckle, and in the song of blackbird and thrush—which I can't hear, yet know. It is one of those days that recall all joys that have ever been, and make one worship the great Mother-Sweetheart whose smile in buttercup and poppy is none the less sweet for its sadness. One wants to be alone on such days. Yet if I could walk with you and Father, the Mother-Sweetheart, on such a day as this, would dance and sing as well as smile for her own joy—and ours.

"These here stanzas, though they stumble on stilts, will let you see me better. But the rhymes and emblems don't know where I am, nor what I want, nor where I am going—any more than the mad laird in *Malcolm*. . . .

#### "A THRUSH ON THE BROADS

"O Thrush in the jubilant Springtime, shouting so merrily  
 Thy song in melodious rivulets to hearten the leafless tree!  
 Sing, O sing us your paeon of joy thro' vanishing rainbow and  
 hail,  
 Sing of a blackthorn scattering snow o'er sweethearts' spinney  
 and dale!

"Sing of the grey-boled larches' cone-studded, emerald buds,  
 And the winds that attune those organ-pipes up there in the  
 sombre woods;  
 Though the ash, with eyes still closed and black, his fingers  
 sleek and cold,  
 Cares not a straw for thrush or elf, or love that never is old.

“Sing of the daffodil’s topaz-lamp hanging from leafy sconce,  
Hail to the crozier fronds of bracken, withered, yet valorous  
once;  
And my primrose so shy—in her thousands she waits patient  
and all alone,  
For her virgin gold, her wilding scent, are mine—for ever my  
own!

“Up with the lark to welcome the Sun’s flaming, majestic birth!  
Then sing of the venturesome wind from the West, leaping  
like joy o’er the Earth.  
For anon creeps the twilight’s stealthy mist, rising from river  
and dune,  
Driving away all the fairy folk back to their gossamer moon!

“I’m afraid it all means nothing, even if it is pretty-pretty.  
So Father would say I am right in letting it go no further, though  
really there’s a lot more. That’s the worst of a poetaster:

“With a third-class-return, he goes for a hop  
In and out of the clouds, like a star;  
But the beggar, he don’t know the place for to stop,  
For he don’t never know where he are!

“There! that’s run out of my pen spontaneous-like and has  
splashed my shirt-cuffs! I’m hopeless in my vulgarity: but Kip-  
ling has shown us the trick of it! . . .

“Yesterday I was told that a darling duchess *couldn’t* bring  
her little girl to me because I was a radical! And a few days  
before, a lady (?) hoped I would be *particularly* careful in operating  
on her boy because he was heir to over a million. I told her I  
couldn’t be if I tried, and had no end of trouble to make her see  
why. Certainly money does make people d—d stupid. . . .”

Here I must let my mother’s words reveal her keen sense of  
the ridiculous in fashion and gluttony; but I myself had  
never met the lady described.

*From my Mother*

[Undated].

“. . . I and Irene called a few weeks ago on Mrs. — at  
Mentone. . . . Dr. S—— had a patient with him; so we had to  
wait and wait. At last one of the folding doors opened and a

portion of an enormous blonde painted woman began to squeeze through. They had at last to open the other door in a hurry so that the fat, fair and fifty, peroxidised—what was it?—managed to shoulder herself through without much damage, but quite breathless. It was like squeezing paint out of one of Irene's tubes on to her palette. *I* never saw such a full blown monster and she must have been pretty once. You could only say *Monte Carlo*. . . . But then came another difficulty; she wanted to see the garden. Again two doors had to be opened, and her large person, surmounted by a rowdy-looking, huge straw hat, with long, sweeping feathers and soaring flowers, billowed out of our sight. . . . But Mrs. S—— whispered to us in apologetic alarm 'That's Mrs. X. the Specialist's wife. She has come from Monte Carlo to consult my husband!' . . . Oh! such a woman! Or was it a Smithfield cow dressed up for the Carnival? . . ."

The next fragments also concern the fashions and literature of bygone days. But possibly I should in this day actually commend the girl-bicyclist's defiance of convention.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET, W.,  
14th October, 1894.

". . . I hope Father has received *Esther Waters*, which I sent him. I wonder if he will approve it as much as I do, though I do not think it is a book for young ladies, though they are all reading *Dodo*. The Railway bookstalls won't stock *Esther Waters*, because her trouble is a servant girl's. If she were only French or a Countess, well, that's another story, as Kipling says.

"We had a discussion at dinner about young women riding bicycles in knickerbockers. . . . They may be pioneers of a needed change of fashion, and perhaps we must forgive them! . . . But if you had seen, as I did to-day, a girl jumping off and on her machine splashed with mud, and a crowd of dirty urchins running after her, the men laughing, the girls turning their heads away, and Mrs. Grundy looking aghast, you would have been disgusted. . . ."

*To my Father*

"BACTON,

"23 Feb., 1896.

". . . Even in London, along with the weeds and slugs, there are finer flowers than Solomon in all his glory. One I know is my old crossing-sweeper, whose work is to keep the mud away from all the godly boots and lacey petticoats, as they trip into Vere Street Church to praise God. . . . Her real care is tending a bed-ridden husband, and her last thought, one would think, is the half-pence which the worshippers would give her but that the men's hands are gloved, and the women's pockets so impossibly devised by their dressmakers. . . .

"Also there is an old boy, a road-mender, yet variously known as Captain Smith or Physician Smith. He was master of a trawler once, but now spends his life getting up early in the morning. He tells me early rising and morning air are healing for everything. He honestly believes he can cure cancer and cataract, as he knows nearly all the Almighty's ways. All his friends will go to heaven, and the others don't matter. . . ."

## CHAPTER II

### PARENTS AND SON

IN an Introduction to my father's extraordinary allegory *Lilith*,<sup>1</sup> I have related some points relative to its first construction and writing in 1890, some years before it was published. I refer to it again in this place, as it strangely involves my own Reminiscences. It looks as though he allowed the book's leading idea to take possession of his imagination so completely that by something like "unconscious cerebration" he in the first place wrote it in unbroken sequence, never altering a word, and hardly allowing it to rest in momentary paragraphs. When after four years he decided to publish it, its strange visions into the deeps of mind and soul being possible of expression only through symbolic pictures, many of amazing beauty, he gave it to my mother to read. She, less brave than he in philosophic adventure, found the narrative often distressing, its hidden meaning too obscure; and she feared lest it should be taken as evidence of weakening power, rather than the reverse. Even though she might agree that often the poet must walk where angels fear to tread, she wrote of it to me as "a terrible book, though portions, such as the loveliness in death, and the grand ending are exquisitely beautiful"; and she could not be happy over its publication. For the first time in their lives they were at variance. Then they determined that I should adjudicate. To me, my father wrote, *à propos* of its difficulties, "I am so tired of everything; yet with oh! so much to learn; and trouble the only way." The words seem to reflect the note of sadness pervading the book, though they were all in glorious harmony with the far-calling chimes of his unfathomable faith.

My surprise and happiness that they should choose me as

<sup>1</sup> Centenary Edition, George Allen & Unwin, 1924.

judge between them was great, and I read it greedily. So profoundly gripped was I by the story's uplifting mysticism, and its fearless facing of questions that for many are obstacles to faith, that, in writing of it to my mother, I declared that so far from its being my father's last book, as he opined, it was his "veriest first of all, the Revelation of St. George the Divine."

At last the book was published, and puzzled some of the critics almost out of their sorely tried wits, besides many who, while rejoicing in its exalted loveliness, must still ask what it all meant. Music means nothing to one lacking sense of music, but unspeakable joy to those who had known a spiritual hunger before ever their ears were trained for celestial harmonies. So with all Beauty: it is at least half subjective. So it is with Faith also.

Following up those words confessing his weariness I give part of another letter—to me a bit of revelation no less than sacred in its humility.

*"Sept. 17, 1894.*

" . . . I have been and am still going through a time of trial. That my book is not to be a success in the money way is not much of a trial, thanks to you; but the conscious failing—the doubt if I shall ever write another book—is a trial that stirs up other mental and spiritual trials, one being the great dread of becoming a burden. . . .

"But God may have some relief in store for me, and work seems a little more probable to me, and I have got some good in having my pride brought down a little. . . . But an eternal ripeness may well take many suns and frosts. . . . Next Dec. I shall be 70. . . . I believe all will be well anyhow, and I shall go and see. . . . I am glad at the thought of being so near Home now. . . ."

For myself, even greater to me than the book was the assurance of my place in my parents' hearts; I was bidden come up higher and sit beside them; needing, more than they knew, some such anchorage. Then a little later my father told me I was now the only friend left who understood him—

an avowal which, though laden with pathos, was even more wonderful.

But here I am pulled up by the fact that I am setting forth my own Reminiscences, though I would far rather tell all I know of my father—one of the greatest of God's souls, even if his name may be forgotten. That his influence and the spirit of his poetic revelations will never die, I am altogether sure.

Certain troubles that of late had thrown a shadow over our mutual trust were, I do believe, in some measure responsible for the writing of *Lilith*; and, with such a probability before me, it does not seem surprising that this fearless work proved heavier in its demands than anything my father had ever undertaken. For, quite possibly I think, he was, with spiritual telepathy seeing into my own stormy seas, and, in his anxiety misinterpreting facts, he feared I might be making terms with the Enemy of Man. Such telepathic knowledge is by no means uncommon among people of Celtic origin. But at last the whole outlook became changed—how I do not even now understand, even if in my heart I attribute it to some angelic intervention. The shadows departed and perfect trust held us again in sure and patient contentment.

While speaking of *Lilith* I must give one or two more personal points concerning its writer, and I am the more impelled to this after suggesting that he and I had been for a time in disagreement.

My father was always a fighter if only because his Faith was so simply romantic; and perhaps the divine gift for fighting, with its necessary quantum of anger, cannot always allow the no less divine gift of adjudication to ask, "Why this distress in understanding, when Love rules all?" So keen was my father for adventure with sealed orders, that no sickness, no storms, no losses of mast or rudder, ever made him afraid. As a poet he revelled in the hurricane because its passion had counterpart in himself. But, being more than a

fighter, his joy in mastering winds to carry him home—even though, rudder gone, they might overwhelm him—made the very elements his own, their conflict symbolic of the eternal warfare. So, I repeat, he never knew fear. And failure was of small importance. On beholding the Dragon—to change my metaphor—crawling from its den among the *flammifera moenia mundi*, he must instantly sally forth lest the Beast assure the people that evil is more apparent than real; that, because God's in His Heaven, all's well with the world. Evil *was* absolutely real: all was *not* well with the world; and to make terms with the Beast was akin to unpardonable sin.

A few more letters concerning *Lilith* cannot fail to be interesting. The first is one from Mr. H. G. Wells, acknowledging my father's gift of *Lilith*.<sup>1</sup> Both *Lilith* and *The Wonderful Visit* should find renewed interest to-day when the most advanced scientific minds give heart to idealists who would have our rigidly three-dimensioned education expand in the concept of other capaciousness.

*From H. G. Wells to George MacDonald*

“WOKING,

“Sep. 24/95.

“Dear Sir,

“I have been reading your *Lilith* with exceptional interest. Curiously enough I have been at work on a book based on essentially the same idea, namely that, assuming more than three dimensions, it follows that there must be wonderful worlds nearer to us than breathing and closer than hands and feet. I have wanted to get into such kindred worlds for the purposes of romance for several years, but I've been bothered by the way. Your polarization and mirror business struck me as neat in the extreme. For my own part I've never quite got out of this world. In my own book *The Wonderful Visit* (of which I will send you a copy in the course of a week or so—so soon as it is published, that is) I have done the complement of *Lilith*.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter of last year (1931) Mr. H. G. Wells, in permitting me to print his letter, assures me how very pleased he is to be associated with my father's memory.



You make a man go out of this world of three-dimensions and I make a visitor from outside come into it. But different as the books are, the mother idea is the same beyond question. It's curious, is it not, that after this new idea has been lying neglected for years, it should be worked at simultaneously in this way?

"Yours very truly,  
"H. G. WELLS."

Although I had not heard Mr. Wells's remarks on my father's exploiting Light, the following letter of my own comes near the same idea :

*To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"8th December, 1895.

" . . . I have nothing to write for your birthday, except things too difficult for my pen. Words never seem adequate modes of expression between those who hold love to be just freedom's bondage. And yet it is just those people that don't need words! They have but to creep under the Garment's hem and be at peace, where things are understood and never need be *told*. Whenever I get into the pine-woods, all too seldom, I feel like a chick creeping under the outspread feathers of the One Wing. You will know what I mean—unless it wasn't my father who wrote *Phantastes*! And I am in prison, my heart bricked up in my own self and the chimney-smoke wrapping up our sorrowful little bits of blue sky. . . .

"Have you heard of the new discovery in light and photography? It should be particularly interesting to us with *Lilith* in our minds. Your polarized light was almost prophetic, and lets one see further into your vision-gift concerning matters absolute. Perhaps one day all substance may be transparent; and the mere thought of such possibility suggests how little the gross flesh need hem us in! But we need poetical eyes, don't we? and faith—not X-rays and experiment—to see angel-prayers [in *Lilith*] ascending like doves to the Home they came from. . . .

"*Lilith* is exciting a good deal of notice—they say it is as impossible to put it down as to understand it! But a text-book on light-waves can't make us understand *much* after all! and *Lilith* was written, I take it, only to help people think it out for themselves and to find it all *within*. . . ."

So here I leave *Lilith* and its bearing upon the relations of

parents to son; and lighter memories bid me add the next letter on a very different topic. It suggests the constant pleasuring of others that so fully occupied my mother and sisters. Indeed we sons, who now could make only occasional visits to Bordighera, felt that the life in that little English colony did not offer my father all the intellectual companionship he needed. Men need men-friends—quite as much as do women—even if some of these may not be best pleased at my saying it.

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,

"March 26th, 1897.

" . . . About the relative depth of love I can't tell, for there is no measuring line on this material earth that can gauge that immeasurable Essence. But why can't I overcome tiredness and stupor enough to sit up and write to you all the thinkings that bubble up, always burning in me? . . . Yet, dear son, if you could only know the joy that bubbles up in me whenever your hand-writing reaches me. . . .

"Mrs. Scott and her daughter Violet<sup>1</sup> stayed with us four days—Sir Lawrence and Lady Jones are coming for three; and so we don't rest much. But I *loved* the Bentincks' visit. They both did Father good. . . ."

Before closing this chapter about *Lilith*, a few words concerning its forerunner *Phantastes*, which had so greatly influenced my boyhood, will be not out of place.

*To my Mother*

"20th April, 1897.

" . . . I always think the best antidote to one's own troubles is

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Scott's former husband had been the Rev. Charles Cavendish Bentinck, they being parents of Lady Strathmore and her twin sisters, the Misses Violet and Hyacinth Cavendish Bentinck. Miss Violet, aunt to H.R.H. the Duchess of York, still cherished friendship with me and my sisters. Indeed, she gave me much wise counsel regarding these Reminiscences. But this summer, 1932, she left us and her long terrible suffering. Sir Laurence Jones, as President of the Psychical Research Society, still keeps wise interest in all evidences of survival.

the hearing of and bearing of others'. Yet how little we can do! Believe me, Mother, I too know how hard it is for

'A heart to be content  
With its desire's relinquishment';

although to the world (and perhaps to your dear self) my lot seems now so easy. . . . I have just had two days in Norfolk and found an open door into the New Jerusalem's Cathedral; its stupendous ritual being the rolling away of the wintry stone and the leaping forth of the risen Spring. Such a sweet spiritual maiden has she been this year! The only sorrow is that, when she comes too near me, she has to step aside, not liking the shadow about me. But I think she never came quite so near before, and I am over head and ears in love with her—shadow or none! Forgive my preachy priggishness! Anyhow I never forget the magical lesson of *Phantastes*—re a man's shadow. . . ."

This "Faerie Romance for Men and Women" had recently been republished by a firm who, buying the copyright, did not refer to the author regarding the form of its new edition. Hence this letter:

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA

[Undated].

" . . . It made me groan—within me and aloud—that that wondrous *Phantastes* should have been so degraded by commonplace, Sunday-at-home-ish, bad art. Have you seen its worse than pantomime scratchings of silly columbines and jumping jacks? That holy-fairy book! I can't bear to think of it. . . . Oh! If only it had fallen into Arthur Hughes' hands! . . ."

A few years later I re-purchased the copyright along with hundreds of *remainders*, of which I destroyed the whole consignment. Then, following my mother's suggestion, I gave Arthur Hughes a free hand in illustrating it. That old friend was now almost past his best imaginative work; but his hand had not lost its cunning and the drawings had much of his early charm, while some were even strong.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This edition, too, is now out of print; but the story is included in the Everyman's Library and has a steady sale.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET,

"5th December, 1897.

". . . It has been but a dreary time since you left us. I miss you both dreadfully. For in spite of all the frettingness and interest of my work, you both grow more to me as I cast my youth away with its crude aspirations, even though I cannot look as far back or forwards as you can. I fancy those who are childless can never look so clearly ahead as those to whom the best things have been given—and perhaps taken away. Fortunately, I think I see always more clearly Life in sleeping winter, as well as the wakening spring, and Love in the smile of the outcast to her bundled baby, even while the demons of dirt, beer and disgrace do their utmost to persuade us that both baby and smile are defiled.

"I don't know why I write this. . . . I only want to tell you how grateful I am for your abiding sweetness to me this past summer, dearest of mothers! Do not talk of not coming back to us next year. Though your children are getting so old, they cannot do without you yet, nor ever will. . . . *À propos* of which, I wonder if you remember a clumsy poem I sent you, along with the old spoon figuring the divine Mother, repoussée in the bowl? It was for your birthday when I was at the Asylum in 1880."

I think she must have remembered it, for I find it in one of her careful bundles; and it may be worth recording to point the strength of our mutual belongingness.

*Nov. 5th. (My Mother's Birthday). 1880.*

"Sweetest Mother, thy tender watch keeping  
Over our joys, our songs and our weeping!  
Thine the care that for ever is feeding  
Each of thy children's prodigal needing!

"Take this spoon from thy first boy, dear Mother!  
'Tis him thou art teaching, with sister and brother,  
How from their schooling and toys they are learning  
What good things to cherish, what bad to send burning.

- “See the old spoon thou always wast filling!  
If winter unkind set our little hands chilling,  
Or summer-day’s racing our heads over-heated,  
Still that same spoon our bread and milk meted.
- “Day in and day out, distraught or obedient,  
It held for our sickness some wondrous ingredient,  
Or food fit for fairies’ angelic alluring,  
Food for our maddest adventures’ enduring!
- “But whence, O my Mother, didst thou cull its dear magic  
To meet all our hunger, now laughing, now tragic?  
Whatever our failures or sins or misdoings,  
Whence thy spoon’s solace for all our renewings?
- “In the deeps of thy bosom lie heart-springs eternal—  
Deep wells of thy Love, creative, supernal:  
Thence flows the milk thou so lavishly givest,  
Thence comes the strength of the Faith that thou livest.
- “One day at the last when thy travail is over—  
The wealth of thy Love, still as fresh as June’s clover—  
Then, when thy griefs have told their full measure,  
There bides in thy spoon, now empty, one treasure.
- “For there thou behold’st the Mother in Glory  
Giving her Baby His Father’s own story:  
And there, when the bowl of thy sorrows lies broken,  
This spoon is full-filled to the brim with this token—  
That thou, our Beloved, e’en thou art the mother  
Of Jesus Himself. He said so—no other!”

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHILD IN A SCARLET CLOAK

I CANNOT even now let the flames devour the remaining letters, even though it is only their sentimental value that holds my hand. How far it can interest one of different temperament to learn what the word *Home* meant to me, I cannot conjecture. Though I lived and laboured in Harley Street a thousand miles from my parents, I still dwelt largely and precisely where I first found food and utterance—and I do not mean either Manchester in 1856, or Bordighera later; but I am not sure if it is possible to translate into any current tongue those faded cramped words, written on the flimsy pages of a bygone alien environment: so greatly have we and the world altered in needs and modes of expression. Yet happily we do claim the old maternal language; and even psycho-analysis has not made great inroads into the most sacred of our feelings, even if it has rough-cast their walls. Once an old Jew of great wealth said to me: "In my youth I was a young man of sentiment; and I thank the God of my fathers that, in my old age, I am still a young man of sentiment!" His words sank deeper than he guessed. How far homes or temples are built, buttressed, kept alive by letters and words of sentiment no one knows: especially now when the arts of language and penmanship are busy dying, because there is "nothing doing!" Yet these letters do justify my claim that I was always living within reach of my mother's consolation; and, in spite of certain tragical misunderstandings already hinted, they indicate our unspeakably happy intimacy.

My professional reputation had now—i.e. during the Boer War—reached its acme. Nor did it seem affected seriously by the intercurrent demands of my literary and social recreations. My mother could hardly keep pace with

my scientific interests, though my father must have realized their philosophic significance. But I was wisely at no pains to suggest to either of them how much the mere money-making was becoming an object in my life, for it would have grieved them sorely. I know nothing more resplendent in my father's equipment than his scorn for money, wherever it was more than a symbol: it was a fowler's net alluring and destroying rich man and poor alike. If they thought my understanding of this armed me against its lure, well—I *think* I was legally honest in all my ways of earning it: even though I would brag that, when times were bad, I could go into the streets and haul in as many patients as I wanted.

But this hardly decent fooling might be misunderstood; and if a schoolboy writes an essay to prove that honesty implies poor understanding of "salesmanship," I confess he lays himself open to ambiguity when the test comes in later years. The more one wants to be truthful the more difficult it becomes, so complex and antagonizing are desires and ideals.

My instinctive, still youthful optimism sustained more of a shock than may be easily understood, when I realized that my father was outliving his popularity. Though his imaginative power was young and virile, publishers no longer could afford the great prices he had earned for so many years. A man always needs some enemy to fight or befriend, be it only a dogma: otherwise he may find he is alone. The life at Bordighera hardly helped him, and the world's mode of thought was rapidly changing. People were now wondering why so much fuss had ever been made about the paradoxical eternal damnation; they had yet to learn that my father's genius was less revealed in theologic controversy, however finely socratic his mode, than in his poetic interpretation of Life's meaning and destiny. Though his last published novel *Salted with Fire* was in many ways as strong as earlier works, the strain of *Lilith* upon him had been very marked; and this, coming in hand with troubles I have touched upon, but even now incomprehensible, meant for him not

only the insomnia attendant upon mental distress, but also an increase of his life-long eczema, which now by slow and halting steps brought him very near to breakdown. Its dependence upon his mental state was clinically undeniable; and certain letters of mine were all unwittingly yet definitely responsible for now increase, now mitigation of the misery.

But my mother must bear his cross. Worn out with sustaining her own optimism, with her ceaseless and wise nursing, constantly suggesting to him that his mind was no way at fault—"only," as she said, "ben the hoose"—she died in January 1902. During the three remaining years of his life he always retained his old look of one whose understanding was far in advance of anything *provable*. His wonderful blue eyes, not tarnished by any *arcus senilis*, looked as if alertly watching—for what we knew not, though he would turn instantly towards any opening of door in the hope, perhaps, that my mother was coming to him.

I was careful that any letters to my father should be in no way different from their old manner, hoping to suggest to him, as did my mother, that his interests were unchanging.

After a visit with my wife to Vienna, accompanied by my then best of friends, Joseph King and his wife Maude Egerton King, I wrote to him the one following. I had been anxious to see the system of teaching in a city so renowned in medical science, as well as to consult Politzer, the aurist, regarding two patients I had sent to him. The letter relates certain impressions which have never been modified, though it tells nothing of my previously held suspicions, that all too many patients under German systems have to acquiesce in some *Kur*, almost irrespectively of definite result.

*To my Father*

"HARLEY STREET, W.,

"8 Dec., 1898.

". . . I shall write you soon about a wonderful three-days' visit to Nuremburg, remembering your love for it and how you



once said it was the only city you'd contentedly die in. It was like stepping into a dream of long ago—of a time when every man was artist or poet; every woman a good wife and an even better cook!—at least so I should judge from the beauty of kitchens, pots and pans. . . . and the discovery that sausages must have been indigenous in the garden of Eden.

“I will tell you when I see you what I learnt in Vienna—that immaculately municipalized, money-plastered city; what I saw of its *perfect system* in teaching, and how patients are chiefly items in the machine for turning out doctors. Like all machinery, it was so clever that its badness seemed right. I think we might copy the cleverness without making patients suffer from the clumsiness of eager students: quite ordinary in Vienna. Even Politzer was doing real harm to several—and all *because students must learn*. He was immensely kind to me, and proud of showing me his *clinique*. . . . Incidentally he remarked that *even in hopeless cases there is always something to be done!*”

The next may be worth giving, because it shows how much a son may do for his mother if he can open his heart to her.

*From my Mother*

“CASA CORAGGIO,

“December 9, 1898.

“. . . Dearest of Dears, don't doubt yourself! your uprightness of purpose must not misdoubt itself. Look up if you can endure without weakness, but go on enduring—and don't break down in the temptation of self-accusation. Father just came looking over my shoulder (I had told him I was writing to you). Perhaps he saw I was hesitating to find the right way of saying to you what was burning and throbbing in my heart. Looking down so exquisitely sweetly, he said, ‘Well, you have then found some best words for Greville!’ He often talks now so quaintly—in his books' style. . . .”

Among the comico-tragic joys that came in course of my work, was a four-year-old patient, on whom I must often inflict pain, but who always greeted me with a bewitching smile and large pathetically pleading brown eyes; which, had she been twenty years older and I ten years younger I must have fallen hopelessly in love with. She was the darling of the

hospital. For months before she was quite cured, I would often take her in my mail-phaeton, she perched up beside me in her little scarlet hospital cloak, as I drove my Ruby and Diamond round to see my patients. Then I would take her home and got some real intimacy with her parents. More than once I took her with her whole family, except the father, a carpenter and a splendid fellow, for a visit to one of the annual exhibitions at Earl's Court. And I confess that I meanly hoped no private patient would see me carrying the baby!

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"23rd Dec., 1898.

" . . . I have been helping deck our Christmas-tree here, and am dog-tired with standing. It will be very gay and we shall have a lot of children, and Jenny of course. She is so sweet and good and to-day her big innocent eyes were deliciously amazed as I hung the sparkle things on. . . ."

A few days later I wrote again of this children's party:

*To my Mother*

" . . . But Jenny was too simple for the smug-snobbery of Harley Street. The other children seemed to disapprove of her at once. She actually exclaimed at one inauspicious moment, proud and boastingly, 'My father goes to work very day, and Jimmy takes his dinner to him in a tin can.' All the children were instantly silenced, as if a sudden clap of thunder had burst. I thought of that time when you were dining at Lord —'s and of the sudden silence of all the guests, the moment when father mentioned the forbidden words *Jesus Christ*. Children would never, but for their mothers, discover any depravity in this child of a healthy mother, splendidly busy with bringing children into the world. . . ."

"HARLEY STREET,  
"31st Dec., 1898.

" . . . I have just returned after seeing little Jenny who is at last in her home again. The mother has four children, the

youngest in arms, only four weeks old. She looked old and worn, but with a sweet smile like her child's, and eyes nearly as good as yours: a clean, poor woman, but boasting a proud parlour, with its china vases, hymn-books and chromos on the walls to match. . . . So they are not very poor, and Jenny will be all right. . . . But I felt while I was in the house how rotten all our ideas of social distinction must be. . . . One has but to see any child's or good mother's smile to know how wicked it is that rich and poor can't happily feed together at one another's homes without impossible shyness on the one hand or condescension on the other. . . . What among all the world's goods can compare with a mother's heart! . . .

"The dear woman did not know how to express her gratitude; and I could have taken her in my arms and kissed her, squalling baby and all!—except that such enthusiasm is not always understood! . . . To little Jenny the words *Mother* and *Home* mean just earthly paradise. Treacle is as good as jam, and a mother's eyes to tend us are worth the universe! At any rate that's what this old and heart-weary child of yours is feeling at this moment. But he is oh! so grateful for the love from his mother's hand direct to his parched soul! . . ."

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,

"January 3rd, 1899.

". . . Your most beautiful letter, so full of divine love—which would spend itself on giving out and out and receiving in and in of the very heart of life—the love that moves every good and perfect thing—has touched me beyond expression. Dear, it is so good, so grand, to see how you find and acknowledge the God-power in the poor and know that His love in these poor hearts is bigger than anything else. . . ."

Then a few more odd-and-end bits of letters that belong here can easily be skipped over if they seem too many. I myself cannot destroy them, when they make so shining-clear the love she lavished upon my father and every one of her brood. One or two of my own have reminiscent interest.

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,

"30 October, 1898.

" . . . Suddenly Father exclaimed, 'They say, don't they, my wits are all gone?' 'No,' I said, 'the wits are out in the back premises at present. We all know that.' Then that despairing look came into his face: 'I know you are all going away from me and I'm going to be left in a strange house.' . . . I with my arms round him told him *I* should never leave him and that Irene and I loved nothing in the world so much as to be with him. . . . He really is not worse, only I think, not having you, it seems worse for him and for us. . . .

"I asked him if he'd like Irene to sing, and so she did—the first time he's heard any music since we came back. It was perfectly lovely to see his face transform from the intensely unhappy creature to the wondering, listening, loving soul that shone out of him at the very beginning of her '*O Salutaris*' [by M. de Nevers] 'Beautiful, beautiful,' he exclaimed. All through it she sang so humanizingly—gently. So now we are hoping much from music. . . ."

I look back at those far-distant years when my whole thoughts were given to mental troubles, and I cannot but say, "Here again is proof of the emotions' power." My father was not naturally musical.

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,

"Nov. 6th, 1899.

" . . . What a letter of belovedness you sent me for my birthday too! How far above all imperishable rubies—or pearls or gold! Dear son, what made every word so particularly precious to me was the poetry in it—all so like your beloved father. I had been looking at some of his letters to me of 50 years ago; and there were set ringing the same eternities of truth in the dying of the outer garment of beauty, yet having to lie at rest for ever so long perhaps, before rising again as full of light and life as ever. The *One who is the Life and Light* was his constant theme to me. . . . It was all so like your words and thoughts—of our summer delights having gone to rest. I'll show you the verses some

day. . . . I haven't been well; for three days without life and wondering whether I shall live long enough to go on tending him till he gets better. . . ."

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,  
"Nov. 24th, 1898.

". . . Your letter this morning *was* delightful. How I should like to have seen you with all those little children. . . . I read much of it to Father this morning. . . . He was much interested in your children's party. . . . I wish you could just see him now, just dozing into a little sleep and looks so lovely. He has been so like his best old self these last 3 days, but some bits are very sad. His nights, and consequently mine, are wonderfully good; and he eats very well indeed. . . . I mustn't write one word more but what he said the other day. 'There's nothing but *Amore.*' . . . Then: 'I shall never see Greville again—Oh! my boy, my Greville.' . . . It is wonderful in looking over his pile of new-bound books to hear the little remarks he makes about the learned ones, telling Irene and me little things we didn't know. . . ."

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET, W.,  
"14 Nov., 1899

". . . How I wish I could put my arms round and comfort you! I am afraid you are feeling dreadfully this separation from your chicks. You see, if you *will* keep your big brown wings so warm for them to run under, when they for a moment peep out and then the horrid world drives them from you, you must expect to keep on needing them. There is no such thing in the world as a solitary need. One needs and another is needed: though often the two never meet—or must not—in the here-below. But you and yours, thanks be to God! need and are needed, and therefore belong to Him and one another. . . .

I had a happy day at Birtly.<sup>1</sup> Maude's girl-friend, only 15, Melcie Oakes, was there: such a wonderful gentle personality. She can lie down in the woods and call the birds and they come

<sup>1</sup> The home of my cousin, Joseph King. The girl mentioned is now the wife of Major S. L. Norris, R.E.

to her! She worships Father, and seems to have, though little more than a child, an awareness of magical on-goings. Her mother, Maude tells me, is almost superhuman in her deep perceptions of spiritual happenings, extraordinarily gifted in second-sight; though she is not a Celt. Very like Mrs. Russell Gurney in some ways, I should think. . . .”

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET, W.,

“Nov. 28, 1898.

“. . . We doctors have appalling inflictions every Christmas in the way of grateful patients' offerings. The hospital ones are often touching and amusing—for instance one given me on Tuesday—a pair of wool-work slippers representing, I was *told*, a dog's head, though its eyes were almost the only recognizable bits of portraiture, being just large black beads: ‘O, just you look at his eyes, Sir! Ain't I done 'em almost like a artis?’ hissed the poor old dear, one finger on her tracheotomy tube.

“But if all were as easy to deal with, I should not be complaining. The trouble is that while a woman can always return a man's present if she wants to snub him, for a man in the same predicament to do so would be to offer unpardonable insult. I have the last few months been seeing a charming and clever woman belonging to the ‘best society’—this of course being mainly ‘army’; and she just pesters me with things I don't want. They vary from hot-house flowers and baskets of beribboned fruit to silver inkstands, all of which I am profusely grateful for, adding that my wife is simply charmed and will find them so useful, etc., etc. The latest, and I trust the last, is two dozen of '63 port, which I simply cannot despise, and can't pretend that only my wife enjoys the rare tippie! Well, yesterday we had a scene in my consulting-room. She began by reproaching me that I had never once responded to her appeals to call upon her, and I had only the lame excuse to offer that I literally had no time. She is half French, and brings with her—for propriety I suppose—her French poodle, as exquisitely groomed as herself. Then, when I had done what was professionally necessary, I referred to the magnificent port, with some poor joking as to the weakness of my head and heart. At that, she became the defeated actress—she would have made her fortune on the stage. For she flopped down on the floor between me at my big

desk and the fire, and buried her face in her hands. If only she had been behind the footlights, you would have sworn she was weeping really! Not a bit of it! though her poodle who had been lying meekly waiting by the door, as if to guard it for her, now ran up to her wagging his tail and licking her hands that hid the mock tears. Finding this of no avail in comforting her, he sat down on his haunches and for a moment howled piteously, just as our Charley [a Bedlington terrier] used to do when I did much double-stopping on my fiddle. Poodle must have thought I had been playing on his mistress's heart-strings, though really, Mother, I had been fighting shy of those touchy theatrical articles. I think she was savage at her failure to bring me to her feet. When I suggested sending for my wife's maid to tidy her, she instantly recovered and became a matter-of-fact lady again. I don't think I shall have to see her again—I hope to goodness not! But, all the same, the port is A1. Don't please say I ought to return it! Some has already gone too far on the downward road!"

Yet I had to see her a few times more. Almost immediately after this trifling incident her husband lost all his money. So then I was able, without any possibility of her misunderstanding me, to give her my professional services without fees. She proved quite splendid in her misfortunes—as only a very clever woman can. I learned more of her subsequent story than she ever knew. By a strange coincidence, her man of business, the lawyer who had somehow made away with her husband's property, had, a few weeks earlier, been a patient of mine. Subsequently, when he became a ticket-of-leave man, I was able to serve him also without fee—his work being then cleaning knives and boots for his wife's lodgers at a seaside resort.

*To my Mother*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"March 6th.

". . . It is your wedding day on the 8th; and then I shall remember you and Father and the Oneness of your love for each other and for us who come of that love. I think I could write

all night and not be able to tell you all that is in my heart and mind about you. After all it would only be saying yet again that yours is the same love as that Creative-All-Love—with whom there is never any denying, but always giving and doing; even though what we suffer in waiting—in the length of time—looks as though He ignored it. . . . As I grow older I am sure I think and feel more as you and Father would have me think and feel, and this although the stones and weeds seem pretty much the same as, when I was a small boy, I was set to weeding in the garden for punishment. . . .

“And now I am having such a week of hard work that my one feeling is insufficient-unto-the-day-are-the-hours-thereof. To-day I have been incessantly with patients since 9 a.m. until now, 7.45 p.m. Now comes dinner, which I don’t want; then bed and oblivion, which I do. . . . Your dear sweet letter received yesterday made me very happy and I carry it about with me—a jewel enshrining the intangible something which passes all understanding of philosophy; namely your love for me. . . .

“Out of the vanity of my heart—or something better, I think—I send you this little poem which I think it won’t do Father any harm to read: it may even do him good to see where the technical faults lie, though I don’t think he will find any in its spirit. . . .”

#### “CONTINUITY

“Never is gossamer carded and spun,  
But a finer and stronger is somewhere begun;  
Never a dragon is beaten right sore,  
But new strength is sent for the beating of more.

“Never skies darken with thunder and flood,  
But the roots drink their fill for the quickening bud;  
Never Spring shakes the soft sleet from her wings,  
But the thrush pipes a hymn full of magical things.

“Never her fruit will an apple-tree yield,  
But she dreams of pink blossoms and lambs in the field;  
Never her petals fly away in the wind,  
But in promise of apples, ripe, rosy and kind.



‘Consider the ravens, that sow not nor reap;  
Yet One their full barn in the heavens doth keep;  
Never were flowers, that toil not nor spin,  
But they bid a child gather and carry them in.

‘Never a story is finished and told,  
But another begins, always new, quite as old;  
Never is castle built up in the air,  
But behold! in the vision a rainbow for stair.

‘Never child loses his way in the night,  
But the house-door is open, the candle alight.  
So let the clouds clash with their impotent wars,  
For a red sun is risen on Fairyland shores.’”

## CHAPTER IV

### *À DIEU*

SOME few letters may yet be borne with before I put away these sign-manuals for ever. They involve a few incidents, anecdotal or reflective, that may prove interesting, and cease when my mother left us in 1902. My practice fortunately was now lessening, partly because many able men had adopted the specialty; but more because the telephone, now everywhere used, gave the general practitioner more satisfying communication with consultants who were not deaf. Moreover I could no longer hear well enough to attend the medical societies, which, owing to their proceedings being always reported in the medical press, kept a man's name in circulation. But I was glad for my work to be easier. Not only could I give more time to each patient, but I could now hope that a certain book might at last be written. It was often discussed between my mother and myself, although it went altogether beyond her knowledge of science, and sometimes must have startled her with its rough-handling of doctrines long sanctioned as the basis of religion. Her wisdom in tacitly admitting her ignorance, and in seeing exactly where she might object without the risk of inviting bewildering argument, seems to me not only rare but extraordinary in a woman who, always deferred to by her husband, was inclined to overvalue her decisions, if not her opinions.

The ensuing letters need little explanation. One of my happiest Reminiscences was the building of a house for my parents—one that should satisfy all possible requirements. Another was the book I had for some years been planning as a Natural History of Symbolism. But it was never finished; though its initial argument, favouring the

concept of Teleology in Evolution, was published under the name of *The Tree in the Midst*.<sup>1</sup>

*To my Father*

“Dec. 8th, 1899.

“. . . Once more on the tenth we shall all be drinking your health in your sparkling red Burgundy, as a symbol of the life-blood you have given us along with multitudes who have found in your words Faith, Hope and Charity as the triune *substance* of life.

“Yesterday I signed the contract for the building of St. George’s Wood. For that, an’ it please you, will be your English Home for all your earthly time. Bob’s plans are quite perfect, I think; and there you will easily gather together in your arms—you and Mother—all your children. It should be a lovely home, set among huge beech-trees. The country is still gloriously lovely. How exquisite the winter months may be—brown and purple all a-glitter in cold sunlight; so emphatic of our own, as well as the old trees’ resurrection!

“I’ve been writing a lot, and I do think you would say I am improving my style. I so often remember what you once said to me over my carpentering: ‘Never be content if you say to yourself, “O! that’ll have to do!” for then you may be sure it won’t do at all!’ It should be an 11th commandment, and it has helped, I think, even my surgery. . . .”

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,

“Feb. 4th, 1900.

“. . . I am hoping more and more that my book may help some overburdened stragglers. . . . I am finding Maurice’s *Mental and Metaphysical Philosophy* extremely helpful. Then I am collecting the many 16th-century translations of Boehme. I find him stupendous and enchanting in his simple mysticism—more vision-gifted, I think, than Prof. Maurice realized. Both these seers are easier reading than Huxley’s essay on Berkeley, which I am tackling concurrently. Of course, Huxley

<sup>1</sup> Hodder & Stoughton, 1904.

wrote more lucidly; but I think a great deal of his philosophy is distinctly *unscientific*! which remark, I know, savours of rankest conceit. . . . I am trying to put things together, ship-shapely, and show how the Law has made all things and ideas—all hopes indeed—just the essence of our complexly unified Nature. . . .

“I am going to St. George’s Wood to-day. I am afraid I shall find all the planting gone wrong, trees upside down, roots sprawling and weeping in the air, the drive turfed, the lawn gravelled, the sundial at loggerheads with its heavenly director. It wouldn’t be surprising, seeing that philosophers hope to find truth by turning things upside down with a spade—when by this time they might know, with St. Paul, that only Love creates and reveals. . . .”

*From my Mother*

“CASA CORAGGIO,

“Monday, March 5th, 1900.

“. . . The Beloved *is* really better. After your dear love-letter this morning I have been wanting to tell you how much, how strong your love for me and your dad makes me. I can’t live without it and *he* wouldn’t, but we feel grateful to God and you and all for your love. I know how sad at times your soul is and often I would say more than I may. . . .

“If Father’s peace and glorious praise is not to come yet in full satisfaction, still the Almighty Father’s Will is being done; and I don’t think He is angry with us if we do cry out puzzledly, complainingly—‘Why, Oh Lord, why?’ And the answer that has come to me this week is so absolutely satisfying—‘*What I do thou knowest not now—but thou shalt know hereafter.*’

“Wouldn’t that be enough for any good child from a loving Father? Christ said it to Peter about washing his feet. And how lovingly said! Don’t I know how impetuous and impatient Peter was. Yet how Christ loved him! . . .

“Don’t be vexed at what you said to me. I am vexed only when you do not distinguish between the class and the individual—between the grievous errors of the System’s bad doctrines and the purity and graciousness of those who live with the light all about them—wheat notwithstanding the tares. . . . When I hear what seems unfairness from your lips—so like the old ugly *ranting* which Father and I used to hear—it makes me *so* unhappy. Those odious doctrines will some day become obsolete by the

glorifying of righteousness that must be brought out of every human being. . . . Don't you see, dear, what I mean? I can't bear you to think I have no sympathy with you. . . . But I want you to be large and broad—not to nibble at classes and stupid people. . . .”

*From my Mother*

“C. C. B.,

“20 April, 1900.

“. . . This lovely morning, the olive trees' leaves from our window look like masses of gold dust with the sun rising on them. . . . Not even you could hate all silly sawdust more than I do. But do not include in your maledictions such Churchmen as Prof. Collins, the Bishop of Hereford, Wilson Carlile, Father Stanton, etc., etc., etc. These surely have the love of Christ and his simple teaching burning in their hearts. They make their lives and ministrations all a sacrifice of love, *communicating* with those they labour for. Surely there must be some terrible day of the Lord coming to purge his floor of sawdust and scout the idolaters. If it weren't for the music in things, as you say, they would dry up like a withered leaf. But O, the music always creates emotion and feeling enough to keep the truth in some vigour of life! . . .”

*To my Mother*

“April 23, 1900.

“. . . I see the points of your dear letters, and I am sure I do get stupidly narrow. Bitter aloes always make one screw up one's eyes; sour grapes still more. But my work gives me intimacy with such a lot of ministers and priests of all degrees; and if I am too ready to generalize, I really don't forget what is under the surface. But Oxford is so sacrosanctly obscurantist—yet O, *so* gentlemanly! I must often worry people by gassing on things outside my province. But Religion is everyman's business; you and Father allow that! If by any chance the subject crops up with a clergyman, he is quite tolerant, even interested—not unlike many aristocrats who, anxious to let me feel they are not aware of any social barrier, outstep their kindly courtesy, and give the show away entirely. But a congregational minister will always discuss religious subjects as if I were his equal; if he is a bit conceited over his big-mindedness, he is never patronizing.

. . . Some of the younger ones, 'varsity men nowadays, are delightful. . . . But the best people to discuss things with are Quakers and R.C. priests. One Irish priest, Father M——, I have made a real friend of. He has the look and gentle converse of a mediaeval saint, and is richly intellectual. If I could believe all he tells me of his faith, I would go over to Rome to-morrow—but *wagon-lit-de-luxe* please, or I might repent before I got there! And such a humorist he is! I think Father would embrace him for his wide-mindedness. A few weeks ago I said to him: 'I wonder how you manage to keep happy, Father, when you know that such multitudes are outside the pale, booked for everlasting perdition!'

"'But,' he replied very gravely, and with a touch of his wonderful smile, '*you are not outside the pale; that is impossible.* At the worst, 'tis only a little purgatory you'll be needing, to make you understand things you *won't* see for fear of accepting them!'

"'But,' I answered, 'if you were my confessor, you couldn't allow my untamed thoughts, though you patiently put up with them now. Anyhow it is not purgatory that would make me right. I should need a good dose, hot and strong, of Hell-fire to burn the devil out of me.'

"'Och!' he exclaimed with a touch of his soft Dublin brogue. 'The ould Divil himself would have none of you! "'Tis yourself," he'd be saying, "is making my own place too hot for me, so it is—and you no right to be here at all!"'

"You see he likes me, if only because of Father's poetry, which he has read some of; and his blarney was ever so pleasant.

"Of course I am adamantly anti-papal. Yet I do feel there is something in the intellectual peace and authority that Rome offers—and in the old Worm's ceasing to gnaw when once you get absolution. Our own Church's wholesale absolution, without individual penance, never rings quite true to me. Rome will some day work out her own reformation. Some Pope, mightier than any yet, will kick his throne away and become a mendicant disciple. Then perhaps all the Christian Churches will find their deliverance and comfort in papal infallibility!

"Dearest Mother, I am taking to heart your words, trying to be wider-minded, in spite of the 'linen decency that still haunts us'—Milton's phrase, you know, grand nonconformist that he was! . . .

"At Bournemouth last Sunday . . . we went to the Salvation

Army Fort and were welcomed just as if we were unexpected guests not one bit different from their poverty-stricken congregation. There was no intellectual food; but can that sort of stuff raze out the written tablets? Not much! But the really magnificent band, and even the dogmatic, terrorizing sermon, made us both feel we had got more than a spark of Glory direct from the Gospels. It all touched me deeply, though I was not tempted to the penitential form. . . .

"Suppose I chuck my profession and become a S.A. ranter? There are more impossible things. I could at least beat the big drum, though I'm not sure I should like the rotten eggs. But Harley Street is a deal comfortabler than slums for slackers like me. If I seem to you irreverent, it's only the typewriter's agnosticism—not mine! It's a noisy beast and won't let me get in a word of my realest own. . . ."

At last came the first summer in the new house, which was, I really do think, all they could hope for. I had given my mother a lease of it at the rent of one shilling *per annum*, the landlord to pay all rates, etc. That first rent still remains among my treasures in its little ornate box where my mother humorously and securely packed it for me.

*From my Mother*

"ST. GEORGE'S WOOD,

"HASLEMERE,

"Oct. 31st. 1900.

". . . Such a lovely morning, dearest Greville. . . . Were it not for the golden-glory beeches and the rich brown carpetings and hangings we should think we must have had a long sleep during which we have been to Bordighera and come back again on a May morning. . . . Greville dear, it looks to me as if the dark cloud may be moving away to let Father's rain-washed spirit unfold its lovely wings. I'm almost afraid of hoping too much, but I am certain there has been movement of some kind. . . ."

Even with all this hope and its sorrows, I could still be anxious that my mother should see why I must let my pen utter thoughts which gave me no peace:

To my Mother

"HARLEY STREET,

"12 Dec., 1900.

". . . Here is a queer stanza which has just come trotting, as it seemed, into my head—always more quarrelsome than my heart:

"Thinks Science, keen witted with logic and facts,  
She's learned, forsooth;  
But, spite of all text-books and chattering tracts,  
Unproven is Truth!

" 'He to whom the Eternal Word speaks,' said Thomas à Kempis, 'is set at liberty from a multitude of opinions.' And I often think Father in this his day of silence may be listening, perhaps in the dreamland of his Novalis, for the Eternal Word. Anyhow he is resting, free from the 'multitude of opinions' which do but chatter irresponsibly. . . .

"Don't trouble, dear Mother, about your failing memory. It is only asleep, waiting till Sunrise sweeps away the shadows. Like the other sense-organs—eyes, ears and tongue—it too waits deliverance. In place of the 'body of this death' you'll some day put on immortality; and then your old memory will gleam and shimmer, fresh and strong, interwoven with its pattern of all the lovely things in your long life. . . ."

To my Mother

"ST. GEORGE'S WOOD,

"HASLEMERE.

"23rd Dec., 1900.

". . . I hope this will reach you on Christmas Day as outward and visible sign of my *ever-growing* love for you and Father. . . . The point of my book is all this, that nothing *is*, save in virtue of its becoming, of its power to grow as soon as it finds its own right soil. . . . This story of the Incarnate Love is all so beautiful as a 'plan of salvation' for us sons and daughters of Adam and Eve—that it just *has* to be true. Yet I can't think why one is so shy of speaking of it. . . .

"Mother, often I seem to have got understanding of the littleness of time; as if History's most tragic story of failure and transcendent victory belonged to the world only last week! . . .



But I have an awful fear that my words read preachily, a shameful, horrid fault. Yet you will forgive it, if nobody else could. . . .”

I must not quote the letter of my mother to which the following was a rejoinder: it was, more than any others, for me alone. Yet I may say this much, that it concerned a passing despair, lest her Garden of Eden should prove, as it were, her Gethsemane.

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,

“Sunday, 27 Jan., 1901.

“. . . What words have I that will ease your anguish—none that you don't know better than I. Don't fear the failings and failures, Mother; they have to come; and our bodies *must* wear out to make way for the new birth. But you, you bravest of women, your Love will surmount all crucifying and bodily decay. Some of us even now behold your immortal robe shining through the worn-out garment we love so well. . . . I long for my new suit, though perhaps I can't yet fit it. . . . Soon now my work will be too difficult for my deafness, and already I do at times long for deliverance. I wonder if even you ever realize the daily misery of it—so almost overwhelming sometimes that I cannot believe God meant it for me. What He does *mean* is that I shall face and overcome it.

“Here's a variation on that bit of shambling verse I sent:

“Pure Science, with logic concrete and abstract,  
Looks wise as a spectacled owl:  
Yet she thinks love is moonshine, poets all crack'd  
And with never a speck of a soul.

“Though it's only meant to make you chuckle with me, it really concerns this book of mine, nearly finished now. I shall be dreadfully shy if I *do* find a publisher. I shall be laughed at by all the accredited scientific workers. Some of my best friends will certainly think I am cracked, though I'm not a poet. Even the big-minded Alfred Russell Wallace, who has read some of it for me, feels he must snub me—on the score of its deducing the ethical from biological law. He might as well quarrel with an oak tree for not being cut up into mouse-traps. . . . But both friends and enemies—and I have some—will say, why can't he

stick to his own work? Still, I have got to do it, you know, even if *ruat coelum*, and takes its own pity on my patients. . . .

“Dear, sweet Mother! how near we get to your golden wedding! I wish we could all come to you! . . .”

The 8th of March, 1901, was the date of this long-anticipated event. My parents were then at Bordighera and it was not possible for any but their two daughters to be with them. I had been taking a few lessons from a goldsmith in order to make a fifty-link gold chain for my mother. But it was not to be given her until we could actually celebrate the event at St. George's Wood on June 8th. I need hardly say the chain delighted her; and so perhaps it may count to me for righteousness, more than all my literary strivings. In its clasp I set a star-sapphire—my father's favourite stone, to be symbolic of his uniting indis severably that half-century of years. At intervals on the chain I hung eleven various stones, each separately set, to suggest the characteristics of each child: the four already gone denoted by flawless pearls. The craftsmanship was poor, of course, but it served quite as well as if it were a priceless work of art.

*To my Father and Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,  
“5 March, 1901.

“MY BELOVED FATHER AND MOTHER,

“Fifty long, labouring, striving, rejoicing and weeping years! Fifty links in your chain of life! How long a chain compared with the little life lived by each of you before the other came as the crowning of all hope! But little or long is all one when you have each other to hold in that eternal embrace, still to work for one another, and all along the way, for God. The difference, I think, will be only this that *here* you have both grown old in Sorrow, *there* you will ever be growing young in the living Joy. You, Mother, will be tending Father's health instead of his sicknesses; and you, Father, (now resting awhile in a home of Silence, perhaps even now getting stronger in the patience of Love) will *there* be setting Mother free to bring into sweetest play

all those imaginative possibilities, which we, her hungry, ailing children, stood so much in the way of. . . .

"We need both of you more than ever—and the more because you are now needing our upholding. Such services as we can give you delights us, just as the service you gave your little babies once enriched you. Yet we can never give you what you have given us, utterly beloved Mother. We can but help and hold with our feeble hands, hoping that will declare our love. All we are, I do believe, is of your substance—soul and body, mind and character. To you and thence to God we are responsible for our talents. Some of your burdens, some even of imperfections, inherited again from your parents as debts which you, with all your struggling may have not yet repaid, are come on to us for further liquidation. And these we can accept joyfully and humbly, because bequeathed for our own will-strengthening warfare. So much for the visiting of sins upon the 3rd and 4th generation, and the Christian interpretation of that seemingly unjust Law of Retribution! God help us to live by the Light as you have done! . . ."

I do not wonder that these rambling metaphysics puzzled my mother. She admits this in her reply:

*From my Mother*

"BORDIGHERA,  
"March 11th, 1901.

". . . To say all your letter means to me wants a clearer head than I have just now: I won't say *a quieter heart*; for I don't believe in all these fifty years since Father and I were made one, that my heart has ever been quieter, more grateful for all the lovely loves Heaven has given us, than it is now; and all day long last Friday (the Golden Wedding). And as for you and my best Beloved, you are both more dear to me than ever. . . . Of course there have been more exultant joys, blissful, ecstatic delights—such as we both had when first holding and gazing on Lilia—that White Wonder! . . . Perhaps the sense of the miraculous was not quite so strong after the first—but no abatement of love unspeakable. . . ."

After the Golden Wedding celebration at St. George's Wood, my mother's health failed ominously, with frequent

pain and total loss of appetite. But she never let my father suspect her suffering. She still slept beside him, and seldom needed the night-nurse's help. He gave no anxiety, enjoyed being read to, but almost never spoke. Yet it troubled my mother that he seemed to be in less constant need of her. I think she never realized his lively watching for her return, whenever she was absent.

The following trifles suggest how satisfactory was the new home. It should have come earlier, one thinks; for now my mother was little able to enjoy it. That summer of 1901 was one of sub-tropical heat.

*To my Mother at St. George's Wood*

"HARLEY STREET,  
"July 15th.

". . . How are you in this kitchen weather? We put raw food on the table and it cooks itself while I say 'Jack Robinson'—instead of grace! Forgive me, dearest Mother, if I shock you. I am too washed out to speak truth in this nethermost pit.

"But people are too feeble to have bad throats—much less to fork out guineas. But I will bicycle down on Saturday even if I have to sham dead when I reach your dear arms.

"Eat, dear Mother, eat! even if you do like only cucumber, lemonade and new potatoes. They're very bad—just like me, though you don't say so—but are better than nothing. . . ."

*From my Mother*

"ST. GEORGE'S WOOD,  
"July 17th.

". . . Under the magnificent beeches; Father in green arm-chair, I on the Ilkley couch—such a rest—the glorious beech-roof-dome and leafy, aspiring stairs! But you are right; it *is* kitchen weather; and it makes me not much use. Father's eyes are looking very lovely as I see them now under this paternally grand tree. I wish you could have seen him laugh at your meat being cooked by a 'Jack Robinson'! It was lovely seeing him so happily amused. . . . If he should go on getting better. . . . Oh, the joy, after fifty years of such companionship! Yet I get in despair sometimes. . . ."

Here I must quote from my description of a brief holiday in North Wales. It shows how ineradicable, even in one almost overwhelmed by the world's urgencies, the sense of Beauty may be. Nor could I, when it claimed me for disciple, let it go: did it not sanction a certain inexplicable, hardly more than sub-conscious hunger?

*To my Mother*

“LLANDUDNO,  
“Aug. 29th, 1901.

“. . . I have had a two days' outing all along of my little self; and I *did* enjoy them. I went up Snowdon by the old route from Capel Curig, and had much the same experience as on Easter Monday when I was 16. The same wind was still blowing, cold as winter, though now no snow. I must have told you long ago how we got at last into a little hut of Heaven where an ancient mariner huddled up over a fire sold bottles of Olympian Bass. And now I was just as glad to find shelter though the magical hut is swelled into a nasty hotel. I found one room packed with beanfeasters all pinched with cold, though they had topped the mountain by the new rail-road. In place of the old man and his Bass, I was greeted by reeking tea, pipes, and bad cigars; a stove in the centre belching sulphur fumes into the foetid air; windows all shut and streaming; not much like Heaven now, unless Hell itself is, according to Boehme, still portion of God's All-mercy!

“After a cup of beneficent, dam-bad tea, I went out again to find a thick mist, like grey cotton-wool, threatening to toss me into chaos, like Bunyan's *Quag* in the *Valley of the Shadow*. But still holding on to Snowdon's mighty head, it spread away for miles like a dirty rag canopy, its untidy edges constantly ripped off and whirled away into vanishment. Yet in spite of it, the most superb sun-and-cloud-lit landscape was unfolding at my feet—precipitous passes, tarns and lakes and rivers, the encompassing mountains streaked with galloping waters; further off, meadows and forests; away and away to cities where men live and love, sin, suffer and die; or to the deep sea—over the face of whose waters, as well as over the deeper-troubled seas of Humanity, the Spirit of God must be always moving.

“It was all so immense and grand that, though chilled to the

bone, shivering and aching, I had to get all I could for storing memory. So I faced the bitter wind again and began the descent by the usual, easier path. Yet it soon became terrible to me, so frightfully limb-weary was I, and with a shocking headache. The path goes for a mile along a jagged crest, precipitous in some places where a slip might be easily fatal. With the gale in my teeth, and once more hugged by the cotton-wool fog, I confess I was in real, rank fear. I was absolutely alone and, but for the shamefulness of it, I could have crawled, fancy! on all fours. I didn't quite do that; but for one moment, even while despising myself, I stooped and touched old Earth with my open hand, as if to make sure she was still solid and not heaving waves. Thanks to the dear Mother, the touch of her tender strength renewed my sanity; at once I began to feel warm and no longer at the mercy of the fog. How your more sportsmanlike sons would laugh at me for such confessions!

"When I reached the main road, I had to walk another four miles to Beddgelert. There, after 18 miles' walking, seven of them really severe climbing for me, I found the hotel full. But I found a lodging. . . . My landlady mothered me with a bowl of perfect bread-and-milk. She would not hear of my going out again to buy a comb and a toothbrush, but supplied both. I *did* use the comb, preferring the possibility of having to shave my head, rather than hurt her feelings. But the poor toothbrush had already done too much service; and out of pity for its remaining three bristles, I slunk out and bought a comparatively new one. Everything else was spotlessly clean, and she charged me only 4s. ! The dear woman told me not to mind my deafness, as I couldn't help *that* ! It was God's business ! . . ."

*From my Mother*

(In response to some letter that has escaped)

"ST. GEORGE'S WOOD,

"Sept. 26, 1901.

". . . Oh, if you could but have seen Father's over-come-edness at your profoundly lovely dream of Eternity. We could both have wept. . . . My joy to see him so moved was almost too great. Yes—yours and his beliefs and dreams and sometimes apocalypses are from the everlasting One, from whom you are both come. I call out for gladness to the One Father that I did not spoil it all: I hope, dear, you see what I mean. Every word of

your *Home*-pictures, as well as the mighty *Forward* ones, is like a diamond of Light to me. . . . I did not know you felt all that so heartfully about our Madonna-like Mary [the second of the family and first to be taken].

“‘I’m writing to Greville,’ I said to Father; ‘have you any message for him, dear?’

“‘Yes’ (pause, I coaxing him; then) ‘Yes’ (pause again; and then quite softly) ‘*My interminable love!*’ . . .”

This is the last direct message I ever had from my father. It will surely last me for the duration of time.

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,

“*Sept. 30th, 1901.*

“. . . How O how I wish I could do something for your dreadful sciatic pain! Why do the good ones suffer so terribly and the bad ’uns escape!—a question almost deranging, but for that law of vicarious suffering in which Jesus once bore, still bears, the intolerable part. The longer I live, the less I trouble about paradox. We know so little—nothing but this, that with God there is time enough; long or short, it will be all right when the healing does come. But the paradox of shattered hopes and unanswered prayers makes so many of us afraid of nailing our colours. In the intellectual world, I think, never was there so earnest a desire for more light, or sincerer search; and for my part I can’t see that God’s works don’t tally with what His Prophets teach. Father’s work has been to show the utter sufficing of the God-idea. How strong he always was about God having no secrets, always revealing himself and his ways as fast as we become able to look them in the face. . . . Certainly it is the darkness, not the revealing light of new knowledge, that we have to fear.

“Tell Father that I shall never, never, forget his message of ‘*interminable love.*’ . . .”

Here follows one more narrative letter of no deep importance yet of sufficient interest, I think:

*To my Mother*

“HARLEY STREET,

“*Dec. 3rd, 1901.*

“. . . I have been autocratically summoned to the Chinese Ambassador in Portland Place. It was quite an adventure,

and may amuse Father. It was quite difficult for me to see him at the only hour possible, in a word, when he would be *fit* to be seen. They say he is a confirmed opium-smoker. Well, immediately on my arrival I seemed to be shut off from my own world in impenetrable, oriental gloom, though the ground-floor was quite ordinary in arrangements and furniture. But when I reached the first floor, I was swept into yellow darkness quite congruous with strangest odours that instantly recalled Canton to me. On reaching the August Presence, I was surrounded by countless yellow faces, watching, immobile, of whom two conducted me to H.E. I failed to make proper obeisance, I fear; but he became aware of me with a slit-eye stare, as if he thought I had reached the very acme of Western impudence. I had already been advised that he suffered from polypus of the nose, and would not allow anyone to operate; but someone had told him that I treated such cases painlessly. I rigged up my electric light and asked permission to look into his demi-godly nostrils. This, I understood him to say (though I practically heard nothing) was quite unnecessary; that he required not a useless examination, but a cure! Yet at last he allowed me sufficient inspection to confirm the previous diagnosis. I told him of the extraordinary relief to the whole system, as well as his asthma, if he would allow me to cure him; and I undertook, on the honour of an Englishman, to remove the growths without spilling one drop of blood, and without inflicting even the minutest pain. I really knew I could do this: at any rate in a preliminary operation! Even this would give so much relief that I hoped he would trust me to do all I wanted. Yet the result was my immediate dismissal; H.E. mumbling, as far as I could hear, that the Chinese were more skilful in such matters, and that he would wait till he was home again. I was then led forth the Presence; and I wondered if I was not really a stray dog after a bone, to be kicked or perhaps whipped. But the poor man is a great invalid, and not quite responsible. . . .”

Only on one other occasion were my services solicited by an oriental potentate. The case was somewhat similar, the patient being one of our most honoured Indian Princes: a charming personality, intellectual of course, and understanding perfectly our western, materialistic minds. Nevertheless, when I arrived in his multifold suite at the —— Hotel, I had to operate surrounded by fully armed Sikhs in



regimental attendance, and an extraordinary number of native servants, yet with no nurse to help. Here my services were entirely and generously appreciated, and with never a hint of condescension.

The final letter from that wonderful mother had to be dictated, and only a few of its words are worth recording, some lovingly reproachful, seeing that I could not go to her for Christmas, as she had hoped:

*From my Mother*

“December 20th, 1901.

“. . . I haven't written to you, Dearest, simply because I couldn't. If you come it will be lovely, divine. . . . I don't fancy many more days can pass. Oh, to feel your hand once more! Dear, don't think I am miserable about the dying part of it—that is all right; and you and I will know it to be well, when it is decided for us. . . .”

One more letter of my own, written before my parting from her, serves as a last declaration of what she was to me. Yet in it I had to assume a lightness of heart I could not feel.

*To my Mother*

“THE REFORM CLUB,

“January 1st, 1902.

“. . . This is to greet you on the New Year's beginning. May I be an ever better son than I yet can be, hampered as I am. And may you be stronger every day, as it is ordained from the beginning that you must and shall be. The dear saints will see to it, and call upon God, the great consulting Physician, to dispense his own medicine (though it would be quite unprofessional). Don't think me irreverent, Belovedest! Indeed, is not God so much with us, and of us, that he may enjoy our fun—so long as it is child-like, perhaps? But, but, no wrong-struck notes can ever change for you and me the central fact of our life—that, now and for ever, we are *mother and son*. So my wish for this new year may well be that some day we shall stand together before the Throne, you, strong and young again in the

gifts of your inheritance, I not rejected, even though I have grown so much older than you with the world's grating and friction. . . ."

A few days later I hurriedly left my work to see her. The change was terrible, except in this that her countenance, which for the past ten years had been slowly and surely winning the look of Loveliness so signally her own, and unlike any other woman's that I ever knew, had now unmistakably put on its immortality. So I left her; and, I think, she came nearer to me than was ever possible before.

The night is done, the day is won,  
The old world neweth  
And strength endueth.  
In the tears she breweth  
The rainbow showeth!  
The night is done! So will I run  
And welcome cloud or rising sun.  
Sweet Lord, Thy risen day is won!  
Grant me some work yet waits to be done!



BOOK VII

THE SETTING SUN



*[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible, appearing as a series of light grey lines.]*

BOOK III

THE SETTING SUN

## CHAPTER I

### *ME JUDICE*

ONCE more I claim that it is only Reminiscences and their correct adjusting to convictions that I have undertaken. Thus far it has seemed possible to write truthfully, even if some vanities, quixotic or demure, with perhaps a few social braveries, servile fears and other such beguilements that gibe at or flatter our elusive strength of character, have been ignored because they belong rather to autobiography. But even if one concede to any kindly, sceptical critic a right to read between the lines, one difficulty still remains. Despite the timeless labours of speech-artificers and poets throughout the long ages, we have not yet at our command a language quite unimpeachable. No man understands more than he can, or believes more than is in him; and when one realizes that all language is built of symbols variable in import, he sees how difficult it must be to impart ideas that transcend the needs of larder or the vagaries of wardrobe and weather. Should one protest that certainly all men of the same nation employ a common speech, he must admit that each of the multitudes has need of a dictionary specially written by and for himself; so that he may, with some measure of truthfulness, say one thing when he means another—or, perchance, nothing at all. But even with the help of such dictionary, no man will easily say what he means to such a hypercritical if not hypocritical hob-goblin as his Self.

William Blake, that tower of poetic wisdom, knew all this very well, or he had never said to certain readers:

“He who doubts from what he sees  
Will ne'er believe, do what you please”;

or to others:

“He who shall teach the child to doubt  
The rotting grave shall ne'er get out.”

The whole difficulty lies in this, that “A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees,” nor puts the same construction upon words, those symbolic vehicles of thought, which we depend upon for nearer intimacy. Appositely, I again recall the remark of my father that, should one tell him it was easy to speak the truth, clearly that man had never tried. The non-understanding between, say, a German and a Frenchman who have not learned one another's language, may be less insurmountable than the ambiguity between a husband and wife whose only literature is a cheque-book, its significance ignored by the one, feared by the other. For to such a pair, and however kindly their home's amenities, something is missing; something which it is perhaps Life's chief purpose to discover, even though the Truth of it all first bound them together.

In admitting all this difficulty in language, can I hope that some will believe that this, my *Me Judice*, is sincere? Or, just because of its straining at sincerity, will my endeavour prove inscrutably prolix? Yet, to quote Blake again, “Truth can never be told so as to be understood and not be believed.” And in putting together these Reminiscences, my hope has been to make one point clear: that a concept imagined as possibly true must be conditioned in truth, or it had never been conceived; that when such concept has been, throughout all our progress, the inspiration of every great deed, the sanction of all vicarious enduring, it must be of the vital essence; and finally, that a man admitting this much, will carry on, drinking freely of this essence at whatever water-brooks he may, even if he has not yet found the key of the rainbow stair.

This preamble has seemed to me necessary before venturing any further. For now that both my parents were gone, I was driven to examine my own foundations; for I was

doubting whether my attitude towards the eternally importunate questions might not be dependent upon my father's impregnable convictions. When a man finds himself thrust into the first rank, introspection may be imperative; and for myself certain conclusions were then reached, thereafter to become unassailable, in spite of the fierce logomachy of wise men who are constantly changing the intellectual outlook; in spite also of a world-war that flung into desolation those very foundations which, in their assurance of security, had kept some of us from asking what we lacked.

A new horoscope was now cast, its especial discovery being the personal worth of deep friendship, and the social need for firmer bonding of all things and ideas in loveliness. For the new day was rapidly becoming more luxuriant in complexity; and was threatening to destroy alike home-life and vineyards and wayside shrines. I was realizing, and more cogently, that I must accept in wiser humility every good that life offers, and that a man in his strife for independence and what he calls freedom of thought may lose possibly all remnants of soul.

I have already claimed that I got quick intimacy with all sorts and conditions of men, and that my deafness mattered less than would be supposed. The remark is not alien to what I have just said concerning the very general difficulty in finding a common language. But I have not pointed out sufficiently the personal bearing of the subject, nor in what ways the deafness actually found for me a wider range of ancillaries to conversation than is usually contemplated. One of these I may name the *tongue of countenance*, and it is so far inseparable from ordinary conversation, that epistolary conversation often suffers woefully from its absence. All of us use and understand it, some quickly, some haltingly; but it claims neither grammar nor literature. I do not of course include lip-reading as "tongue of countenance," which, though it helps the deaf enormously, is quite different. Some of the most facile in reading "the mind's construction in the



face" are our four-footed collocutors, the dogs, who may find in it something akin to syntax and prosody. And certainly it helped me more than is usual to read character and win intimacies. I doubt if it ever misled me.

Then again there can be no doubt of telepathic *rapport* as a help to the deaf. "God is within us still, even in the depths of Hell," said Blake; and it may somehow be, through His Presence within and around, that we subconsciously have touch with one another's souls and their meanings. By some such means, I am sure, I was enabled to understand my friends, even when I heard little of their actual words: for at times, it might be, I dared not ask for repetition, lest I break into some nobility of thought or appeal and spoil its utterance. Such helps in conversation were more necessary now, when, as I have just remarked, I was realizing the profounder values in friendship. In such needs was it that I came to know how everything truly *possible* must be true; and more, that some time, some where, the concept would be known for its truth in some miraculous compassion. Though the old eyes grow dim, the Sun seems to wait for a moment, as it slowly lengthens its shadows, and lets me dream again of the old friends and the Law of Loveliness that I found through them even more than in Ruskin's oracular word. Then bluebells and primroses are merry once again among the fluttering shadows of the greening larches; and those who, because of their unassuageable suffering, had at last to leave us battling alone, will companion our awakening, letting us know, at once and for evermore, that nothing can be "too good to be true."

Which remarks on my old friends, the converse that won them, and the making secure of all they gave me, are especially consequent upon one Reminiscence, to myself more significant than all in my soul-adventurings. Even some years before my mother's death there had come into my life one friend, "a candle of the Lord," whose light shone for me more brilliantly than any other I can recall. Of her

character and work I would often write to my mother ; and I shall now, for the reader's sake, tell of her beauty, tranquillity and vision, besides the way her genius became responsible for much that I would confess in the words, *Me Judice*. She opened for me the door of William Blake's Imagination workshop. Therein I found how nearly my own early studies of Symbolism inclined to his creed, and how, through the language and art of Symbolism, Imagination may help us to understand Christ's teaching, in opposition to the agnosticism into which the intellectualism of priests, Roman or Socinian, was driving many who would before all things be honest.

My father, so clear-seeing and courageous in his symbolism, was wholly with me, though he knew little of Blake ; and it is peculiarly interesting to me that I, not instinctively a great reader of poetry, should by the different road of Science, arrive at conclusions he had reached through profound intuition and a wide acquaintance with poetic authors. St. Paul, as already suggested, knew all about symbolic expression when he spoke of the "invisible things" being "understood by the things that are made" ; and multitudes do not hesitate to declare that the Light must illuminate from the Within, not from any Without, however learned or saintly its candle be ; even if they seem uncertain when called upon to trust their inheritance of Imagination.

But for this doubt—

"If the Sun and Moon should doubt  
They'd immediately go out"—

of which Blake constantly warns us, our religious teachers would be full of Beauty's lavish offerings in symbolic word, in song or in dance : making Life's adventure still glorious even if the smoke and fury of Hell-fire hide from our vision Jerusalem, the Fairyland we seek. So would they awaken our sleeping hunger and thirst after righteousness, converting its hope into faith, contentment and joy.

Thus it is that my own belief in the child's avidity for fairy-tale as more urgent than the multiplication table is become matured and steadfast. And now physical science is set upon shattering the limitations of a three-dimensioned universe; and soon, one may well hope, it will insist upon the child's need of fairy-tales to make him laugh and dance and shout for joy. Indeed blackboard and chalk should, rightly used, accentuate, strengthen the Imagination's service in education. Poetry has fearlessly discarded the letter of the law ever since it began to light candles of the Lord; until now it may widen the understanding of physical science so that "the mountains and the hills break forth into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands";<sup>1</sup> words not *literally* true, yet arrestingly splendid, truth inspiring.

A little five-year old friend of mine, after listening to his mother's teaching about God, in which she laid stress upon His omnipotence, asked one question: "I suppose then, that God could make something so heavy that He couldn't lift it? Mother, I think I've *got* Him now!" He had at any rate fetched his mother's theology into a very sorry predicament. The child's wit instinctively saw that the facts of gravity and dimension belong to another world of thought than the "candle of the Lord," the Imagination, which his mother had been hoping to trim, yet without any understanding that axiom and convention are for such purposes useless. Oil and water neither mix nor come to terms. The mentality of the old prophets is not yet belittled, and things hidden from wise men are still revealed to babes.

The need of keeping the things of fact and imagination quite distinct remains absolute, and of realizing that while facts can be demonstrated and experimented with, the ideas of Imagination, of unprovable Faith, can be represented only by symbolic vehicles. Perhaps in the words of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lv. 12; or to quote my father, "For the very essence o' poetry is trowth, an' as soon's a word's no true, it's no poetry, though it may hae on the cast claes [clothes] o' 'it" (*Sir Gibbie*, Vol. III, p. 153).

concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, we may find the most perfect example in all literature of this necessary differentiation. There being no words precise enough in *definition* for our limited comprehension, He gives us a series of purely imaginative, symbolic *predications*. The Kingdom was like a treasure hid in a field, which, when found, had to be hidden for the joy of it; then the finder would sell all that he had to buy that field; and so on, symbol after symbol in different suggestiveness for our thoughts and hopes; but no definition, never even a hint as to the Kingdom's having locality, time or substance. And finally thus: "Every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old"—words stupendously grand in their refusal to define, or even suggest space or substance or time. Are not some of us justified in our amazement when ecclesiastical wisdom seeks to interpret, through defining creed and dogma, those things which Jesus Himself knew would be incomprehensible, perhaps even misrepresented, if so tortured?

If such symbolic teaching emphasizes the distinction between what is known of our world through a limited understanding and the Universe that includes all the unknown Truth, it surely strengthens my plea for the Imagination in all manner of language. Symbol is so essential that we may speak of language as a cathedral whose glory and efficacy is found in the poetry of its spires, pinnacles, buttresses, and all the added beauty within its walls; whereby we get both easier understanding and some means of telling one another what we see of the spiritual life beyond the tangible outsides of it, "the hardened shadow" of Blake.

Nor is it difficult to see why Symbolism may express the otherwise obscure. If all things are from the one all-creating, all-bestowing God, then they all belong to Him, and concurrently to ourselves and one another. Hence it is easy to make one thing give news of another if that thing seems an

easy way of communication for differently seeing, differently understanding men and women.

To go a step farther, if our concept of language includes also all other arts in it, especially pictorially, I can recall nothing more illuminating than one of Blake's pictures in tempera, sadly faded now.<sup>1</sup> It represents Christ pleading for the Magdalen at the throne of the inexorable God of Law. Happy child angels hover around and support the anguished woman, as if endorsing the most tender and just of all pleas that because she had loved much, much must necessarily, ungrudgingly, be forgiven her. The picture is moreover prophetic: it suggests the spiritual truth that though gross creatures may put to foul use the elemental, creative desires, these remain, in spite of terrible anguish—in spite of all social and personal horrors—still spiritual, wholly undefiled in their essence. It is indeed a *predication* of how Love shall to the last defy all *definition*; and because of its imaginative power, convinces and inspires where correct maxims would leave us cold.

Here, if only because it concerns this *Me Judice*, I wish I had knowledge enough to indicate how music must be classed as symbolic language. But it is more mystical than even the grandest poetry or the most suggestive paintings. It robs the magical to witness the mystical; yet in such way that, though we cannot define or explain its harmonies, we feel, rather than know, that they testify for everyone a place

<sup>1</sup> It is one of the magnificent collection of Blake's works belonging to my friend Mr. Graham Robertson; and a faithful copy of it by another friend hangs over my desk as I write. That seer's book, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, illustrates my point, though Swinburne praises it because he saw in it only an apology for free-love: and later critics are for the most part quite as stupid. Blake, as much greater in his sympathy with suffering than his advocate, as he was in reverence for purity, could express the truth in symbolic form and colour, when more ordinary teachers, especially the conventionally religious, have not vision or courage enough for its utterance: when too, of old, the patristic logicians, disputing the possibility of God's omnipotence in forgiveness, would have refused to sanction such gloriously daring consolation.

of his own in the spiritual Universe. Perhaps my deafness has taken from me all right to utter what music still means and promises: I cannot know how this may be. Certainly it passes all definitive understanding, although needed by so many if only for its own invitation, even adventuring, to believe. Here again I am arrested as one having lost his passport, yet I recall a wonderfully imaginative, probably now discarded, Salvation Army hymn, "If you can't get in at the Golden Gate, get over the Garden Wall." It gives me heart to relate a very personal experience in justification of my *Me Judice*.

Once in one November of a few years ago, after storms had deluged the country and swept away the last flame of autumn's glory, and I was still in the grip of an unspeakable personal anguish, there was set before me, as if miraculously, a point of spiritual revelation in perfect symbolic presentment. Against the deep rain-washed blue of the sky stood a group of still and quiet larches, now stripped bare save for their little nut-like cones and a few golden needles raggedly clinging. It so happened that during those days of wind my mind had been intent upon, even troubled by certain recent scientific books, their writers less wise than learned; and as I, like the trees, had felt as if my very roots might be torn out, I was trying dispassionately to epitomize the claims of these masters and dissociate them from my own hopelessness. And then at last, as if in answer to the exhaustion consequent upon the now spent objective hurricane, this blue sky of peace enveloped me, demanding that I share with those stripped larches their tranquillity. The shadow of my own self-conscious misery was swept away. I was taken home—lifted up into the All-Mother's arms where I might find what I hungered and thirsted for, the Bread and the Wine, and should realize that my Faith could not stand, had never come to me, without the Hope it must signify. I was at last beholding Beauty "through and not with the eye" as Blake puts it. I had, I am sure, never doubted the wonder

of Beauty, our right enchantment by its suggestive demands. Yet, till now, it never rang out to me in one Word that called me forth the tomb of doubt and compromise. Nor had it touched that imprisoned sorrow—pacing, and turning again to pace its cell, never to leave me, this self of me its prison. And now that ancient thing, the fairy wand, had touched me, like a mother's magical cherishing of her ailing child, whereby, pending the wound's assured healing, the pain became quite bearable. The perilous shadow vanished. I was set at peace among those waiting larches, sharing their at-homeness in the Universe's mother-arms, however minute and non-significant I might be, or possibly even taking some minutest part in the evolving Destiny. Curiously the experience instantly recalled that miracle when as a lad my mother's forgiveness was lavished upon me; though now it was only a worn old man that needed her.

Whenever, it is said, some Oriental potentate is presented with a rare jewel which the donor can ill afford to part with, the great man just touches it with one finger to signify his gracious acceptance of the gift, yet only that he may remit it. So it was with me now. In the mere realizing of this vision, I was offering all I possessed: all my knowledge in Science, all my unshakable deductions, "all I could never be, all men ignored in me," knowing at last how worthless such matters were in face of those larches' awakening. And my offer was accepted; the Almighty Finger touched it, whereby the gift was made my own again; or rather for one moment's eternity I had truly become identified with all that Beauty stands for; just as when half a century before I had dropped upon my knees before the Matterhorn's piercing of this very same blue sky.

William Blake, when he saw angels conversing in the tree-top, was uttering no mere charming fancy, but confessing his faith—and here, I think, in no scorning of the letter of the law. His own "candle of the Lord" could never deceive him. The idea and its symbolic expression became mystically one

in and through his utterance. The miracle he beheld was truth—even if no other eyes than his could thus vividly behold angels in the trees. His imagination, true in faith and obligation, may have set his angels there: and there they were and shall be! It was akin to his beholding the crash of the “mundane shell” wherever a lark soars on wing above this “hardened shell of ancient night and purgatory.”

Though Blake was as far from me as the Matterhorn from the larches, I dare add yet one more halting word.

With an increasing clarity I realize that we shall only understand what life is, we shall only be able to obey the laws of this understanding, when, like Blake, we are able to see far enough through the hardened shadow of our mundane shell to behold angels all around and with us, whether in the tree-tops or dancing among the daffodils in woodlands of resurrection.



## CHAPTER II

### ART AND MACHINERY

**B**EFORE the Great War set out to destroy us, I had resigned my work at King's, in spite of my colleagues' protests. The increase of deafness had become too irksome. Students were finding me not easy to interrogate and preferred my assistants' help; though I think patients still preferred my less clumsy handling. There was nothing for it but to relinquish the work I had made—a step none the happier, I fear, that more than one man of note was eager to replace me. In a measure I was consoled by having the titles of Consulting Physician and Emeritus Professor conferred upon me—sinecures not often offered in that day to specialists.

Most men not burdened with defects like mine, if they have no flair for idleness or hopeless weeding of their gardens, find recompense in sport or even in cocktails. But I, debarred from social pleasures, must find other outlet. Fortunately most have more chambers in their habitation than, as wage-earners, they have time to explore; and there was at least one for me where I could be sure of a welcome—my workshop. Its enticements had never interfered with my profession. Indeed, the wider a man's interests and efficiencies, the sounder should be his specialized work: but for his wrist-watch—that galling little handcuff!—he might be freer to recover the soul he has so often determined to lose.

So now, in 1919, I set a period to all direct service; for correspondence with my mother, once so treasured a consolation, had long since been denied me. Yet something of real worth remained. Unhappily my wife had been crippled from the loss of a leg in 1913; yet she had always been a lover of flowers, and now we could cultivate a garden.

So I found a little house with three acres at Haslemere: a place of lovely possibilities and admirably suited to her now limited pleasures. I came upon it in a day when it was almost impossible to secure habitations of any sort; and I can never dismiss the feeling that some super-ordinary guidance led me to it. Moreover, many of my best and oldest friends lived very near it.

Among these were some who did unquestionably "affect the quality of the day"; and for many years I had been a collaborator in their social strivings, partly because of my own belief in handicrafts, but more because their ideals involved matters which, ever since my student-days, had increasingly seemed to me of racial importance. These friends' work had already definite form and creed: they were raising the whole question of the machine's relation to civilization, with its tendency to destroy the Hand's serviceableness by appropriating the creative arts, thus enslaving Man as never before in his social evolution. "Through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through"; and if during my busy years I had thrust Solomon's and Ruskin's convictions into the background, they had still, I do think, kept their hold upon me. But now I must take some part, however humble, in the Ruskin emancipation.

This decision of mine is intriguing personally. It involves most inclusively of all my Reminiscences, one who, for me at least, was chief among these re-creators. Few perhaps then realized the sweet imperiousness of Maude Egerton King's appeal to every quality of high worth in them. It was like a brook quietly singing through storm-rent ravines, bringing Water of Life to thirsty pastures. Consistently with this book's intent, I shall say little of others who, equally masterful, are still with us. Of her, however, I may write in literal truth. She was born on Ruskin's birthday, February 8, 1867, and died on St. George's Day, 1927—one so definitely associated with his teaching and work, which she had

adopted for guidance. I wish my pen could portray as much of her as was outward and visible. But when portraiture is necessary, it is seldom possible; and some present-day artists are cited for genius precisely because their work proclaims their ineptitude. Yet long before the cant-word *self-expression* had found currency, it was fully realized that no truthful artist can keep himself out of his work. Thus I recall how much my mother loved the portrait of my father painted by Sir George Reid, P.R.S.A., and now in the National Portrait Gallery, even while she condemned its undeniable, wholly erroneous, melancholy as characteristic rather of the painter than his subject. Everyone, and still more the camera, reveals inherent limitations. If it were possible for anyone to limn the loveliness of Maude Egerton King, the background should be filled in, not with shoutings of his genius, but with pools of bluebells in a copse of Springtime larches; or with beeches glorious in colour because of the sleep they look for, even while they safe-hold in the embryo-leaves of the coming Spring their anticipated regeneration. For this rejoicing in faith and works we beheld in her face; and perhaps only a Fra Angelico's genius, with the technique of later centuries, could suggest all that we saw.

Curiously, it was my own early attempts to fathom Art's delight that gave me friendship with this woman long before I knew her power. For it happened that in 1885, when—so I thought—I had abandoned my profession as hopeless, “it chanced—Eternal God that chance did guide”—that I sat beside her at a dinner party. Then eighteen, she was youngest of the artist Henry George Hine's fifteen children, all with the one mother. At once arrested by her beauty, her quick uptake of the young doctor's claims regarding Art and Symbolism surprised him. I found she was engaged to my cousin, Joseph King, a young barrister, who later represented North Somerset in the House of Commons (1910–1918). As they moved in literary and artistic circles,

and I was professionally tied down and socially handicapped, it was only occasionally that I met the young couple. But I and my wife often visited them in Surrey for a week-end, and sometimes joined them for a holiday in Switzerland or Germany.

Maude King, whose literary gifts even in childhood proved her mastery of great issues, determined that she and her husband must no longer be content in passive sympathy with Ruskin and William Morris. Her own vision must find concrete venture—if only lest it perish; and Joseph King, keenly appreciating genius, though his inclinations embraced rather politics and non-conforming orthodoxies, gave her every opportunity for developing her hopes in spinning-wheel and loom. From these directly came the Peasant Arts Movement. Regnant in her heart was a conviction that Machine Power was devitalizing the people, and increasingly so; that unless the Hand's time-honoured creative power and domestic supremacy could be restored, the consequences might well be appalling. Once her work was begun, she could never leave it—until the Breaking of her Pitcher at the Fountain in 1927 led to the disruption of our Guild. She had been its main inspiration and moral support, more particularly through its organ, *The Vineyard Magazine*: which latter, in commercial sense, I myself founded.

The story of the Peasant Arts Society—or Guild, as we named it later—is worth telling if only because it intimately concerns this one woman, to know whom even slightly was to be given a certain unforfeitable uplift. So intimately was I concerned with the organization of the Guild as well as its literary productions, that I am well equipped for telling its story, and justifying the wonderful belief in Maude King's powers which everyone entertained, however it might be that they came into touch with her.

So illuminating is heredity that the first step, I think, towards understanding her may well be the realization of

her father's genius. My first intimacy with H. G. Hine, though not personal, was yet deep. A few years later than my first meeting with Miss Maude Hine, and already overwhelmed with work, I had to visit frequently a patient who owned a dozen or more of her father's poetic water-colour drawings. Although he was Vice-President of the Royal Institute, I had not till then fully realized his genius. But the wonder of these few drawings now so gripped me that, then and there, I was swept into the South Downs' loveliness which H. G. Hine, like none before or since, has portrayed. One somehow shared their limner's tread over uplands redolent with thyme's sweet pungency; one understood his tender, colloquial handling of sheep and shepherds, inviting all to join in their converse. Only magic could make these pigment harmonies declare the sheep-bells tinkling, the wheat-ears' timid songs, or, maybe, the ploughman's call to his horses down away, there, in the wide Weald. More; only such magic could tell us this rare secret: that Beauty waits with open door and greeting for everyone. Later, Maude King told me how her father once avowed that no picture was worth much if it failed to point the way out of itself. And I think this is the secret of his work, whether with South Downs or ruined castles, mossy dells or wastes of desolate ocean. This it was, rather than his perfect technique or fadeless colouring, that made me, certainly no critic, know how near he stood to Turner, Constable, David Cox—even to Samuel Palmer, that gentle-souled pupil of William Blake. Unhappily I never met H. G. Hine, though soon I was to be honoured by closest friendship with his family; while along with this privilege, and largely contributing to my new adventure, I got intimacy with my best of friends, Godfrey Blount, and his wife Ethel, the sister of Maude King.

These and a few other sympathizers, profoundly convinced of the intrinsic worth, individual and national, in craftsmanship, invited me to join their adventure. The world

dubbed them *cranks*; but they were prophets, and not the less that they well knew their enterprise might fail in immediate recognition. Happy that I might possibly help them, I soon assigned my scanty leisure, along with some too easily earned money, to the support of their Society; the tenets of which amounted to this: that man, if he is still to fulfil his destiny, must express himself—or rather the divine intent in him—in one or another mode of Art.<sup>1</sup> Consistently they made war upon Machinery, even though, as we were constantly reminded, it had “come to stop.” So, for that matter, has the Devil determined his permanence. Machinery, our tenets declared, would doubtless save man from all labour in living, but would, in doing everything better than the gods had ever intended, arrest all further emancipation. Already, in this day of my writing, Machinery has outpaced its intentions, immuring in idleness millions who, robbed of all work, must accept State-charity in further denial of their manhood. Yet the only remedy upon which the financier builds any hope is more efficient Machinery!

So I joined these protagonists of the Peasant Arts Guild, and did something to enlarge its sphere, as well as making it, for some twenty-five years, my one recreation. Incidentally I may point out that this was quite consistent with what I had, as I say, been groping after nearly all my life. The words of John Hunter, that *life is the cause, not the consequence of organizing law*, might well be taken as the Guild's inspiring doctrine. For man is no more a machine, can no more be transformed into one, than is the primordial germ of him, in span infinitely minute, yet destined per-

<sup>1</sup> I may take this opportunity of discounting the ordinary phrase “Self-expression.” When we contemplate the tendencies of many artists during the last quarter-century or more, we are driven to admit that, in expressing themselves, they outrage our native instinct for Beauty: their work seems to glorify distortion rather than uphold any Law of Loveliness. But here William Blake comes to our rescue, with his ceaseless claim that the essential purity of Life can “never be defiled.” So Art may yet live to be born again.

haps for an illuminating increase. From the beginning the Spirit has always been at work, urging Man to come out from among the shadows: and this even when he seemed almost hopeless in degradation. Then again our plea for the restoration of handicrafts tallies with the fact that Man's evolution has run *pari passu* with the hand's discovery of how to express, in symbolic craftsmanship, the mind's ideas; involving always that Law of Loveliness—of Righteousness, shall we say?—which may yet dominate all social organization, as well as beautifying our pots and cradles. Tonguecraft also, language-building, is become efficient through symbolism—a sort of revolt against the literalness of facts, the letter of the law; compelling a word to stand for more than its original, utilitarian intent. While obedience is the incubation of strength, man must, if he would be more than automaton, rise above the Law: which I take to be the teaching of St. Paul. All this, in one or other aspect, had been suggested in my book, *The Tree in the Midst*; and I now found it wholly in sympathy with my friends' adventure. But they had vision ahead: just as life is the cause, not the consequence, of organized phenomena, so, said they, we dare not reverse the law, and make man the slave of organized machinery.

The Peasant Arts Guild's operations, with its social duties, lectures and exhibitions; sending into country-places teachers of spinning and weaving, its *Vineyard Magazine*, and the publication of pamphlets and books bearing upon its work, were as extensive as intensive. Its numbers, however, seldom exceeded five hundred; but that it became an efficient factor in compelling the more thoughtful to question machinery's racial value—a problem now discussed on every hand—is proved by the fact that among our official patrons we numbered G. K. Chesterton, Sir Frank Dicksee, P.R.A., Dr. L. P. Jacks, Maurice Hewlett, Selma Lagerlöf, Ernest Rhys, Katharine Tynan, etc. The Guild's first aim was to encourage hand-industries and find

a market for them until such time came when they needed no help beyond that of their own beauty and durability, and the happiness which we found wherever spinning-wheel and loom became part of the home-life. This happiness, to myself quite surprising, was surely significant.

Presently a Weaving House was opened at Haslemere, and it soon proved self-supporting. Then Godfrey Blount and his wife more boldly opened a depot in Bayswater for the sale of their people's work. That artist had revealed his genius for design in a truly noble book *Arbor Vitae*,<sup>1</sup> which will yet be accepted as the one inspiring manual on the subject. If he, in addition to his intense faith in handcraft, and his unremitting industry in securing its practical recognition, had evinced some personal ambition—of which no man I ever knew had less—his work and influence would by this time have stood alongside of William Morris's—and perhaps of a surer stability because dissociated from political illusions. A few of his words will indicate the spirit regnant in his creations and teaching, suggesting also something of the Peasant Arts Guild's wide scope :

“ ‘Excess of pleasure,’ says Blake, ‘weeps.’ Let me, in passing, emphasize this characteristic of the best art any of us can achieve. Its glory will lie in our dissatisfaction with it. . . . Have you considered what the greatest artist once said? ‘I came to call the failures, not the successes.’ There is more real art in one person who knows he has fallen short of his ideals than in ninety-nine accomplished artists who are satisfied with their work.

“Two things are required to make a designer, natural ability and strong feeling. You as teachers cannot give the former; you can only direct it and give opportunities for practising it. *You can also dangerously pervert it by your systems.* What you *can* do is what is generally supposed not to be your business. You can evoke the strong feeling. Can you tell me what systems of drawing to-day are adapted to do that? No system of education ever did or can. Only your personal belief and influence, which are for ever opposed to System, ever can infuse that divine enthusiasm

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Dent & Sons, 1899.



which is the *alpha* and *omega* of all true education, artistic or other, into the minds and fingers of your pupils. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

But for financial reasons the Guild could not survive without more business acumen. The moneyed patrons of art could never understand that hand-loom weavers are entitled to a living wage, indeed that it must be proportionately higher. In Vanity Fair cheapness of production will always outbid any quality of loveliness; and the Peasant Arts Society, as these workers named themselves, were almost driven to close their depot. It was at this point that I joined my friends, hoping that with organization and more systematic management, it could, as a Guild, be made more definitely propagandist. In the first place it must have a constitution. Mr. and Mrs. Blount, Mrs. Maude King and myself were its self-constituted “Founders,” the financial capital being retained in our hands, though we pledged ourselves to use all trading profits for advance of the propaganda. Next the general public were invited to join, and to help with donation or annual subscription; and these elected a Committee, of which the Founders were to be *ex officio* members, to arrange for meetings, lectures, exhibitions and for sending teachers of spinning and weaving and wood-craft into country places. Then I essayed an even bolder step and launched in 1910 *The Vineyard Magazine*. It was edited by Maude Egerton King without emolument. It quickly found wide sympathy, especially, however, among workers with little time or money to spare.

Next came a very happy incident: the acquisition of a Museum of Peasant Arts—a collection quite unique in this country for beauty and significance, though not to be compared with the vast Folk Museums of Stockholm and Christiania. Our items had been collected and housing built for them in Godalming by the Rev. Gerald Davies,

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture on “Art and Religion” to the Art Teachers’ Guild at the Conference of Educational Associations held at the London University in January 1914.

then of the Charterhouse School, but always keen on European travel for the study especially of Peasant Handicrafts. When, in 1908, he was appointed Master of the Charterhouse, London, some other home for his Museum must be found; and he allowed me to buy it at a price well below its value, but on the condition that it should never be displayed in any City Museum, where, he thought, its beauties might be swamped, and its materials damaged by smoke. Realizing the national worth of the collection, I put it, by Trust Deed, in the hands of the Founders of the Peasant Arts Guild for the public benefit, thus protecting it against any possible mishap to the Guild. But at last, because Mrs. Joseph King's illness made it no more possible to carry on the Guild, we, the Trustees, offered the collection to the Haslemere Museum,<sup>1</sup> whose Committee put at our disposal two of their largest and best-lit rooms. Mr. Gerald Davies opened it, but himself died in 1927. One passage of an article he contributed to *The Vineyard* dealing with his collection is worth quoting:<sup>2</sup>

“. . . I am not saying that Peasant Art is the only art worthy of preserving or practising. It is the spontaneous expression of the joy of life uttered in a very simple and very delightful language. It is full too of the handicraftsman's pleasure in and understanding of material. It asserts, all unknowingly, that Use is beauty and beauty is Use. If you divorce one from the other there is less beauty and also less use. But it does not attempt to express any great independent idea, spiritual, social, intellectual, literary. These ideas are the property and field of a different

<sup>1</sup> This was founded by the late Sir Jonathan Hutchinson as a scientific and educational enterprise; but it has been managed with so much enthusiasm that, especially since the acquisition of the Peasant Arts' collection, it has become a very remarkable Museum for a small country town.

<sup>2</sup> This article ought to be available as a pamphlet for visitors to the Haslemere Museum. Besides other books and articles Gerald Davies wrote a *Life of Franz Hals*—a work of established repute; also a book on *Charterhouse in London*, 1922; and several remarkable articles in *Country Life* on horses and horse-racing.

Art which exists as a rule, but not invariably, in isolation from the industries. The two phases of Art aim at satisfying two very different cravings of humanity, though once upon a day very far back in human history they set out from the same starting-point. It is as the difference between a Devonshire folk-song and a sonata of Beethoven. . . .”

As a final word about our Guild, I am constrained to admit that, like many men and women who win their souls “got at a life’s cost,” it was not in worldly sense successful. Godfrey Blount’s designs, weavings, toys and emblems, were often mechanically copied by great firms without any acknowledgment, even if to their own and possibly the world’s enrichment. Yet our failure to make wider appeal was due, I emphatically believe, solely to our proclaiming and striving to practise the belief that nothing can lift up man or his work unless religious inspiration lies at its heart. Godfrey Blount, in his designs, his writings and speakings, never forgot this truth: nor did his wife in her weavings and her quite perfect text-book on weaving; nor did Maude King in her writings, her household’s spinning, or her editing of *The Vineyard*. For my part I was content that we should have had our day and then cease to be, if our apparent failure was due to that declaration of Faith. Indeed, I was even more than content when I remembered that my father’s unique imaginative power had failed to bring him a wider circle of readers, precisely because his duty in the first place was to proclaim everywhere the Gospel’s Truth. But there was an even more ordinary reason for our failure. The man in the street, who alone decrees Success or Failure, is a lover of Specialism: Religion to those of the Cloth; healing to qualified practitioners; Art handsomely framed rather than integral in life. To him Art and Religion will only endanger common sense by jostling one another. But beyond all things he seems suspicious of religion in the street on work-days: even if he theoretically allows that no work is well done without it.

At any rate, if Life is the cause not the consequence of organization, it were better that the Guild's influence should now be scattered like seed caught up by the wind, than that, its sower being taken away, a devitalized organization should hope to carry on the work.

## CHAPTER III

### ART AND ASPIRATION

WITH this preamble explaining my absorption in the intent of the Peasant Arts Guild, a happier task now awaits me—that of giving a good likeness of its Honorary Secretary, its ruling spirit. The more truly one has known a friend the abler he should be to depict him. Excepting my parents, I have known no one whose personality was more openly significant than Maude E. King's. My mother is revealed so vividly in her letters that there has been no need to limn her face or character; while my father is so intensively known through his books that hardly anything descriptive could tell more of his genius and himself. But Mrs. King was not only a brilliant correspondent. Her stories, essays and verse indicate almost all that specifically belonged to her nature. Unfortunately I have no letters quite characteristic; but, being anxious that her personality be realized, because any intercourse with unconscious truth is rare and full of delight, I propose giving now and again a few items from her works, as well as other indication of her influence upon the day's thought, her ideals and her home. Her story ought to have a book of its own; for the simplest details of even an ordinary life, especially if not in the same walk as our own, are often entrancing—a fact which Maude King well knew when she wrote her first book, *Round About a Brighton Coach Office*,<sup>1</sup> a story full of humour and pathos. From this we are allowed to infer that her own parents came on the one side from peasant folk and on the other from the old aristocracy. It was the former heritage of which she was prouder; and a certain atmosphere of cottage flowers attended her life and its work, as with sweet and magic wand she ruled her social

<sup>1</sup> John Lane, 1896. Subsequently reissued by *The Vineyard Press*.

world. Many have said they won a renewal in hope and energy from her presence and inspiring sympathy. It was her power of instant critical comprehension that first brought home to me Solomon's word: "the soul of man is a candle of the Lord searching out the innermost parts." She might, for instance, raise the question as to some work of art which I was too readily praising; yet, on asking her reason, she would, after a moment of self-enquiry, justify her verdict, so incisively that I must see exactly where I was at fault. The flame of her candle had no smoke, no flicker; indeed, the darker the shadows, the more surely would her light disperse their doubt and gloom.

Maude King's writings, verse or prose, were accepted by those who realized how greatly simple they were, how unequivocally self-expression. They would have been more widely known, had the ceaseless giving of herself and her time to the sorrowful, needy or foolish, allowed her pen more opportunity. To win even a little recognition, the artist, true or spurious, has to produce enormously. Nevertheless, she gave us poems that are perfect:

"The dark sweet violet still hiding low,  
And over the hedge in golden dance and glow  
The jocund daffodil ——"¹

as well as a goodly array of stories and essays, each one of them instinct with that realism which presents wayside things in their own true imagery and sweetness of appeal.

Though subscribing to no creed or dogma, her faith in immanent Beauty, whether in men, women or children; in homey valleys or snow-clad vestibules of the eternal; in peasant-lore or great literature, in folk-song or oratorio; such faith made her religion more convincing to some of us than that indoctrinated by wise men and endorsed perhaps

¹ "Young Tree in Spring," *My Book of Songs and Sonnets*, by Maude Egerton King, 1893, p. 67.

by newest science. In an almost Calvinistic submission to duty lay her secret of vision, her fearlessness, her instant sympathy and wit. She dared use pungent satire too—sometimes the only possible appeal for one crying in the wilderness; but it was never bitter or cynical. Her eyes needed no rose-coloured glasses to beautify the common-place; and they seldom misled her even when pitifulness might so easily outweigh discretion. If social exigencies sometimes overwhelm genius of less vigour, Maude King's sense of the unqualified ministration that Beauty and its energy demand, enriched her genius. In her early wedded life, and with her husband's ardent support, she threw her life into slum-work. They even took into their home a hopelessly abandoned girl, who, nevertheless, proved unsavable. But such work, just because it claimed her whole life, would have killed her; and the friend who had assigned her such terrible duties, soon realized that this one of his followers must have different obligations awaiting her. He saw that it cannot be right to cage a lark in a cellar, even if, for a while, it still pipes of the sun; and that Wordsworth could never have uplifted the hearts of multitudes had his genius been suffocated by cleansing sewers.

Genius such as hers never starves; for to an innately creative craftsman, almost any material will be made to serve; and this woman's keen happiness in self-denial compels such conclusions. Thus her devotion for several long periods to her husband's political work undeniably helped him and his party, though politics seemed to her, however nobly intended, too wasteful of fine energy, too desolating indeed; and I recall Octavia Hill's feeling on the point, already quoted. Again, Mrs. King's quite joyful acceptance of drudgery was in constant evidence during all the years she was Honorary Secretary to the Peasant Arts Guild; and it became especially obvious to myself, in her eight years' editing of *The Vineyard*. The labour involved in the monthly production of a magazine, if devotedly con-

scientious, is enormous; and she undertook the full technical and spiritual responsibility for it.

But a few words are needed to define the aims of this brave venture: and *brave* I venture to call it, seeing that my own responsibility was little more than financial: the inspiring courage came from Editor and contributors. Whoever wrote for us—and among its contributors were Selma Lagerlöf, Peter Rosegger, G. K. Chesterton, R. L. Gales, Maurice Hewlett, Ernest Rhys, Katharine Tynan, Anatole France, Lord Dunsany—*The Vineyard* always stood for these, the Editor's convictions: that the redemption of man must involve return to an original, diviner Nature than to-day's exactions permit: that the salvation of his hand and his land are essential, but will never come without devotion and sacrifice; and that machinery, with its loveless labour and dividends, making politics necessary to antidote its blight upon the people's souls and bodies, has no sign-manual of divine sanction. This newest of demon powers—even though many, while hating it, submit perforce to its iniquity—must be for ever and unhesitatingly *disbelieved in* and fought: Apollyon must be met in the open and closed with, even if he has "come to stop." This creed was upheld by the Editor's unflagging purpose, her unself-conscious sweetness, her witty and always just humour; and solely because, if the Sermon on the Mount was really our guide, it was inevitable. Whether in her writings or her entertaining of politicians, or in fireside spinning with spindle or wheel, her personality, like an atmospheric peace, became our environment. From all she did we learned this truth, that if we cannot claim all Work to be Art, Art is most certainly all Play—the transforming of common things and duties to an imaginative joyful use of utility more than worldly. As the Eternal Craftsman miraculously brings forth from earth and rain, sun and air, the form and scent of the rose: so does the artist paint his windows with glory; so does the poet find imagery in things and words,



to proclaim what never yet was said in logic or through reason; yet in beauty is known to be true.<sup>1</sup> Art is just heavenly play.

Many who shut their eyes upon the horrors inseparable from machinery, would argue that it needs only freer play to discover to the world some ultimate, universal blessings. They would even claim that we shall some day admit that monster cranes, gasometers, and—yes, most certainly—luxurious motor-cars, have in them all the elements of beauty. Our *Vineyard* was constantly assailed by taunts from even sympathetic critics, that, while granting all our ideals, we could not “set back the hands of the clock”; and, once again, that “Machinery had come to stop.”

On one occasion, when Mrs. King was spinning, I recall her reply to similar questions. Descanting on the miraculous in Art, I asked, “Don’t you ever think the time *may* somehow come, when Art will exploit even Machinery to serve her—reassemble its antics into some sort of justification? Or is she at last paralysed?”

“Never!” she answered thoughtfully, her words chiming so well with the humming of her wheel that its gentle music was no hindrance to my hearing. “For it could only be when the demon Progress gives up driving Pegasus downhill, with always increasing speed, promising always more corn, and more idle hours for enjoying it. By the time the demon has discovered the millennium he wants, I am sure machinery will dispense with Man altogether. . . . If any men *are* left they will be too fat to work; or starving; but with still enough brains to serve the machines as the Luddites did.”

Because we wanted *The Vineyard* to be before all things honest, looking facts in the face rather than sentimentalizing over pretty ideals, in 1912 I spent the greater part of a week in visiting and living among the spinners and weavers of

<sup>1</sup> This claim I have elaborated in the article, “The Spirit of Play,” *Hibbert Journal*, January 1923, to which I have already referred.

Lancashire, helped into the heart of it all by that versatile and prolific writer, Allen Clarke. Known among his own people as a witty, humorous and often profoundly thoughtful journalist, his influence there was enormous. He began life as a half-timer, and was a member of our Guild. His work, *The Effects of the Factory System*, appeared in *The Vineyard*. He introduced me to a remarkable spinner, who was a student of Ruskin and Thoreau, but hopelessly embittered by the work's "strangle-hold upon his soul," as he put it to me. It was consequent upon many talks with him that I tried to express in *The Vineyard's* pages some sense of the upas-tree that overshadowed all hope of socialistic or other possible betterment. He had been a foreman, earning fifty shillings a week, then a high wage; but he abandoned the spinning-mules for other work that, bringing him in but half the wage, yet set him free. I quote my stanzas, though I would emphasize the fact that they represent that one man's bitterness, not the constructive spirit of *The Vineyard*.

#### "LABORARE EST ORARE

*"The country carpenter, lured to the city's power-loom sheds by high wages, utters his protest.*

"Laborare est Orare?

D'ye think it stands true for me,

With my hands no longer free?

Why, ten years ago I just loved the hand's craft:

As I worked with my plane, it rushed and laughed,

And rang out its shavings in spiral songs;

While the scent of the wood,—oak, chestnut and pine—

Gave life to my labour—like cowslip wine:

And little cared I for man's Rights and Wrongs!

Such songs, like the birds', came a deal nearer praying

Than the roaring rung out by spinning-mules' braying!

And now I am dumb:

Handicraft gone is hand-cuffs come.

“No son of the Dales and their flowers can feel  
 Love alongside a belted wheel;  
 Nor hope in a blood-stained, grudging wage  
 That’s shoved in your face with no kind word uttered,  
 A scowl for your thanks, or a curse half muttered  
 That sets my hands itching with impotent rage!  
 Prayer ’long with work is for God’s money-grubbers,  
 Never for weavers, fool-spinners and slubbers.

“You’ve doubled our wages? Right! . . . but you’ve halved  
 all we had  
 Of joy: and, I grant you, the liquor ain’t bad.  
 You! smiling rats with moustache hypocritical  
 Basking in sunshine and fed parasitical;  
 Us! angry squirrels, a-scramble in cages,  
 Who plot revolutions to quench our mad rages!  
 The wrong done our hands can never be mended  
 Till the show’s all scrapped, its infamy ended.

“Well! well! for peace’ sake in this weltering strife  
 With blacklegs or boss—always war to the knife—  
 To please you and God, I *will* pray as I work. . . .  
 ‘Look, God, at these manacled hands at their prayers:  
*Can* they pray for my home’s and my manhood’s betrayers?  
 And once, long ago, Thou didst nothing for Him,  
 Thy crucified Son, but fill full to the brim  
 The cup of His agony: while Caiaphas grim  
 First mumbled his prayers, then daintily supped:  
 ‘Was Christ or Barabbas more damned and corrupt?’

“How can we pray, when Thou takest no heed  
 Of a craftsman’s grief, his dying soul’s need?  
 With Thee Thyself, he’s crucified here,  
 Nailed to the Cross, knees broke, stripped bare,  
 Life’s very passion has strangled his breath!  
 So, on top, write the truth, though not worth a tear:  
 ‘Long o’ Christ, he’s done in, on the Tree of Death!’ ”

As a relief from this lament, by no means exaggerated, I must give a specimen of our Editor’s powers. It instances her intimate knowledge of Life’s conditions and details, yet suggests the depth of her religion—cloistral yet all-embracing

—and how far the plea, that Powers greater than our own bring good out of evil, may be justly allowed to console us. The passage occurs in her story, *The Country Heart*, dealing with a degraded cook and a simple-hearted cowman. The characters are drawn from life: yet only eyes like hers could visualize conditions to which she certainly never had actual access.

“. . . This wonderful night with its many ministers . . . the stately, starry, sapphire night, was holding her passionate heart in its quiet hands, divinely meddling, divinely moulding, there. Much poor stuff it found and revealed—petty cruelties, tyrannies, vulgarities, grossnesses, mingled with something worthier, shaming her sadly, whilst kindling a bright hope too. . . . Surely there was no waste here. Surely it was entirely blessed and practical that the infinite beauty and solemn appeal of the night should pass into that simple soul, translated into its mother-tongue, pointing to homely duty and inspiring in its drudgery—a whole universe conspiring to bring about better relations between a cook and her underlings. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

In all her doings Maude King let us see that human nature is perfectly human only when breathing its spiritual atmosphere. Her outlook in a certain way seemed sympathetic with my own story, the point being that, with a perennial atmosphere of fairy-tale imaginings, never impossible even in my direst needs, I have now and at last only to wait with worn-out shoes, until the little postern shall open upon some fair land of home-again wonder; and that, all along the way of failure, success and spiritual slothfulness, this same atmosphere has held me as if aware, however dimly, of a destiny not comprised in the *things* I know intellectually, nor asking to be understood. I like to feel that Maude King, with magical insight, claimed that man has become himself, with his hopes of becoming more than himself, through Art: Art in all its creations of language and play, its

<sup>1</sup> *The Country Heart and other Stories*, 1911, p. 33. This particular story first appeared in *The Century Magazine* and again in *The Vineyard*, January 1911.

happy laughter at life's commonplaces, its solace and pity, its searching for the treasure hid in the unknown field—in all these I like to think she, in her purer vision, has justified my own wavering strife with the unknown Demon.

In those most terrible four years of War, when Fear robbed us alike of wisdom and charity; when to speak bitterly of the War's anguish, regardless of our need to give all unhesitatingly, was thought unpatriotic; Maude King could write of it with profoundest pathos, now and again with necessary satire, yet always free of khaki sentimentalism. Few of Mrs. King's short stories are more worthy of re-issue than "The Divine Image" in the final volume of *The Vineyard*. There the antithesis of our tragically feeble enthusiasms, our patient, heroic sacrifices at home, with the realism of the young V.C. dying in a shell-hole while a middle-aged enemy tends him with gentlest words: "*Aber, ich bin auch ein Vater!*" should never be forgotten. Here also her insight suggests some gift of telepathic clairvoyance: a gift I have marvelled at in more than one of her unpublished sketches which gave, in absolutely true colour, situations and conditions of mind which by no possibility could she have ever encountered. "I saw it all so vividly," she would say, "that I just had to put it down at once": and this even if her script's immediate doom was the flames.

Much of her best poetry was written when about twenty, and is as strong and sweet as her maturer work. Almost everything she wrote or said evidenced her oneness with Ruskin's *Law of Loveliness* as against the coarsening of money and machinery. How I wish I could instance the peaceful, gorgeous utterance of her weavings!—for they, like her prose and verse, tell of the joy in ministration and vicarious service. For her, Art was inseparable from Religion; and the Divine intent was more definitely proclaimed in colour and music, pots of precious ointment in prodigal disregard

of economic law, than we, nervously fearing for our bank-balance, can understand.

Mrs. King was curiously like Ethel and Godfrey Blount, in that she cared little or nothing for personal success; the three of them made us feel that the highest genius is inseparable from chivalry and sacrifice. The service of her muse seemed to be psychically one with the lavishing of her spiritual wealth upon anyone in distress who needed her. I think this must be true, though I believe it is only those who can give all for Love and Love's truth who will understand it.

I have before me, pencilled when she was seven, in childish script and spelling, on odd scraps of paper, a ballad, *The Knight of the Golden Shield*, almost perfect in form and redolent of her simple chivalry; and, through all her life, pitifulness would drive her to instant action. Her satirical mockery of her dolls' pretence to sentimental appeal: her joy in all imagery, if true in grace or humour; a devotion to her home so gravely pathetic that it was impossible to leave her at school; were characteristic points in her childhood; and they remained dominant throughout her life. Her child-like optimism perhaps accounted for her conviction that the hand's restoration to its own crafts and arts would do more in social and personal betterment than any advances in education, as understood by reformers. She never *believed in* her dolls, even ridiculing their pretended ailments. On the other hand, she felt that the spiritual worth of spinning and weaving, of building chairs and tables, or of carving vessels or crucifixes for the home, was absolute. As, once again quoting her own words:

"the flowers  
Outwearièd with the glare and heat of day  
Put up their petals prayer-wise, for the cool  
And hush of night. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Eternal Strife*, an early, unpublished poem.

so the humblest home was to her more sacred than any church or shrine or altar: though any noble cathedral with windows of purest colour would bring her down on her knees as surely as any Roman Catholic. Concerning this point I shall give a quotation from a story of hers before I write my *Finis*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WAR AND SINN FEIN

**D**URING the years of war-horror, now almost incredible though its ashes are still smouldering, many, like myself, could contribute only the poorest, outlying service. Yet some of us, however deep-rooted our convictions had seemed, felt the strain more intolerable than did those young men and women who were giving their lives for England's honour. It may look almost impertinent for one who must stay at home, with perhaps no sons in the trenches, to speak of the Nation's agony; unreasonable also to confess to a feeling of almost guilty responsibility. Yet certainly we had our own burden to bear. Looking back upon it at last in some approximation to correct perspective, so long as we had to watch from afar Hell's encroachment upon the very citadel of God, many of us had, just in order to keep a mental balance, to accept any lamp to light us on the treacherous way, its oil by whomsoever replenished, however dim its flame. For my part I was blessed by frequent touch with one who, concealing her anguish, held her own world ready garnished for the ultimate peace, whatever the penalty. For she saw that God, the only hope of aggressor and broken, must triumph over the enemy alike of Himself and of His mutually destroying nations. Maude King and her husband, like so many others, kept house and heart open to help the broken, to hearten those on the way. In ordinary life, instinct bids us take hand in whatever is a-doing, whether cutting one another's throats or cementing friendships; otherwise life proves intolerable. To this day I find it difficult to be a mere spectator of any surgical operation; yet, give me the smallest share in it, then, whether I am dresser or the surgeon himself, I could by no possibility lose my head, though the worst of mischances



should intervene. Thus it came about that those who during the War must stand and wait, accepting passively the world-anguish, would eagerly seize the most trivial opportunities for helping and for accepting help. Multitudes lived through their bitterness and impotency quite grandly, doing, though they knew it not, more even than the wonderful men at the Front, to trim the candle that lighteth every man, to feed the divine Home-fire. And this one woman of whom I write never knew how she kept us in some measure of spiritual sanity. Creative work is always donative and unselfconscious in loveliness : her cruse was always miraculously replenished. She gave as much as it held : more, for at the last there still remained her own life to lay down.

Inevitably the work of our Guild, after certain attempts to meet outlying distresses had proved ill-advised, must be suspended, though we intermittently held our social gatherings. *The Vineyard* was discontinued ; but only to reappear with renewed conviction that, through its ideals of work and recreation, and though treaty after treaty must inevitably fail, war will one day be abolished.

Meantime, one of our worst griefs was that our relations with Ireland were once again strained to breaking point. Although in those days one must speak circumspectly, *The Vineyard* could not, if it would be true, deny its sympathy with that hapless island ; for we had much in common with the original tenets of *Sinn Fein* before this appellation was appropriated by politicians. I dare even affirm that we understood with that long-suffering, land-robbed people, all that passionate *Patriotism* signified. Though many Anglo-Saxons theoretically honour it, few, I imagine, will realize how integral it is in their life, until this our present-day worship of wealth and of power is overpast. Ireland's patriotism is close-knit with her faith, and crucifixion has for generations seemed more tolerable than any making of terms with a traditional enemy, who, however sincere his endeavour to make just amends for past cruelties,

still thinks that relinquishment of this esoteric patriotism should ensure lasting harmony between the two sister islands. We of *The Vineyard*, however, would tacitly claim that Ireland was saner, righter—at least from her own point of view—than England could conceive or her pride confess. Our Guild's hope for an ultimate restitution of handicrafts that once meant so much in the national character—as over against the passivity and irresponsibility ensured by machinery—was quite in consonance with the aspiration of those greater Irishmen who saw how simplicity in life, in allowing the imagination—that mystic twilight of religion—freer play, must foster a patriotism which, on both sides of the Irish Sea, is so easily stifled by greed for power and gold. The revelation of all this to myself stands as a Reminiscence that cannot be passed over. I had seen how, in family-life, ungenerosity and avarice are destructive of love; I had seen how socially they breed fear and discontent and poverty of mind; and now I realized how the same laws were ruling the nations. As wealth amasses, the hunger for it grows and love wanes; as empire extends its power, jealousy of other nations' increase robs patriotism of all divineness. But as Ireland's poverty had been her crucifixion so it might prove her possible resurrection. Even in the midst of our own fears that the War might mean our defeat, exasperated too by the 1916-rebellion which made almost impossible any sanity in vision, some of us came to suspect that Ireland was much nearer understanding certain things which, in our overstrained power and our braggartly sincere passion for justice, must remain hidden from us.

Joseph King, always a Home-ruler, did much for a peaceful understanding of Ireland; but his wife's intimacy with the Irish poetess, Katharine Tynan, gave us a vision quite new and hitherto not possible. It was my happy fortune also soon to win friendship with that writer and her entrancing appeals; nor, apart from politics, was it difficult seeing that I had always respected what I could not understand in

Ireland's aspirations: my own Celtic blood perhaps making it inevitable. Soon multitudes openly admitted their responsibility for Ireland's mad soreness.

But it is personal Reminiscences that I am recording. Thanks to the Irish poetess and the recent acute troubles, I was impelled to study Ireland's tragedy, and from it to discover a profound sympathy with the Rebels. Then, as I argued with myself, no one feels anything passionately but he instantly knows there is something for himself to do. Precisely as every soldier then was essential if the War was to be won, so did I feel that, with *The Vineyard's* pages available, I might "do my bit" in making intelligible the Irish attitude. My Editor suggested that I, with perhaps herself in collaboration, should write a book facing the whole question so fearlessly that it would suggest to both countries sympathy in place of anger, even toleration for one another's stupidities and violence, for England's contempt and Ireland's hatred. The book was to be a novel and, for more than one reason, anonymous. Yet, though Mrs. King helped essentially in arranging characters and plot, I myself, up to a point, did all the writing.

And here I am self-arrested, feeling—and not for the first time in these pages—the parallel of one who would be charitable out of another's purse, or who is busy with final touches to a picture never begun. For the book was only half written; and its mention would not justify the ink wasted, but that it brought me new experiences and new friends, as well as first-hand knowledge of a people whose history had for centuries been one long crucifixion. Consequently a few more Reminiscences are emphatically worth record.

In order to substantiate certain points, I secured, six months before the Armistice, introductions to several notable people, chiefly through Mrs. Katharine Tynan and Miss Eva Gore Booth—a sister of that intransigent Countess who

would have given her life to be shot as a rebel; and I, with a cousin, crossed to Ireland, attended by aeroplanes and inflated by life-belt waistcoats. As instance once again, of "making my ill the advantage of my good," I may explain how I secured some very real, if brief, intimacies with a few highly influential politicians, who would at that time have been practically unapproachable for the majority of Englishmen, unless identified with sympathy in Sinn Fein. I wrote to each of these beforehand, mentioning the introduction I should bring, and that I had in hand a book whose sole purpose was to make the English understand Ireland's wrongs and hopes. I claimed to be competent if only because of my Celtic origin. But I added that I was deaf; and, although I could converse without giving trouble so long as no third person was present, social meetings like tea-drinkings handicapped me hopelessly: hence, would my correspondent grant me a private half-hour?

The amount of kindness I got was quite consistent with the sympathy which every Irishman so readily extends to personal appeal. Thus I enjoyed heart-to-heart talks with Mrs. John Richard Green, almost as notable a historian as her husband; with "A.E." (George Russell), editor of *The Irish Homestead*, who, together with Sir Horace Plunkett, afterwards Lord Plunkett, had done more than anyone to restore and consolidate Ireland's agriculture; with that entrancing poet, James Stephens; with Madame Gonne, widow of the fenian O'Brien, who, not only helped me to realize the terrible wretchedness of Dublin's poverty, and the crumbling away of its onetime grandeur, but made for me with her own hands the most celestial omelette and exquisite coffee ever set before Celt or Saxon; with the Gavan Duffys, delightful in their sweet culture and generous talk, not to omit their fascinating children who, talking Erse, had not learned any English whatever, "though later," it was admitted, "they may have to learn it as a foreign

tongue"—thus suggesting their deep feeling for Ireland's spiritual insularity.<sup>1</sup>

Then I went to Connemara, to see the people and hear them talk at first hand: somehow converse was always easier for me out of doors, and Irish articulation is particularly good. So I had many a chat with farmers, their wives and children, deafness being no hindrance to falling in love at least with the children; for these little egoists look for only a minimum of reciprocity in talk. I recall particularly one maid of fifteen, whose beauty, sweet eagerness to show me the kids she was rearing in the fire-place of a derelict castle's kitchen, and her intolerance of the nannygoat's pitiful anxiety over them; along with her consolation that I should of course be *Sinn Fein*, if only I were one of themselves; seemed to typify at once the pathos and extravagance of Ireland's hopes. Indeed every incident was illuminating. The industry of the people contradicted all I had heard; and their accredited slovenliness—of which I saw little—was evidently due to the enforced economy of poverty and not to any ingrain coarseness. Nevertheless it may well be true that the Celt, whether Irish, Highland-Scots or Welsh, less obviously the Cornish, do in city-life quickly degenerate—yet another instance of physical law having its counterpart in the moral; the higher the altitude, the more shattering must be the fall to earth. A shrewd American once remarked to me that the Irish have to slump through three generations across the Atlantic to transform them into first-class Americans.

I admit that the general ignorance seemed astounding, especially regarding questions of Home-Rule and the meaning of *Sinn Fein*. They had all heard of English cruelty to German prisoners, and they were quickly hot to confirm such lies with instances of their own landlords' brutality in

<sup>1</sup> I could get no touch with Mr. de Valera; for those I have mentioned, particularly Mrs. Green, his best of friends, seemed anxious that I should not do so.

the '47-'48 famine, when the people dropped dead, so they did, on the roadside by thousands, while the landlords were for exporting all the potatoes and corn. Yet perhaps the same angry accuser would freely admit the benefits of the latest land-acts. The general and only quite important notion of *Sinn Fein*, however, was that it would abolish all rents entirely.

My innocent and all too brief adventure was officially, so it seemed, regarded with some suspicion; for both of us were watched rather farcically by a detective of the beef-faced kind who disguised his profession by donning swallow-tails and white-tie for dinner always; although in those perilous days, men troubled nothing whatever about such conventions. I kept a full diary, but have room here of course only for two letters written to my Editor concerning a few of the people I met; and once more I claim for similar epistles a special value in that their material was culled and recorded on the spot.

I think "AE." will let me speak of him as a friend, if only because we reached perfect agreement on all manner of subjects, ranging from the splendour of William Blake to the insuperable difficulty of bringing Celt and Saxon to bear with one another's virtues. Nor will he, I think, object to my description of himself and his Office whence emanated all he did for his offspring, *The Irish Homestead*, the very room seeming to suggest a topsy-turvy-dom in Ireland that could not smirch her ingrain loveliness:

*To Mrs. Maude Egerton King*

"DUBLIN.

"May 8th, 1918.

". . . Yesterday I had a 2 hours' talk with 'AE.,' and I don't know where to begin telling you all about him. Jack Yeates, the painter and brother of the poet, came in and was most of the time with us. He was very chilly at first—such a contrast to the beaming 'AE.'; but after I had had a little say about William Blake, he almost forgave me for being a Saxon and even got a little flush of pleasure over his face at my crude sympathies!

But AE.!! Imagine a rather stout, beaming-faced man, with a not remarkable but good nose, a brow not high, looking indeed almost low because of the enormous roll of thick brown hair falling over it, but with knobby eyebrow ridges, the eyebrows slanting upwards at the corners like G.B. Shaw's; eyes large, flat, grey-blue and rather small in pupil, looking at you deeply through gold spectacles, but seldom blinking; imagine below this a great thick long brown beard—carefully trimmed to a strong point, and a thick irregular moustache almost concealing the mouth, though the lips are, I am sure, full and certainly red; imagine this Being of splendid locks, not a grey hair in them, smiling always, pouring out words of mystical belief in fairies and visions, with the Irish gift of seeing them and of believing in them; imagine him perched upon a common cane chair with all the cane broken away into one hazardous hole, his heels now on the rung, now on the seat itself, always shifting, but with eyes scarce moving! Imagine me on just such another chair—me, not yet quite adapted to the Irish eccentricities of home-misrule; all the room, littered and tumbled with documents, low in its rain-stained ceiling, its walls everywhere covered with gigantic frescoes, good, splendid, and Blakeish, yet rather tawdry in their gilded, life-sized figures; imagine a long leather-covered settee, the seat of which was also broken down into three unfathomable pits, and you have a fine picture of AE. in his office. The lady-secretary, deaf and 'a poet also,' sat at a tidy roll-top desk, but left us and came back to finish up the tea AE. had made for me with bread and jam—one plate and a teaspoon to serve and spread with. The frescoes are his own—'done in 2 or 3 days—to be washed out soon when I have better ideas to replace them with.' He was just awfully kind, perhaps a little over-sensitive if I criticized anything Irish; as who would not be? My one bit of mission here is to let people realize that we are up against all that they are, and fighting their battle (on a less tragic ground, yet the same). They also admit this, but hardly realize its significance. No sooner do you set foot on Irish land than England is a far, far away land, certainly with some good and lovable people in it, yet hopeless to hold intercourse with, and theoretically hateful! But it is strangely touching the way this inner circle of intellectual and spiritual life has gone about telling one another of my arrival, as though I was a person of importance, and only because I was a sympathetic Englishman who thought he understood something of Irish Ideals, etc. . . ."

The second letter is more amusing because dealing with the Countess Markievicz. Her sister, Miss Eva Gore-Booth, having followed this poor enthusiast into a better land will not mind my telling of the interview I had with her.

*To Mrs. Maude Egerton King*

“DUBLIN,

“May 17th, 1918.

“. . . At last I have seen the terror of Dublin—the Countess M. She is a poor sort of mad thing, hatred dominating her life and all her thoughts. She represents the extreme feeling which I suppose can be aroused any moment in the collective Irish Heart, but of which in the cultured Sinn Feinhe, e.g. Mrs. Green, the Gavin Duffys, James Stephens, I have seen nothing. I sat at one end of her well-sprung Chesterfield, she on a cushion-stool on the floor at the couch's other end; so that after each dozen words she could bang the springy seat with her skinny fist, and every time she did so, fixing her eyes upon the spot to be hit, and hitting hard enough to make me at the other end feel myself rising in the air. Her history is glib and cruel in its one-sidedness. She wants conscription because it will lead at once to that general rising that is to free once and for all her country from the hated yoke. She seemed unable to remember for more than two minutes that I was sympathetic; she hates us all and desires no better understanding. ‘It is impossible.’ She dwelt for long upon our cruelty, as compared with Germans, and still worse was it when compared with Irish. I tried hard to make her draw some distinction between official cruelty, military justice, etc., and individual men and women. But I wanted to hear this out—wanted to examine the grave charge: for every such accusation must have some, however dubious, foundation. Yet each instance she gave was concerning officials—wardresses in particular—an Irish official, she said, would always find means of tempering the worst severities. I quoted Darrell Figgis in his *Chronicle of Jails*—but he was ‘not a true Irishman’ although, as one of the 1916 Rebels, he had been tried for his life. She instanced then our wife-beating, our cruelty to children, our parental infamy towards girls who have had trouble, the screaming of the vivisectioned animals in our hospitals; the harshness of the law towards infanticides; and so on; but last of all our cruelty to German prisoners. She defended Germany for its treatment of Belgium



because of our 'secret treaty' with the cockpit of Europe. She was certain the Germans would treat Ireland with deepest sympathy when the end came. Altogether the interview would have tried my temper but for the poor mad thing's irresponsibility.

"I told her at last—my only touch of warmth—that all the best people in England were working for one ultimate ideal, the Brotherhood of Nations, but that she and those who thought with her were making that impossible. Unfortunately she does not believe there are any *best* people among us. To her I claimed all my rights in being English, let her see that I was proud of it, well knowing what the best in us stood for and made for. I tried my hardest to make her understand that the average Englishman had a passion for Justice; and this in spite of his thinking—foolishly, infamously, stupidly—that it could be enforced with the sword. Lastly I vowed he was capable of any self-sacrifice to give justice equally to everyone, white, black or yellow. But I left her baffled—I, not she!—and wondering if she does actually represent any real Irish people. You see neither she nor de Valera is of Irish blood. Certainly she hates us.

"Yesterday I had a chat with Mr. —, the editor of the — newspaper. He is a typical Irishman in friendliness, quick and witty in repartee, with the indefinable Irish charm. Mrs. Green, delightful though she was, and quite trustful of me, is about the only one here, except the poor Countess, who has it not; but she is English—as also were the Gore-Booths a few generations back. Well, I asked this Editor about the Irish hatred of us; his answer was concise and perhaps humorous, though rather terrible. 'I don't *hate* the poor ox,' he said with a merry twinkle, 'when I am out of meat; nor is it the tiger I hate because some of his kind are man-eaters. Yet, the Saints be praised! I just kill the two of them, and we get our absolution aisy. No! No! *we* never hate; though things there are that are never to be forgiven, and I trust we shall never forget.' Yet he was as friendly as man could be, although the doomed ox—or tiger—was sitting beside him. Sure the Celt is a rum 'un—same as me, same as you, only much more so. . . ."

In spite of the political turmoil, the ruinous condition and poverty of Dublin, the bitter, fierce, ingrained sadness which one could not but feel as if it were atmospheric with a cloudy sun for whose warmth all were subconsciously praying, the three weeks in Ireland, crammed with new experiences,

were most profitable to myself. I brought home a strengthened belief that only ideals transcending the possibility of their fulfilling can make any man's work worth its doing. I frequently remind myself of "A.E." Full of his dreams he found his self-expression in the practical re-habilitation of his country, rather than in his noble poetry or his daring symbolic frescoes. His organ *The Irish Homestead*, of widest circulation among the farmers, and issued from amidst tangled aspirations and vital prayers, had been guiding the ploughs into better-fed land, the people into more peaceful ways of thought, even compelling an almost universal co-operation in dairy farming. But then the Revolution came, and worse, the *Black-and-Tan* quelling of it. Between them, they swept away all. Had I been Irish, I would (D.V.) have been a rebel.

How I wished Maude King could have shared my glimpse of the captivating Irish peasantry!—in Connemara especially, though I do not doubt from other evidence, such as Dr. Helen Webb's intimacy with Donegal, that its sweeter qualities are universal. But enough was already known of our stupidity in ruling this passionate race, taught generation after generation, at hearth and altar, to hate us. Mrs. King would have portrayed the domestic fidelity and charm of a people more naturally virtue-loving—in spite of their repudiation of law if a landlord stood in the way!—than any race I know. For to her, Religion was one with the home-idea; a fact evidenced in her writings on the home-crafts, her *Vineyard* articles and stories; but nowhere more signally than in her description of Chartres Cathedral—that "Bible of the People"—from which I shall presently quote one passage.

But for one reason especially, the novel was never completed. If I were younger it should still justify the ways in which *The Vineyard* and its Guild, and the one woman inspiring and ruling them, were quietly compelling a truer sympathy with Ireland.

## CHAPTER V

### ULTIMAM MANUM IMPONO

THREE-FOURTHS of a century's strife should leave the mind still keen in the uptake, even if there remains no urgency of work to prove it. But I still claim some companionship with the Man-in-the-Street, and he may say a kind word for me. Indeed, he being very probably myself, I bare my head to him; for, though surveying for the most part his own often paced Street—that arrogant, jostling, irresponsible Street—as old men will, he, with change of spectacles perhaps, looks ahead also, in hope of clearer vision than his unaided memory sanctions. It is no doubt a merciful dispensation that the old man shall feel weary and rest him on door-steps along the Street, watching the young people going ahead of him. They come and they go, go and come yet again, compelled all along, so he thinks, by a curiousness, if seldom a longing, to answer the questions *Whence? Whither?* For in those questions, realized or not, they keep in some touch with their primary Eden. For my own consolation I like to name this subconscious questioning the *Sense of Home*: for thence it is we are come, thither we return, and there we belong. Even ordinary adventures, whatever their objective, involve, I think, this sense: was it not in the peace of Home that we first discovered the urgency to leave it? Is it not hence we return with the story of our doings? So the old man on the door-step, his thoughts wandering up and down the Street of his past life, finds that these questionings, inseparable from human nature, however expressed, are grounded in Truth—even if he must wait for their full answer in the wider-understanding ahead. Certainly his wastrel thoughts are consistent; for all along the way it was a vague hope of getting home again, of proving its imperishable sweetness, that helped him to withstand the

lure of success, its bitter failures, and even his own portion of its shame. Then, looking ahead where the wandering street tapers away into mists of the snow-mountains, he finds that this upholding desire belongs there-away also: still it is Home he would find and the sweetness thereof. The longing may be even more poignant in that he never had found in all his long journey one actual home, that, as sanctuary and oratory, he could call his very own. Certainly this desire for Home and its sweetness will not let him know fear when, very soon now, he is bidden rise and walk once more with youthful back and stride, out and away; his warfare accomplished, even if never to end.

I have deliberately enlarged upon the Home's sanctity and the relation of its idea to our present on-going, because there is reason for anxiety lest in this day, and for many haphazard young travellers, the hoot of motors seems more pertinent to life than the laughter of children; because the danger of missing the most deathless joys is great if we narrow the concept of Home to ease and irresponsibility. More than this: if the Kingdom of Heaven is not in us, we have no home; and certainly, if it come not here, it can belong to no remote and mystical Universe. It was Maude Egerton King's convictions as to Home implying the purest essence of joy—being in fact the signature of religion—which made me feel she should interpret for us Ireland's distresses and needs. If I could give here the whole of her story, *The Hearth Fire*, my claim would be justified to its every reader. Yet a few paragraphs, even when taken from their context, will prove her shrewd estimate of the Celt's many and guileless qualities, although in this particular story of hers they concern the folk of North Wales, not Ireland. After these quotations I shall, to stress still further her belief in Home, offer a gem from her description of Chartres Cathedral, and finally two others. For they take high rank in my own Reminiscences of that holiest, most faith-inspiring fane.

In the opening words of the Welsh story we find an actual

portrait of a happy, twelve-year old child, whom I also knew, and so can vouch for its truthfulness. She is singing at her work, irrepressibly as a thrush, with a pure, ringing, soprano voice, which in its highest notes' felicity was comparable, so Mrs. King averred, only with Melba's :

"She sang for joy, for peace of heart, but for sorrow and anger too; for sunshine, and also for mountain storm and cold; and when she struggled along, all alone, head and umbrella down against the wild weather which always befell her Bible class nights, she still sang with what breath was left in her, like a missel-thrush against a north-east gale. Indeed, whenever she was not singing, it was because Jenny was talking, eating or sleeping. . . ."

Then, after Jenny had been defending to her mother a lad who was falling into evil ways :

". . . As Jenny stood there stroking the little calf's head, gazing and remembering, she began singing again softly under her breath; but, when she went about her other work indoors, the smouldering fire broke into flame, and she defied the powers of darkness in one of the fiercest fighting hymns of her race. . . ."

We have an unforgettable description of this lad's mother :

". . . Mifanwy stayed by the hearth long after the candle had burned itself out. She was one that went gladly to chapel to pray and praise with her neighbours. But she had learned more of God's ways through homely things and daily life than in pulpit exposition. During one night when she had wandered searching with a lantern for her son, it came to her that *this*, upon her heart, was part of the Good Shepherd's suffering, and its later uplifting was one with His joy when He found and brought home His sheep. And just as the slender life of her body, so was the strong life of her spirit daily quickened at the great hearth [of the Farm]. For in that bleak place it had long since meant the goodness of God to her, not only its sign, but an actual part of it; and since grief came so heavy upon her it had meant his mercy too. As a child she had heard more than one word against the open hearth fire at Grey Bush, the draughty chimney, the ashes that blew about; but to little Mifanwy the fire that had served and outlasted so many men was nearly as sacred as the stars

themselves. Early in her married life, and ever since, she felt it to be the heart of home and homestead too. In those young days, when work was done, she sat by the hearth sewing for the child who was coming, while David read aloud to her, or brought her his hopes and fears from byre and pasture. Into the sweet-smelling warmth of the great hearth she brought her baby to wash him there and put his clothes warm upon him. . . . When her little boy, always thin and weakly, came home from the far-away school, crying with cold, it was there she chafed the blue hands and numbed feet. It was the refuge for all sorts of needy people; for disputants, seeking counsel of her just David; for the widower and his little ones from their fireless house; for tramping men hunting for work as hunger hunted them; for the farm lad crying with toothache in the cold, for the lamb untimely born, sick sheep-dogs; for little half-frozen birds. She had seen that great fire melt grief like iron, turn unkindness to pity and burn up enmity. . . .”

“She often wondered if any other [of those who had tended the fire before she came] had brought the same anguish there, and found the same hope, as she. For she had a child who came back and back to it, out of strange storms, disgraced and desperate; and when she cared for him there, and saw the steam reeking from his clothes hung about the hearth, she used to tell herself, ‘In like manner the evil is leaving his soul before the warmth of love.’ And, in like manner, she had comforted herself with the thought that though he had come home many times disgraced, the seventy times seven were not nearly told. It had been her strength and support to know that the fire was always ready for him, whether her prodigal was forgetting all about it in the drinking-places in B—, or longing for it in some chill awakening. . . . Oh! where would we all be, in our wickedness and our wretchedness, if the goodness and mercy of God went out like an untended fire?

“All the time Mifanwy had been sitting still as a stone, but when she asked her heart that question, she got up, then stooped, and with passionate swiftness pulled out peat after peat, and built them wall-like round the fire, and roofed it too until not one red window was left. Then she sat down again in the warm darkness, still as ever. Only when the grey dawn came did she unlock her icy hands, though even then she did not leave off praying. And then she went softly upstairs to wash herself and make ready for the new day’s work. . . .”

Maude King's sense of guest-hood was one with her home-love. She could sup with the poor and accept joyfully their bounty. Nationality and social rank were no more barriers than to Ruskin's child-saint Rose La Touche. In Dr. John Donne's words:

"In all she did  
Some tincture of the golden times was hid."<sup>1</sup>

A certain Swiss critic, after reading her story, *Christian's Wife*, could hardly believe she had not lived for years among Alpine peasantry; while a well-known Welsh writer wondered how, in *The Hearth Fire*, she evinced such intimacy with peasant life in North Wales.

But now for her words about Chartres and its significance of the way Church and Home were once inseparable.<sup>2</sup>

"Merely to think, on a grey English day, of that most incomparable of all the crown-jewels of Christian Art makes the pulse leap and the soul home-sick. . . . Not a bright morning, not a dull and foggy one, not a sunset, not an after-glow, but brings a great company of saints and heroes into sight; not a ray but lights a flaming martyrdom, a starry victory, or a joyful miracle. The early light, which shows first the Mother and Child in the great east window, gives, as the sun passes round, gradual revelation of all the Prophets and Apostles of the Old and New Testaments, and a long succession of later saints and martyrs . . . who translucently fill all the clerestory of apse and choir and south transept. While these in turn emerge and glow and then go back into blue shadows, the northern clerestory remains mysterious as a deep night sky, only hinting at stars; but there, awaiting their light, is just as glorious a host. . . and all of them sealed by the Rose of the Last Judgment, with Christ as its flaming heart of love and purification. . . ."

"The sense of being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, making it illuminant of vital truth; the spiritual pressure of an innumerable host, silent, and yet crying out so loud that our stupid materialism falls like Jericho's walls before their triumphant shout that the Kingdom is God's, and the power,

<sup>1</sup> *Epithalamiums*, Eclogue, 1.70.

<sup>2</sup> "The Saints' Calendar," *The Vineyard*, January 1914.

and the glory, for ever and ever and ever—overwhelms prejudice, beats one down on to the humblest of knees, catches one up to unsuspected heights of hope and faith. . . .

*“It is a sad waste of a sky full of stars not to look at them: a greater not to know and love the radiant ones of our race, who, no less than the heavens themselves, declare the glory of God, and reveal, too, the divine possibility in man. . . .”*

I fancy those who think as they run or read, will easily see how Chartres and the lonely little Welsh farm belong to one another in spiritual consanguinity. Taken so, they proclaim in no doubtful word that the sanctity of Home need hardly be damped by griefs incident to the Hearth Fire’s tending, and that its joy “will never pass into nothingness.” Yet at the same time, no one knew better than she, from her own observation, that pleasure sought as a main object in life—pleasure which, as R. L. Stevenson put it, must be just accepted “as a bye-product”—is but ephemeral and anti-pathetic to that life of purpose and will which means Joy, essential, immortal.

Maude King had entire understanding that even such joy may involve the full acceptance of grief. These final stanzas of a little poem called *Loss in Spring*, which touches upon her first baby-girl dying in infancy, evidence this acceptance:

“A breath from hidden violets wanders past,  
A sweet soul strayed from some forgotten tomb,  
And, like a happy dream come true at last,  
The grey old fruit-tree stands in snowy bloom.

“All, all is here, and lovely as of yore,  
In resurrection beauty rich and rife.  
Yet am I but an alien thing before  
The intolerably happy heart of life.

“There lacks one tiny flower that once I thought  
Would crown all dreams, and hopes, and suffering.  
For all her fulness, Spring has only brought  
A sadness deeper than the joy of Spring.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My *Book of Songs and Sonnets*, p. 13.



There is something in this glory and anguish of Motherhood and Home that no man, even if a father, can dare say he quite understands. And I question if any man-poet could have given us this ode "English Earth" with its bitter heartache such as only a mother knows. Personal suffering alone could tell of the Land's anguish when torn from her offspring:

"I saw the Mother, the beautiful lonely Mother;  
I heard her weeping for the children who had left her desolate.

" "They have left me;  
They do not weep for me as I weep for them.  
My breasts are full of milk,  
But my babes do not hunger for milk as my breasts ache to  
give it them.

"What am I now, I, hapless, deserted Mother—  
Without my children, without the bearing of children,  
Without my happy labour, my care and training and testing  
of darling children?  
Without all this I am only the rich man's darling;  
He buys me and plays with me.  
Not mine any longer the hope of seedtime, the peaceful and  
wonderful waiting, the stir and the greening hope, the  
full-eared burden of harvest,  
Nor any labour whose toil is the health, whose flower the joy,  
whose fruit is the life of my children!

"I am become instead a creature that's kept for pleasure,  
I am sickened and stifled in flowers, I am worthlessly beautiful;  
The pleasure I make is sin, but I cannot escape it.  
The rich men have bought me; they hold me fast in their thrall.

"O pity my shame! O hate and pity my shame—  
The shame of my gay unfruitful slavery;  
The shame of the selfish privacy of my gardens and woodlands,  
deer forests, covers, great pastures; the thousand places  
Where beast and bird, and machine have driven my children  
Out and away to the lusting, insatiable city!

“Is my motherhood gone for ever?  
Can no one restore it?  
Can no one redeem the sterile, beautiful wanton,  
Who all the while is hungering to mother men?”<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that, as the defilement of the Temple, once to all devout Jews a Holy Place and Sanctuary, roused the blazing anger of Jesus; so was the desecration of her Motherland to this woman, almost broken-hearted by a not very different defilement. The heart that cannot flame with indignation has never a message from the High Kingdom. I see in Maude King's words suggestion of the nobler spirit in hereditary, responsible possession making one with the peasant exiled from his ancient tenure, his bounteous Mother's home. The best in both sides of her own lineage seem here interwoven with the poem's spiritual passion.

But the conflict always within her, the constant need to meet Apollyon, be it in the valley or on the City's ways, seemed more than her temporal strength could support. Whether it was her political entertaining, or her devotion to the Guild, or her editing of *The Vineyard*—though this last, she once assured me, was the happiest work of all her life—that must be chiefly blamed, no one dare say. To do all she had in hand needed more power. Not even her Master, the Galilean Craftsman, was omnipotent: even He must drink of that uttermost anguish, failure. But her fearlessness never wavered, though never since the war had she been free of a slow-creeping malady ever tightening its grip. The waning of youthful health was now constantly aggravated by apprehensions for those she loved; any small mishap to them meant definite injury to herself. Yet her courage, if suddenly requisitioned, was always sure and masterly, even when the Breaking of her Bowl was close at hand. She had to bear acutest pain in several operations where anaesthetics were inadmissible. Yet she realized that, for the sake of doctors and nurses, she must not lose self-control. I, who

<sup>1</sup> *The Vineyard*, Vol. IX, p. 20.

must take part in these inflictions, and knew how great was the strain, especially when success was doubtful, was always astonished at the spiritual beauty that each of these ordeals awakened. When commended for her steadfastness, she would say very simply, "I just knew what it was costing you!" Indeed the Kingdom of Heaven was still close about her, even if its glory was wrapped in darkest clouds. In all my life of long and multifold experiences, I have never seen Beauty quite like this—her sweet nature and lineaments lit by her increasingly essential loveliness. Spiritual ecstasy may, as I have already remarked, bring positive beauty into an even plain countenance. But this woman's beauty, so peculiarly her own, now miraculously revealed herself.

On her final Christmas Day none will ever forget the conviction of angelic presence in our midst. Dr. Donne knew well what this meant:

"Then unbeguile thyself, and know with me  
That angels, though employed on earth they be,  
Are still in heaven."

On that memorable day she mastered her physical exhaustion, and became the inspiring hostess to her little company singing carols around a Christmas Tree, scintillant and gemmed with candles. Yet herself was to us all the one "Candle of the Lord."

Steadfast in ideals and word, tireless in devotion to those she served, so wonderful was Maude Egerton King, that she has given a new and sufficing Hope to those far distant chimes, *Come unto Me! Come Home!* Her life was all along a victory over Death, and enduring to the end. In the spring of 1927, her White Stone was given for her eternal keeping: "and in the Stone a new name is written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

That her new name signifies her simple worth to God, all who knew her were sure. It keeps her still near to us.

The mortal sands of Time at last outrun,  
And work all done, my snowy pall I wait.  
Yet One, I know, her love defying fate,  
Lingers to take my hand: "Anon! Anon!"  
I hear her ringing call: "Thy journey's done.  
Nor latch nor padlock holds our faëry-gate  
Now Death is fled—too long thy intimate!  
So, doff thy cowl: the harvest wage is won!"

Now am I free to climb those ancient Hills  
Whence cometh help and healing for all ills.  
For that dear Friend (who bid her roses flame  
Red in my garden, banishing all blame  
With their sweet incense) points the starry way  
Where Love means Home, and Life the Risen Day.



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