CHAPTER THE SEVENTH - THE SECOND VISION

(1)

A MONTH later found the bishop's original state of perplexity and insomnia returned and intensified. He had done none of all the things that had seemed so manifestly needing to be done after his vision in the Athenaeum. All the relief and benefit of his experience in London had vanished out of his life. He was afraid of Dr. Dale's drug; he knew certainly that it would precipitate matters; and all his instincts in the state of moral enfeeblement to which he had relapsed, were to temporize.

Although he had said nothing further about his changed beliefs to Lady Ella, yet he perceived clearly that a shadow had fallen between them. She had a wife's extreme sensitiveness to fine shades of expression and bearing, and manifestly she knew that something was different. Meanwhile Lady Sunderbund had become a frequent worshipper in the cathedral, she was a figure as conspicuous in sombre Princhester as a bird of paradise would have been; common people stood outside her very very rich blue door on the chance of seeing her; she never missed an opportunity of hearing the bishop preach or speak, she wrote him several long and thoughtful letters with which he did not bother Lady Ella, she communicated persistently, and manifestly intended to become a very active worker in diocesan affairs.

It was inevitable that she and the bishop should meet and talk occasionally in the cathedral precincts, and it was inevitable that he should contrast the flexibility of her rapid and very responsive mind with a certain defensiveness, a stoniness, in the intellectual bearing of Lady Ella.

If it had been Lady Sunderbund he had had to explain to, instead of Lady Ella, he could have explained a dozen times a day.

And since his mind was rehearsing explanations it was not unnatural they should overflow into this eagerly receptive channel, and that the less he told Lady Ella the fuller became his spiritual confidences to Lady Sunderbund.

She was clever in realizing that they were confidences and treating them as such, more particularly when it chanced that she and Lady Ella and the bishop found themselves in the same conversation.

She made great friends with Miriam, and initiated her by a whole collection of pretty costume plates into the mysteries of the "Ussian Ballet" and the works of Mousso'gski and "Imsky Ko'zakof."

The bishop liked a certain religiosity in the texture of Moussorgski's music, but failed to see the "significance "--of many of the costumes.

(2)

It was on a Sunday night--the fourth Sunday after Easter--that the supreme crisis of the bishop's life began. He had had a feeling all day of extreme dulness and stupidity; he felt his ministrations unreal, his ceremonies absurd and undignified. In the night he became bleakly and painfully awake. His mind occupied itself at first chiefly with the tortuousness and weakness of his own character. Every day he perceived that the difficulty of telling Lady Ella of the change in his faith became more mountainous. And every day he procrastinated. If he had told her naturally and simply on the evening of his return from London--before anything material intervened--everything would have been different, everything would have been simpler....

He groaned and rolled over in his bed.

There came upon him the acutest remorse and misery. For he saw that amidst these petty immediacies he had lost touch with God. The last month became incredible. He had seen God. He had touched God's hand. God had been given to him, and he had neglected the gift. He was still lost amidst the darkness and loneliness, the chaotic ends and mean shifts, of an Erastian world. For a month now and more, after a vision of God so vivid and real and reassuring that surely no saint nor prophet had ever had a better, he had made no more than vague responsive movements; he had allowed himself to be persuaded into an unreasonable and cowardly

delay, and the fetters of association and usage and minor interests were as unbroken as they had been before ever the vision shone. Was it credible that there had ever been such a vision in a life so entirely dictated by immediacy and instinct as his? We are all creatures of the dark stream, we swim in needs and bodily impulses and small vanities; if ever and again a bubble of spiritual imaginativeness glows out of us, it breaks and leaves us where we were.

"Louse that I am!" he cried.

He still believed in God, without a shadow of doubt; he believed in the God that he had seen, the high courage, the golden intention, the light that had for a moment touched him. But what had he to do with God, he, the loiterer, the little thing?

He was little, he was funny. His prevarications with his wife, for example, were comic. There was no other word for him but "funny."

He rolled back again and lay staring.

"Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" What right has a little bishop in a purple stock and doeskin breeches, who hangs back in his palace from the very call of God, to a phrase so fine and tragic as "the body of this death?"

He was the most unreal thing in the universe. He was a base insect

giving himself airs. What advantage has a bishop over the Praying Mantis, that cricket which apes the attitude of piety? Does he matter more--to God?

"To the God of the Universe, who can tell? To the God of man,--yes."

He sat up in bed struck by his own answer, and full of an indescribable hunger for God and an indescribable sense of his complete want of courage to make the one simple appeal that would satisfy that hunger. He tried to pray. "O God!" he cried, "forgive me! Take me!" It seemed to him that he was not really praying but only making believe to pray. It seemed to him that he was not really existing but only seeming to exist. He seemed to himself to be one with figures on a china plate, with figures painted on walls, with the flimsy imagined lives of men in stories of forgotten times. "O God!" he said, "O God," acting a gesture, mimicking appeal.

"Anaemic," he said, and was given an idea.

He got out of bed, he took his keys from the night-table at the bed head and went to his bureau.

He stood with Dale's tonic in his hand. He remained for some time holding it, and feeling a curious indisposition to go on with the thing in his mind.

He turned at last with an effort. He carried the little phial to his bedside, and into the tumbler of his water-bottle he let the drops fall, drop by drop, until he had counted twenty. Then holding it to the bulb of his reading lamp he added the water and stood watching the slow pearly eddies in the mixture mingle into an opalescent uniformity. He replaced the water-bottle and stood with the glass in his hand. But he did not drink.

He was afraid.

He knew that he had only to drink and this world of confusion would grow transparent, would roll back and reveal the great simplicities behind. And he was afraid.

He was afraid of that greatness. He was afraid of the great imperatives that he knew would at once take hold of his life. He wanted to muddle on for just a little longer. He wanted to stay just where he was, in his familiar prison-house, with the key of escape in his hand. Before he took the last step into the very presence of truth, he would--think.

He put down the glass and lay down upon his bed....

(3)

He awoke in a mood of great depression out of a dream of wandering

interminably in an endless building of innumerable pillars, pillars so vast and high that the ceiling was lost in darkness. By the scale of these pillars he felt himself scarcely larger than an ant. He was always alone in these wanderings, and always missing something that passed along distant passages, something desirable, something in the nature of a procession or of a ceremony, something of which he was in futile pursuit, of which he heard faint echoes, something luminous of which he seemed at times to see the last fading reflection, across vast halls and wildernesses of shining pavement and through Cyclopaean archways. At last there was neither sound nor gleam, but the utmost solitude, and a darkness and silence and the uttermost profundity of sorrow....

It was bright day. Dunk had just come into the room with his tea, and the tumbler of Dr. Dale's tonic stood untouched upon the night-table. The bishop sat up in bed. He had missed his opportunity. To-day was a busy day, he knew.

"No," he said, as Dunk hesitated whether to remove or leave the tumbler. "Leave that."

Dunk found room for it upon the tea-tray, and vanished softly with the bishop's evening clothes.

The bishop remained motionless facing the day. There stood the draught of decision that he had lacked the decision even to touch.

From his bed he could just read the larger items that figured upon the engagement tablet which it was Whippham's business to fill over-night and place upon his table. He had two confirmation services, first the big one in the cathedral and then a second one in the evening at Pringle, various committees and an interview with Chasters. He had not yet finished his addresses for these confirmation services....

The task seemed mountainous--overwhelming.

With a gesture of desperation he seized the tumblerful of tonic and drank it off at a gulp.

(4)

For some moments nothing seemed to happen.

Then he began to feel stronger and less wretched, and then came a throbbing and tingling of artery and nerve.

He had a sense of adventure, a pleasant fear in the thing that he had done. He got out of bed, leaving his cup of tea untasted, and began to dress. He had the sensation of relief a prisoner may feel who suddenly tries his cell door and finds it open upon sunshine, the outside world and freedom.

He went on dressing although he was certain that in a few minutes the world of delusion about him would dissolve, and that he would find himself again in the great freedom of the place of God.

This time the transition came much sooner and much more rapidly. This time the phases and quality of the experience were different. He felt once again that luminous confusion between the world in which a human life is imprisoned and a circumambient and interpenetrating world, but this phase passed very rapidly; it did not spread out over nearly half an hour as it had done before, and almost immediately he seemed to plunge away from everything in this life altogether into that outer freedom he sought. And this time there was not even the elemental scenery of the former vision. He stood on nothing; there was nothing below and nothing above him. There was no sense of falling, no terror, but a feeling as though he floated released. There was no light, but as it were a clear darkness about him. Then it was manifest to him that he was not alone, but that with him was that same being that in his former vision had called himself the Angel of God. He knew this without knowing why he knew this, and either he spoke and was answered, or he thought and his thought answered him back. His state of mind on this occasion was altogether different from the first vision of God; before it had been spectacular, but now his perception was altogether super-sensuous.

(And nevertheless and all the time it seemed that very faintly he was still in his room.)

It was he who was the first to speak. The great Angel whom he felt rather than saw seemed to be waiting for him to speak.

"I have come," he said, "because once more I desire to see God."

"But you have seen God."

"I saw God. God was light, God was truth. And I went back to my life, and God was hidden. God seemed to call me. He called. I heard him, I sought him and I touched his hand. When I went back to my life I was presently lost in perplexity. I could not tell why God had called me nor what I had to do."

"And why did you not come here before?"

"Doubt and fear. Brother, will you not lay your hand on mine?"

The figure in the darkness became distincter. But nothing touched the bishop's seeking hands.

"I want to see God and to understand him. I want reassurance. I want conviction. I want to understand all that God asks me to do. The world is full of conflict and confusion and the spirit of war. It is dark and dreadful now with suffering and bloodshed. I want to serve God who could save it, and I do not know how."

It seemed to the bishop that now he could distinguish dimly but surely the form and features of the great Angel to whom he talked. For a little while there was silence, and then the Angel spoke.

"It was necessary first," said the Angel, "that you should apprehend God and desire him. That was the purport of your first vision. Now, since you require it, I will tell you and show you certain things about him, things that it seems you need to know, things that all men need to know. Know then first that the time is at hand when God will come into the world and rule it, and when men will know what is required of them. This time is close at hand. In a little while God will be made manifest throughout the earth. Men will know him and know that he is King. To you this truth is to be shown--that you may tell it to others."

"This is no vision?" said the bishop, "no dream that will pass away?"

"Am I not here beside you?"

(5)

The bishop was anxious to be very clear. Things that had been shapelessly present in his mind now took form and found words for themselves.

"The God I saw in my vision--He is not yet manifest in the world?"

"He comes. He is in the world, but he is not yet manifested. He whom you saw in your vision will speedily be manifest in the world. To you this vision is given of the things that come. The world is already glowing with God. Mankind is like a smouldering fire that will presently, in quite a little time, burst out into flame.

"In your former vision I showed you God," said the Angel. "This time I will show you certain signs of the coming of God. And then you will understand the place you hold in the world and the task that is required of you."

(6)

And as the Angel spoke he lifted up his hands with the palms upward, and there appeared above them a little round cloud, that grew denser until it had the likeness of a silver sphere. It was a mirror in the form of a ball, but a mirror not shining uniformly; it was discoloured with greyish patches that had a familiar shape. It circled slowly upon the Angel's hands. It seemed no greater than the compass of a human skull, and yet it was as great as the earth. Indeed it showed the whole earth. It was the earth. The hands of the Angel vanished out of sight, dissolved and vanished, and the spinning world hung free. All about the bishop the velvet darkness broke into glittering points that shaped out the constellations, and nearest to them, so near as to seem only a few

million miles away in the great emptiness into which everything had resolved itself, shone the sun, a ball of red-tongued fires. The Angel was but a voice now; the bishop and the Angel were somewhere aloof from and yet accessible to the circling silver sphere.

At the time all that happened seemed to happen quite naturally, as things happen in a dream. It was only later, when all this was a matter of memory, that the bishop realized how strange and incomprehensible his vision had been. The sphere was the earth with all its continents and seas, its ships and cities, its country-sides and mountain ranges. It was so small that he could see it all at once, and so great and full that he could see everything in it. He could see great countries like little patches upon it, and at the same time he could see the faces of the men upon the highways, he could see the feelings in men's hearts and the thoughts in their minds. But it did not seem in any way wonderful to the bishop that so he should see those things, or that it was to him that these things were shown.

"This is the whole world," he said.

"This is the vision of the world," the Angel answered.

"It is very wonderful," said the bishop, and stood for a moment marvelling at the compass of his vision. For here was India, here was Samarkand, in the light of the late afternoon; and China and the swarming cities upon her silvery rivers sinking through twilight to the

night and throwing a spray and tracery of lantern spots upon the dark; here was Russia under the noontide, and so great a battle of artillery raging on the Dunajec as no man had ever seen before; whole lines of trenches dissolved into clouds of dust and heaps of blood-streaked earth; here close to the waiting streets of Constantinople were the hills of Gallipoli, the grave of British Imperialism, streaming to heaven with the dust and smoke of bursting shells and rifle fire and the smoke and flame of burning brushwood. In the sea of Marmora a big ship crowded with Turkish troops was sinking; and, purple under the clear water, he could see the shape of the British submarine which had torpedoed her and had submerged and was going away. Berlin prepared its frugal meals, still far from famine. He saw the war in Europe as if he saw it on a map, yet every human detail showed. Over hundreds of miles of trenches east and west of Germany he could see shells bursting and the men below dropping, and the stretcher-bearers going back with the wounded. The roads to every front were crowded with reserves and munitions. For a moment a little group of men indifferent to all this struggle, who were landing amidst the Antarctic wilderness, held his attention; and then his eyes went westward to the dark rolling Atlantic across which, as the edge of the night was drawn like a curtain, more and still more ships became visible beating upon their courses eastward or westward under the overtaking day.

The wonder increased; the wonder of the single and infinitely multitudinous adventure of mankind.

"So God perhaps sees it," he whispered.

(7)

"Look at this man," said the Angel, and the black shadow of a hand seemed to point.

It was a Chinaman sitting with two others in a little low room separated by translucent paper windows from a noisy street of shrill-voiced people. The three had been talking of the ultimatum that Japan had sent that day to China, claiming a priority in many matters over European influences they were by no means sure whether it was a wrong or a benefit that had been done to their country. From that topic they had passed to the discussion of the war, and then of wars and national aggressions and the perpetual thrusting and quarrelling of mankind. The older man had said that so life would always be; it was the will of Heaven. The little, very yellow-faced, emaciated man had agreed with him. But now this younger man, to whose thoughts the Angel had so particularly directed the bishop's attention, was speaking. He did not agree with his companion.

"War is not the will of Heaven," he said; "it is the blindness of men."

"Man changes," he said, "from day to day and from age to age. The science of the West has taught us that. Man changes and war changes and

all things change. China has been the land of flowery peace, and she may yet give peace to all the world. She has put aside that puppet Emperor at Peking, she turns her face to the new learning of the West as a man lays aside his heavy robes, in order that her task may be achieved."

The older man spoke, his manner was more than a little incredulous, and yet not altogether contemptuous. "You believe that someday there will be no more war in the world, that a time will come when men will no longer plot and plan against the welfare of men?"

"Even that last," said the younger man. "Did any of us dream twenty-five years ago that here in China we should live to see a republic? The age of the republics draws near, when men in every country of the world will look straight up to the rule of Right and the empire of Heaven."

("And God will be King of the World," said the Angel. "Is not that faith exactly the faith that is coming to you?")

The two other Chinamen questioned their companion, but without hostility.

"This war," said the Chinaman, "will end in a great harvesting of kings."

"But Japan--" the older man began.

The bishop would have liked to hear more of that conversation, but the dark hand of the Angel motioned him to another part of the world. "Listen to this," said the Angel.

He pointed the bishop to where the armies of Britain and Turkey lay in the heat of Mesopotamia. Along the sandy bank of a wide, slow-flowing river rode two horsemen, an Englishman and a Turk. They were returning from the Turkish lines, whither the Englishman had been with a flag of truce. When Englishmen and Turks are thrown together they soon become friends, and in this case matters had been facilitated by the Englishman's command of the Turkish language. He was quite an exceptional Englishman. The Turk had just been remarking cheerfully that it wouldn't please the Germans if they were to discover how amiably he and his charge had got on. "It's a pity we ever ceased to be friends," he said.

"You Englishmen aren't like our Christians," he went on.

The Englishmen wanted to know why.

"You haven't priests in robes. You don't chant and worship crosses and pictures, and quarrel among yourselves."

"We worship the same God as you do," said the Englishman.

"Then why do we fight?"

"That's what we want to know."

"Why do you call yourselves Christians? And take part against us? All who worship the One God are brothers."

"They ought to be," said the Englishman, and thought. He was struck by what seemed to him an amazingly novel idea.

"If it weren't for religions all men would serve God together," he said. "And then there would be no wars--only now and then perhaps just a little honest fighting...."

"And see here," said the Angel. "Here close behind this frightful battle, where the German phalanx of guns pounds its way through the Russian hosts. Here is a young German talking to two wounded Russian prisoners, who have stopped to rest by the roadside. He is a German of East Prussia; he knows and thinks a little Russian. And they too are saying, all three of them, that the war is not God's will, but the confusion of mankind.

"Here," he said, and the shadow of his hand hovered over the burning-ghats of Benares, where a Brahmin of the new persuasion watched the straight spires of funereal smoke ascend into the glow of the late afternoon, while he talked to an English painter, his friend, of the blind intolerance of race and caste and custom in India.

"Or here."

The Angel pointed to a group of people who had gathered upon a little beach at the head of a Norwegian fiord. There were three lads, an old man and two women, and they stood about the body of a drowned German sailor which had been washed up that day. For a time they had talked in whispers, but now suddenly the old man spoke aloud.

"This is the fourth that has come ashore," he said. "Poor drowned souls! Because men will not serve God."

"But folks go to church and pray enough," said one of the women.

"They do not serve God," said the old man. "They just pray to him as one nods to a beggar. They do not serve God who is their King. They set up their false kings and emperors, and so all Europe is covered with dead, and the seas wash up these dead to us. Why does the world suffer these things? Why did we Norwegians, who are a free-spirited people, permit the Germans and the Swedes and the English to set up a king over us? Because we lack faith. Kings mean secret counsels, and secret counsels bring war. Sooner or later war will come to us also if we give the soul of our nation in trust to a king.... But things will not always be thus with men. God will not suffer them for ever. A day comes, and it is no distant day, when God himself will rule the earth, and when men will do, not what the king wishes nor what is expedient nor what is customary,

but what is manifestly right."....

"But men are saying that now in a thousand places," said the Angel. "Here is something that goes a little beyond that."

His pointing hand went southward until they saw the Africanders riding down to Windhuk. Two men, Boer farmers both, rode side by side and talked of the German officer they brought prisoner with them. He had put sheep-dip in the wells of drinking-water; his life was fairly forfeit, and he was not to be killed. "We want no more hate in South Africa," they agreed. "Dutch and English and German must live here now side by side. Men cannot always be killing."

"And see his thoughts," said the Angel.

The German's mind was one amazement. He had been sure of being shot, he had meant to make a good end, fierce and scornful, a relentless fighter to the last; and these men who might have shot him like a man were going to spare him like a dog. His mind was a tumbled muddle of old and new ideas. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of the foulest and fiercest militarism; he had been trained to relentlessness, ruthlessness and so forth; war was war and the bitterer the better, frightfulness was your way to victory over every enemy. But these people had found a better way. Here were Dutch and English side by side; sixteen years ago they had been at war together and now they wore the same uniform and rode together, and laughed at him for a queer fellow because he was

for spitting at them and defying them, and folding his arms and looking level at the executioners' rifles. There were to be no executioners' rifles.... If it was so with Dutch and English, why shouldn't it be so presently with French and Germans? Why someday shouldn't French, German, Dutch and English, Russian and Pole, ride together under this new star of mankind, the Southern Cross, to catch whatever last mischief-maker was left to poison the wells of goodwill?

His mind resisted and struggled against these ideas. "Austere," he whispered. "The ennobling tests of war." A trooner rode up alongside, and offered him a drink of water

"Just a mouthful," he said apologetically. "We've had to go rather short."...

"There's another brain busy here with the same idea," the Angel interrupted. And the bishop found himself looking into the bedroom of a young German attache in Washington, sleepless in the small hours.

"Ach!" cried the young man, and sat up in bed and ran his hands through his fair hair.

He had been working late upon this detestable business of the Lusitania; the news of her sinking had come to hand two days before, and all America was aflame with it. It might mean war. His task had been to pour out explanations and justifications to the press; to show that it was an

act of necessity, to pretend a conviction that the great ship was loaded with munitions, to fight down the hostility and anger that blazed across a continent. He had worked to his limit. He had taken cup after cup of coffee, and had come to bed worked out not two hours ago. Now here he was awake after a nightmare of drowning women and children, trying to comfort his soul by recalling his own arguments. Never once since the war began had he doubted the rightness of the German cause. It seemed only a proof of his nervous exhaustion that he could doubt it now. Germany was the best organized, most cultivated, scientific and liberal nation the earth had ever seen, it was for the good of mankind that she should be the dominant power in the world; his patriotism had had the passion of a mission. The English were indolent, the French decadent, the Russians barbaric, the Americans basely democratic; the rest of the world was the "White man's Burthen"; the clear destiny of mankind was subservience to the good Prussian eagle. Nevertheless--those wet draggled bodies that swirled down in the eddies of the sinking Titan--Ach! He wished it could have been otherwise. He nursed his knees and prayed that there need not be much more of these things before the spirit of the enemy was broken and the great Peace of Germany came upon the world.

And suddenly he stopped short in his prayer.

Suddenly out of the nothingness and darkness about him came the conviction that God did not listen to his prayers....

Was there any other way?

It was the most awful doubt he had ever had, for it smote at the training of all his life. "Could it be possible that after all our old German God is not the proper style and title of the true God? Is our old German God perhaps only the last of a long succession of bloodstained tribal effigies--and not God at all?"

For a long time it seemed that the bishop watched the thoughts that gathered in the young attache's mind. Until suddenly he broke into a quotation, into that last cry of the dying Goethe, for "Light. More Light!"...

"Leave him at that," said the Angel. "I want you to hear these two young women."

The hand came back to England and pointed to where Southend at the mouth of the Thames was all agog with the excitement of an overnight Zeppelin raid. People had got up hours before their usual time in order to look at the wrecked houses before they went up to their work in town. Everybody seemed abroad. Two nurses, not very well trained as nurses go nor very well-educated women, were snatching a little sea air upon the front after an eventful night. They were too excited still to sleep. They were talking of the horror of the moment when they saw the nasty thing "up there," and felt helpless as it dropped its bombs. They had both hated it.

"There didn't ought to be such things," said one.

"They don't seem needed," said her companion.

"Men won't always go on like this--making wars and all such wickedness."

"It's 'ow to stop them?"

"Science is going to stop them."

"Science?"

"Yes, science. My young brother--oh, he's a clever one--he says such things! He says that it's science that they won't always go on like this. There's more sense coming into the world and more--my young brother says so. Says it stands to reason; it's Evolution. It's science that men are all brothers; you can prove it. It's science that there oughtn't to be war. Science is ending war now by making it horrible like this, and making it so that no one is safe. Showing it up. Only when nobody is safe will everybody want to set up peace, he says. He says it's proved there could easily be peace all over the world now if it wasn't for flags and kings and capitalists and priests. They still manage to keep safe and out of it. He says the world ought to be just one state. The World State, he says it ought to be."

("Under God," said the bishop, "under God.")

"He says science ought to be King of the whole world."

"Call it Science if you will," said the bishop. "God is wisdom."

"Out of the mouths of babes and elementary science students," said the Angel. "The very children in the board schools are turning against this narrowness and nonsense and mischief of nations and creeds and kings. You see it at a thousand points, at ten thousand points, look, the world is all flashing and flickering; it is like a spinthariscope; it is aquiver with the light that is coming to mankind. It is on the verge of blazing even now."

"Into a light."

"Into the one Kingdom of God. See here! See here! And here! This brave little French priest in a helmet of steel who is daring to think for the first time in his life; this gentle-mannered emir from Morocco looking at the grave-diggers on the battlefield; this mother who has lost her son....

"You see they all turn in one direction, although none of them seem to dream yet that they are all turning in the same direction. They turn, every one, to the rule of righteousness, which is the rule of God. They turn to that communism of effort in the world which alone permits men

to serve God in state and city and their economic lives.... They are all coming to the verge of the same salvation, the salvation of one human brotherhood under the rule of one Righteousness, one Divine will.... Is that the salvation your church offers?"

(8)

"And now that we have seen how religion grows and spreads in men's hearts, now that the fields are white with harvest, I want you to look also and see what the teachers of religion are doing," said the Angel.

He smiled. His presence became more definite, and the earthly globe about them and the sun and the stars grew less distinct and less immediately there. The silence invited the bishop to speak.

"In the light of this vision, I see my church plainly for the little thing it is," he said.

He wanted to be perfectly clear with the Angel and himself.

"This church of which I am a bishop is just a part of our poor human struggle, small and pitiful as one thinks of it here in the light of the advent of God's Kingdom, but very great, very great indeed, ancient and high and venerable, in comparison with me. But mostly it is human. It is most human. For my story is the church's story, and the church's story

is mine. Here I could almost believe myself the church itself. The world saw a light, the nations that were sitting in darkness saw a great light. Even as I saw God. And then the church began to forget and lose itself among secondary things. As I have done.... It tried to express the truth and lost itself in a maze of theology. It tried to bring order into the world and sold its faith to Constantine. These men who had professed the Invisible King of the World, shirked his service. It is a most terrible disaster that Christianity has sold itself to emperors and kings. They forged a saying of the Master's that we should render unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's and unto God the things that are God's....

"Who is this Ceasar to set himself up to share mankind with God? Nothing that is Ceasar's can be any the less God's. But Constantine Caesar sat in the midst of the council, his guards were all about it, and the poor fanatics and trimmers and schemers disputed nervously with their eyes on him, disputed about homoousian and homoiousian, and grimaced and pretended to be very very fierce and exact to hide how much they were frightened and how little they knew, and because they did not dare to lay violent hands upon that usurper of the empire of the world....

"And from that day forth the Christian churches have been damned and lost. Kept churches. Lackey churches. Roman, Russian, Anglican; it matters not. My church indeed was twice sold, for it doubled the sin of Nicaea and gave itself over to Henry and Elizabeth while it shammed a dispute about the sacraments. No one cared really about

transubstantiation any more than the earlier betrayers cared about consubstantiality; that dispute did but serve to mask the betrayal."

He turned to the listening Angel. "What can you show me of my church that I do not know? Why! we Anglican bishops get our sees as footmen get a job. For months Victoria, that old German Frau, delayed me--because of some tittle-tattle.... The things we are! Snape, who afterwards became Bishop of Burnham, used to waylay the Prince Consort when he was riding in Hyde Park and give him, he boasts, 'a good loud cheer,' and then he would run very fast across the park so as to catch him as he came round, and do it again.... It is to that sort of thing we bearers of the light have sunken....

"I have always despised that poor toady," the bishop went on. "And yet here am I, and God has called me and shown me the light of his countenance, and for a month I have faltered. That is the mystery of the human heart, that it can and does sin against the light. What right have I, who have seen the light--and failed, what right have I--to despise any other human being? I seem to have been held back by a sort of paralysis.

"Men are so small, so small still, that they cannot keep hold of the vision of God. That is why I want to see God again.... But if it were not for this strange drug that seems for a little while to lift my mind above the confusion and personal entanglements of every day, I doubt if even now I could be here. I am here, passionate to hold this moment and

keep the light. As this inspiration passes, I shall go back, I know, to my home and my place and my limitations. The littleness of men! The forgetfulness of men! I want to know what my chief duty is, to have it plain, in terms so plain that I can never forget.

"See in this world," he said, turning to the globe, "while Chinese merchants and Turkish troopers, school-board boys and Norwegian fishermen, half-trained nurses and Boer farmers are full of the spirit of God, see how the priests of the churches of Nicaea spend their time."

And now it was the bishop whose dark hands ran over the great silver globe, and it was the Angel who stood over him and listened, as a teacher might stand over a child who is learning a lesson. The bishop's hand rested for a second on a cardinal who was planning a political intrigue to produce a reaction in France, then for a moment on a Pomeranian pastor who was going out to his well-tilled fields with his Sunday sermon, full of fierce hatred of England, still echoing in his head. Then he paused at a Mollah preaching the Jehad, in doubt whether he too wasn't a German pastor, and then at an Anglican clergyman still lying abed and thinking out a great mission of Repentance and Hope that should restore the authority of the established church--by incoherent missioning--without any definite sin indicated for repentance nor any clear hope for anything in particular arising out of such activities.
The bishop's hand went seeking to and fro, but nowhere could he find any religious teacher, any religious body rousing itself to meet the new dawn of faith in the world. Some few men indeed seemed thoughtful, but

within the limitation of their vows. Everywhere it was church and creed and nation and king and property and partisanship, and nowhere was it the True God that the priests and teachers were upholding. It was always the common unhampered man through whom the light of God was breaking; it was always the creed and the organization of the religious professionals that stood in the way to God....

"God is putting the priests aside," he cried, "and reaching out to common men. The churches do not serve God. They stand between man and God. They are like great barricades on the way to God."

The bishop's hand brushed over Archbishop Pontifex, who was just coming down to breakfast in his palace. This pompous old man was dressed in a purple garment that set off his tall figure very finely, and he was holding out his episcopal ring for his guests to kiss, that being the customary morning greeting of Archbishop Pontifex. The thought of that ring-kissing had made much hard work at lower levels "worth while" to Archbishop Pontifex. And seventy miles away from him old Likeman breakfasted in bed on Benger's food, and searched his Greek Testament for tags to put to his letters. And here was the familiar palace at Princhester, and in an armchair in his bed-room sat Bishop Scrope insensible and motionless, in a trance in which he was dreaming of the coming of God.

"I see my futility. I see my vanity. But what am I to do?" he said, turning to the darkness that now wrapped about the Angel again, fold

upon fold. "The implications of yesterday bind me for the morrow. This is my world. This is what I am and what I am in. How can I save myself? How can I turn from these habits and customs and obligations to the service of the one true God? When I see myself, then I understand how it is with the others. All we priests and teachers are men caught in nets. I would serve God. Easily said! But how am I to serve God? How am I to help and forward His coming, to make myself part of His coming?"

He perceived that he was returning into himself, and that the vision of the sphere and of the starry spaces was fading into non-existence.

He struggled against this return. He felt that his demand was still unanswered. His wife's face had suddenly come very close to him, and he realized she intervened between him and that solution.

What was she doing here?

(9)

The great Angel seemed still to be near at hand, limitless space was all about him, and yet the bishop perceived that he was now sitting in the arm-chair in his bedroom in the palace of Princhester. He was both there and not there. It seemed now as if he had two distinct yet kindred selves, and that the former watched the latter. The latter was now awakening to the things about him; the former marked his gestures and

listened with an entire detachment to the words he was saying. These words he was saying to Lady Ella: "God is coming to rule the world, I tell you. We must leave the church."

Close to him sat Lady Ella, watching him with an expression in which dismay and resolution mingled. Upon the other side of him, upon a little occasional table, was a tray with breakfast things. He was no longer the watcher now, but the watched.

Lady Ella bent towards him as he spoke. She seemed to struggle with and dismiss his astonishing statement.

"Edward," she said, "you have been taking a drug." He looked round at his night table to see the little phial. It had gone. Then he saw that Lady Ella held it very firmly in her hand.

"Dunk came to me in great distress. He said you were insensible and breathing heavily. I came. I realized. I told him to say nothing to any one, but to fetch me a tray with your breakfast. I have kept all the other servants away and I have waited here by you.... Dunk I think is safe.... You have been muttering and moving your head from side to side...."

The bishop's mind was confused. He felt as though God must be standing just outside the room. "I have failed in my duty," he said. "But I am very near to God." He laid his hand on her arm. "You know, Ella, He is

very close to us...."

She looked perplexed.

He sat up in his chair.

"For some months now," he said, "there have been new forces at work in my mind. I have been invaded by strange doubts and still stranger realizations. This old church of ours is an empty mask. God is not specially concerned in it."

"Edward!" she cried, "what are you saying?"

"I have been hesitating to tell you. But I see now I must tell you plainly. Our church is a cast hull. It is like the empty skin of a snake. God has gone out of it."

She rose to her feet. She was so horrified that she staggered backward, pushing her chair behind her. "But you are mad," she said.

He was astonished at her distress. He stood up also.

"My dear," he said, "I can assure you I am not mad. I should have prepared you, I know...."

She looked at him wild-eyed. Then she glanced at the phial, gripped in

her hand.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and going swiftly to the window emptied out the contents of the little bottle. He realized what she was doing too late to prevent her.

"Don't waste that!" he cried, and stepping forward caught hold of her wrist. The phial fell from her white fingers, and crashed upon the rough paved garden path below.

"My dear," he cried, "my dear. You do not understand."

They stood face to face. "It was a tonic," he said. "I have been ill. I need it."

"It is a drug," she answered. "You have been uttering blasphemies."

He dropped her arm and walked half-way across the room. Then he turned and faced her.

"They are not blasphemies," he said. "But I ought not to have surprised you and shocked you as I have done. I want to tell you of changes that have happened to my mind."

"Now!" she exclaimed, and then: "I will not hear them now. Until you are better. Until these fumes--"

Her manner changed. "Oh, Edward!" she cried, "why have you done this? Why have you taken things secretly? I know you have been sleepless, but I have been so ready to help you. I have been willing--you know I have been willing--for any help. My life is all to be of use to you...."

"Is there any reason," she pleaded, "why you should have hidden things from me?"

He stood remorseful and distressed. "I should have talked to you," he said lamely.

"Edward," she said, laying her hands on his shoulders, "will you do one thing for me? Will you try to eat a little breakfast? And stay here? I will go down to Mr. Whippham and arrange whatever is urgent with him. Perhaps if you rest--There is nothing really imperative until the confirmation in the afternoon.... I do not understand all this. For some time--I have felt it was going on. But of that we can talk. The thing now is that people should not know, that nothing should be seen.... Suppose for instance that horrible White Blackbird were to hear of it.... I implore you. If you rest here--And if I were to send for that young doctor who attended Miriam."

"I don't want a doctor," said the bishop.

"But you ought to have a doctor."

"I won't have a doctor," said the bishop.

It was with a perplexed but powerless dissent that the externalized perceptions of the bishop witnessed his agreement with the rest of Lady Ella's proposals so soon as this point about the doctor was conceded.

(10)

For the rest of that day until his breakdown in the cathedral the sense of being in two places at the same time haunted the bishop's mind. He stood beside the Angel in the great space amidst the stars, and at the same time he was back in his ordinary life, he was in his palace at Princhester, first resting in his bedroom and talking to his wife and presently taking up the routines of his duties again in his study downstairs.

His chief task was to finish his two addresses for the confirmation services of the day. He read over his notes, and threw them aside and remained for a time thinking deeply. The Greek tags at the end of Likeman's letter came into his thoughts; they assumed a quality of peculiar relevance to this present occasion. He repeated the words: "Epitelesei. Epiphausei."

He took his little Testament to verify them. After some slight trouble

he located the two texts. The first, from Philippians, ran in the old version, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it"; the second was expressed thus: "Christ shall give thee light." He was dissatisfied with these renderings and resorted to the revised version, which gave "perfect" instead of "perform," and "shall shine upon you" for "give thee light." He reflected profoundly for a time.

Then suddenly his addresses began to take shape in his mind, and these little points lost any significance. He began to write rapidly, and as he wrote he felt the Angel stood by his right hand and read and approved what he was writing. There were moments when his mind seemed to be working entirely beyond his control. He had a transitory questioning whether this curious intellectual automatism was not perhaps what people meant by "inspiration."

(11)

The bishop had always been sensitive to the secret fount of pathos that is hidden in the spectacle of youth. Long years ago when he and Lady Ella had been in Florence he had been moved to tears by the beauty of the fresh-faced eager Tobit who runs beside the great angel in the picture of Botticelli. And suddenly and almost as uncontrollably, that feeling returned at the sight of the young congregation below him, of all these scores of neophytes who were gathered to make a public acknowledgment of God. The war has invested all youth now with the

shadow of tragedy; before it came many of us were a little envious of youth and a little too assured of its certainty of happiness. All that has changed. Fear and a certain tender solicitude mingle in our regard for every child; not a lad we pass in the street but may presently be called to face such pain and stress and danger as no ancient hero ever knew. The patronage, the insolent condescension of age, has vanished out of the world. It is dreadful to look upon the young.

He stood surveying the faces of the young people as the rector read the Preface to the confirmation service. How simple they were, how innocent! Some were a little flushed by the excitement of the occasion; some a little pallid. But they were all such tender faces, so soft in outline, so fresh and delicate in texture and colour. They had soft credulous mouths. Some glanced sideways at one another; some listened with a forced intentness. The expression of one good-looking boy, sitting in a corner scat, struck the bishop as being curiously defiant. He stood very erect, he blinked his eyes as though they smarted, his lips were compressed bitterly. And then it seemed to the bishop that the Angel stood beside him and gave him understanding.

"He is here," the bishop knew, "because he could not avoid coming. He tried to excuse himself. His mother wept. What could he do? But the church's teaching nowadays fails even to grip the minds of boys."

The rector came to the end of his Preface: "They will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they by their own

confession have assented unto."

"Like a smart solicitor pinning them down," said the bishop to himself, and then roused himself, unrolled the little paper in his hand, leant forward, and straightway began his first address.

Nowadays it is possible to say very unorthodox things indeed in an Anglican pulpit unchallenged. There remains no alert doctrinal criticism in the church congregations. It was possible, therefore, for the bishop to say all that follows without either hindrance or disturbance. The only opposition, indeed, came from within, from a sense of dreamlike incongruity between the place and the occasion and the things that he found himself delivering.

"All ceremonies," he began, "grow old. All ceremonies are tainted even from the first by things less worthy than their first intention, and you, my dear sons and daughters, who have gathered to-day in this worn and ancient building, beneath these monuments to ancient vanities and these symbols of forgotten or abandoned theories about the mystery of God, will do well to distinguish in your minds between what is essential and what is superfluous and confusing in this dedication you make of yourselves to God our Master and King. For that is the real thing you seek to do today, to give yourselves to God. This is your spiritual coming of age, in which you set aside your childish dependence upon teachers and upon taught phrases, upon rote and direction, and stand up to look your Master in the face. You profess a great brotherhood when

you do that, a brotherhood that goes round the earth, that numbers men of every race and nation and country, that aims to bring God into all the affairs of this world and make him not only the king of your individual lives but the king--in place of all the upstarts, usurpers, accidents, and absurdities who bear crowns and sceptres today--of an united mankind."

He paused, and in the pause he heard a little rustle as though the congregation before him was sitting up in its places, a sound that always nerves and reassures an experienced preacher.

"This, my dear children, is the reality of this grave business to-day, as indeed it is the real and practical end of all true religion. This is your sacrament urn, your soldier's oath. You salute and give your fealty to the coming Kingdom of God. And upon that I would have you fix your minds to the exclusion of much that, I know only too well, has been narrow and evil and sectarian in your preparation for this solemn rite. God is like a precious jewel found among much rubble; you must cast the rubble from you. The crowning triumph of the human mind is simplicity; the supreme significance of God lies in his unity and universality. The God you salute to-day is the God of the Jews and Gentiles alike, the God of Islam, the God of the Brahmo Somaj, the unknown God of many a righteous unbeliever. He is not the God of those felted theologies and inexplicable doctrines with which your teachers may have confused your minds. I would have it very clear in your minds that having drunken the draught you should not reverence unduly the cracked old vessel that has

brought it to your lips. I should be falling short of my duty if I did not make that and everything I mean by that altogether plain to you."

He saw the lad whose face of dull defiance he had marked before, sitting now with a startled interest in his eyes. The bishop leant over the desk before him, and continued in the persuasive tone of a man who speaks of things too manifest for laboured argument.

"In all ages religion has come from God through broad-minded creative men, and in all ages it has fallen very quickly into the hands of intense and conservative men. These last--narrow, fearful, and suspicious--have sought in every age to save the precious gift of religion by putting it into a prison of formulae and asseverations. Bear that in mind when you are pressed to definition. It is as if you made a box hermetically sealed to save the treasure of a fresh breeze from the sea. But they have sought out exact statements and tortuous explanations of the plain truth of God, they have tried to take down God in writing, to commit him to documents, to embalm his living faith as though it would otherwise corrupt. So they have lost God and fallen into endless differences, disputes, violence, and darkness about insignificant things. They have divided religion between this creed and teacher and that. The corruption of the best is the worst, said Aristotle; and the great religions of the world, and especially this Christianity of ours, are the ones most darkened and divided and wasted by the fussings and false exactitudes of the creed-monger and the sectary. There is no lie so bad as a stale disfigured truth. There is no heresy so damnable as

a narrow orthodoxy. All religious associations carry this danger of the over-statement that misstates and the over-emphasis that divides and betrays. Beware of that danger. Do not imagine, because you are gathered in this queerly beautiful old building today, because I preside here in this odd raiment of an odder compromise, because you see about you in coloured glass and carven stone the emblems of much vain disputation, that thereby you cut yourselves off and come apart from the great world of faith, Catholic, Islamic, Brahministic, Buddhistic, that grows now to a common consciousness of the near Advent of God our King. You enter that waiting world fraternity now, you do not leave it. This place, this church of ours, should be to you not a seclusion and a fastness but a door.

"I could quote you a score of instances to establish that this simple universalism was also the teaching of Christ. But now I will only remind you that it was Mary who went to her lord simply, who was commended, and not Martha who troubled about many things. Learn from the Mary of Faith and not from these Marthas of the Creeds. Let us abandon the presumptions of an ignorant past. The perfection of doctrine is not for finite men. Give yourselves to God. Give yourselves to God. Not to churches and uses, but to God. To God simply. He is the first word of religion and the last. He is Alpha; he is Omega. Epitelesei; it is He who will finish the good work begun."

The bishop ended his address in a vivid silence. Then he began his interrogation.

"Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves--"

He stopped short. The next words were: "bound to believe and do all those things, which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you."

He could not stand those words. He hesitated, and then substituted: "acknowledge yourselves to be the true servants of the one God, who is the Lord of Mankind?"

For a moment silence hung in the cathedral. Then one voice, a boy's voice, led a ragged response. "I do."

Then the bishop: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord."

The congregation answered doubtfully, with a glance at its prayer books: "Who hath made heaven and earth."

The bishop: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The congregation said with returning confidence: "Henceforth, world without end."

(12)

Before his second address the bishop had to listen to Veni Creator Spiritus, in its English form, and it seemed to him the worst of all possible hymns. Its defects became monstrously exaggerated to his hypersensitive mind. It impressed him in its Englished travesty as a grotesque, as a veritable Charlie Chaplin among hymns, and in truth it does stick out most awkward feet, it misses its accusatives, it catches absurdly upon points of abstruse doctrine. The great Angel stood motionless and ironical at the bishop's elbow while it was being sung. "Your church," he seemed to say.

"We must end this sort of thing," whispered the bishop. "We must end this sort of thing--absolutely." He glanced at the faces of the singers, and it became beyond all other things urgent, that he should lift them once for all above the sectarian dogmatism of that hymn to a simple vision of God's light....

He roused himself to the touching business of the laying on of hands. While he did so the prepared substance of his second address was running through his mind. The following prayer and collects he read without difficulty, and so came to his second address. His disposition at first was explanatory.

"When I spoke to you just now," he began, "I fell unintentionally into the use of a Greek word, epitelesei. It was written to me in a letter from a friend with another word that also I am now going to quote to you. This letter touched very closely upon the things I want to say to you now, and so these two words are very much in my mind. The former one was taken from the Epistle to the Philippians; it signifies, 'He will complete the work begun'; the one I have now in mind comes from the Epistle to the Ephesians; it is Epiphausei--or, to be fuller, epiphausei soi ho Christos, which signifies that He will shine upon us. And this is very much in my thoughts now because I do believe that this world, which seemed so very far from God a little while ago, draws near now to an unexampled dawn. God is at hand.

"It is your privilege, it is your grave and terrible position, that you have been born at the very end and collapse of a negligent age, of an age of sham kingship, sham freedom, relaxation, evasion, greed, waste, falsehood, and sinister preparation. Your lives open out in the midst of the breakdown for which that age prepared. To you negligence is no longer possible. There is cold and darkness, there is the heat of the furnace before you; you will live amidst extremes such as our youth never knew; whatever betide, you of your generation will have small chance of living untempered lives. Our country is at war and half mankind is at war; death and destruction trample through the world; men rot and die by the million, food diminishes and fails, there is a wasting away of all the hoarded resources, of all the accumulated well-being of mankind; and there is no clear prospect yet of any end to

this enormous and frightful conflict. Why did it ever arise? What made it possible? It arose because men had forgotten God. It was possible because they worshipped simulacra, were loyal to phantoms of race and empire, permitted themselves to be ruled and misled by idiot princes and usurper kings. Their minds were turned from God, who alone can rule and unite mankind, and so they have passed from the glare and follies of those former years into the darkness and anguish of the present day. And in darkness and anguish they will remain until they turn to that King who comes to rule them, until the sword and indignation of God have overthrown their misleaders and oppressors, and the Justice of God, the Kingdom of God set high over the republics of mankind, has brought peace for ever to the world. It is to this militant and imminent God, to this immortal Captain, this undying Law-giver, that you devote yourselves to-day.

"For he is imminent now. He comes. I have seen in the east and in the west, the hearts and the minds and the wills of men turning to him as surely as when a needle is magnetized it turns towards the north. Even now as I preach to you here, God stands over us all, ready to receive us...."

And as he said these words, the long nave of the cathedral, the shadows of its fretted roof, the brown choir with its golden screen, the rows of seated figures, became like some picture cast upon a flimsy and translucent curtain. Once more it seemed to the bishop that he saw God plain. Once more the glorious effulgence poured about him, and the

beautiful and wonderful conquest of men's hearts and lives was manifest to him.

He lifted up his hands and cried to God, and with an emotion so profound, an earnestness so commanding, that very many of those who were present turned their faces to see the figure to which he looked and spoke. And some of the children had a strange persuasion of a presence there, as of a divine figure militant, armed, and serene....

"Oh God our Leader and our Master and our Friend," the bishop prayed, "forgive our imperfection and our little motives, take us and make us one with thy great purpose, use us and do not reject us, make us all here servants of thy kingdom, weave our lives into thy struggle to conquer and to bring peace and union to the world. We are small and feeble creatures, we are feeble in speech, feebler still in action, nevertheless let but thy light shine upon us and there is not one of us who cannot be lit by thy fire, and who cannot lose himself in thy salvation. Take us into thy purpose, O God. Let thy kingdom come into our hearts and into this world."

His voice ceased, and he stood for a measurable time with his arms extended and his face upturned....

The golden clouds that whirled and eddied so splendidly in his brain thinned out, his sense of God's immediacy faded and passed, and he was left aware of the cathedral pulpit in which he stood so strangely posed,

and of the astonished congregation below him. His arms sank to his side. His eyes fell upon the book in front of him and he felt for and gripped the two upper corners of it and, regardless of the common order and practice, read out the Benediction, changing the words involuntarily as he read:

"The Blessing of God who is the Father, the Son, the Spirit and the King of all Mankind, be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen."

Then he looked again, as if to look once more upon that radiant vision of God, but now he saw only the clear cool space of the cathedral vault and the coloured glass and tracery of the great rose window. And then, as the first notes of the organ came pealing above the departing stir of the congregation, he turned about and descended slowly, like one who is still half dreaming, from the pulpit.

(13)

In the vestry he found Canon Bliss. "Help me to take off these garments," the bishop said. "I shall never wear them again."

"You are ill," said the canon, scrutinizing his face.

"Not ill. But the word was taken out of my mouth. I perceive now that I have been in a trance, a trance in which the truth is real. It is a

fearful thing to find oneself among realities. It is a dreadful thing when God begins to haunt a priest.... I can never minister in the church again."

Whippham thrust forward a chair for the bishop to sit down. The bishop felt now extraordinarily fatigued. He sat down heavily, and rested his wrists on the arms of the chair. "Already," he resumed presently, "I begin to forget what it was I said."

"You became excited," said Bliss, "and spoke very loudly and clearly."

"What did I say?"

"I don't know what you said; I have forgotten. I never want to remember. Things about the Second Advent. Dreadful things. You said God was close at hand. Happily you spoke partly in Greek. I doubt if any of those children understood. And you had a kind of lapse--an aphasia. You mutilated the interrogation and you did not pronounce the benediction properly. You changed words and you put in words. One sat frozen--waiting for what would happen next."

"We must postpone the Pringle confirmation," said Whippham. "I wonder to whom I could telephone."

Lady Ella appeared, and came and knelt down by the bishop's chair. "I never ought to have let this happen," she said, taking his wrists in her

hands. "You are in a fever, dear."

"It seemed entirely natural to say what I did," the bishop declared.

Lady Ella looked up at Bliss.

"A doctor has been sent for," said the canon to Lady Ella.

"I must speak to the doctor," said Lady Ella as if her husband could not hear her. "There is something that will make things clearer to the doctor. I must speak to the doctor for a moment before he sees him."

Came a gust of pretty sounds and a flash of bright colour that shamed the rich vestments at hand. Over the shoulder of the rector and quite at the back, appeared Lady Sunderbund resolutely invading the vestry. The rector intercepted her, stood broad with extended arms.

"I must come in and speak to him. If it is only fo' a moment."

The bishop looked up and saw Lady Ella's expression. Lady Ella was sitting up very stiffly, listening but not looking round.

A vague horror and a passionate desire to prevent the entry of Lady Sunderbund at any cost, seized upon the bishop. She would, he felt, be the last overwhelming complication. He descended to a base subterfuge. He lay back in his chair slowly as though he unfolded himself, he

covered his eyes with his hand and then groaned aloud.

"Leave me alone!" he cried in a voice of agony. "Leave me alone! I can see no one.... I can--no more."

There was a momentous silence, and then the tumult of Lady Sunderbund receded.