CHAPTER THE NINTH - THE THIRD VISION

(1)

ONE afternoon in October, four months and more after that previous conversation, the card of Mr. Edward Scrope was brought up to Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey. The name awakened no memories. The doctor descended to discover a man so obviously in unaccustomed plain clothes that he had a momentary disagreeable idea that he was facing a detective. Then he saw that this secular disguise draped the familiar form of his old friend, the former Bishop of Princhester. Scrope was pale and a little untidy; he had already acquired something of the peculiar, slightly faded quality one finds in a don who has gone to Hampstead and fallen amongst advanced thinkers and got mixed up with the Fabian Society. His anxious eyes and faintly propitiatory manner suggested an impending appeal.

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey had the savoir-faire of a successful consultant; he prided himself on being all things to all men; but just for an instant he was at a loss what sort of thing he had to be here. Then he adopted the genial, kindly, but by no means lavishly generous tone advisable in the case of a man who has suffered considerable social deterioration without being very seriously to blame.

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was a little round-faced man with defective eyesight and an unsuitable nose for the glasses he wore, and he

flaunted--God knows why--enormous side-whiskers.

"Well," he said, balancing the glasses skilfully by throwing back his head, "and how are you? And what can I do for you? There's no external evidence of trouble. You're looking lean and a little pale, but thoroughly fit."

"Yes," said the late bishop, "I'm fairly fit--"

"Only--?" said the doctor, smiling his teeth, with something of the manner of an old bathing woman who tells a child to jump.

"Well, I'm run down and--worried."

"We'd better sit down," said the great doctor professionally, and looked hard at him. Then he pulled at the arm of a chair.

The ex-bishop sat down, and the doctor placed himself between his patient and the light.

"This business of resigning my bishopric and so forth has involved very considerable strains," Scrope began. "That I think is the essence of the trouble. One cuts so many associations.... I did not realize how much feeling there would be.... Difficulties too of readjusting one's position."

"Zactly. Zactly. Zactly," said the doctor, snapping his face and making his glasses vibrate. "Run down. Want a tonic or a change?"

"Yes. In fact--I want a particular tonic."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey made his eyes and mouth round and interrogative.

"While you were away last spring--"

"Had to go," said the doctor, "unavoidable. Gas gangrene. Certain enquiries. These young investigators all very well in their way. But we older reputations--Experience. Maturity of judgment. Can't do without us. Yes?"

"Well, I came here last spring and saw, an assistant I suppose he was, or a supply,--do you call them supplies in your profession?--named, I think--Let me see--D--?"

"Dale!"

The doctor as he uttered this word set his face to the unaccustomed exercise of expressing malignity. His round blue eyes sought to blaze, small cherubic muscles exerted themselves to pucker his brows. His colour became a violent pink. "Lunatic!" he said. "Dangerous Lunatic! He didn't do anything--anything bad in your case, did he?"

He was evidently highly charged with grievance in this matter. "That man was sent to me from Cambridge with the highest testimonials. The very highest. I had to go at twenty-four hours' notice. Enquiry--gas gangrene. There was nothing for it but to leave things in his hands."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey disavowed responsibility with an open, stumpy-fingered hand.

"He did me no particular harm," said Scrope.

"You are the first he spared," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey.

"Did he--? Was he unskilful?"

"Unskilful is hardly the word."

"Were his methods peculiar?"

The little doctor sprang to his feet and began to pace about the room. "Peculiar!" he said. "It was abominable that they should send him to me. Abominable!"

He turned, with all the round knobs that constituted his face, aglow. His side-whiskers waved apart like wings about to flap. He protruded his face towards his seated patient. "I am glad that he has been killed," he said. "Glad! There!"

His glasses fell off--shocked beyond measure. He did not heed them. They swung about in front of him as if they sought to escape while he poured out his feelings.

"Fool!" he spluttered with demonstrative gestures. "Dangerous fool! His one idea--to upset everybody. Drugs, Sir! The most terrible drugs! I come back. Find ladies. High social position. Morphine-maniacs. Others. Reckless use of the most dangerous expedients.... Cocaine not in it. Stimulants--violent stimulants. In the highest quarters. Terrible. Exalted persons. Royalty! Anxious to be given war work and become anonymous.... Horrible! He's been a terrible influence. One idea--to disturb soul and body. Minds unhinged. Personal relations deranged. Shattered the practice of years. The harm he has done! The harm!"

He looked as though he was trying to burst--as a final expression of wrath. He failed. His hands felt trembling to recover his pince-nez. Then from his tail pocket he produced a large silk handkerchief and wiped the glasses. Replaced them. Wriggled his head in his collar, running his fingers round his neck. Patted his tie.

"Excuse this outbreak!" he said. "But Dr. Dale has inflicted injuries!"

Scrope got up, walked slowly to the window, clasping his hands behind his back, and turned. His manner still retained much of his episcopal dignity. "I am sorry. But still you can no doubt tell from your books

what it was he gave me. It was a tonic that had a very great effect on me. And I need it badly now."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was quietly malignant. "He kept no diary at all," he said. "No diary at all."

"But

"If he did," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey, holding up a flat hand and wagging it from side to side, "I wouldn't follow his treatment."
He intensified with the hand going faster. "I wouldn't follow his treatment. Not under any circumstances."

"Naturally," said Scrope, "if the results are what you say. But in my case it wasn't a treatment. I was sleepless, confused in my mind, wretched and demoralized; I came here, and he just produced the stuff--It clears the head, it clears the mind. One seems to get away from the cloud of things, to get through to essentials and fundamentals. It straightened me out.... You must know such a stuff. Just now, confronted with all sorts of problems arising out of my resignation, I want that tonic effect again. I must have it. I have matters to decide--and I can't decide. I find myself uncertain, changeable from hour to hour. I don't ask you to take up anything of this man Dale's. This is a new occasion. But I want that drug."

At the beginning of this speech Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey's hands had fallen

to his hips. As Scrope went on the doctor's pose had stiffened. His head had gone a little on one side; he had begun to play with his glasses. At the end he gave vent to one or two short coughs, and then pointed his words with his glasses held out.

"Tell me," he said, "tell me." (Cough.) "Had this drug that cleared your head--anything to do with your resignation?"

And he put on his glasses disconcertingly, and threw his head back to watch the reply.

"It did help to clear up the situation."

"Exactly," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey in a tone that defined his own position with remorseless clearness. "Exactly." And he held up a flat, arresting hand. .

"My dear Sir," he said. "How can you expect me to help you to a drug so disastrous?--even if I could tell you what it is."

"But it was not disastrous to me," said Scrope.

"Your extraordinary resignation--your still more extraordinary way of proclaiming it!"

"I don't think those were disasters."

"But my dear Sir!"

"You don't want to discuss theology with me, I know. So let me tell you simply that from my point of view the illumination that came to me--this drug of Dr. Dale's helping--has been the great release of my life. It crystallized my mind. It swept aside the confusing commonplace things about me. Just for a time I saw truth clearly.... I want to do so again."

"Why?"

"There is a crisis in my affairs--never mind what. But I cannot see my way clear."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was meditating now with his eyes on his carpet and the corners of his mouth tucked in. He was swinging his glasses pendulum-wise. "Tell me," he said, looking sideways at Scrope, "what were the effects of this drug? It may have been anything. How did it give you this--this vision of the truth--that led to your resignation?"

Scrope felt a sudden shyness. But he wanted Dale's drug again so badly that he obliged himself to describe his previous experiences to the best of his ability.

"It was," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "a golden, transparent

liquid. Very golden, like a warm-tinted Chablis. When water was added it became streaked and opalescent, with a kind of living quiver in it. I held it up to the light."

"Yes? And when you took it?"

"I felt suddenly clearer. My mind--I had a kind of exaltation and assurance."

"Your mind," Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey assisted, "began to go twenty-nine to the dozen."

"It felt stronger and clearer," said Scrope, sticking to his quest.

"And did things look as usual?" asked the doctor, protruding his knobby little face like a clenched fist.

"No," said Scrope and regarded him. How much was it possible to tell a man of this type?

"They differed?" said the doctor, relaxing.

"Yes.... Well, to be plain.... I had an immediate sense of God. I saw the world--as if it were a transparent curtain, and then God became--evident.... Is it possible for that to determine the drug?"

"God became--evident," the doctor said with some distaste, and shook his head slowly. Then in a sudden sharp cross-examining tone: "You mean you had a vision? Actually saw 'um?"

"It was in the form of a vision." Scrope was now mentally very uncomfortable indeed.

The doctor's lips repeated these words noiselessly, with an effect of contempt. "He must have given you something--It's a little like morphia. But golden--opalescent? And it was this vision made you astonish us all with your resignation?"

"That was part of a larger process," said Scrope patiently. "I had been drifting into a complete repudiation of the Anglican positions long before that. All that this drug did was to make clear what was already in my mind. And give it value. Act as a developer."

The doctor suddenly gave way to a botryoidal hilarity. "To think that one should be consulted about visions of God--in Mount Street!" he said. "And you know, you know you half want to believe that vision was real. You know you do."

So far Scrope had been resisting his realization of failure. Now he gave way to an exasperation that made him reckless of Brighton-Pomfrey's opinion. "I do think," he said, "that that drug did in some way make God real to me. I think I saw God."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey shook his head in a way that made Scrope want to hit him.

"I think I saw God," he repeated more firmly. "I had a sudden realization of how great he was and how great life was, and how timid and mean and sordid were all our genteel, professional lives. I was seized upon, for a time I was altogether possessed by a passion to serve him fitly and recklessly, to make an end to compromises with comfort and self-love and secondary things. And I want to hold to that. I want to get back to that. I am given to lassitudes. I relax. I am by temperament an easy-going man. I want to buck myself up, I want to get on with my larger purposes, and I find myself tired, muddled, entangled.... The drug was a good thing. For me it was a good thing. I want its help again."

"I know no more than you do what it was."

"Are there no other drugs that you do know, that have a kindred effect? If for example I tried morphia in some form?"

"You'd get visions. They wouldn't be divine visions. If you took small quantities very discreetly you might get a temporary quickening. But the swift result of all repeated drug-taking is, I can assure you, moral decay--rapid moral decay. To touch drugs habitually is to become hopelessly unpunctual, untruthful, callously selfish and insincere. I am

talking mere textbook, mere everyday common-places, to you when I tell you that."

"I had an idea. I had a hope...."

"You've a stiff enough fight before you," said the doctor, "without such a handicap as that."

"You won't help me?"

The doctor walked up and down his hearthrug, and then delivered himself with an extended hand and waggling fingers.

"I wouldn't if I could. For your good I wouldn't. And even if I would I couldn't, for I don't know the drug. One of his infernal brews, no doubt. Something--accidental. It's lost--for good--for your good, anyhow...."

(2)

Scrope halted outside the stucco portals of the doctor's house. He hesitated whether he should turn to the east or the west.

"That door closes," he said. "There's no getting back that way."...

He stood for a time on the kerb. He turned at last towards Park Lane and Hyde Park. He walked along thoughtfully, inattentively steering a course for his new home in Pembury Road, Notting Hill.

(3)

At the outset of this new phase in Scrope's life that had followed the crisis of the confirmation service, everything had seemed very clear before him. He believed firmly that he had been shown God, that he had himself stood in the presence of God, and that there had been a plain call to him to proclaim God to the world. He had realized God, and it was the task of every one who had realized God to help all mankind to the same realization. The proposal of Lady Sunderbund had fallen in with that idea. He had been steeling himself to a prospect of struggle and dire poverty, but her prompt loyalty had come as an immense relief to his anxiety for his wife and family. When he had talked to Eleanor upon the beach at Hunstanton it had seemed to him that his course was manifest, perhaps a little severe but by no means impossible. They had sat together in the sunshine, exalted by a sense of fine adventure and confident of success, they had looked out upon the future, upon the great near future in which the idea of God was to inspire and reconstruct the world.

It was only very slowly that this pristine clearness became clouded and confused. It had not been so easy as Eleanor had supposed to win over

the sympathy of Lady Ella with his resignation. Indeed it had not been won over. She had become a stern and chilling companion, mute now upon the issue of his resignation, but manifestly resentful. He was secretly disappointed and disconcerted by her tone. And the same hesitation of the mind, instinctive rather than reasoned, that had prevented a frank explanation of his earlier doubts to her, now restrained him from telling her naturally and at once of the part that Lady Sunderbund was to play in his future ministry. In his own mind he felt assured about that part, but in order to excuse his delay in being frank with his wife, he told himself that he was not as yet definitely committed to Lady Sunderbund's project. And in accordance with that idea he set up housekeeping in London upon a scale that implied a very complete cessation of income. "As yet," he told Lady Ella, "we do not know where we stand. For a time we must not so much house ourselves as camp. We must take some quite small and modest house in some less expensive district. If possible I would like to take it for a year, until we know better how things are with us."

He reviewed a choice of London districts.

Lady Ella said her bitterest thing. "Does it matter where we hide our heads?"

That wrung him to: "We are not hiding our heads."

She repented at once. "I am sorry, Ted," she said. "It slipped from

me."...

He called it camping, but the house they had found in Pembury Road, Notting Hill, was more darkened and less airy than any camp. Neither he nor his wife had ever had any experience of middle-class house-hunting or middle-class housekeeping before, and they spent three of the most desolating days of their lives in looking for this cheap and modest shelter for their household possessions. Hitherto life had moved them from one established and comfortable home to another; their worst affliction had been the modern decorations of the Palace at Princhester, and it was altogether a revelation to them to visit house after house, ill-lit, ill-planned, with dingy paint and peeling wallpaper, kitchens for the most part underground, and either without bathrooms or with built-out bathrooms that were manifestly grudging afterthoughts, such as harbour the respectable middle classes of London. The house agents perceived intimations of helplessness in their manner, adopted a "rushing" method with them strange to people who had hitherto lived in a glowing halo of episcopal dignity. "Take it or leave it," was the note of those gentlemen; "there are always people ready for houses." The line that property in land and houses takes in England, the ex-bishop realized, is always to hold up and look scornful. The position of the land-owning, house-owning class in a crowded country like England is ultra-regal. It is under no obligation to be of use, and people are obliged to get down to the land somewhere. They cannot conduct business and rear families in the air. England's necessity is the landlord's opportunity....

Scrope began to generalize about this, and develop a new and sincerer streak of socialism in his ideas. "The church has been very remiss," he said, as he and Lady Ella stared at the basement "breakfast room" of their twenty-seventh dismal possibility. "It should have insisted far more than it has done upon the landlord's responsibility. No one should tolerate the offer of such a house as this--at such a rent--to decent people. It is unrighteous."

At the house agent's he asked in a cold, intelligent ruling-class voice, the name of the offending landlord.

"It's all the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that side of the railway," said the agent, picking his teeth with a pin. "Lazy lot. Dreadfully hard to get 'em to do anything. Own some of the worst properties in London."

Lady Ella saw things differently again. "If you had stayed in the church," she said afterwards, "you might have helped to alter such things as that."

At the time he had no answer.

"But," he said presently as they went back in the tube to their modest Bloomsbury hotel, "if I had stayed in the church I should never have realized things like that."

(4)

But it does no justice to Lady Ella to record these two unavoidable expressions of regret without telling also of the rallying courage with which she presently took over the task of resettling herself and her stricken family. Her husband's change of opinion had fallen upon her out of a clear sky, without any premonition, in one tremendous day. In one day there had come clamouring upon her, with an effect of revelation after revelation, the ideas of drugs, of heresy and blasphemy, of an alien feminine influence, of the entire moral and material breakdown of the man who had been the centre of her life. Never was the whole world of a woman so swiftly and comprehensively smashed. All the previous troubles of her life seemed infinitesimal in comparison with any single item in this dismaying debacle. She tried to consolidate it in the idea that he was ill, "disordered." She assured herself that he would return from Hunstanton restored to health and orthodoxy, with all his threatenings of a resignation recalled; the man she had loved and trusted to succeed in the world and to do right always according to her ideas. It was only with extreme reluctance that she faced the fact that with the fumes of the drug dispelled and all signs of nervous exhaustion gone, he still pressed quietly but resolutely toward a severance from the church. She tried to argue with him and she found she could not argue. The church was a crystal sphere in which her life was wholly contained, her mind could not go outside it even to consider a

dissentient proposition.

While he was at Hunstanton, every day she had prayed for an hour, some days she had prayed for several hours, in the cathedral, kneeling upon a harsh hassock that hurt her knees. Even in her prayers she could not argue nor vary. She prayed over and over again many hundreds of times: "Bring him back, dear Lord. Bring him back again."

In the past he had always been a very kind and friendly mate to her, but sometimes he had been irritable about small things, especially during his seasons of insomnia; now he came back changed, a much graver man, rather older in his manner, carefully attentive to her, kinder and more watchful, at times astonishingly apologetic, but rigidly set upon his purpose of leaving the church. "I know you do not think with me in this," he said. "I have to pray you to be patient with me. I have struggled with my conscience.... For a time it means hardship, I know. Poverty. But if you will trust me I think I shall be able to pull through. There are ways of doing my work. Perhaps we shall not have to undergo this cramping in this house for very long...."

"It is not the poverty I fear," said Lady Ella.

And she did face the worldly situation, if a little sadly, at any rate with the courage of practical energy. It was she who stood in one ungainly house after another and schemed how to make discomforts tolerable, while Scrope raged unhelpfully at landlordism and the

responsibility of the church for economic disorder. It was she who at last took decisions into her hands when he was too jaded to do anything but generalize weakly, and settled upon the house in Pembury Road which became their London home. She got him to visit Hunstanton again for half a week while she and Miriam, who was the practical genius of the family, moved in and made the new home presentable. At the best it was barely presentable. There were many plain hardships. The girls had to share one of the chief bedrooms in common instead of their jolly little individual dens at Princhester.... One little room was all that could be squeezed out as a study for "father"; it was not really a separate room, it was merely cut off by closed folding doors from the dining-room, folding doors that slowly transmitted the dinner flavours to a sensitive worker, and its window looked out upon a blackened and uneventful yard and the skylights of a populous, conversational, and high-spirited millinery establishment that had been built over the corresponding garden of the house in Restharrow Street. Lady Ella had this room lined with open shelves, and Clementina (in the absence of Eleanor at Newuham) arranged the pick of her father's books. It is to be noted as a fact of psychological interest that this cramped, ill-lit little room distressed Lady Ella more than any other of the discomforts of their new quarters. The bishop's writing-desk filled a whole side of it. Parsimony ruled her mind, but she could not resist the impulse to get him at least a seemly reading-lamp.

He came back from Hunstanton full of ideas for work in London. He was, he thought, going to "write something" about his views. He was very

grateful and much surprised at what she had done to that forbidding house, and full of hints and intimations that it would not be long before they moved to something roomier. She was disposed to seek some sort of salaried employment for Clementina and Miriam at least, but he would not hear of that. "They must go on and get educated," he said, "if I have to give up smoking to do it. Perhaps I may manage even without that." Eleanor, it seemed, had a good prospect of a scholarship at the London School of Economics that would practically keep her. There would be no Cambridge for Clementina, but London University might still be possible with a little pinching, and the move to London had really improved the prospects of a good musical training for Miriam. Phoebe and Daphne, Lady Ella believed, might get in on special terms at the Notting Hill High School.

Scrope found it difficult to guess at what was going on in the heads of his younger daughters. None displayed such sympathy as Eleanor had confessed. He had a feeling that his wife had schooled them to say nothing about the change in their fortunes to him. But they quarrelled a good deal, he could hear, about the use of the one bathroom--there was never enough hot water after the second bath. And Miriam did not seem to enjoy playing the new upright piano in the drawing-room as much as she had done the Princhester grand it replaced. Though she was always willing to play that thing he liked; he knew now that it was the Adagio of Of. 111; whenever he asked for it.

London servants, Lady Ella found, were now much more difficult to get

than they had been in the Holy Innocents' days in St. John's Wood. And more difficult to manage when they were got. The households of the more prosperous clergy are much sought after by domestics of a serious and excellent type; an unfrocked clergyman's household is by no means so attractive. The first comers were young women of unfortunate dispositions; the first cook was reluctant and insolent, she went before her month was up; the second careless; she made burnt potatoes and cindered chops, underboiled and overboiled eggs; a "dropped" look about everything, harsh coffee and bitter tea seemed to be a natural aspect of the state of being no longer a bishop. He would often after a struggle with his nerves in the bedroom come humming cheerfully to breakfast, to find that Phoebe, who was a delicate eater, had pushed her plate away scarcely touched, while Lady Ella sat at the end of the table in a state of dangerous calm, framing comments for delivering downstairs that would be sure to sting and yet leave no opening for repartee, and trying at the same time to believe that a third cook, if the chances were risked again, would certainly be "all right."

The drawing-room was papered with a morose wallpaper that the landlord, in view of the fact that Scrope in his optimism would only take the house on a yearly agreement, had refused to replace; it was a design of very dark green leaves and grey gothic arches; and the apartment was lit by a chandelier, which spilt a pool of light in the centre of the room and splashed useless weak patches elsewhere. Lady Ella had to interfere to prevent the monopolization of this centre by Phoebe and Daphne for their home work. This light trouble was difficult to arrange; the plain

truth was that there was not enough illumination to go round. In the Princhester drawing-room there had been a number of obliging little electric pushes. The size of the dining-room, now that the study was cut off from it, forbade hospitality. As it was, with only the family at home, the housemaid made it a grievance that she could scarcely squeeze by on the sideboard side to wait.

The house vibrated to the trains in the adjacent underground railway. There was a lady next door but one who was very pluckily training a contralto voice that most people would have gladly thrown away. At the end of Restharrow Street was a garage, and a yard where chauffeurs were accustomed to "tune up" their engines. All these facts were persistently audible to any one sitting down in the little back study to think out this project of "writing something," about a change in the government of the whole world. Petty inconveniences no doubt all these inconveniences were, but they distressed a rather oversensitive mind which was also acutely aware that even upon this scale living would cost certainly two hundred and fifty pounds if not more in excess of the little private income available.

(5)

These domestic details, irrelevant as they may seem in a spiritual history, need to be given because they added an intimate keenness

to Scrope's readiness for this private chapel enterprise that he was discussing with Lady Sunderbund. Along that line and along that line alone, he saw the way of escape from the great sea of London dinginess that threatened to submerge his family. And it was also, he felt, the line of his duty; it was his "call."

At least that was how he felt at first. And then matters began to grow complicated again.

Things had gone far between himself and Lady Sunderbund since that letter he had read upon the beach at Old Hunstanton. The blinds of the house with the very very blue door in Princhester had been drawn from the day when the first vanload of the renegade bishop's private possessions had departed from the palace. The lady had returned to the brightly decorated flat overlooking Hyde Park. He had seen her repeatedly since then, and always with a fairly clear understanding that she was to provide the chapel and pulpit in which he was to proclaim to London the gospel of the Simplicity and Universality of God. He was to be the prophet of a reconsidered faith, calling the whole world from creeds and sects, from egotisms and vain loyalties, from prejudices of race and custom, to the worship and service of the Divine King of all mankind. That in fact had been the ruling resolve in his mind, the resolve determining his relations not only with Lady Sunderbund but with Lady Ella and his family, his friends, enemies and associates. He had set out upon this course unchecked by any doubt, and overriding the manifest disapproval of his wife and his younger daughters. Lady

Sunderbund's enthusiasm had been enormous and sustaining....

Almost imperceptibly that resolve had weakened. Imperceptibly at first. Then the decline had been perceived as one sometimes perceives a thing in the background out of the corner of one's eye.

In all his early anticipations of the chapel enterprise, he had imagined himself in the likeness of a small but eloquent figure standing in a large exposed place and calling this lost misled world back to God. Lady Sunderbund, he assumed, was to provide the large exposed place (which was dimly paved with pews) and guarantee that little matter which was to relieve him of sordid anxieties for his family, the stipend. He had agreed in an inattentive way that this was to be eight hundred a year, with a certain proportion of the subscriptions. "At first, I shall be the chief subscriber," she said. "Before the rush comes." He had been so content to take all this for granted and think no more about it--more particularly to think no more about it--that for a time he entirely disregarded the intense decorative activities into which Lady Sunderbund incontinently plunged. Had he been inclined to remark them he certainly might have done so, even though a considerable proportion was being thoughtfully veiled for a time from his eyes.

For example, there was the young architect with the wonderful tie whom he met once or twice at lunch in the Hyde Park flat. This young man pulled the conversation again and again, Lady Sunderbund aiding and abetting, in the direction of the "ideal church." It was his ambition,

he said, someday, to build an ideal church, "divorced from tradition."

Scrope had been drawn at last into a dissertation. He said that hitherto all temples and places of worship had been conditioned by orientation due to the seasonal aspects of religion, they pointed to the west or--as in the case of the Egyptian temples--to some particular star, and by sacramentalism, which centred everything on a highly lit sacrificial altar. It was almost impossible to think of a church built upon other lines than that. The architect would be so free that--

"Absolutely free," interrupted the young architect. "He might, for example, build a temple like a star."

"Or like some wondyful casket," said Lady Sunderbund....

And also there was a musician with fuzzy hair and an impulsive way of taking the salted almonds, who wanted to know about religious music.

Scrope hazarded the idea that a chanting people was a religious people. He said, moreover, that there was a fine religiosity about Moussorgski, but that the most beautiful single piece of music in the world was Beethoven's sonata, Opus 111,--he was thinking, he said, more particularly of the Adagio at the end, molto semplice e cantabile. It had a real quality of divinity.

The musician betrayed impatience at the name of Beethoven, and thought,

with his mouth appreciatively full of salted almonds, that nowadays we had got a little beyond that anyhow.

"We shall be superhuman before we get beyond either Purcell or Beethoven," said Scrope.

Nor did he attach sufficient importance to Lady Sunderbund's disposition to invite Positivists, members of the Brotherhood Church, leaders among the Christian Scientists, old followers of the Rev. Charles Voysey, Swedenborgians, Moslem converts, Indian Theosophists, psychic phenomena and so forth, to meet him. Nevertheless it began to drift into his mind that he was by no means so completely in control of the new departure as he had supposed at first. Both he and Lady Sunderbund professed universalism; but while his was the universalism of one who would simplify to the bare fundamentals of a common faith, hers was the universalism of the collector. Religion to him was something that illuminated the soul, to her it was something that illuminated prayer-books. For a considerable time they followed their divergent inclinations without any realization of their divergence. None the less a vague doubt and dissatisfaction with the prospect before him arose to cloud his confidence.

At first there was little or no doubt of his own faith. He was still altogether convinced that he had to confess and proclaim God in his life. He was as sure that God was the necessary king and saviour of mankind and of a man's life, as he was of the truth of the Binomial

Theorem. But what began first to fade was the idea that he had been specially called to proclaim the True God to all the world. He would have the most amiable conference with Lady Sunderbund, and then as he walked back to Notting Hill he would suddenly find stuck into his mind like a challenge, Heaven knows how: "Another prophet?" Even if he succeeded in this mission enterprise, he found himself asking, what would he be but just a little West-end Mahomet? He would have founded another sect, and we have to make an end to all sects. How is there to be an end to sects, if there are still to be chapels--richly decorated chapels--and congregations, and salaried specialists in God?

That was a very disconcerting idea. It was particularly active at night. He did his best to consider it with a cool detachment, regardless of the facts that his private income was just under three hundred pounds a year, and that his experiments in cultured journalism made it extremely improbable that the most sedulous literary work would do more than double this scanty sum. Yet for all that these nasty, ugly, sordid facts were entirely disregarded, they did somehow persist in coming in and squatting down, shapeless in a black corner of his mind--from which their eyes shone out, so to speak--whenever his doubt whether he ought to set up as a prophet at all was under consideration.

(6)

Then very suddenly on this October afternoon the situation had come to a

crisis.

He had gone to Lady Sunderbund's flat to see the plans and drawings for the new church in which he was to give his message to the world. They had brought home to him the complete realization of Lady Sunderbund's impossibility. He had attempted upon the spur of the moment an explanation of just how much they differed, and he had precipitated a storm of extravagantly perplexing emotions....

She kept him waiting for perhaps ten minutes before she brought the plans to him. He waited in the little room with the Wyndham Lewis picture that opened upon the balcony painted with crazy squares of livid pink. On a golden table by the window a number of recently bought books were lying, and he went and stood over these, taking them up one after another. The first was "The Countess of Huntingdon and Her Circle," that bearder of lightminded archbishops, that formidable harbourer of Wesleyan chaplains. For some minutes he studied the grim portrait of this inspired lady standing with one foot ostentatiously on her coronet and then turned to the next volume. This was a life of Saint Teresa, that energetic organizer of Spanish nunneries. The third dealt with Madame Guyon. It was difficult not to feel that Lady Sunderbund was reading for a part.

She entered.

She was wearing a long simple dress of spangled white with a very high

waist; she had a bracelet of green jade, a waistband of green silk, and her hair was held by a wreath of artificial laurel, very stiff and green. Her arms were full of big rolls of cartridge paper and tracing paper. "I'm so pleased," she said. "It's 'eady at last and I can show you."

She banged the whole armful down upon a vivid little table of inlaid black and white wood. He rescued one or two rolls and a sheet of tracing paper from the floor.

"It's the Temple," she panted in a significant whisper. "It's the Temple of the One T'ue God!"

She scrabbled among the papers, and held up the elevation of a strange square building to his startled eyes. "Iszi't it just pe'fect?" she demanded.

He took the drawing from her. It represented a building, manifestly an enormous building, consisting largely of two great, deeply fluted towers flanking a vast archway approached by a long flight of steps. Between the towers appeared a dome. It was as if the Mosque of Saint Sophia had produced this offspring in a mesalliance with the cathedral of Wells. Its enormity was made manifest by the minuteness of the large automobiles that were driving away in the foreground after "setting down." "Here is the plan," she said, thrusting another sheet upon him before he could fully take in the quality of the design. "The g'eat Hall

is to be pe'fectly 'ound, no aisle, no altar, and in lettas of sapphiah, 'God is ev'ywhe'.'"

She added with a note of solemnity, "It will hold th'ee thousand people sitting down."

"But--!" said Scrope.

"The'e's a sort of g'andeur," she said. "It's young Venable's wo'k. It's his fl'st g'ate oppo'tunity."

"But--is this to go on that little site in Aldwych?"

"He says the' isn't 'oom the'!" she explained. "He wants to put it out at Golda's G'een."

"But--if it is to be this little simple chapel we proposed, then wasn't our idea to be central?"

"But if the' isn't 'oem!" she said--conclusively. "And isn't this--isn't it rather a costly undertaking, rather more costly--"

"That doesn't matta. I'm making heaps and heaps of money. Half my p'ope'ty is in shipping and a lot of the 'eat in munitions. I'm 'icher than eva. Isn't the' a sort of g'andeur?" she pressed.

He put the elevation down. He took the plan from her hands and seemed to study it. But he was really staring blankly at the whole situation.

"Lady Sunderbund," he said at last, with an effort, "I am afraid all this won't do."

"Won't do!"

"No. It isn't in the spirit of my intention. It isn't in a great building of this sort--so--so ornate and imposing, that the simple gospel of God's Universal Kingdom can be preached."

"But oughtn't so gate a message to have as g'ate a pulpit?"

And then as if she would seize him before he could go on to further repudiations, she sought hastily among the drawings again.

"But look," she said. "It has ev'ything! It's not only a p'eaching place; it's a headquarters for ev'ything."

With the rapid movements of an excited child she began to thrust the remarkable features and merits of the great project upon him. The preaching dome was only the heart of it. There were to be a library, "'efecto'ies," consultation rooms, classrooms, a publication department, a big underground printing establishment. "Nowadays," she said, "ev'y gate movement must p'int." There was to be music, she said, "a gate

invisible o'gan," hidden amidst the architectural details, and pouring out its sounds into the dome, and then she glanced in passing at possible "p'ocessions" round the preaching dome. This preaching dome was not a mere shut-in drum for spiritual reverberations, around it ran great open corridors, and in these corridors there were to be "chapels."

"But what for?" he asked, stemming the torrent. "What need is there for chapels? There are to be no altars, no masses, no sacraments?"

"No," she said, "but they are to be chapels for special int'ests; a chapel for science, a chapel for healing, a chapel for gov'ment. Places for peoples to sit and think about those things--with paintings and symbols."

"I see your intention," he admitted. "I see your intention."

"The' is to be a gate da'k blue 'ound chapel for sta's and atoms and the myst'ry of matta." Her voice grew solemn. "All still and deep and high. Like a k'ystal in a da'k place. You will go down steps to it. Th'ough a da'k 'ounded a'ch ma'ked with mathematical symbols and balances and scientific app'atus.... And the ve'y next to it, the ve'y next, is to be a little b'ight chapel for bi'ds and flowas!"

"Yes," he said, "it is all very fine and expressive. It is, I see, a symbolical building, a great artistic possibility. But is it the place for me? What I have to say is something very simple, that God is the

king of the whole world, king of the ha'penny newspaper and the omnibus and the vulgar everyday things, and that they have to worship him and serve him as their leader in every moment of their lives. This isn't that. This is the old religions over again. This is taking God apart. This is putting him into a fresh casket instead of the old one. And.... I don't like it."

"Don't like it," she cried, and stood apart from him with her chin in the air, a tall astonishment and dismay.

"I can't do the work I want to do with this."

"But--Isn't it you' idea?"

"No. It is not in the least my idea. I want to tell the whole world of the one God that can alone unite it and save it--and you make this extravagant toy."

He felt as if he had struck her directly he uttered that last word.

"Toy!" she echoed, taking it in, "you call it a Toy!"

A note in her voice reminded him that there were two people who might feel strongly in this affair.

"My dear Lady Sunderbund," he said with a sudden change of manner, "I

must needs follow the light of my own mind. I have had a vision of God, I have seen him as a great leader towering over the little lives of men, demanding the little lives of men, prepared to take them and guide them to the salvation of mankind and the conquest of pain and death. I have seen him as the God of the human affair, a God of politics, a God of such muddy and bloody wars as this war, a God of economics, a God of railway junctions and clinics and factories and evening schools, a God in fact of men. This God--this God here, that you want to worship, is a God of artists and poets--of elegant poets, a God of bric-a-brac, a God of choice allusions. Oh, it has its grandeur! I don't want you to think that what you are doing may not be altogether fine and right for you to do. But it is not what I have to do.... I cannot--indeed I cannot--go on with this project--upon these lines."

He paused, flushed and breathless. Lady Sunderbund had heard him to the end. Her bright face was brightly flushed, and there were tears in her eyes. It was like her that they should seem tears of the largest, most expensive sort, tears of the first water.

"But," she cried, and her red delicate mouth went awry with dismay and disappointment, and her expression was the half incredulous expression of a child suddenly and cruelly disappointed: "You won't go on with all this?"

"No," he said. "My dear Lady Sunderbund--"

"Oh! don't Lady Sunderbund me!" she cried with a novel rudeness. "Don't you see I've done it all for you?"

He winced and felt boorish. He had never liked and disapproved of Lady Sunderbund so much as he did at that moment. And he had no words for her.

"How can I stop it all at once like this?"

And still he had no answer.

She pursued her advantage. "What am I to do?" she cried.

She turned upon him passionately. "Look what you've done!" She marked her points with finger upheld, and gave odd suggestions in her face of an angry coster girl. "Eva' since I met you, I've wo'shipped you. I've been 'eady to follow you anywhe'--to do anything. Eva' since that night when you sat so calm and dignified, and they baited you and wo'id you. When they we' all vain and cleva, and you--you thought only of God and 'iligion and didn't mind fo' you'self.... Up to then--I'd been living--oh! the emptiest life..."

The tears ran. "Pe'haps I shall live it again...." She dashed her grief away with a hand beringed with stones as big as beetles.

"I said to myself, this man knows something I don't know. He's got the

seeds of ete'nal life su'ely. I made up my mind then and the' I'd follow you and back you and do all I could fo' you. I've lived fo' you. Eve' since. Lived fo' you. And now when all my little plans are 'ipe, you--! Oh!"

She made a quaint little gesture with pink fists upraised, and then stood with her hand held up, staring at the plans and drawings that were littered over the inlaid table. "I've planned and planned. I said, I will build him a temple. I will be his temple se'vant.... Just a me' se'vant...."

She could not go on.

"But it is just these temples that have confused mankind," he said.

"Not my temple," she said presently, now openly weeping over the gay rejected drawings. "You could have explained...."

"Oh!" she said petulantly, and thrust them away from her so that they went sliding one after the other on to the floor. For some long-drawn moments there was no sound in the room but the slowly accelerated slide and flop of one sheet of cartridge paper after another.

"We could have been so happy," she wailed, "se'ving oua God."

And then this disconcerting lady did a still more disconcerting thing.

She staggered a step towards Scrape, seized the lapels of his coat, bowed her head upon his shoulder, put her black hair against his cheek, and began sobbing and weeping.

"My dear lady!" he expostulated, trying weakly to disengage her.

"Let me k'y," she insisted, gripping more resolutely, and following his backward pace. "You must let me k'y. You must let me k'y."

His resistance ceased. One hand supported her, the other patted her shining hair. "My dear child!" he said. "My dear child! I had no idea. That you would take it like this...."

(7)

That was but the opening of an enormous interview. Presently he had contrived in a helpful and sympathetic manner to seat the unhappy lady on a sofa, and when after some cramped discourse she stood up before him, wiping her eyes with a wet wonder of lace, to deliver herself the better, a newborn appreciation of the tactics of the situation made him walk to the other side of the table under colour of picking up a drawing.

In the retrospect he tried to disentangle the threads of a discussion that went to and fro and contradicted itself and began again far

back among things that had seemed forgotten and disposed of. Lady Sunderbund's mind was extravagantly untrained, a wild-grown mental thicket. At times she reproached him as if he were a heartless God; at times she talked as if he were a recalcitrant servant. Her mingling of utter devotion and the completest disregard for his thoughts and wishes dazzled and distressed his mind. It was clear that for half a year her clear, bold, absurd will had been crystallized upon the idea of giving him exactly what she wanted him to want. The crystal sphere of those ambitions lay now shattered between them.

She was trying to reconstruct it before his eyes.

She was, she declared, prepared to alter her plans in any way that would meet his wishes. She had not understood. "If it is a Toy," she cried, "show me how to make it not a Toy! Make it 'eal!"

He said it was the bare idea of a temple that made it impossible. And there was this drawing here; what did it mean? He held it out to her. It represented a figure, distressingly like himself, robed as a priest in vestments.

She snatched the offending drawing from him and tore it to shreds.

"If you don't want a Temple, have a meeting-house. You wanted a meeting-house anyhow."

"Just any old meeting-house," he said. "Not that special one. A place without choirs and clergy."

"If you won't have music," she responded, "don't have music. If God doesn't want music it can go. I can't think God does not app'ove of music, but--that is for you to settle. If you don't like the' being o'naments, we'll make it all plain. Some g'ate g'ey Dome--all g'ey and black. If it isn't to be beautiful, it can be ugly. Yes, ugly. It can be as ugly"--she sobbed--"as the City Temple. We will get some otha a'chitect--some City a'chitect. Some man who has built B'anch Banks or 'ailway stations. That's if you think it pleases God.... B'eak young Venable's hea't.... Only why should you not let me make a place fo' you' message? Why shouldn't it be me? You must have a place. You've got 'to p'each somewhe'."

"As a man, not as a priest."

"Then p'each as a man. You must still wea' something."

"Just ordinary clothes."

"O'dina'y clothes a' clothes in the fashion," she said. "You would have to go to you' taila for a new p'eaching coat with b'aid put on dif'ently, or two buttons instead of th'ee...."

"One needn't be fashionable."

"Ev'ybody is fash'nable. How can you help it? Some people wea' old fashions; that's all.... A cassock's an old fashion. There's nothing so plain as a cassock."

"Except that it's a clerical fashion. I want to be just as I am now."

"If you think that--that owoble suit is o'dina'y clothes!" she said, and stared at him and gave way to tears of real tenderness.

"A cassock," she cried with passion. "Just a pe'fectly plain cassock. Fo' deecency!... Oh, if you won't--not even that!"

(8)

As he walked now after his unsuccessful quest of Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey towards the Serpentine he acted that stormy interview with Lady Sunderbund over again. At the end, as a condition indeed of his departure, he had left things open. He had assented to certain promises. He was to make her understand better what it was he needed. He was not to let anything that had happened affect that "spi'tual f'enship." She was to abandon all her plans, she was to begin again "at the ve'y beginning." But he knew that indeed there should be no more beginning again with her. He knew that quite beyond these questions of the organization of a purified religion, it was time their association

ended. She had wept upon him; she had clasped both his hands at parting and prayed to be forgiven. She was drawing him closer to her by their very dissension. She had infected him with the softness of remorse; from being a bright and spirited person, she had converted herself into a warm and touching person. Her fine, bright black hair against his cheek and the clasp of her hand on his shoulder was now inextricably in the business. The perplexing, the astonishing thing in his situation was that there was still a reluctance to make a conclusive breach.

He was not the first of men who have tried to find in vain how and when a relationship becomes an entanglement. He ought to break off now, and the riddle was just why he should feel this compunction in breaking off now. He had disappointed her, and he ought not to have disappointed her; that was the essential feeling. He had never realized before as he realized now this peculiar quality of his own mind and the gulf into which it was leading him. It came as an illuminating discovery.

He was a social animal. He had an instinctive disposition to act according to the expectations of the people about him, whether they were reasonable or congenial expectations or whether they were not. That, he saw for the first time, had been the ruling motive of his life; it was the clue to him. Man is not a reasonable creature; he is a socially responsive creature trying to be reasonable in spite of that fact. From the days in the rectory nursery when Scrope had tried to be a good boy on the whole and just a little naughty sometimes until they stopped smiling, through all his life of school, university, curacy, vicarage

and episcopacy up to this present moment, he perceived now that he had acted upon no authentic and independent impulse. His impulse had always been to fall in with people and satisfy them. And all the painful conflicts of those last few years had been due to a growing realization of jarring criticisms, of antagonized forces that required from him incompatible things. From which he had now taken refuge--or at any rate sought refuge--in God. It was paradoxical, but manifestly in God he not only sank his individuality but discovered it.

It was wonderful how much he had thought and still thought of the feelings and desires of Lady Sunderbund, and how little he thought of God. Her he had been assiduously propitiating, managing, accepting, for three months now. Why? Partly because she demanded it, and there was a quality in her demand that had touched some hidden spring--of vanity perhaps it was--in him, that made him respond. But partly also it was because after the evacuation of the palace at Princhester he had felt more and more, felt but never dared to look squarely in the face, the catastrophic change in the worldly circumstances of his family.
Only this chapel adventure seemed likely to restore those fallen and bedraggled fortunes. He had not anticipated a tithe of the dire quality of that change. They were not simply uncomfortable in the Notting Hill home. They were miserable. He fancied they looked to him with something between reproach and urgency. Why had he brought them here? What next did he propose to do? He wished at times they would say it out instead of merely looking it. Phoebe's failing appetite chilled his heart.

That concern for his family, he believed, had been his chief motive in clinging to Lady Sunderbund's projects long after he had realized how little they would forward the true service of God. No doubt there had been moments of flattery, moments of something, something rather in the nature of an excited affection; some touch of the magnificent in her, some touch of the infantile,--both appealed magnetically to his imagination; but the real effective cause was his habitual solicitude for his wife and children and his consequent desire to prosper materially. As his first dream of being something between Mohammed and Peter the Hermit in a new proclamation of God to the world lost colour and life in his mind, he realized more and more clearly that there was no way of living in a state of material prosperity and at the same time in a state of active service to God. The Church of the One True God (by favour of Lady Sunderbund) was a gaily-coloured lure.

And yet he wanted to go on with it. All his imagination and intelligence was busy now with the possibility of in some way subjugating Lady Sunderbund, and modifying her and qualifying her to an endurable proposition. Why?

Why?

There could be but one answer, he thought. Brought to the test of action, he did not really believe in God! He did not believe in God as he believed in his family. He did not believe in the reality of either his first or his second vision; they had been dreams, autogenous

revelations, exaltations of his own imaginations. These beliefs were upon different grades of reality. Put to the test, his faith in God gave way; a sword of plaster against a reality of steel.

And yet he did believe in God. He was as persuaded that there was a God as he was that there was another side to the moon. His intellectual conviction was complete. Only, beside the living, breathing--occasionally coughing--reality of Phoebe, God was something as unsubstantial as the Binomial Theorem....

Very like the Binomial Theorem as one thought over that comparison.

By this time he had reached the banks of the Serpentine and was approaching the grey stone bridge that crosses just where Hyde Park ends and Kensington Gardens begins. Following upon his doubts of his religious faith had come another still more extraordinary question: "Although there is a God, does he indeed matter more in our ordinary lives than that same demonstrable Binomial Theorem? Isn't one's duty to Phoebe plain and clear?" Old Likeman's argument came back to him with novel and enhanced powers. Wasn't he after all selfishly putting his own salvation in front of his plain duty to those about him? What did it matter if he told lies, taught a false faith, perjured and damned himself, if after all those others were thereby saved and comforted?

"But that is just where the whole of this state of mind is false and wrong," he told himself. "God is something more than a priggish

devotion, an intellectual formula. He has a hold and a claim--he should have a hold and a claim--exceeding all the claims of Phoebe, Miriam, Daphne, Clementina--all of them.... But he hasn't'!..."

It was to that he had got after he had left Lady Sunderbund, and to that he now returned. It was the thinness and unreality of his thought of God that had driven him post-haste to Brighton-Pomfrey in search for that drug that had touched his soul to belief.

Was God so insignificant in comparison with his family that after all with a good conscience he might preach him every Sunday in Lady Sunderbund's church, wearing Lady Sunderbund's vestments?

Before him he saw an empty seat. The question was so immense and conclusive, it was so clearly a choice for all the rest of his life between God and the dear things of this world, that he felt he could not decide it upon his legs. He sat down, threw an arm along the back of the seat and drummed with his fingers.

If the answer was "yes" then it was decidedly a pity that he had not stayed in the church. It was ridiculous to strain at the cathedral gnat and then swallow Lady Sunderbund's decorative Pantechnicon.

For the first time, Scrope definitely regretted his apostasy.

A trivial matter, as it may seem to the reader, intensified that regret.

Three weeks ago Borrowdale, the bishop of Howeaster, had died, and Scrope would have been the next in rotation to succeed him on the bench of bishops. He had always looked forward to the House of Lords, intending to take rather a new line, to speak more, and to speak more plainly and fully upon social questions than had hitherto been the practice of his brethren. Well, that had gone....

(9)

Regrets were plain now. The question before his mind was growing clear; whether he was to persist in this self-imposed martyrdom of himself and his family or whether he was to go back upon his outbreak of visionary fanaticism and close with this last opportunity that Lady Sunderbund offered of saving at least the substance of the comfort and social status of his wife and daughters. In which case it was clear to him he would have to go to great lengths and exercise very considerable subtlety--and magnetism--in the management of Lady Sunderbund....

He found himself composing a peculiar speech to her, very frank and revealing, and one that he felt would dominate her thoughts.... She attracted him oddly.... At least this afternoon she had attracted him....

And repelled him....

A wholesome gust of moral impatience stirred him. He smacked the back of the seat hard, as though he smacked himself.

No. He did not like it….

A torn sunset of purple and crimson streamed raggedly up above and through the half stripped trecs of Kensington Gardens, and he found himself wishing that Heaven would give us fewer sublimities in sky and mountain and more in our hearts. Against the background of darkling trees and stormily flaming sky a girl was approaching him. There was little to be seen of her but her outline. Something in her movement caught his eye and carried his memory back to a sundown at Hunstanton. Then as she came nearer he saw that it was Eleanor.

It was odd to see her here. He had thought she was at Newnham.

But anyhow it was very pleasant to see her. And there was something in Eleanor that promised an answer to his necessity. The girl had a kind of instinctive wisdom. She would understand the quality of his situation better perhaps than any one. He would put the essentials of that situation as fully and plainly as he could to her. Perhaps she, with that clear young idealism of hers, would give him just the lift and the light of which he stood in need. She would comprehend both sides of it, the points about Phoebe as well as the points about God.

When first he saw her she seemed to be hurrying, but now she had fallen

to a loitering pace. She looked once or twice behind her and then ahead, almost as though she expected some one and was not sure whether this person would approach from east or west. She did not observe her father until she was close upon him.

Then she was so astonished that for a moment she stood motionless, regarding him. She made an odd movement, almost as if she would have walked on, that she checked in its inception. Then she came up to him and stood before him. "It's Dad," she said.

"I didn't know you were in London, Norah," he began.

"I came up suddenly."

"Have you been home?"

"No. I wasn't going home. At least--not until afterwards."

Then she looked away from him, east and then west, and then met his eye again.

"Won't you sit down, Norah?"

"I don't know whether I can."

She consulted the view again and seemed to come to a decision. "At

least, I will for a minute."

She sat down. For a moment neither of them spoke....

"What are you doing here, little Norah?"

She gathered her wits. Then she spoke rather volubly. "I know it looks bad, Daddy. I came up to meet a boy I know, who is going to France to-morrow. I had to make excuses--up there. I hardly remember what excuses I made."

"A boy you know?"

"Yes."

"Do we know him?"

"Not yet."

For a time Scrope forgot the Church of the One True God altogether. "Who is this boy?" he asked.

With a perceptible effort Eleanor assumed a tone of commonsense conventionality. "He's a boy I met first when we were skating last year. His sister has the study next to mine."

Father looked at daughter, and she met his eyes. "Well?"

"It's all happened so quickly, Daddy," she said, answering all that was implicit in that "Well?" She went on, "I would have told you about him if he had seemed to matter. But it was just a friendship. It didn't seem to matter in any serious way. Of course we'd been good friends--and talked about all sorts of things. And then suddenly you see,"--her tone was offhand and matter-of-fact--"he has to go to France."

She stared at her father with the expression of a hostess who talks about the weather. And then the tears gathered and ran down her cheek.

She turned her face to the Serpentine and clenched her fist.

But she was now fairly weeping. "I didn't know he cared. I didn't know I cared."

His next question took a little time in coming.

"And it's love, little Norah?" he asked.

She was comfortably crying now, the defensive altogether abandoned. "It's love, Daddy.... Oh! love!.... He's going tomorrow." For a minute or so neither spoke. Scrope's mind was entirely made up in the matter. He approved altogether of his daughter. But the traditions of parentage, his habit of restrained decision, made him act a judicial part. "I'd

like just to see this boy," he said, and added: "If it isn't rather interfering...."

"Dear Daddy!" she said. "Dear Daddy!" and touched his hand. "He'll be coming here...."

"If you could tell me a few things about him," said Scrope. "Is he an undergraduate?"

"You see," began Eleanor and paused to marshal her facts. "He graduated this year. Then he's been in training at Cambridge. Properly he'd have a fellowship. He took the Natural Science tripos, zoology chiefly. He's good at philosophy, but of course our Cambridge philosophy is so silly--McTaggart blowing bubbles.... His father's a doctor, Sir Hedley Riverton."

As she spoke her eyes had been roving up the path and down. "He's coming," she interrupted. She hesitated. "Would you mind if I went and spoke to him first, Daddy?"

"Of course go to him. Go and warn him I'm here," said Scrope.

Eleanor got up, and was immediately greeted with joyful gestures by an approaching figure in khaki. The two young people quickened their paces as they drew nearer one another. There was a rapid greeting; they stood close together and spoke eagerly. Scrope could tell by their movements

when he became the subject of their talk. He saw the young man start and look over Eleanor's shoulder, and he assumed an attitude of philosophical contemplation of the water, so as to give the young man the liberty of his profile.

He did not look up until they were quite close to him, and when he did he saw a pleasant, slightly freckled fair face a little agitated, and very honest blue eyes. "I hope you don't think, Sir, that it's bad form of me to ask Eleanor to come up and see me as I've done. I telegraphed to her on an impulse, and it's been very kind of her to come up to me."

"Sit down," said Scrope, "sit down. You're Mr. Riverton?"

"Yes, Sir," said the young man. He had the frequent "Sir" of the subaltern. Scrope was in the centre of the seat, and the young officer sat down on one side of him while Eleanor took up a watching position on her father's other hand. "You see, Sir, we've hardly known each other--I mean we've been associated over a philosophical society and all that sort of thing, but in a more familiar way, I mean...."

He hung for a moment, just a little short of breath. Scrope helped him with a grave but sympathetic movement of the head. "It's a little difficult to explain," the young man apologized.

"We hadn't understood, I think, either of us very much. We'd just been friendly--and liked each other. And so it went on even when I was

training. And then when I found I had to go out--I'm going out a little earlier than I expected--I thought suddenly I wouldn't ever go to Cambridge again at all perhaps--and there was something in one of her letters.... I thought of it a lot, Sir, I thought it all over, and I thought it wasn't right for me to do anything and I didn't do anything until this morning. And then I sort of had to telegraph. I know it was frightful cheek and bad form and all that, Sir. It is. It would be worse if she wasn't different--I mean, Sir, if she was just an ordinary girl.... But I had a sort of feeling--just wanting to see her. I don't suppose you've ever felt anything, Sir, as I felt I wanted to see her--and just hear her speak to me...."

He glanced across Scrope at Eleanor. It was as if he justified himself to them both.

Scrope glanced furtively at his daughter who was leaning forward with tender eyes on her lover, and his heart went out to her. But his manner remained judicial.

"All this is very sudden," he said.

"Or you would have heard all about it, Sir," said young Riverton. "It's just the hurry that has made this seem furtive. All that there is between us, Sir, is just the two telegrams we've sent, hers and mine. I hope you won't mind our having a little time together. We won't do anything very committal. It's as much friendship as anything. I go by

the evening train to-morrow."

"Mm," said Serope with his eye on Eleanor.

"In these uncertain times," he began.

"Why shouldn't I take a risk too, Daddy?" said Eleanor sharply.

"I know there's that side of it," said the young man. "I oughtn't to have telegraphed," he said.

"Can't I take a risk?" exclaimed Eleanor. "I'm not a doll. I don't want to live in wadding until all the world is safe for me."

Scrope looked at the glowing face of the young man.

"Is this taking care of her?" he asked.

"If you hadn't telegraphed--!" she cried with a threat in her voice, and left it at that.

"Perhaps I feel about her--rather as if she was as strong as I am--in those ways. Perhaps I shouldn't. I could hardly endure myself, Sir--cut off from her. And a sort of blank. Nothing said."

"You want to work out your own salvation," said Scrope to his daughter.

"No one else can," she answered. "I'm--I'm grown up."

"Even if it hurts?"

"To live is to be hurt somehow," she said. "This--This--" She flashed her love. She intimated by a gesture that it is better to be stabbed with a clean knife than to be suffocated or poisoned or to decay....

Scrope turned his eyes to the young man again. He liked him. He liked the modelling of his mouth and chin and the line of his brows. He liked him altogether. He pronounced his verdict slowly. "I suppose, after all," he said, "that this is better than the tender solicitude of a safe and prosperous middleaged man. Eleanor, my dear, I've been thinking to-day that a father who stands between his children and hardship, by doing wrong, may really be doing them a wrong. You are a dear girl to me. I won't stand between you two. Find your own salvation." He got up. "I go west," he said, "presently. You, I think, go east."

"I can assure you, Sir," the young man began.

Scrope held his hand out. "Take your life in your own way," he said.

He turned to Eleanor. "Talk as you will," he said.

She clasped his hand with emotion. Then she turned to the waiting young

man, who saluted.

"You'll come back to supper?" Scrope said, without thinking out the implications of that invitation.

She assented as carelessly. The fact that she and her lover were to go, with their meeting legalized and blessed, excluded all other considerations. The two young people turned to each other.

Scrope stood for a moment or so and then sat down again.

For a time he could think only of Eleanor.... He watched the two young people as they went eastward. As they walked their shoulders and elbows bumped amicably together.

(10)

Presently he sought to resume the interrupted thread of his thoughts. He knew that he had been dealing with some very tremendous and urgent problem when Eleanor had appeared. Then he remembered that Eleanor at the time of her approach had seemed to be a solution rather than an interruption. Well, she had her own life. She was making her own life. Instead of solving his problems she was solving her own. God bless those dear grave children! They were nearer the elemental things than he was. That eastward path led to Victoria--and thence to a very probable death.

The lad was in the infantry and going straight into the trenches.

Love, death, God; this war was bringing the whole world back to elemental things, to heroic things. The years of comedy and comfort were at an end in Europe; the age of steel and want was here. And he had been thinking--What had he been thinking?

He mused, and the scheme of his perplexities reshaped itself in his mind. But at that time he did not realize that a powerful new light was falling upon it now, cast by the tragic illumination of these young lovers whose love began with a parting. He did not see how reality had come to all things through that one intense reality. He reverted to the question as he had put it to himself, before first he recognized Eleanor. Did he believe in God? Should he go on with this Sunderbund adventure in which he no longer believed? Should he play for safety and comfort, trusting to God's toleration? Or go back to his family and warn them of the years of struggle and poverty his renunciation cast upon them?

Somehow Lady Sunderbund's chapel was very remote and flimsy now, and the hardships of poverty seemed less black than the hardship of a youthful death.

Did he believe in God? Again he put that fundamental question to himself.

He sat very still in the sunset peace, with his eyes upon the steel mirror of the waters. The question seemed to fill the whole scene, to wait, even as the water and sky and the windless trees were waiting....

And then by imperceptible degrees there grew in Scrope's mind the persuasion that he was in the presence of the living God. This time there was no vision of angels nor stars, no snapping of bow-strings, no throbbing of the heart nor change of scene, no magic and melodramatic drawing back of the curtain from the mysteries; the water and the bridge, the ragged black trees, and a distant boat that broke the silvery calm with an arrow of black ripples, all these things were still before him. But God was there too. God was everywhere about him. This persuasion was over him and about him; a dome of protection, a power in his nerves, a peace in his heart. It was an exalting beauty; it was a perfected conviction.... This indeed was the coming of God, the real coming of God. For the first time Scrope was absolutely sure that for the rest of his life he would possess God. Everything that had so perplexed him seemed to be clear now, and his troubles lay at the foot of this last complete realization like a litter of dust and leaves in the foreground of a sunlit, snowy mountain range.

It was a little incredible that he could ever have doubted.

(11)

It was a phase of extreme intellectual clairvoyance. A multitude of things that hitherto had been higgledy-piggledy, contradictory and incongruous in his mind became lucid, serene, full and assured. He seemed to see all things plainly as one sees things plainly through perfectly clear still water in the shadows of a summer noon. His doubts about God, his periods of complete forgetfulness and disregard of God, this conflict of his instincts and the habits and affections of his daily life with the service of God, ceased to be perplexing incompatibilities and were manifest as necessary, understandable aspects of the business of living.

It was no longer a riddle that little immediate things should seem of more importance than great and final things. For man is a creature thrusting his way up from the beast to divinity, from the blindness of individuality to the knowledge of a common end. We stand deep in the engagements of our individual lives looking up to God, and only realizing in our moments of exaltation that through God we can escape from and rule and alter the whole world-wide scheme of individual lives. Only in phases of illumination do we realize the creative powers that lie ready to man's hand. Personal affections, immediate obligations, ambitions, self-seeking, these are among the natural and essential things of our individual lives, as intimate almost as our primordial lusts and needs; God, the true God, is a later revelation, a newer, less natural thing in us; a knowledge still remote, uncertain, and confused with superstition; an apprehension as yet entangled with barbaric traditions of fear and with ceremonial surgeries, blood sacrifices, and

the maddest barbarities of thought. We are only beginning to realize that God is here; so far as our minds go he is still not here continually; we perceive him and then again we are blind to him. God is the last thing added to the completeness of human life. To most His presence is imperceptible throughout their lives; they know as little of him as a savage knows of the electric waves that beat through us for ever from the sun. All this appeared now so clear and necessary to Scrope that he was astonished he had ever found the quality of contradiction in these manifest facts.

In this unprecedented lucidity that had now come to him, Scrope saw as a clear and simple necessity that there can be no such thing as a continuous living presence of God in our lives. That is an unreasonable desire. There is no permanent exaltation of belief. It is contrary to the nature of life. One cannot keep actively believing in and realizing God round all the twenty-four hours any more than one can keep awake through the whole cycle of night and day, day after day. If it were possible so to apprehend God without cessation, life would dissolve in religious ecstasy. But nothing human has ever had the power to hold the curtain of sense continually aside and retain the light of God always. We must get along by remembering our moments of assurance. Even Jesus himself, leader of all those who have hailed the coming kingdom of God, had cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The business of life on earth, life itself, is a thing curtained off, as it were, from such immediate convictions. That is in the constitution of life. Our ordinary state of belief, even when we are free from doubt,

is necessarily far removed from the intuitive certainty of sight and hearing. It is a persuasion, it falls far short of perception....

"We don't know directly," Scrope said to himself with a checking gesture of the hand, "we don't see. We can't. We hold on to the remembered glimpse, we go over our reasons."...

And it was clear too just because God is thus manifest like the momentary drawing of a curtain, sometimes to this man for a time and sometimes to that, but never continuously to any, and because the perception of him depends upon the ability and quality of the perceiver, because to the intellectual man God is necessarily a formula, to the active man a will and a commandment, and to the emotional man love, there can be no creed defining him for all men, and no ritual and special forms of service to justify a priesthood. "God is God," he whispered to himself, and the phrase seemed to him the discovery of a sufficient creed. God is his own definition; there is no other definition of God. Scrope had troubled himself with endless arguments whether God was a person, whether he was concerned with personal troubles, whether he loved, whether he was finite. It were as reasonable to argue whether God was a frog or a rock or a tree. He had imagined God as a figure of youth and courage, had perceived him as an effulgence of leadership, a captain like the sun. The vision of his drug-quickened mind had but symbolized what was otherwise inexpressible. Of that he was now sure. He had not seen the invisible but only its sign and visible likeness. He knew now that all such presentations were true and that all

such presentations were false. Just as much and just as little was God the darkness and the brightness of the ripples under the bows of the distant boat, the black beauty of the leaves and twigs of those trees now acid-clear against the flushed and deepening sky. These riddles of the profundities were beyond the compass of common living. They were beyond the needs of common living. He was but a little earth parasite, sitting idle in the darkling day, trying to understand his infinitesimal functions on a minor planet. Within the compass of terrestrial living God showed himself in its own terms. The life of man on earth was a struggle for unity of spirit and for unity with his kind, and the aspect of God that alone mattered to man was a unifying kingship without and within. So long as men were men, so would they see God. Only when they reached the crest could they begin to look beyond. So we knew God, so God was to us; since we struggled, he led our struggle, since we were finite and mortal he defined an aim, his personality was the answer to our personality; but God, except in so far as he was to us, remained inaccessible, inexplicable, wonderful, shining through beauty, shining beyond research, greater than time or space, above good and evil and pain and pleasure.

(12)

Serope's mind was saturated as it had never been before by his sense of the immediate presence of God. He floated in that realization. He was not so much thinking now as conversing starkly with the divine

interlocutor, who penetrated all things and saw into and illuminated every recess of his mind. He spread out his ideas to the test of this presence; he brought out his hazards and interpretations that this light might judge them.

There came back to his mind the substance of his two former visions; they assumed now a reciprocal quality, they explained one another and the riddle before him. The first had shown him the personal human aspect of God, he had seen God as the unifying captain calling for his personal service, the second had set the stage for that service in the spectacle of mankind's adventure. He had been shown a great multitude of human spirits reaching up at countless points towards the conception of the racial unity under a divine leadership, he had seen mankind on the verge of awakening to the kingdom of God. "That solves no mystery," he whispered, gripping the seat and frowning at the water; "mysteries remain mysteries; but that is the reality of religion. And now, now, what is my place? What have I to do? That is the question I have been asking always; the question that this moment now will answer; what have I to do?..."

God was coming into the life of all mankind in the likeness of a captain and a king; all the governments of men, all the leagues of men, their debts and claims and possessions, must give way to the world republic under God the king. For five troubled years he had been staring religion in the face, and now he saw that it must mean this--or be no more than fetishism, Obi, Orphic mysteries or ceremonies of Demeter, a legacy

of mental dirtiness, a residue of self-mutilation and superstitious sacrifices from the cunning, fear-haunted, ape-dog phase of human development. But it did mean this. And every one who apprehended as much was called by that very apprehension to the service of God's kingdom. To live and serve God's kingdom on earth, to help to bring it about, to propagate the idea of it, to establish the method of it, to incorporate all that one made and all that one did into its growing reality, was the only possible life that could be lived, once that God was known.

He sat with his hands gripping his knees, as if he were holding on to his idea. "And now for my part," he whispered, brows knit, "now for my part."

Ever since he had given his confirmation addresses he had been clear that his task, or at least a considerable portion of his task, was to tell of this faith in God and of this conception of service in his kingdom as the form and rule of human life and human society. But up to now he had been floundering hopelessly in his search for a method and means of telling. That, he saw, still needed to be thought out. For example, one cannot run through the world crying, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Men's minds were still so filled with old theological ideas that for the most part they would understand by that only a fantasy of some great coming of angels and fiery chariots and judgments, and hardly a soul but would doubt one's sanity and turn scornfully away. But one must proclaim God not to confuse but to convince men's minds. It was that and the habit of his priestly calling that had disposed him towards

a pulpit. There he could reason and explain. The decorative genius of Lady Sunderbund had turned that intention into a vast iridescent absurdity.

This sense he had of thinking openly in the sight of God, enabled him to see the adventure of Lady Sunderbund without illusion and without shame. He saw himself at once honest and disingenuous, divided between two aims. He had no doubt now of the path he had to pursue. A stronger man of permanently clear aims might possibly turn Lady Sunderbund into a useful opportunity, oblige her to provide the rostrum he needed; but for himself, he knew he had neither the needed strength nor clearness; she would smother him in decoration, overcome him by her picturesque persistence. It might be ridiculous to run away from her, but it was necessary. And he was equally clear now that for him there must be no idea of any pulpit, of any sustained mission. He was a man of intellectual moods; only at times, he realized, had he the inspiration of truth; upon such uncertain snatches and glimpses he must live; to make his life a ministry would be to face phases when he would simply be "carrying on," with his mind blank and his faith asleep.

His thought spread out from this perennial decision to more general things again. Had God any need of organized priests at all? Wasn't that just what had been the matter with religion for the last three thousand years?

His vision and his sense of access to God had given a new courage to

his mind; in these moods of enlightenment he could see the world as a comprehensible ball, he could see history as an understandable drama. He had always been on the verge of realizing before, he realized now, the two entirely different and antagonistic strands that interweave in the twisted rope of contemporary religion; the old strand of the priest, the fetishistic element of the blood sacrifice and the obscene rite, the element of ritual and tradition, of the cult, the caste, the consecrated tribe; and interwoven with this so closely as to be scarcely separable in any existing religion was the new strand, the religion of the prophets, the unidolatrous universal worship of the one true God. Priest religion is the antithesis to prophet religion. He saw that the founders of all the great existing religions of the world had been like himself--only that he was a weak and commonplace man with no creative force, and they had been great men of enormous initiative--men reaching out, and never with a complete definition, from the old kind of religion to the new. The Hebrew prophets, Jesus, whom the priests killed when Pilate would have spared him, Mohammed, Buddha, had this much in common that they had sought to lead men from temple worship, idol worship, from rites and ceremonies and the rule of priests, from anniversaryism and sacramentalism, into a direct and simple relation to the simplicity of God. Religious progress had always been liberation and simplification. But none of these efforts had got altogether clear. The organizing temper in men, the disposition to dogmatic theorizing, the distrust of the discretion of the young by the wisdom of age, the fear of indiscipline which is so just in warfare and so foolish in education, the tremendous power of the propitiatory tradition, had always caught

and crippled every new gospel before it had run a score of years. Jesus for example gave man neither a theology nor a church organization; His sacrament was an innocent feast of memorial; but the fearful, limited, imitative men he left to carry on his work speedily restored all these three abominations of the antiquated religion, theology, priest, and sacrifice. Jesus indeed, caught into identification with the ancient victim of the harvest sacrifice and turned from a plain teacher into a horrible blood bath and a mock cannibal meal, was surely the supreme feat of the ironies of chance....

"It is curious how I drift back to Jesus," said Scrope. "I have never seen how much truth and good there was in his teaching until I broke away from Christianity and began to see him plain. If I go on as I am going, I shall end a Nazarene...."

He thought on. He had a feeling of temerity, but then it seemed as if God within him bade him be of good courage.

Already in a glow of inspiration he had said practically as much as he was now thinking in his confirmation address, but now he realized completely what it was he had then said. There could be no priests, no specialized ministers of the one true God, because every man to the utmost measure of his capacity was bound to be God's priest and minister. Many things one may leave to specialists: surgery, detailed administration, chemistry, for example; but it is for every man to think his own philosophy and think out his own religion. One man may tell

another, but no man may take charge of another. A man may avail himself of electrician or gardener or what not, but he must stand directly before God; he may suffer neither priest nor king. These other things are incidental, but God, the kingdom of God, is what he is for.

"Good," he said, checking his reasoning. "So I must bear witness to God--but neither as priest nor pastor. I must write and talk about him as I can. No reason why I should not live by such writing and talking if it does not hamper my message to do so. But there must be no high place, no ordered congregation. I begin to see my way...."

The evening was growing dark and chill about him now, the sky was barred with deep bluish purple bands drawn across a chilly brightness that had already forgotten the sun, the trees were black and dim, but his understanding of his place and duty was growing very definite.

"And this duty to bear witness to God's kingdom and serve it is so plain that I must not deflect my witness even by a little, though to do so means comfort and security for my wife and children. God comes first...."

"They must not come between God and me...."

"But there is more in it than that."

He had come round at last through the long clearing-up of his mind, to

his fundamental problem again. He sat darkly reluctant.

"I must not play priest or providence to them," he admitted at last. "I must not even stand between God and them."

He saw now what he had been doing; it had been the flaw in his faith that he would not trust his family to God. And he saw too that this distrust has been the flaw in the faith of all religious systems hitherto....

(13)

In this strange voyage of the spirit which was now drawing to its end, in which Scrope had travelled from the confused, unanalyzed formulas and assumptions and implications of his rectory upbringing to his present stark and simple realization of God, he had at times made some remarkable self-identifications. He was naturally much given to analogy; every train of thought in his mind set up induced parallel currents. He had likened himself to the Anglican church, to the whole Christian body, as, for example, in his imagined second conversation with the angel of God. But now he found himself associating himself with a still more far-reaching section of mankind. This excess of solicitude was traceable perhaps in nearly every one in all the past of mankind who had ever had the vision of God. An excessive solicitude to shield those others from one's own trials and hardships, to preserve the exact quality of the

revelation, for example, had been the fruitful cause of crippling errors, spiritual tyrannies, dogmatisms, dissensions, and futilities. "Suffer little children to come unto me"; the text came into his head with an effect of contribution. The parent in us all flares out at the thought of the younger and weaker minds; we hide difficulties, seek to spare them from the fires that temper the spirit, the sharp edge of the truth that shapes the soul. Christian is always trying to have a carriage sent back from the Celestial City for his family. Why, we ask, should they flounder dangerously in the morasses that we escaped, or wander in the forest in which we lost ourselves? Catch these souls young, therefore, save them before they know they exist, kidnap them to heaven; vaccinate them with a catechism they may never understand, lull them into comfort and routine. Instinct plays us false here as it plays the savage mother false when she snatches her fevered child from the doctor's hands. The last act of faith is to trust those we love to God....

Hitherto he had seen the great nets of theological overstatement and dogma that kept mankind from God as if they were the work of purely evil things in man, of pride, of self-assertion, of a desire to possess and dominate the minds and souls of others. It was only now that he saw how large a share in the obstruction of God's Kingdom had been played by the love of the elder and the parent, by the carefulness, the fussy care, of good men and women. He had wandered in wildernesses of unbelief, in dangerous places of doubt and questioning, but he had left his wife and children safe and secure in the self-satisfaction of orthodoxy. To none

of them except to Eleanor had he ever talked with any freedom of his new apprehensions of religious reality. And that had been at Eleanor's initiative. There was, he saw now, something of insolence and something of treachery in this concealment. His ruling disposition throughout the crisis had been to force comfort and worldly well-being upon all those dependants even at the price of his own spiritual integrity. In no way had he consulted them upon the bargain.... While we have pottered, each for the little good of his own family, each for the lessons and clothes and leisure of his own children, assenting to this injustice, conforming to that dishonest custom, being myopically benevolent and fundamentally treacherous, our accumulated folly has achieved this catastrophe. It is not so much human wickedness as human weakness that has permitted the youth of the world to go through this hell of blood and mud and fire. The way to the kingdom of God is the only way to the true safety, the true wellbeing of the children of men....

It wasn't fair to them. But now he saw how unfair it was to them in a light that has only shone plainly upon European life since the great interlude of the armed peace came to an end in August, 1914. Until that time it had been the fashion to ignore death and evade poverty and necessity for the young. We can shield our young no longer, death has broken through our precautions and tender evasions--and his eyes went eastward into the twilight that had swallowed up his daughter and her lover.

The tumbled darkling sky, monstrous masses of frowning blue, with icy

gaps of cold light, was like the great confusions of the war. All our youth has had to go into that terrible and destructive chaos--because of the kings and churches and nationalities sturdier-souled men would have set aside.

Everything was sharp and clear in his mind now. Eleanor after all had brought him his solution.

He sat quite still for a little while, and then stood up and turned northward towards Notting Hill.

The keepers were closing Kensington Gardens, and he would have to skirt the Park to Victoria Gate and go home by the Bayswater Road....

(14)

As he walked he rearranged in his mind this long-overdue apology for his faith that he was presently to make to his family. There was no one to interrupt him and nothing to embarrass him, and so he was able to set out everything very clearly and convincingly. There was perhaps a disposition to digress into rather voluminous subordinate explanations, on such themes, for instance, as sacramentalism, whereon he found himself summarizing Frazer's Golden Bough, which the Chasters' controversy had first obliged him to read, and upon the irrelevance of the question of immortality to the process of salvation. But the reality

of his eclaircissement was very different from anything he prepared in these anticipations.

Tea had been finished and put away, and the family was disposed about the dining-room engaged in various evening occupations; Phoebe sat at the table working at some mathematical problem, Clementina was reading with her chin on her fist and a frown on her brow; Lady Ella, Miriam and Daphne were busy making soft washing cloths for the wounded; Lady Ella had brought home the demand for them from the Red Cross centre in Burlington House. The family was all downstairs in the dining-room because the evening was chilly, and there were no fires upstairs yet in the drawing-room. He came into the room and exchanged greetings with Lady Ella. Then he stood for a time surveying his children. Phoebe, he noted, was a little flushed; she put passion into her work; on the whole she was more like Eleanor than any other of them. Miriam knitted with a steady skill. Clementina's face too expressed a tussle. He took up one of the rough-knit washing-cloths upon the side-table, and asked how many could be made in an hour. Then he asked some idle obvious question about the fire upstairs. Clementina made an involuntary movement; he was disturbing her. He hovered for a moment longer. He wanted to catch his wife's eye and speak to her first. She looked up, but before he could convey his wish for a private conference with her, she smiled at him and then bent over her work again.

He went into the back study and lit his gas fire. Hitherto he had always made a considerable explosion when he did so, but this time by taking

thought and lighting his match before he turned on the gas he did it with only a gentle thud. Then he lit his reading-lamp and pulled down the blind--pausing for a time to look at the lit dressmaker's opposite. Then he sat down thoughtfully before the fire. Presently Ella would come in and he would talk to her. He waited a long time, thinking only weakly and inconsecutively, and then he became restless. Should he call her?

But he wanted their talk to begin in a natural-seeming way. He did not want the portentousness of "wanting to speak" to her and calling her out to him. He got up at last and went back into the other room. Clementina had gone upstairs, and the book she had been reading was lying closed on the sideboard. He saw it was one of Chasters' books, he took it up, it was "The Core of Truth in Christianity," and he felt an irrational shock at the idea of Clementina reading it. In spite of his own immense changes of opinion he had still to revise his conception of the polemical Chasters as an evil influence in religion. He fidgeted past his wife to the mantel in search of an imaginary mislaid pencil. Clementina came down with some bandage linen she was cutting out. He hung over his wife in a way that he felt must convey his desire for a conversation. Then he picked up Chasters' book again. "Does any one want this?" he asked.

"Not if I may have it again," consented Clementina.

He took it back with him and began to read again those familiar controversial pages. He read for the best part of an hour with his knees

drying until they smoked over the gas. What curious stuff it was! How it wrangled! Was Chasters a religious man? Why did he write these books? Had he really a passion for truth or only a Swift-like hatred of weakly-thinking people? None of this stuff in his books was really wrong, provided it was religious-spirited. Much of it had been indeed destructively illuminating to its reader. It let daylight through all sorts of walls. Indeed, the more one read the more vividly true its acid-bit lines became.... And yet, and yet, there was something hateful in the man's tone. Scrope held the book and thought. He had seen Chasters once or twice. Chasters had the sort of face, the sort of voice, the sort of bearing that made one think of his possibly saying upon occasion, rudely and rejoicing, "More fool you!" Nevertheless Scrope perceived now with an effort of discovery that it was from Chasters that he had taken all the leading ideas of the new faith that was in him. Here was the stuff of it. He had forgotten how much of it was here. During those months of worried study while the threat of a Chasters prosecution hung over him his mind had assimilated almost unknowingly every assimilable element of the Chasters doctrine; he had either assimilated and transmuted it by the alchemy of his own temperament, or he had reacted obviously and filled in Chasters' gaps and pauses. Chasters could beat a road to the Holy of Holies, and shy at entering it. But in spite of all the man's roughness, in spite of a curious flavour of baseness and malice about him, the spirit of truth had spoken through him. God has a use for harsh ministers. In one man God lights the heart, in another the reason becomes a consuming fire. God takes his own where he finds it. He does not limit himself to nice

people. In these matters of evidence and argument, in his contempt for amiable, demoralizing compromise, Chasters served God as Scrope could never hope to serve him. Scrope's new faith had perhaps been altogether impossible if the Chasters controversy had not ploughed his mind.

For a time Scrope dwelt upon this remarkable realization. Then as he turned over the pages his eyes rested on a passage of uncivil and ungenerous sarcasm. Against old Likeman of all people!...

What did a girl like Clementina make of all this? How had she got the book? From Eleanor? The stuff had not hurt Eleanor. Eleanor had been able to take the good that Chasters taught, and reject the evil of his spirit....

He thought of Eleanor, gallantly working out her own salvation. The world was moving fast to a phase of great freedom--for the young and the bold.... He liked that boy....

His thoughts came back with a start to his wife. The evening was slipping by and he had momentous things to say to her. He went and just opened the door.

"Ella!" he said.

"Did you want me?"

"Presently."

She put a liberal interpretation upon that "presently," so that after what seemed to him a long interval he had to call again, "Ella!"

"Just a minute," she answered.

(15)

Lady Ella was still, so to speak, a little in the other room when she came to him.

"Shut that door, please," he said, and felt the request had just that flavour of portentousness he wished to avoid.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I wanted to talk to you--about some things. I've done something rather serious to-day. I've made an important decision."

Her face became anxious. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"You see," he said, leaning upon the mantelshelf and looking down at the gas flames, "I've never thought that we should all have to live in this crowded house for long."

"All!" she interrupted in a voice that made him look up sharply. "You're not going away, Ted?"

"Oh, no. But I hoped we should all be going away in a little time. It isn't so."

"I never quite understood why you hoped that."

"It was plain enough."

"How?"

"I thought I should have found something to do that would have enabled us to live in better style. I'd had a plan."

"What plan?"

"It's fallen through."

"But what plan was it?"

"I thought I should be able to set up a sort of broad church chapel. I had a promise."

Her voice was rich with indignation. "And she has betrayed you?"

"No," he said, "I have betrayed her."

Lady Ella's face showed them still at cross purposes. He looked down again and frowned. "I can't do that chapel business," he said. "I've had to let her down. I've got to let you all down. There's no help for it. It isn't the way. I can't have anything to do with Lady Sunderbund and her chapel."

"But," Lady Ella was still perplexed.

"It's too great a sacrifice."

"Of us?"

"No, of myself. I can't get into her pulpit and do as she wants and keep my conscience. It's been a horrible riddle for me. It means plunging into all this poverty for good. But I can't work with her, Ella. She's impossible."

"You mean--you're going to break with Lady Sunderbund?"

"I must."

"Then, Teddy!"--she was a woman groping for flight amidst intolerable perplexities--"why did you ever leave the church?"

"Because I have ceased to believe--"

"But had it nothing to do with Lady Sunderbund?"

He stared at her in astonishment.

"If it means breaking with that woman," she said.

"You mean," he said, beginning for the first time to comprehend her, "that you don't mind the poverty?"

"Poverty!" she cried. "I cared for nothing but the disgrace."

"Disgrace?"

"Oh, never mind, Ted! If it isn't true, if I've been dreaming...."

Instead of a woman stunned by a life sentence of poverty, he saw his wife rejoicing as if she had heard good news.

Their minds were held for a minute by the sound of some one knocking at the house door; one of the girls opened the door, there was a brief hubbub in the passage and then they heard a cry of "Eleanor!" through the folding doors.

"There's Eleanor," he said, realizing he had told his wife nothing of the encounter in Hyde Park.

They heard Eleanor's clear voice: "Where's Mummy? Or Daddy?" and then: "Can't stay now, dears. Where's Mummy or Daddy?"

"I ought to have told you," said Scrope quickly. "I met Eleanor in the Park. By accident. She's come up unexpectedly. To meet a boy going to the front. Quite a nice boy. Son of Riverton the doctor. The parting had made them understand one another. It's all right, Ella. It's a little irregular, but I'd stake my life on the boy. She's very lucky."

Eleanor appeared through the folding doors. She came to business at once.

"I promised you I'd come back to supper here, Daddy," she said. "But I don't want to have supper here. I want to stay out late."

She saw her mother look perplexed. "Hasn't Daddy told you?"

"But where is young Riverton?"

"He's outside."

Eleanor became aware of a broad chink in the folding doors that was making the dining-room an auditorium for their dialogue. She shut them

deftly.

"I have told Mummy," Scrope explained. "Bring him in to supper. We ought to see him."

Eleanor hesitated. She indicated her sisters beyond the folding doors. "They'll all be watching us, Mummy," she said. "We'd be uncomfortable. And besides--"

"But you can't go out and dine with him alone!"

"Oh, Mummy! It's our only chance."

"Customs are changing," said Scrope.

"But can they?" asked Lady Ella.

"I don't see why not."

The mother was still doubtful, but she was in no mood to cross her husband that night. "It's an exceptional occasion," said Scrope, and Eleanor knew her point was won. She became radiant. "I can be late?"

Scrope handed her his latch-key without a word.

"You dear kind things," she said, and went to the door. Then turned and

came back and kissed her father. Then she kissed her mother. "It is so kind of you," she said, and was gone. They listened to her passage through a storm of questions in the dining-room.

"Three months ago that would have shocked me," said Lady Ella.

"You haven't seen the boy," said Scrope.

"But the appearances!"

"Aren't we rather breaking with appearances?" he said.

"And he goes to-morrow--perhaps to get killed," he added. "A lad like a schoolboy. A young thing. Because of the political foolery that we priests and teachers have suffered in the place of the Kingdom of God, because we have allowed the religion of Europe to become a lie; because no man spoke the word of God. You see--when I see that--see those two, those children of one-and-twenty, wrenched by tragedy, beginning with a parting.... It's like a knife slashing at all our appearances and discretions.... Think of our lovemaking...."

The front door banged.

He had some idea of resuming their talk. But his was a scattered mind now.

"It's a quarter to eight," he said as if in explanation.

"I must see to the supper," said Lady Ella.

(16)

There was an air of tension at supper as though the whole family felt that momentous words impended. But Phoebe had emerged victorious from her mathematical struggle, and she seemed to eat with better appetite than she had shown for some time. It was a cold meat supper; Lady Ella had found it impossible to keep up the regular practice of a cooked dinner in the evening, and now it was only on Thursdays that the Scropes, to preserve their social tradition, dressed and dined; the rest of the week they supped. Lady Ella never talked very much at supper; this evening was no exception. Clementina talked of London University and Bedford College; she had been making enquiries; Daphne described some of the mistresses at her new school. The feeling that something was expected had got upon Scrope's nerves. He talked a little in a flat and obvious way, and lapsed into thoughtful silences. While supper was being cleared away he went back into his study.

Thence he returned to the dining-room hearthrug as his family resumed their various occupations.

He tried to speak in a casual conversational tone.

"I want to tell you all," he said, "of something that has happened to-day."

He waited. Phoebe had begun to figure at a fresh sheet of computations. Miriam bent her head closer over her work, as though she winced at what was coming. Daphne and Clementina looked at one another. Their eyes said "Eleanor!" But he was too full of his own intention to read that glance. Only his wife regarded him attentively.

"It concerns you all," he said.

He looked at Phoebe. He saw Lady Ella's hand go out and touch the girl's hand gently to make her desist. Phoebe obeyed, with a little sigh.

"I want to tell you that to-day I refused an income that would certainly have exceeded fifteen hundred pounds a year."

Clementina looked up now. This was not what she expected. Her expression conveyed protesting enquiry.

"I want you all to understand why I did that and why we are in the position we are in, and what lies before us. I want you to know what has been going on in my mind."

He looked down at the hearthrug, and tried to throw off a memory of his

Princhester classes for young women, that oppressed him. His manner he forced to a more familiar note. He stuck his hands into his trouser pockets.

"You know, my dears, I had to give up the church. I just simply didn't believe any more in orthodox Church teaching. And I feel I've never explained that properly to you. Not at all clearly. I want to explain that now. It's a queer thing, I know, for me to say to you, but I want you to understand that I am a religious man. I believe that God matters more than wealth or comfort or position or the respect of men, that he also matters more than your comfort and prosperity. God knows I have cared for your comfort and prosperity. I don't want you to think that in all these changes we have been through lately, I haven't been aware of all the discomfort into which you have come--the relative discomfort. Compared with Princhester this is dark and crowded and poverty-stricken. I have never felt crowded before, but in this house I know you are horribly crowded. It is a house that seems almost contrived for small discomforts. This narrow passage outside; the incessant going up and down stairs. And there are other things. There is the blankness of our London Sundays. What is the good of pretending? They are desolating. There's the impossibility too of getting good servants to come into our dug-out kitchen. I'm not blind to all these sordid consequences. But all the same, God has to be served first. I had to come to this. I felt I could not serve God any longer as a bishop in the established church, because I did not believe that the established church was serving God. I struggled against that conviction--and I struggled against it largely

for your sakes. But I had to obey my conviction.... I haven't talked to you about these things as much as I should have done, but partly at least that is due to the fact that my own mind has been changing and reconsidering, going forward and going back, and in that fluid state it didn't seem fair to tell you things that I might presently find mistaken. But now I begin to feel that I have really thought out things, and that they are definite enough to tell you...."

He paused and resumed. "A number of things have helped to change the opinions in which I grew up and in which you have grown up. There were worries at Princhester; I didn't let you know much about them, but there were. There was something harsh and cruel in that atmosphere. I saw for the first time--it's a lesson I'm still only learning--how harsh and greedy rich people and employing people are to poor people and working people, and how ineffective our church was to make things better. That struck me. There were religious disputes in the diocese too, and they shook me. I thought my faith was built on a rock, and I found it was built on sand. It was slipping and sliding long before the war. But the war brought it down. Before the war such a lot of things in England and Europe seemed like a comedy or a farce, a bad joke that one tolerated. One tried half consciously, half avoiding the knowledge of what one was doing, to keep one's own little circle and life civilized. The war shook all those ideas of isolation, all that sort of evasion, down. The world is the rightful kingdom of God; we had left its affairs to kings and emperors and suchlike impostors, to priests and profit-seekers and greedy men. We were genteel condoners. The war has ended that. It

thrusts into all our lives. It brings death so close--A fortnight ago twenty-seven people were killed and injured within a mile of this by Zeppelin bombs.... Every one loses some one.... Because through all that time men like myself were going through our priestly mummeries, abasing ourselves to kings and politicians, when we ought to have been crying out: 'No! No! There is no righteousness in the world, there is no right government, except it be the kingdom of God.'"

He paused and looked at them. They were all listening to him now. But he was still haunted by a dread of preaching in his own family. He dropped to the conversational note again.

"You see what I had in mind. I saw I must come out of this, and preach the kingdom of God. That was my idea. I don't want to force it upon you, but I want you to understand why I acted as I did. But let me come to the particular thing that has happened to-day. I did not think when I made my final decision to leave the church that it meant such poverty as this we are living in--permanently. That is what I want to make clear to you. I thought there would be a temporary dip into dinginess, but that was all. There was a plan; at the time it seemed a right and reasonable plan; for setting up a chapel in London, a very plain and simple undenominational chapel, for the simple preaching of the world kingdom of God. There was some one who seemed prepared to meet all the immediate demands for such a chapel."

"Was it Lady Sunderbund?" asked Clementina.

Scrope was pulled up abruptly. "Yes," he said. "It seemed at first a quite hopeful project."

"We'd have hated that," said Clementina, with a glance as if for assent, at her mother. "We should all have hated that."

"Anyhow it has fallen through."

"We don't mind that," said Clementina, and Daphne echoed her words.

"I don't see that there is any necessity to import this note of--hostility to Lady Sunderbund into this matter." He addressed himself rather more definitely to Lady Ella. "She's a woman of a very extraordinary character, highly emotional, energetic, generous to an extraordinary extent...."

Daphne made a little noise like a comment.

A faint acerbity in her father's voice responded.

"Anyhow you make a mistake if you think that the personality of Lady Sunderbund has very much to do with this thing now. Her quality may have brought out certain aspects of the situation rather more sharply than they might have been brought out under other circumstances, but if this chapel enterprise had been suggested by quite a different sort of

person, by a man, or by a committee, in the end I think I should have come to the same conclusion. Leave Lady Sunderbund out. Any chapel was impossible. It is just this specialization that has been the trouble with religion. It is just this tendency to make it the business of a special sort of man, in a special sort of building, on a special day--Every man, every building, every day belongs equally to God. That is my conviction. I think that the only possible existing sort of religions meeting is something after the fashion of the Quaker meeting. In that there is no professional religious man at all; not a trace of the sacrifices to the ancient gods.... And no room for a professional religions man...." He felt his argument did a little escape him. He snatched, "That is what I want to make clear to you. God is not a speciality; he is a universal interest."

He stopped. Both Daphne and Clementina seemed disposed to say something and did not say anything.

Miriam was the first to speak. "Daddy," she said, "I know I'm stupid. But are we still Christians?"

"I want you to think for yourselves."

"But I mean," said Miriam, "are we--something like Quakers--a sort of very broad Christians?"

"You are what you choose to be. If you want to keep in the church, then

you must keep in the church. If you feel that the Christian doctrine is alive, then it is alive so far as you are concerned."

"But the creeds?" asked Clementina.

He shook his head. "So far as Christianity is defined by its creeds, I am not a Christian. If we are going to call any sort of religious feeling that has a respect for Jesus, Christianity, then no doubt I am a Christian. But so was Mohammed at that rate. Let me tell you what I believe. I believe in God, I believe in the immediate presence of God in every human life, I believe that our lives have to serve the Kingdom of God...."

"That practically is what Mr. Chasters calls 'The Core of Truth in Christianity.'"

"You have been reading him?"

"Eleanor lent me the book. But Mr. Chasters keeps his living."

"I am not Chasters," said Scrope stiffly, and then relenting: "What he does may be right for him. But I could not do as he does."

Lady Ella had said no word for some time.

"I would be ashamed," she said quietly, "if you had not done as you

have done. I don't mind--The girls don't mind--all this.... Not when we understand--as we do now."

That was the limit of her eloquence.

"Not now that we understand, Daddy," said Clementina, and a faint flavour of Lady Sunderbund seemed to pass and vanish.

There was a queer little pause. He stood rather distressed and perplexed, because the talk had not gone quite as he had intended it to go. It had deteriorated towards personal issues. Phoebe broke the awkwardness by jumping up and coming to her father. "Dear Daddy," she said, and kissed him.

"We didn't understand properly," said Clementina, in the tone of one who explains away much--that had never been spoken....

"Daddy," said Miriam with an inspiration, "may I play something to you presently?"

"But the fire!" interjected Lady Ella, disposing of that idea.

"I want you to know, all of you, the faith I have," he said.

Daphne had remained seated at the table.

"Are we never to go to church again?" she asked, as if at a loss.

(17)

Scrope went back into his little study. He felt shy and awkward with his daughters now. He felt it would be difficult to get back to usualness with them. To-night it would be impossible. To-morrow he must come down to breakfast as though their talk had never occurred.... In his rehearsal of this deliverance during his walk home he had spoken much more plainly of his sense of the coming of God to rule the world and end the long age of the warring nations and competing traders, and he had intended to speak with equal plainness of the passionate subordination of the individual life to this great common purpose of God and man, an aspect he had scarcely mentioned at all. But in that little room, in the presence of those dear familiar people, those great horizons of life had vanished. The room with its folding doors had fixed the scale. The wallpaper had smothered the Kingdom of God; he had been, he felt, domestic; it had been an after-supper talk. He had been put out, too, by the mention of Lady Sunderbund and the case of Chasters....

In his study he consoled himself for this diminution of his intention. It had taken him five years, he reflected, to get to his present real sense of God's presence and to his personal subordination to God's purpose. It had been a little absurd, he perceived, to expect these girls to leap at once to a complete understanding of the halting hints,

the allusive indications of the thoughts that now possessed his soul. He tried like some maiden speaker to recall exactly what it was he had said and what it was he had forgotten to say.... This was merely a beginning, merely a beginning.

After the girls had gone to bed, Lady Ella came to him and she was glowing and tender; she was in love again as she had not been since the shadow had first fallen between them. "I was so glad you spoke to them," she said. "They had been puzzled. But they are dear loyal girls."

He tried to tell her rather more plainly what he felt about the whole question of religion in their lives, but eloquence had departed from him.

"You see, Ella, life cannot get out of tragedy--and sordid tragedy--until we bring about the Kingdom of God. It's no unreality that has made me come out of the church."

"No, dear. No," she said soothingly and reassuringly. "With all these mere boys going to the most dreadful deaths in the trenches, with death, hardship and separation running amok in the world--"

"One has to do something," she agreed.

"I know, dear," he said, "that all this year of doubt and change has been a dreadful year for you."

"It was stupid of me," she said, "but I have been so unhappy. It's over now--but I was wretched. And there was nothing I could say.... I prayed.... It isn't the poverty I feared ever, but the disgrace. Now--I'm happy. I'm happy again.

"But how far do you come with me?"

"I'm with you."

"But," he said, "you are still a churchwoman?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't mind."

He stared at her.

"But I thought always that was what hurt you most, my breach with the church."

"Things are so different now," she said.

Her heart dissolved within her into tender possessiveness. There came flooding into her mind the old phrases of an ancient story: "Whither thou goest I will go... thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.... The Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me."

Just those words would Lady Ella have said to her husband now, but she was capable of no such rhetoric.

"Whither thou goest," she whispered almost inaudibly, and she could get no further. "My dear," she said.

(18)

At two o'clock the next morning Scrope was still up. He was sitting over the snoring gas fire in his study. He did not want to go to bed. His mind was too excited, he knew, for any hope of sleep. In the last twelve hours, since he had gone out across the park to his momentous talk with Lady Sunderbund, it seemed to him that his life had passed through its cardinal crisis and come to its crown and decision. The spiritual voyage that had begun five years ago amidst a stormy succession of theological nightmares had reached harbour at last. He was established now in the sure conviction of God's reality, and of his advent to unify the lives of men and to save mankind. Some unobserved process in his mind had perfected that conviction, behind the cloudy veil of his vacillations and moods. Surely that work was finished now, and the day's experience had drawn the veil and discovered God established for ever.

He contrasted this simple and overruling knowledge of God as the supreme fact in a practical world with that vague and ineffective subject for

sentiment who had been the "God" of his Anglican days. Some theologian once spoke of God as "the friend behind phenomena"; that Anglican deity had been rather a vague flummery behind court and society, wealth, "respectability," and the comfortable life. And even while he had lived in lipservice to that complaisant compromise, this true God had been here, this God he now certainly professed, waiting for his allegiance, waiting to take up the kingship of this distraught and bloodstained earth. The finding of God is but the stripping of bandages from the eyes. Seek and ye shall find....

He whispered four words very softly: "The Kingdom of God!"

He was quite sure he had that now, quite sure.

The Kingdom of God!

That now was the form into which all his life must fall. He recalled his vision of the silver sphere and of ten thousand diverse minds about the world all making their ways to the same one conclusion. Here at last was a king and emperor for mankind for whom one need have neither contempt nor resentment; here was an aim for which man might forge the steel and wield the scalpel, write and paint and till and teach. Upon this conception he must model all his life. Upon this basis he must found friendships and co-operations. All the great religions, Christianity, Islam, in the days of their power and honesty, had proclaimed the advent of this kingdom of God. It had been their common inspiration. A religion

surrenders when it abandons the promise of its Millennium. He had recovered that ancient and immortal hope. All men must achieve it, and with their achievement the rule of God begins. He muttered his faith. It made it more definite to put it into words and utter it. "It comes. It surely comes. To-morrow I begin. I will do no work that goes not Godward. Always now it shall be the truth as near as I can put it. Always now it shall be the service of the commonweal as well as I can do it. I will live for the ending of all false kingship and priestcraft, for the eternal growth of the spirit of man...."

He was, he knew clearly, only one common soldier in a great army that was finding its way to enlistment round and about the earth. He was not alone. While the kings of this world fought for dominion these others gathered and found themselves and one another, these others of the faith that grows plain, these men who have resolved to end the bloodstained chronicles of the Dynasts and the miseries of a world that trades in life, for ever. They were many men, speaking divers tongues. He was but one who obeyed the worldwide impulse. He could smile at the artless vanity that had blinded him to the import of his earlier visions, that had made him imagine himself a sole discoverer, a new Prophet, that had brought him so near to founding a new sect. Every soldier in the new host was a recruiting sergeant according to his opportunity.... And none was leader. Only God was leader....

"The achievement of the Kingdom of God;" this was his calling. Henceforth this was his business in life....

For a time he indulged in vague dreams of that kingdom of God on earth of which he would be one of the makers; it was a dream of a shadowy splendour of cities, of great scientific achievements, of a universal beauty, of beautiful people living in the light of God, of a splendid adventure, thrusting out at last among the stars. But neither his natural bent nor his mental training inclined him to mechanical or administrative explicitness. Much more was his dream a vision of men inwardly ennobled and united in spirit. He saw history growing reasonable and life visibly noble as mankind realized the divine aim. All the outward peace and order, the joy of physical existence finely conceived, the mounting power and widening aim were but the expression and verification of the growth of God within. Then we would bear children for finer ends than the blood and mud of battlefields. Life would tower up like a great flame. By faith we reached forward to that. The vision grew more splendid as it grew more metaphorical. And the price one paid for that; one gave sham dignities, false honour, a Levitical righteousness, immediate peace, one bartered kings and churches for God.... He looked at the mean, poverty-struck room, he marked the dinginess and tawdriness of its detail and all the sordid evidences of ungracious bargaining and grudging service in its appointments. For all his life now he would have to live in such rooms. He who had been one of the lucky ones.... Well, men were living in dug-outs and dying gaily in muddy trenches, they had given limbs and lives, eyes and the joy of movement, prosperity and pride, for a smaller cause and a feebler assurance than this that he had found....

(19)

Presently his thoughts were brought back to his family by the sounds of Eleanor's return. He heard her key in the outer door; he heard her move about in the hall and then slip lightly up to bed. He did not go out to speak to her, and she did not note the light under his door.

He would talk to her later when this discovery of her own emotions no longer dominated her mind. He recalled her departing figure and how she had walked, touching and looking up to her young mate, and he a little leaning to her....

"God bless them and save them," he said....

He thought of her sisters. They had said but little to his clumsy explanations. He thought of the years and experience that they must needs pass through before they could think the fulness of his present thoughts, and so he tempered his disappointment. They were a gallant group, he felt. He had to thank Ella and good fortune that so they were. There was Clementina with her odd quick combatant sharpness, a harder being than Eleanor, but nevertheless a fine-spirited and even more independent. There was Miriam, indefatigably kind. Phoebe too had a real passion of the intellect and Daphne an innate disposition to service.
But it was strange how they had taken his proclamation of a conclusive

breach with the church as though it was a command they must, at least outwardly, obey. He had expected them to be more deeply shocked; he had thought he would have to argue against objections and convert them to his views. Their acquiescence was strange. They were content he should think all this great issue out and give his results to them. And his wife, well as he knew her, had surprised him. He thought of her words: "Whither thou goest--"

He was dissatisfied with this unconditional agreement. Why could not his wife meet God as he had met God? Why must Miriam put the fantastic question--as though it was not for her to decide: "Are we still Christians?" And pursuing this thought, why couldn't Lady Sunderbund set up in religion for herself without going about the world seeking for a priest and prophet. Were women Undines who must get their souls from mortal men? And who was it tempted men to set themselves up as priests? It was the wife, the disciple, the lover, who was the last, the most fatal pitfall on the way to God.

He began to pray, still sitting as he prayed.

"Oh God!" he prayed. "Thou who has shown thyself to me, let me never forget thee again. Save me from forgetfulness. And show thyself to those I love; show thyself to all mankind. Use me, O God, use me; but keep my soul alive. Save me from the presumption of the trusted servant; save me from the vanity of authority....

"And let thy light shine upon all those who are so dear to me.... Save them from me. Take their dear loyalty...."

He paused. A flushed, childishly miserable face that stared indignantly through glittering tears, rose before his eyes. He forgot that he had been addressing God.

"How can I help you, you silly thing?" he said. "I would give my own soul to know that God had given his peace to you. I could not do as you wished. And I have hurt you!... You hurt yourself.... But all the time you would have hampered me and tempted me--and wasted yourself. It was impossible.... And yet you are so fine!"

He was struck by another aspect.

"Ella was happy--partly because Lady Sunderbund was hurt and left desolated...."

"Both of them are still living upon nothings. Living for nothings. A phantom way of living...."

He stared blankly at the humming blue gas jets amidst the incandescent asbestos for a space.

"Make them understand," he pleaded, as though he spoke confidentially of some desirable and reasonable thing to a friend who sat beside him. "You

see it is so hard for them until they understand. It is easy enough when one understands. Easy--" He reflected for some moments--"It is as if they could not exist--except in relationship to other definite people. I want them to exist--as now I exist--in relationship to God. Knowing God...."

But now he was talking to himself again.

"So far as one can know God," he said presently.

For a while he remained frowning at the fire. Then he bent forward, turned out the gas, arose with the air of a man who relinquishes a difficult task. "One is limited," he said. "All one's ideas must fall within one's limitations. Faith is a sort of tour de force. A feat of the imagination. For such things as we are. Naturally--naturally.... One perceives it clearly only in rare moments.... That alters nothing...."