GEORGE MACDONALD

HOME AGAIN

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MacDonald G.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I. THE PARLOR

In the dusk of the old-fashioned best room of a farm-house, in the faint glow of the buried sun through the sods of his July grave, sat two elderly persons, dimly visible, breathing the odor which roses unseen sent through the twilight and open window. One of the two was scarcely conscious of the odor, for she did not believe in roses; she believed mainly in mahogany, linen, and hams; to the other it brought too much sadness to be welcomed, for it seemed, like the sunlight, to issue from the grave of his vanished youth. He was not by nature a sad man; he was only one that had found the past more delightful than the present, and had not left his first loves.

The twilight of his years had crept upon him and was deepening; and he felt his youth slowly withering under their fallen leaves. With more education, and perhaps more receptivity than most farmers, he had married a woman he fervently loved, whose rarely truthful nature, to which she had striven to keep true, had developed the delicate flower of moral and social refinement; and her influence upon him had been of the eternal sort. While many of their neighbors were vying with each other in the effort to dress, and dwell, and live up to their notion of *gentility*, Richard Colman and his wife had never troubled themselves about fashion, but had sought to please each the taste of the other, and cultivate their own. Perhaps now as he sat thus silent in the *dimmits*, he was holding closer converse than he knew, or any of us can know, with one who seemed to have vanished from all this side of things, except the heart of her husband. That clung to what people would call *her memory*; I prefer to call it *her*.

The rose-scented hush was torn by the strident, cicala-like shrilling of a self-confident, self-satisfied female voice—

"Richard, that son of yours will come to no good! You may take my word for it!"

Mr. Colman made no answer; the dusky, sweet-smelling waves of the silence closed over its laceration.

"I am well aware my opinion is of no value in your eyes, Richard; but that does not absolve me from the duty of stating it: if you allow him to go on as he is doing now, Walter will never eat bread of his own earning!"

"There are many who do, and yet don't come to much!" half thought, but nowise said the father.

"What do you mean to make of him?" persisted Miss Hancock, the half-sister of his wife, the *a* in whose name Walter said ought to have been an *e*.

"Whatever he is able to make himself. He must have the main hand in it, whatever it be," answered Mr. Colman.

"It is time twice over he had set about something! You let him go on dawdling and dawdling without even making up his mind whether or not he ought to do anything! Take my word for it, Richard, you'll have him on your hands till the day of your death!"

The father did not reply that he could wish nothing better, that the threat was more than he could hope for. He did not want to provoke his sister-in-law, and he knew there was a shadow of reason in what she said, though even perfect reason could not have sweetened the mode in which she said it. Nothing could make up for the total absence of sympathy in her utterance of any modicum of truth she was capable of uttering. She was a very dusty woman, and never more dusty than when she fought against dust as in a warfare worthy of all a woman's energies—one who, because she had not a spark of Mary in her, imagined herself a Martha. She was true as steel to the interests of those in whose life hers was involved, but only their dusty interests, not those which make man worth God's trouble.

She was a vessel of clay in an outhouse of the temple, and took on her the airs—not of gold, for gold has no airs—but the airs of clay imagining itself gold, and all the golden vessels nothing but clay.

"I put it to you, Richard Colman," she went on, "whether good ever came of reading poetry, and falling asleep under hay-stacks! He actually writes poetry!—and we all know what that leads to!"

"Do we?" ventured her brother-in-law. "King David wrote poetry!"

"Richard, don't garble! I will not have you garble! You know what I mean as well as I do myself! And you know as well as I do what comes of writing poetry! That friend of Walter's who borrowed ten pounds of you—did he ever pay you?"

"He did, Ann."

"You didn't tell *me*!"

"I did not want to disappoint you!" replied Richard, with a sarcasm she did not feel.

"It was worth telling!" she returned.

"I did not think so. Everybody does not stick to a bank-note like a snail to the wall! I returned him the money."

"Returned him the money!"

"Yes."

"Made him a present of *ten pounds*!"

"Why not?"

"Why then?"

"I had more reasons than one."

"And no call to explain them! It was just like you to throw away your hard earnings upon a fellow that would never earn anything for himself! As if one such wasn't enough to take all you'd got!"

"How could he send back the money if that had been the case! He proved himself what I believed him, ready and willing to work! The money went for a fellow's bread and cheese, and what better money's worth would you have?"

"You may some day want the bread and cheese for yourself!"

"One stomach is as good as another!"

"It never was and never will be any use talking to some people!" concluded sister Ann, in the same tone she began with, for she seldom lost her temper—though no one would have much minded her losing it, it was so little worth keeping. Rarely angry, she was always disagreeable. The good that was in her had no flower, but bore its fruits, in the shape of good food, clean linen, mended socks, and such like, without any blossom of sweet intercourse to make life pleasant.

Aunt Ann would have been quite justified in looking on poetry with contempt had it been what she imagined it. Like many others, she had decided opinions concerning things of which her idea nowise corresponded with the things themselves.

CHAPTER II. THE ARBOR

While the elders thus conversed in the dusky drawing-room, where the smell of the old roses almost overpowered that of the new, another couple sat in a little homely bower in the garden. It was Walter and his rather distant cousin, Molly Wentworth, who for fifteen years had been as brother and sister. Their fathers had been great friends, and when Molly's died in India, and her mother speedily followed him, Richard Colman took the little orphan, who was at the time with a nurse in England, home to his house, much to the joy of his wife, who had often longed for a daughter to perfect the family idea. The more motherly a woman is, the nearer will the child of another satisfy the necessities of her motherhood. Mrs. Colman could not have said which child she loved best.

Over the still summer garden rested a weight of peace. It was a night to the very mind of the fastidious, twilight-loving bat, flitting about, coming and going, like a thought we can not help. Most of Walter's thoughts came and went thus. He had not yet learned to think; he was hardly more than a medium in which thought came and went. Yet when a thought seemed worth anything, he always gave himself the credit of it!—as if a man were author of his own thoughts any more than of his own existence! A man can but live so with the life given him, that this or that kind of thoughts shall call on him, and to this or that kind he shall not be at home. Walter was only at that early stage of development where a man is in love with what he calls his own thoughts.

Even in the dark of the summer-house one might have seen that he was pale, and might have suspected him handsome. In the daylight his gray eyes might almost seem the source of his paleness. His features were well marked though delicate, and had a notable look of distinction. He was above the middle height, and slenderly built; had a wide forehead, and a small, pale mustache on an otherwise smooth face. His mouth was the least interesting feature; it had great mobility, but when at rest, little shape and no attraction. For this, however, his smile made considerable amends.

The girl was dark, almost swarthy, with the clear, pure complexion, and fine-grained skin, which more commonly accompany the hue. If at first she gave the impression of delicacy, it soon changed into one of compressed life, of latent power. Through the night, where she now sat, her eyes were too dark to appear; they sank into it, and were as the unseen soul of the dark; while her mouth, rather large and exquisitely shaped, with the curve of a strong bow, seemed as often as she smiled to make a pale window in the blackness. Her hair came rather low down the steep of her forehead, and, with the strength of her chin, made her face look rounder than seemed fitting.

They sat for a time as silent as the night that infolded them. They were not lovers, though they loved each other, perhaps, more than either knew. They were watching to see the moon rise at the head of the valley on one of whose high sloping sides they sat.

The moon kept her tryst, and revealed a loveliness beyond what the day had to show. She looked upon a wide valley, that gleamed with the windings of a river. She brightened the river, and dimmed in the houses and cottages the lights with which the opposite hill sparkled like a celestial map. Lovelily she did her work in the heavens, her poor mirror-work—all she was fit for now, affording fit room, atmosphere, and medium to young imaginations, unable yet to spread their wings in the sunlight, and believe what lies hid in the light of the workaday world. Nor was what she showed the less true for what lay unshown in shrouded antagonism. The vulgar cry for the real would bury in deepest grave every eternal fact. It is the cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" The day would reveal a river stained with loathsome refuse, and rich gardens on hill-sides mantled in sooty smoke and evil-smelling vapors, sent up from a valley where men, like gnomes, toiled and caused to toil too eagerly. What would one think of a housekeeper so intent upon saving that she could waste no time on beauty or cleanliness? How many who would storm if they came home to an untidy house, feel no shadow of uneasiness that they have all day been defiling the house of the Father, nor at night lifted hand to cleanse it! Such men regard him as a fool, whose joy a foul river can poison; yet, as soon as they have by pollution

gathered and saved their god, they make haste to depart from the spot they have ruined! Oh, for an invasion of indignant ghosts, to drive from the old places the generation that dishonors the ancient Earth! The sun shows all their disfiguring, but the friendly night comes at length to hide her disgrace; and that well hidden, slowly descends the brooding moon to unveil her beauty.

For there was a *thriving* town full of awful chimneys in the valley, and the clouds that rose from it ascended above the Colmans' farm to the great moor which stretched miles and miles beyond it. In the autumn sun its low forest of heather burned purple; in the pale winter it lay white under snow and frost; but through all the year winds would blow across it the dull smell of the smoke from below. Had such a fume risen to the earthly paradise, Dante would have imagined his purgatory sinking into hell. On all this inferno the night had sunk like a foretaste of cleansing death. The fires lay smoldering like poor, hopeless devils, fain to sleep. The world was merged in a tidal wave from the ocean of hope, and seemed to heave a restful sigh under its cooling renovation.

CHAPTER III. A PENNYWORTH OF THINKING

"A penny for your thought, Walter!" said the girl, after a long silence, in which the night seemed at length to clasp her too close.

"Your penny, then! I was thinking how wild and sweet the dark wind would be blowing up there among the ringing bells of the heather."

"You shall have the penny. I will pay you with your own coin. I keep all the pennies I win of you. What do you do with those you win of me?"

"Oh, I don't know! I take them because you insist on paying your bets, but—"

"Debts, you mean, Walter! You know I never bet, even in fun! I hate taking things for nothing! I wouldn't do it!"

"Then what are you making me do now?"

"Take a penny for the thought I bought of you for a penny. That's fair trade, not gambling. And your thought to-night is well worth a penny. I felt the very wind on the moor for a moment!"

"I'm afraid I sha'n't get a penny a thought in London!"

"Then you are going to London, Walter?"

"Yes, indeed! What else! What is a man to do here?"

"What is a man to do there?"

"Make his way in the world."

"But, Walter, please let me understand! indeed I don't want to be disagreeable! What do you wish to make your way to?"

"To such a position as—"

Here he stopped unsure.

"You mean to fame, and honor, and riches, don't you, Walter?" ventured Molly.

"No—not riches. Did you ever hear of a poet and riches in the same breath?"

"Oh, yes, I have!—though somehow they don't seem to go together comfortably. If a poet is rich, he ought to show he couldn't help it."

"Suppose he was made a lord, where would he then be without money?"

"If to be a lord one must be rich, he ought never to wish to be a lord. But you do not want to be either lord or millionaire, Walter, do you?"

"I hope I know better!"

"Where does the way you speak of lead then, Walter? To fame?"

"If it did, what would you have to say against it? Even Milton calls it 'That last infirmity of noble mind!'"

"But he calls it an infirmity, and such a bad infirmity, apparently, that it is the hardest of all to get rid of!"

The fact was that Walter wanted to be—thought he was a poet, but was far from certain—feared indeed it might not be so, therefore desired greatly the verdict of men in his favor, if but for his own satisfaction. Fame was precious to him as determining, he thought, his position in the world of letters—his kingdom of heaven. Well read, he had not used his reading practically enough to perceive that the praise of one generation may be the contempt of another, perhaps of the very next, so that the repute of his time could assure him of nothing. He did not know the worthlessness of the opinion that either grants or withholds fame.

He looked through the dark at his cousin, thinking, "What sets her talking of such things? How can a girl understand a man with his career before him!"

She read him through the night and his silence.

"I know what you are thinking, Walter!" she said. "You are thinking women can't think. But I should be ashamed not to have common sense, and I can not see the sense of doing anything for a praise that can help nothing and settle nothing."

"Why then should all men have the desire for it?"

"That they may get rid of it Why have all men vanity? Where would the world be on the way to now, if Jesus Christ had sought the praise of men?"

"But He has it!"

"Not much of it yet, I suspect. He does not care for the praise that comes before obedience! —that's what I have heard your father say."

"I never heard him!"

"I have heard him say it often. What could Jesus care for the praise of one whose object in life was the praise of men!"

Walter had not lived so as to destroy the reverence of his childhood. He believed himself to have high ideals. He felt that a man must be upright, or lose his life. So strongly did he feel it, that he imagined himself therefore upright, incapable of a dishonest or mean thing. He had never done, never could, he thought, do anything unfair. But to what Molly said, he had no answer. What he half thought in his silence, was something like this: that Jesus Christ was not the type of manhood, but a man by himself, who came to do a certain work; that it was both absurd and irreverent to talk as if other men had to do as He did, to think and feel like Him; that He was so high above the world He could not care for its fame, while to mere man its praises must be dear. Nor did Walter make any right distinction between the approbation of understanding men, who know the thing they praise, and the empty voice of the unwise many.

In a word, Walter thought, without knowing he did, that Jesus Christ was not a man.

"I think, Molly," he said, "we had better avoid the danger of irreverence."

For the sake of his poor reverence he would frustrate the mission of the Son of God; by its wretched mockery justify himself in refusing the judgment of Jesus!

"I know you think kindly of me, Molly," he went on, "and I should be sorry to have you misunderstand me; but surely a man should not require religion to make him honest! I scorn the notion. A man must be just and true because he is a man! Surely a man may keep clear of the thing he loathes! For my own honor," he added, with a curl of his lip, "I shall at least do nothing disgraceful, however I may fall short of the angelic."

"I doubt," murmured Molly, "whether a man is a man until he knows God."

But Walter, if he heard the words, neither heeded nor answered them. He was far from understanding the absurdity of doing right from love of self.

He was no hypocrite. He did turn from what seemed to him degrading. But there were things degrading which he did not see to be such, things on which some men to whom he did not yet look up, would have looked down. Also there was that in his effort to sustain his self-respect which was far from pure: he despised such as had failed; and to despise the human because it has fallen, is to fall from the human. He had done many little things he ought to be, and one day must be, but as yet felt no occasion to be—ashamed of. So long as they did not trouble him they seemed nowhere. Many a youth starts in life like him, possessed with the idea, not exactly formulated, that he is a most precious specimen of pure and honorable humanity. It comes of self-ignorance, and a low ideal taken for a high one. Such are mainly among the well-behaved, and never doubt themselves a prize for any woman. They color their notion of themselves with their ideal, and then mistake the one for the other. The mass of weaknesses and conceits that compose their being they compress into their ideal mold of man, and then regard the shape as their own. What composes it they do not heed.

No man, however, could look in the refined face of Walter Colman and imagine him cherishing sordid views of life. Asked what of all things he most admired, he might truly answer, "The imaginative intellect." He was a fledgling poet. He worshiped what he called thoughts, would rave

about a thought in the abstract, apostrophize an uncaught idea. When a concrete thinkable one fell to him, he was jubilant over the isolate thing, and with his joy value had nothing to do. He would stand wrapped in the delight of what he counted its beauty, and yet more in the delight that his was the mind that had generated such a meteor! To be able to think pretty things was to him a gigantic distinction! A thought that could never be soul to any action, would be more valuable to him than the perception of some vitality of relation demanding the activity of the whole being. He would call thoughts the stars that glorify the firmament of humanity, but the stars of his firmament were merely atmospheric —pretty fancies, external likenesses. That the grandest thing in the world is to be an accepted poet, is the despotic craze of a vast number of the weak-minded and half-made of both sexes. It feeds poetic fountains of plentiful yield, but insipid and enfeebling flow, the mere sweat of weakness under the stimulus of self-admiration.

CHAPTER IV. A LIVING FORCE

Walter was the very antipode of the Molly he counted commonplace, one outside the region of poetry; she had a passion for turning a *think* into a thing. She had a strong instinctive feeling that she was in the world to do something, and she saw that if nobody tried to keep things right, they would go terribly wrong: what then could she be there for but to set or keep things right! and if she could do nothing with the big things, she must be the busier with the little things! Besides, who could tell how much the little might have to do with the big things! The whole machine depended on every tiny wheel! She could not order the clouds, but she could keep some weeds from growing, and then when the rain came, they would not take away the good of it!

The world might be divided into those who let things go, and those who do not; into the forces and facts, the slaves and fancies; those who are always doing something on God's creative lines, and those that are always grumbling and striving against them.

"Another penny for your thought, Walter!" said Molly.

"I am not going to deal with you. This time you would not think it worth a penny! Why are you so inquisitive about my thoughts?"

"I want to know what you meant when you said the other day that thoughts were better than things."

Walter hesitated. The question was an inclined plane leading to unknown depths of argument!

"See, Walter," said Molly, "here is a *narcissus*—a pheasant's eye: tell me the thought that is better than this thing!"

How troublesome girls were when they asked questions!

"Well," he said, not very logically, "that narcissus has nothing but air around it; my thought of the narcissus has mind around it."

"Then a thought is better than a thing because it has thought round about it?"

"Well, yes."

"Did the thing come there of itself, or did it come of God's thinking?"

"Of God's thinking."

"And God is always the same?"

"Yes."

"Then God's thought is about the narcissus still—and the narcissus is better than your thought of it!"

Walter was silent.

"I should so like to understand!" said Molly. "If you have a thought more beautiful than the narcissus, Walter, I should like to see it! Only if I could see it, it would be a thing, would it not? A thing must be a think before it be a thing. A thing is a ripe think, and must be better than a think—except it lose something in ripening—which may very well be with man's thoughts, but hardly with God's! I will keep in front of the things, and look through them to the thoughts behind them. I want to understand! If a thing were not a thought first, it would not be worth anything! And everything has to be thought about, else we don't see what it is! I haven't got it quite!"

Instead of replying, Walter rose, and they walked to the house side by side in silence.

"Could a thought be worth anything that God had never cared to think?" said Molly to herself as they went.

CHAPTER V. FLUTTERBIES

Mr. Colman and his adopted daughter were fast friends—so fast and so near that they could talk together about Walter, though but the adoptive brother of the one, and the real son of the other. Richard had inherited, apparently, his wife's love to Molly, and added to it his own; but their union had its root in the perfect truthfulness of the two. Real approximation, real union must ever be in proportion to mutual truthfulness. It was quite after the usual fashion, therefore, between them, when Molly began, to tell her father about the conversation she had had with Walter.

"What first made you think, Molly, of such a difference between thoughts and things?" asked Mr. Colman.

"I know quite well," answered Molly. "You remember our visit to your old school-friend, Mr. Dobson?"

"Of course; perfectly."

Mr. Dobson was a worthy clergyman, doing his weary best in a rural parish.

"And you remember Mrs. Evermore?"

"Yes."

"You thought her name a funny one; but you said it ought to have been *'Nevermore,"* because she seemed never to get any further!"

"Come, come, Molly! that won't do! It was you, not I, that said such a spiteful thing!" "It was true any way!" answered Molly; "and you agreed with me; so if I said it first, you said it last! Well, I had to study this Mrs. Evermore. From morning to night she was evermore on the hunt after new fancies. She watched for them, stalked them, followed them like a boy with a butterfly-net She caught them too, of the sort she wanted, plentifully. But none ever came to anything, so far as I could see. She never did anything with one of them. Whatever she caught had a cage to itself, where it sat on 'the all-alone-stone.' Every other moment, while you and Mr. Dobson were talking, she would cry 'oh! oh! o—o—oh!' and pull out her note-book, which was the cork-box in which she pinned her butterflies. She must have had a whole museum of ideas! The most accidental resemblance between words would suffice to start one: after it she would go, catch it, pin it down, and call it a correspondence. Now and then a very pretty notion would fall to her net, and often a silly one; but all were equally game to her. I found her amusing and interesting for two days, but then began to see she only led nothing nowhere. She was touchy, and jealous, and said things that disgusted me; never did anything for anybody; and though she hunted religious ideas most, never seemed to imagine they could have anything to do with her life. It was only the fineness of a good thought even that she seemed to prize. She would startle you any moment by an exclamation of delight at some religious fancy or sentimentality, and down it most go in her book, but it went no further than her book: she was just as common as before, vulgar even, in her judgments of motives and actions. She seemed made for a refined and delicate woman, but not to take the trouble to be what she was made for. You told me, you know, that God makes us, but *we* have to be. She talked about afflictions as one might of manure: by these afflictions, of which she would complain bitterly, she was being fashioned for life eternal! It was all the most dreary, noisome rubbish I had ever come across. I used to lie awake thinking what could ever rouse such a woman to see that she had to *do* something; that man nor woman can become anything without having a hand in the matter. She seemed to expect the spirit of God to work in her like yeast in flour, although there was not a sign of the dough rising. That is how I came to see that one may have any number of fine thoughts and fancies and be nothing the better, any more than the poor woman in the gospel with her doctors! And when Walter, the next time he came home, talked as he did about thoughts, and quoted Keats to the same effect, as if the finest thing in the universe were a fine thought, I could not bear it, and that made me speak to him as I did."

"You have made it very clear, Molly; and I quite agree with you: thinks are of no use except they be turned into things."

"But perhaps, after all, I may have been unfair to her!" said Molly. "People are so queer! They seem sometimes to be altogether made up of odd bits of different people. There's Aunt Ann now! she would not do a tradesman out of a ha'penny, but she will cheat at backgammon!"

"I know she will, and that is why I never play with her. It is so seldom she will give herself any recreation, that it makes me sorry to refuse her."

"There is one thing that troubles me," said Molly, after a little pause.

"What is it, my child? I always like to hear something troubles you, for then I know you are going to have something. To miss is the preparation for receiving."

"I can't care—much—about poetry—and Walter says such fine things about it! Walter is no fool!"

"Far from one, I am glad to think!" said Richard, laughing. Molly's straightforward, humble confidence, he found as delightful as amusing.

"It seems to me so silly to scoff at things because you can't go in for them! I sometimes hear people make insulting remarks about music, and music I *know* to be a good and precious and lovely thing. Then I think with myself, they must be in the same condition with regard to music, that I am in with regard to poetry. So I take care not to be a fool in talking about what I don't know. That I am stupid is no reason for being a fool. Any one whom God has made stupid, has a right to be stupid, but no right to call others fool because they are not stupid."

"I thought you liked poetry, Molly!"

"So I do when you read it, or talk about it. It seems as if you made your way of it grow my way of it. I hear the poetry and feel your feeling of it. But when I try to read it myself, then I don't care for it. Sometimes I turn it into prose, and then I get a hold of it."

"That is about the best and hardest test you could put it to, Molly! But perhaps you have been trying to like what ought not, because it does not deserve to be liked. There is much in the shape of poetry that set in gold and diamonds would be worth nothing."

"I think the difficulty is in myself. Sometimes I am in the fit mood, and other times not. A single line will now and then set something churning, churning in me, so that I can not understand myself. It will make me think of music, and sunrise, and the wind, and the song of the lark, and all lovely things. But sometimes prose will serve me the same. And the next minute, perhaps, either of them will be boring me more than I can bear! I know it is my own fault, but—"

"Stop there, Molly! It may sometimes be your own fault, but certainly not always! You are fastidious, little one; and in exquisite things how can one be too fastidious! When Walter is gone, suppose we read a little more poetry together?"

Richard Colman had made some money in one of the good farming times, but of late had not been increasing his store. But he was a man too genuinely practical to set his mind upon making money.

There are parents who, notwithstanding they have found possession powerless for their own peace, not the less heap up for the sons coming after, in the weak but unquestioned fancy that possession will do for them what it could not do for their fathers and mothers. Richard was above such stupidity. He had early come to see that the best thing money could do for his son, was to help in preparing him for some work fit to employ what faculty had been given him, in accordance with the tastes also given him. He saw, the last thing a foolish father will see, that the best a father can do, is to enable his son to earn his livelihood in the exercise of a genial and righteous labor. He saw that possession generates artificial and enfeebling wants, overlaying and smothering the God-given necessities of our nature, whence alone issue golden hopes and manly endeavors.

He had therefore been in no haste to draw from his son a declaration of choice as to profession. When every man shall feel in himself a call to this or that, and scarce needs make a choice,

the generations will be well served; but that is not yet, and what Walter was fit for was not yet quite manifest. It was only clear to the father that his son must labor for others with a labor, if possible, whose reflex action should be life to himself. Agriculture seemed inadequate to the full employment of the gifts which, whether from paternal partiality or genuine insight, he believed his son to possess; neither had Walter shown inclination or aptitude for any department of it. All Richard could do, therefore, was to give him such preparation as would be fundamentally available for any superstructure: he might, he hoped, turn to medicine or the law. Partly for financial reasons, he sent him to Edinburgh.

There Walter neither distinguished nor disgraced himself, and developed no inclination to one more than another of the careers open to a young man of education. He read a good deal, however, and showed taste in literature—was indeed regarded by his companions as an authority in its more imaginative ranges, and specially in matters belonging to verse, having an exceptionally fine ear for its vocal delicacies. This is one of the rarest of gifts; but rarity does not determine value, and Walter greatly overestimated its relative importance. The consciousness of its presence had far more than a reasonable share in turning his thoughts to literature as a profession.

When his bent became apparent, it troubled his father a little. He knew that to gain the level of excellence at which labor in that calling insured the merest livelihood, required in most cases a severe struggle; and for such effort he doubted his son's capacity, perceiving in him none of the stoic strength that comes of a high ideal, and can encounter disappointment, even privation, without injury. Other and deeper dangers the good parent did not see. He comforted himself that, even if things went no better than now, he could at least give his son a fair chance of discovering whether the career would suit him, until he should attain the material end of it. Long before Miss Hancock's attack upon his supposed indifference to his son's idleness, he had made up his mind to let him try how far he could go in the way to which he was drawn; and the next day told his son, to his unspeakable delight, that he was ready to do what lay in his power to further his desire; that his own earthly life was precious to him only for the sake of the children he must by and by leave; and that when he saw him busy, contented, and useful, he would gladly yield his hold upon it.

Walter's imagination took fire at the prospect of realizing all he had longed for but feared to subject to paternal scrutiny, and he was at once eager to go out into the great unhomely world, in the hope of being soon regarded by his peers as the possessor of certain gifts and faculties which had not yet handed in their vouchers to himself. For, as the conscience of many a man seems never to trouble him until the look of his neighbors bring their consciences to bear upon his, so the mind of many a man seems never to satisfy him that he has a gift until other men grant his possession of it. Around Walter, nevertheless, the world broke at once into rare bloom. He became like a windy day in the house, vexing his aunt with his loud, foolish gladness, and causing the wise heart of Molly many a sudden, chilly foreboding. She knew him better than his father knew him. His father had not played whole days with him, and day after day! She knew that happiness made him feel strong for anything, but that his happiness was easily dashed, and he was then a rain-wet, wind-beaten butterfly. He had no soul for bad weather. He could not therefore be kept in wadding, however! He must have his trial; must, in one way or another, encounter life, and disclose what amount of the real might be in him—what little, but enlargeable claim he might have to manhood!

CHAPTER VI. FROM HOME

Every morning, a man may say,
Calls him up with a new birth-day;
Every day is a little life,
Sunny with love, stormy with strife;
Every life is a little death,
From which too soon he awakeneth—

—as Walter himself wrote, not then knowing half that the words meant. As with the skirt of her mantle the dark wipes out the day, so with her sleep the night makes a man fresh for the new day's journey. If it were not for sleep, the world could not go on. To feel the mystery of day and night, to gaze into the far receding spaces of their marvel, is more than to know all the combinations of chemistry. A little wonder is worth tons of knowledge. But to Walter the new day did not come as a call to new life in the world of will and action, but only as the harbinger of a bliss borne hitherward on the wind of the world. Was he not going forth as a Titanic child to become a great man among great men! Who would be strong among the weak! who would be great among the small! He did not suspect in himself what Molly saw, or at least suspected in him. When a man is hopeful, he feels strong, and can work. The thoughts come and the pen runs. Were he always at his best, what might not a man do! But not many can determine their moods; and none, be they poets or economists, can any more secure the conditions of faculty than they can create the faculty. When the mood changes and hope departs, and the inward atmosphere is grown damp and dismal, there may be whose imagination will yet respond to their call; but let some certain kind of illness come, and every one must lose his power; his creature-condition will assert itself; he is compelled to discover that we did not create ourselves, neither live by ourselves.

Walter loved his father, but did not mind leaving him; he loved Molly, but did not mind leaving her; and we can not blame him if he was glad to escape from his aunt. If people are not lovable, it takes a saint to love them, or at least one who is not afraid of them. Yet it was with a sense of somewhat dreary though welcome liberty, that Walter found himself, but for the young man his father had befriended, alone in London. With his help he found an humble lodging not far from the British Museum, to the neighborhood of which his love of books led him; and for a time, feeling no necessity for immediate effort, he gave himself to the study of certain departments of our literature not hitherto within his easy reach. In the evening he would write, or accompany his new friend to some lecture or amusement; and so the weeks passed. To earn something seemed but a slowly approaching necessity, and the weeks grew to months. He was never idle, for his tastes were strong, and he had delight in his pen; but so sensitive was his social skin, partly from the licking of his aunt's dry, feline tongue, that he shrunk from submitting anything he wrote to Harold Sullivan, who, a man of firmer and more world-capable stuff than he, would at least have shown him how things which the author saw and judged from the inner side of the web, must appear on the other side. There are few weavers of thought capable of turning round the web and contemplating with unprejudiced regard the side of it about to be offered to the world, so as to perceive how it will look to eyes alien to its genesis.

It would be to repeat a story often told, to relate how he sent poem after poem, now to this now to that periodical, with the same result—that he never heard of them again. The verses over which he had labored with delight, in the crimson glory they reflected on the heart whence they issued, were nothing in any eyes to which he submitted them. In truth, except for a good line here and there, they were by no means on the outer side what they looked to him on the inner. He read them in the light of the feeling in which he had written them; whoever else read them had not this light to

interpret them by, had no correspondent mood ready to receive them. It was the business of the verse itself, by witchery of sound and magic of phrase, to rouse receptive mood: of this it was incapable. A course of reading in the first attempts of such as rose after to well-merited distinction, might reveal not a few things—among the rest, their frequent poverty. Much mere babbling often issues before worthy speech begins. There was nothing in Walter's mind to be put in form except a few of the vague lovely sensations belonging to a poetic temperament. And as he grew more and more of a reader, his inspiration came more and more from what he read, less and less from knowledge of his own heart or the hearts of others. He had no revelation to give. He had, like most of our preachers, set out to run before he could walk, begun to cry aloud before he had any truth to utter; to teach, or at least to interest others, before he was himself interested in others. Now and then, indeed, especially when some fading joy of childhood gleamed up, words would come unbidden, and he would throw off a song destitute neither of feeling nor music; but this kind of thing he scarcely valued, for it seemed to cost him nothing.

He comforted himself by concluding that his work was of a kind too original to be at once recognized by dulled and sated editors; that he must labor on and keep sending.

"Why do you not write something?" his friend would say; and he would answer that his time was not come.

The friends he made were not many. Instinctively he shrunk from what was coarse, feeling it destructive to every finer element. How could he write of beauty, if, false to beauty, he had but for a moment turned to the unclean? But he was not satisfied with himself: he had done nothing, even in his own eyes, while the recognition of the world was lacking!

He was in no anxiety, for he did not imagine it of consequence to his father whether he began a little sooner or a little later to earn. The governor knew, he said to himself, that to earn ought not to be a man's first object in life, even when necessity compelled him to make it first in order of time, which was not the case with him! But he did not ask himself whether he had substituted a better object. A greater man than himself, he reflected—no less a man, indeed, than Milton—had never earned a dinner till after he was thirty years of age! He did not consider how and to what ends Milton had all the time been diligent. He was no student yet of men's lives; he was interested almost only in their imaginations, and not half fastidious enough as to whether those imaginations ran upon the rails of truth or not. He was rapidly filling his mind with the good and bad of the literature of his country, but he had not yet gone far in distinguishing between the bad and the good in it. Books were to him the geological deposits of the literary forces. He pursued his acquaintance with them to nourish the literary faculty in himself. They afforded him atmosphere and stimulant and store of matter. He was in full training for the profession that cultivates literature for and upon literature, and neither for nor upon truth.

CHAPTER VII. A CHANGE

A big stone fell suddenly into the smooth pool of Walter's conditions. A letter from his father brought the news that the bank where he had deposited his savings had proved but a swollen mushroom. He had lost all.

"Indeed, my son," wrote the sorrowful Richard, "I do not see how with honesty to send you a shilling more! If you have exhausted the proceeds of my last check, and can not earn a sufficiency, come home. Thank God, the land yet remains!—so long as I can pay the rent."

In the heart of Walter woke a new impulse. He drew himself up for combat and endurance. I am afraid he did not feel much trouble for his father's trouble, but he would have scorned adding to it. He wrote at once that he must not think of him in the affair; he would do very well. It was not a comforting letter exactly, but it showed courage, and his father was glad.

He set himself to find employment in some one of the mechanical departments of literature—the only region in which he could think to do anything. When the architect comes to necessity, it is well if stones are near, and the mason's hammer: if he be not the better mason that he is an architect, alas for his architecture! Walter was nothing yet, however, neither architect nor mason, when the stern hand of necessity laid hold of him. But it is a fine thing for any man to be compelled to work. It is the first divine decree, issuing from love and help. How would it have been with Adam and Eve had they been left to plenty and idleness, the voice of God no more heard in the cool of the day?

But the search for work was a difficult and disheartening task. He who has encountered it, however, has had an experience whose value far more than equals its unpleasantness. A man out of work needs the God that cares for the sparrows, as much as the man whose heart is torn with ingratitude, or crushed under a secret crime. Walter went hither and thither, communicated his quest to each of his few acquaintances, procured introductions, and even without any applied to some who might have employment to bestow, putting so much pride in his pockets that, had it been a solid, they must have bulged in unsightly fashion, and walked till worn with weariness, giving good proof that he was no fool, but had the right stuff in him. He neither yielded to false fastidiousness, nor relaxed effort because of disappointment—not even when disappointment became the very atmosphere of his consciousness. To the father it would have been the worst of his loss to see his son wiping the sweat and dust from the forehead his mother had been so motherly proud of, and hear the heavy sigh with which he would sink in the not too easy chair that was all his haven after the tossing of the day's weary groundswell. He did not rise quite above self-pity; he thought he was hardly dealt with; but so long as he did not respond to the foolish and weakening sentiment by relaxation of effort, it could not do him much harm; he would soon grow out of it, and learn to despise it. What one man has borne, why should not another bear? Why should it be unfit for him any more than the other? Certainly he who has never borne has yet to bear. The new experience is awaiting every member of the Dives clan. Walter wore out his shoes, and could not buy another pair; his clothes grew shabby, and he must wear them: it was no small part of his suffering, to have to show himself in a guise which made him so unlike the Walter he felt. But he did not let his father know even a small part of what he confronted.

He had never drawn close to his father; they had come to no spiritual contact. Walter, the gentleman, saw in Richard the farmer. He knew him an honorable man, and in a way honored him; but he would have been dissatisfied with him in such society to which he considered himself belonging. It is a sore thing for a father, when he has shoved his son up a craggy steep, to see him walk away without looking behind. Walter felt a difference between them.

He had to give up his lodgings. Sullivan took him into his, and shared his bed with him—doing all he could in return for his father's kindness.

Where now was Walter's poetry? Naturally, vanished. He was man enough to work, but not man enough to continue a poet. *His* poetry!—how could such a jade stand the spur!

But to bestir himself was better than to make verses; and indeed of all the labors for a livelihood in which a man may cultivate verse, that of literature is the last he should choose. Compare the literary efforts of Burns with the songs he wrote when home from his plow!

Walter's hope had begun to faint outright, when Sullivan came in one evening as he lay on the floor, and told him that the editor of a new periodical, whom he had met at a friend's house, would make a place for him. The remuneration could suffice only to a grinding economy, but it was bread! —more, it was work, and an opening to possibilities! Walter felt himself equal to any endurance short of incapacitating hunger, and gladly accepted the offer. His duty was the merest agglomeration; but even in that he might show faculty, and who could tell what might follow! It was wearisome but not arduous, and above all, it left him time!

CHAPTER VIII. AT WORK

Walter found that compulsory employment, while taking from, his time for genial labor, quickened his desire after it, increased his faculty for it, and made him more careful of his precious hours of leisure. Life, too, had now an interest greater than before; and almost as soon as anxiety gave place, the impulse to utterance began again to urge him. What this impulse is, who can define, or who can trace its origin? The result of it in Walter's case was ordered words, or, conventionally, poetry. Seldom is such a result of any value, but the process is for the man invaluable: it remained to be seen whether in Walter it was for others as well as himself.

He became rapidly capable of better work. His duty was drudgery, but drudgery well encountered will reveal itself as of potent and precious reaction, both intellectual and moral. One incapable of drudgery can not be capable of the finest work. Many a man may do many things well, and be far from reception into the most ancient guild of workers.

Walter labored with conscience and diligence, and brought his good taste to tell on the quality of his drudgery. He is a contemptible workman who thinks of his claims before his duties, of his poor wages instead of his undertaken work. There was a strong sense of fairness in Walter; he saw the meanness of pocketing the poorest without giving good work in return; he saw that its own badness, and nothing else, makes any work mean—and the workman with it. That he believed himself capable of higher work was the worst of reasons for not giving money's worth for his money. That a thing is of little value is a poor excuse for giving bad measure of it. Walter carried his hod full, and was a man.

Sullivan was mainly employed in writing the reviews of "current literature." One evening he brought Walter a book of some pretension, told him he was hard pressed, and begged him to write a notice of it. Walter, glad of the opportunity of both serving his friend and trying his own hand, set himself at once to read the book. The moment he thus took the attitude of a reviewer, he found the paragraphs begin, like potatoes, to sprout, and generate other paragraphs. Between agreeing and disagreeing he had soon far more than enough to say, and sought his table, as a workman his bench.

To many people who think, writing is the greatest of bores; but Walter enjoyed it, even to the mechanical part of the operation. Heedless of the length of his article, he wrote until long after midnight, and next morning handed the result to his friend. He burst out laughing.

"Here's a paper for a quarterly!" he cried. "Man, it is almost as long as the book itself! This will never do! The world has neither time, space, money, nor brains for so much! But I will take it, and see what can be done with it."

About a sixth part of it was printed. In that sixth Walter could not recognize his hand; neither could he have gathered from it any idea of the book.

A few days after, Harold brought him a batch of books to review, taking care, however, to limit him to an average length for each. Walter entered thus upon a short apprenticeship, the end of which was that, a vacancy happening to occur, he was placed on "the staff" of the journal, to aid in reviewing the books sent by their publishers. His income was considerably augmented, but the work was harder, and required more of his time.

From the first he was troubled to find how much more honesty demanded than pay made possible. He had not learned this while merely supplementing the labor of his friend, and taking his time. But now he became aware that to make acquaintance with a book, and pass upon it a justifiable judgment, required at least four times the attention he could afford it and live. Many, however, he could knock off without compunction, regarding them as too slight to deserve attention: "indifferent honest," he was not so sensitive in justice as to reflect that the poorest thing has a right to fair play; that, free to say nothing, you must, if you speak, say the truth of the meanest. But Walter had not yet sunk to believe there can be *necessity* for doing wrong. The world is divided, very unequally, into

those that think a man can not avoid, and those who believe he *must* avoid doing wrong. Those live in fear of death; these set death in one eye and right in the other.

His first important review, Walter was compelled to print without having finished it. The next he worked at hardest, and finished, but with less deliberation. He grew more and more careless toward the books he counted of little consequence, while he imagined himself growing more and more capable of getting at the heart of a book by skimming its pages. If to skim be ever a true faculty, it must come of long experience in the art of reading, and is not possible to a beginner. To skim and judge, is to wake from a doze and give the charge to a jury.

Writing more and more smartly, he found the usual difficulty in abstaining from a smartness which was unjust because irrelevant.

So far as his employers were concerned, Walter did his duty, but forgot that, apart from his obligation to the mere and paramount truth, it was from the books he reviewed—good, bad, or indifferent, whichever they were—that he drew the food he eat and the clothes that covered him.

His talent was increasingly recognized by the editors of the newspaper, and they began to put other, and what they counted more important work in his way, intrusting him with the discussion of certain social questions of the day, in regard to which, like many another youth of small experience, he found it the easier to give a confident opinion that his experience was so small. In general he wrote logically, and, which is rarer, was even capable of being made to see where his logic was wrong. But his premises were much too scanty. What he took for granted was very often by no means granted. It mattered, little to editors or owners, however, so long as he wrote lucidly, sparklingly, “crisply,” leaving those who read, willing to read more from the same pen.

CHAPTER IX. FLATTERY

Within a year Walter began to be known—to the profession, at least—as a promising writer; and was already, to more than a few, personally known as a very agreeable, gentlemanly fellow, so that in the following season he had a good many invitations. It was by nothing beyond the ephemeral that he was known; but may not the man who has invented a good umbrella one day build a good palace? His acquaintance was considerably varied, but of the social terraces above the professional, he knew for a time nothing.

One evening, however, he happened to meet, and was presented to Lady Tremaine: she had asked to have the refined-looking young man, of whom she had just heard as one of the principal writers in the "Field Battery," introduced to her. She was a matronly, handsome woman, with cordial manners and a cold eye; frank, easy, confident, unassuming. Under the shield of her position, she would walk straight up to any subject, and speak her mind of it plainly. It was more than easy to become acquainted with her when she chose.

The company was not a large one, and they soon found themselves alone in a quiet corner.

"You are a celebrated literary man, Mr. Colman, they tell me!" said Lady Tremaine.

"Not in the least," answered Walter. "I am but a poor hack."

"It is well to be modest; but I am not bound to take your description of yourself. Your class at least is in a fair way to take the lead!"

"In what, pray?"

"In politics, in society, in everything."

"You ladyship can not think it desirable."

"I do not pretend to desire it. I am not false to my own people. But the fact remains that you are coming to the front, and we are falling behind. And the sooner you get to the front, the better it will be for the world, and for us too."

"I can not say I understand you."

"I will tell you why. There are now no fewer than three aristocracies. There is one of rank, and one of brains. I belong to the one, you to the other. But there is a third."

"If you recognize the rich as an aristocracy, you must allow me to differ from you—very much!"

"Naturally. I quite agree with you. But what can your opinion and mine avail against the rising popular tide! All the old families are melting away, swallowed by the *nouveaux riches*. I should not mind, or at least I should feel it in me to submit with a good grace, if we were pushed from our stools by a new aristocracy of literature and science, but I do rebel against the social *régime* which is every day more strongly asserting itself. All the gradations are fast disappearing; the palisades of good manners, dignity, and respect, are vanishing with the hedges; the country is positively inundated with slang and vulgarity—all from the ill-breeding, presumption, and self-satisfaction of new people."

Walter felt tempted to ask whether it was not the fault of the existent aristocracy in receiving and flattering them; whether it could not protect society if it would; whether in truth the aristocracy did not love, even honor money as much as they; but he was silent.

As if she read his thought, Lady Tremaine resumed:

"The plague of it is that younger sons must live! Money they must have!—and there's the gate off the hinges! The best, and indeed the only thing to help is, that the two other aristocracies make common cause to keep the rich in their proper place."

It was not a very subtle flattery, but Walter was pleased. The lady saw she had so far gained her end, for she had an end in view, and changed the subject.

"You go out of an evening, I see!" she said at length. "I am glad. Some authors will not."

"I do when I can. The evening, however, to one who—who—"

"—Has an eye on posterity! Of course! It is gold and diamonds! How silly all our pursuits must appear in your eyes! But I hope you will make an exception in my favor!"

"I shall be most happy," responded Walter, cordially.

"I will not ask you to come and be absorbed in a crowd—not the first time at least! Gould you not manage to come and see me in the morning?"

"I am at your ladyship's service," replied Walter.

"Then come—let me see!—the day after to-morrow—about five o'clock. 17, Goodrich Square."

Walter could not but be flattered that Lady Tremaine was so evidently pleased with him. She called his profession an aristocracy too! therefore she was not patronizing him, but receiving him on the same social level! We can not blame him for the inexperience which allowed him to hold his head a little higher as he walked home.

There was little danger of his forgetting the appointment. Lady Tremaine received him in what she called her growlery, with cordiality. By and by she led the way toward literature, and after they had talked of several new books—

"We are not in this house altogether strange," she said, "to your profession. My daughter Lufa is an authoress in her way. You, of course, never heard of her, but it is twelve months since her volume of verse came out."

Surely Walter had, somewhere about that time, when helping his friend Sullivan, seen a small ornate volume of verses, with a strange name like that on the title-page! Whether he had written a notice of it he could not remember.

"It was exceedingly well received—for a first, of course! Lufa hardly thought so herself, but I told her what could she expect, altogether unknown as she was. Tell me honestly, Mr. Colman, is there not quite as much jealousy in your profession as in any other?"

Walter allowed it was not immaculate in respect of envy and evil speaking.

"You have so much opportunity for revenge, you see!" said Lady Tremaine; "and such a coat of darkness for protection! With a few strokes of the pen a man may ruin his rival!"

"Scarcely that!" returned Walter. "If a book be a good book, the worst of us can not do it much harm; nor do I believe there are more than a few in the profession who would condescend to give a false opinion upon the work of a rival; though doubtless personal feeling may pervert the judgment."

"That, of course," returned the lady, "is but human! You can not deny, however, that authors occasionally make furious assaults on each other!"

"Authors ought not to be reviewers," replied Walter. "I fancy most reviewers avoid the work of an acquaintance even, not to say a friend or enemy."

The door opened, and what seemed to Walter as lovely a face as could ever have dawned on the world, peeped in, and would have withdrawn.

"Lufa," said Lady Tremaine, "you need not go away. Mr. Colman and I have no secrets. Come and be introduced to him."

She entered—a small, pale creature, below the middle height, with the daintiest figure, and child-like eyes of dark blue, very clear, and—must I say it?—for the occasion "worn" wide. Her hair was brown, on the side of black, divided in the middle, and gathered behind in a great mass. Her dress was something white, with a shimmer of red about it, and a blush-rose in the front. She greeted Walter in the simplest, friendliest way, holding out her tiny hand very frankly. Her features were no smaller than for her size they ought to be, in themselves perfect, \Walter thought, and in harmony with her whole being and carriage. Her manner was a gentle, unassuming assurance—almost as if they knew each other, but had not met for some time. Walter felt some ancient primeval bond between them—dim, but indubitable.

The mother withdrew to her writing-table, and began to write, now and then throwing in a word as they talked. Lady Lufa seemed pleased with her new acquaintance; Walter was bewitched.

Bewitchment I take to be the approach of the real to our ideal. Perhaps upon that, however, depends even the comforting or the restful. In the heart of every one lies the necessity for homeliest intercourse with the perfectly lovely; we are made for it. Yet so far are we in ourselves from the ideal, which no man can come near until absolutely devoted to its quest, that we continually take that for sufficing which is a little beyond.

"I think, Mr. Colman, I have seen something of yours! You do put your name to what you write?" said Lady Lufa.

"Not always," replied Walter.

"I think the song must have been yours!"

Walter had, just then, for the first time published a thing of his own. That it should have arrested the eye of this lovely creature! He acknowledged that he had printed a trifle in "The Observatory."

"I was *charmed* with it!" said the girl, the word charmingly drawled.

"The merest trifle!" remarked Walter. "It cost me nothing."

He meant what he said, unwilling to be judged by such a slight thing.

"That is the beauty of it!" she answered. "Your song left your soul as the thrush's leaves his throat. Should we prize the thrush's more if we came upon him practicing it?"

Walter laughed.

"But we are not meant to sing like the birds!"

"That you could write such a song without effort, shows you to possess the bird-gift of spontaneity."

Walter was surprised at her talk, and willing to believe it profound.

"The will and the deed in one may be the highest art!" he said. "I hardly know."

"May I write music to it?" asked Lady Lufa, with upward glance, sweet smile, and gently apologetic look.

"I am delighted you should think of doing so. It is more than it deserves!" answered Walter. "My only condition is, that you will let me hear it."

"That you have a right to. Besides, I dared not publish it without knowing you liked it."

"Thank you so much! To hear you sing it will let me know at once whether the song itself be genuine."

"No, no! I may fail in my part, and yours be all I take it to be. But I shall not fail. It holds me too fast for that!"

"Then I may hope for a summons?" said Walter, rising.

"Before long. One can not order the mood, you know!"

CHAPTER X. THE ROUND OF THE WORLD

Birds when they leave the nest carry, I presume, their hearts with them; not a few humans leave their hearts behind them—too often, alas! to be sent for afterward. The whole round of the world, many a cloud-rack on the ridge of it, and many a mist on the top of that, rises between them and the eyes and hearts which gave their very life that they might live. Some as they approach middle age, some only when they are old, wake up to understand that they have parents. To some the perception comes with their children; to others with the pang of seeing them walk away light-hearted out into the world, as they themselves turned their backs on their parents: they had been all their own, and now they have done with them! Less or more, have we not all thus taken our journey into a far country? But many a man of sixty is more of a son to the father gone from the earth, than he was while under his roof. What a disintegrated mass were the world, what a lump of half-baked brick, if death were indeed the end of affection! if there were no chance more of setting right what was so wrong in the loveliest relations! How gladly would many a son who once thought it a weariness to serve his parents, minister now to their lightest need! and in the boundless eternity is there no help?

Walter was not a prodigal; he was a well-behaved youth. He was *only* proud, *only* thought much of himself; was *only* pharisaical, not hypocritical; was *only* neglectful of those nearest him, always polite to those comparatively nothing to him! Compassionate and generous to necessity, he let his father and his sister-cousin starve for the only real food a man can give, that is, *himself*. As to him who thought his very thoughts into him, he heeded him not at all, or mocked him by merest ceremony. There are who refuse God the draught of water He desires, on the ground that their vessel is not fit for Him to drink from: Walter thought his too good to fill with the water fit for God to drink.

He had the feeling, far from worded, not even formed, but certainly in him, that he was a superior man to his father. But it is a fundamental necessity of the kingdom of heaven, impossible as it must seem to all outside it, that each shall count other better than himself; it is the natural condition of the man God made, in relation to the other men God has made. Man is made, not to contemplate himself, but to behold in others the beauty of the Father. A man who lives to meditate upon and worship himself, is in the slime of hell. Walter knew his father a reading man, but because he had not been to a university, placed no value on his reading. Yet this father was a man who had intercourse with high countries, intercourse in which his son would not have perceived the presence of an idea.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.