

# ALLEN JAMES LANE

THE REIGN OF LAW; A  
TALE OF THE KENTUCKY  
HEMP FIELDS

James Allen

**The Reign of Law; a tale of  
the Kentucky hemp fields**

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# **James Lane Allen**

## **The Reign of Law; a tale of the Kentucky hemp fields**

### **HEMP**

The Anglo-Saxon farmers had scarce conquered foothold, stronghold, freehold in the Western wilderness before they became sowers of hemp—with remembrance of Virginia, with remembrance of dear ancestral Britain. Away back in the days when they lived with wife, child, flock in frontier wooden fortresses and hardly ventured forth for water, salt, game, tillage—in the very summer of that wild daylight ride of Tomlinson and Bell, by comparison with which, my children, the midnight ride of Paul Revere, was as tame as the pitching of a rocking-horse in a boy's nursery—on that history-making twelfth of August, of the year 1782, when these two backwoods riflemen, during that same Revolution the Kentuckians then fighting a branch of that same British army, rushed out of Bryan's Station for the rousing of the settlements and the saving of the West—hemp was growing tall and thick near the walls of the fort.

Hemp in Kentucky in 1782—early landmark in the history of the soil, of the people. Cultivated first for the needs of cabin and clearing solely; for twine and rope, towel and table, sheet and shirt. By and by not for cabin and clearing only; not for tow-homespun, fur-clad Kentucky alone. To the north had begun the building of ships, American ships for American commerce, for American arms, for a nation which Nature had herself created and had distinguished as a sea-faring race. To the south had begun the raising of cotton. As the great period of shipbuilding went on—greatest during the twenty years or more ending in 1860; as the great period of cotton-raising and cotton-baling went on—never so great before as that in that same year—the two parts of the nation looked equally to the one border plateau lying between them, to several counties of Kentucky, for most of the nation's hemp. It was in those days of the North that the CONSTITUTION was rigged with Russian hemp on one side, with American hemp on the other, for a patriotic test of the superiority of home-grown, home-prepared fibre; and thanks to the latter, before those days ended with the outbreak of the Civil War, the country had become second to Great Britain alone in her ocean craft, and but little behind that mistress of the seas. So that in response to this double demand for hemp on the American ship and hemp on the southern plantation, at the close of that period of national history on land and sea, from those few counties of Kentucky, in the year 1859, were taken well-nigh forty thousand tons of the well-cleaned bast.

What history it wrought in those years, directly for the republic, indirectly for the world! What ineffaceable marks it left on Kentucky itself, land, land-owners! To make way for it, a forest the like of which no human eye will ever see again was felled; and with the forest went its pastures, its waters. The roads of Kentucky, those long limestone turnpikes connecting the towns and villages with the farms—they were early made necessary by the hauling of the hemp. For the sake of it slaves were perpetually being trained, hired, bartered; lands perpetually rented and sold; fortunes made or lost. The advancing price of farms, the westward movement of poor families and consequent dispersion of the Kentuckians over cheaper territory, whither they carried the same passion for the cultivation of the same plant,—thus making Missouri the second hemp-producing state in the Union,—the regulation of the hours in the Kentucky cabin, in the house, at the rope-walk, in the factory,—what phase of life went unaffected by the pursuit and fascination of it. Thought, care, hope of the farmer oftentimes throughout the entire year! Upon it depending, it may be, the college of his son, the accomplishments of his daughter, the luxuries of his wife, the house he would build, the stock he could own. His own

pleasures also: his deer hunting in the South, his fox hunting at home, his fishing on the great lakes, his excursions on the old floating palaces of the Mississippi down to New Orleans—all these depending in large measure upon his hemp, that thickest gold-dust of his golden acres.

With the Civil War began the long decline, lasting still. The record stands that throughout the one hundred and twenty-five odd years elapsing from the entrance of the Anglo-Saxon farmers into the wilderness down to the present time, a few counties of Kentucky have furnished army and navy, the entire country, with all but a small part of the native hemp consumed. Little comparatively is cultivated in Kentucky now. The traveller may still see it here and there, crowning those ever-renewing, self-renewing inexhaustible fields. But the time cannot be far distant when the industry there will have become extinct. Its place in the nation's markets will be still further taken by metals, by other fibres, by finer varieties of the same fibre, by the same variety cultivated in soils less valuable. The history of it in Kentucky will be ended, and, being ended, lost.

Some morning when the roar of March winds is no more heard in the tossing woods, but along still brown boughs a faint, veil-like greenness runs; when every spring, welling out of the soaked earth, trickles through banks of sod unbarred by ice; before a bee is abroad under the calling sky; before the red of apple-buds becomes a sign in the low orchards, or the high song of the thrush is pouring forth far away at wet pale-green sunsets, the sower, the earliest sower of the hemp, goes forth into the fields.

Warm they must be, soft and warm, those fields, its chosen birthplace. Up-turned by the plough, crossed and recrossed by the harrow, clodless, levelled, deep, fine, fertile—some extinct river-bottom, some valley threaded by streams, some table-land of mild rays, moist airs, alluvial or limestone soils—such is the favorite cradle of the hemp in Nature. Back and forth with measured tread, with measured distance, broadcast the sower sows, scattering with plenteous hand those small oval-shaped fruits, gray-green, black-striped, heavily packed with living marrow.

Lightly covered over by drag or harrow, under the rolled earth now they lie, those mighty, those inert seeds. Down into the darkness about them the sun rays penetrate day by day, stroking them with the brushes of light, prodding them with spears of flame. Drops of nightly dews, drops from the coursing clouds, trickle down to them, moistening the dryness, closing up the little hollows of the ground, drawing the particles of maternal earth more closely. Suddenly—as an insect that has been feigning death cautiously unrolls itself and starts into action—in each seed the great miracle of life begins. Each awakens as from a sleep, as from pretended death. It starts, it moves, it bursts its ashen woody shell, it takes two opposite courses, the white, fibril-tapered root hurrying away from the sun; the tiny stem, bearing its lance-like leaves, ascending graceful, brave like a palm.

Some morning, not many days later, the farmer, walking out into his barn lot and casting a look in the direction of his field, sees—or does he not see?—the surface of it less dark. What is that uncertain flush low on the ground, that irresistible rush of multitudinous green? A fortnight, and the field is brown no longer. Overflowing it, burying it out of sight, is the shallow tidal sea of the hemp, ever rippling. Green are the woods now with their varied greenness. Green are the pastures. Green here and there are the fields: with the bluish green of young oats and wheat; with the gray green of young barley and rye: with orderly dots of dull dark green in vast array—the hills of Indian maize. But as the eye sweeps the whole landscape undulating far and near, from the hues of tree, pasture, and corn of every kind, it turns to the color of the hemp. With that in view, all other shades in nature seem dead and count for nothing. Far reflected, conspicuous, brilliant, strange; masses of living emerald, saturated with blazing sunlight.

Darker, always darker turns the hemp as it rushes upward: scarce darker as to the stemless stalks which are hidden now; but darker in the tops. Yet here two shades of greenness: the male plants paler, smaller, maturing earlier, dying first; the females darker, taller, living longer, more luxuriant of foliage and flowering heads.

A hundred days from the sowing, and those flowering heads have come forth with their mass of leaves and bloom and earliest fruits, elastic, swaying six, ten, twelve feet from the ground and ripe

for cutting. A hundred days reckoning from the last of March or the last of April, so that it is July, it is August. And now, borne far through the steaming air floats an odor, balsamic, startling: the odor of those plumes and stalks and blossoms from which is exuding freely the narcotic resin of the great nettle. The nostril expands quickly, the lungs swell out deeply to draw it in: fragrance once known in childhood, ever in the memory afterward and able to bring back to the wanderer homesick thoughts of midsummer days in the shadowy, many-toned woods, over into which is blown the smell of the hemp-fields.

Who apparently could number the acres of these in the days gone by? A land of hemp, ready for the cutting! The oats heavy-headed, rustling, have turned to gold and been stacked in the stubble or stored in the lofts of white, bursting barns. The heavy-headed, rustling wheat has turned to gold and been stacked in the stubble or sent through the whirling thresher. The barley and the rye are garnered and gone, the landscape has many bare and open spaces. But separating these everywhere, rise the fields of Indian corn now in blade and tassel; and—more valuable than all else that has been sown and harvested or remains to be—everywhere the impenetrable thickets of the hemp.

Impenetrable! For close together stand the stalks, making common cause for soil and light, each but one of many, the fibre being better when so grown—as is also the fibre of men. Impenetrable and therefore weedless; for no plant life can flourish there, nor animal nor bird. Scarce a beetle runs bewilderingly through those forbidding colossal solitudes. The field-sparrow will flutter away from pollen-bearing to pollen-receiving top, trying to beguile you from its nest hidden near the edge. The crow and the blackbird will seem to love it, having a keen eye for the cutworm, its only enemy. The quail does love it, not for itself, but for its protection, leading her brood into its labyrinths out of the dusty road when danger draws near. Best of all winged creatures it is loved by the iris-eyed, burnish-breasted, murmuring doves, already beginning to gather in the deadened tree-tops with crops eager for the seed. Well remembered also by the long-flight passenger pigeon, coming into the land for the mast. Best of all wild things whose safety lies not in the wing but in the foot, it is loved by the hare for its young, for refuge. Those lithe, velvety, summer-thin bodies! Observe carefully the tops of the still hemp: are they slightly shaken? Among the bases of those stalks a cotton-tail is threading its way inward beyond reach of its pursuer. Are they shaken violently, parted clean and wide to right and left? It is the path of the dog following the hot scent—ever baffled.

A hundred days to lift out of those tiny seed these powerful stalks, hollow, hairy, covered with their tough fibre,—that strength of cables when the big ships are tugged at by the joined fury of wind and ocean. And now some morning at the corner of the field stand the black men with hooks and whetstones. The hook, a keen, straight blade, bent at right angles to the handle two feet from the hand. Let these men be the strongest; no weakling can handle the hemp from seed to seed again. A heart, the doors and walls of which are in perfect order, through which flows freely the full stream of a healthy man's red blood; lungs deep, clear, easily filled, easily emptied; a body that can bend and twist and be straightened again in ceaseless rhythmical movement; limbs tireless; the very spirit of primeval man conquering primeval nature—all these go into the cutting of the hemp. The leader strides to the edge, and throwing forward his left arm, along which the muscles play, he grasps as much as it will embrace, bends the stalks over, and with his right hand draws the blade through them an inch or more from the ground. When he has gathered his armful, he turns and flings it down behind him, so that it lies spread out, covering when fallen the same space it filled while standing. And so he crosses the broad acres, and so each of the big black followers, stepping one by one to a place behind him, until the long, wavering, whitish green swaths of the prostrate hemp lie shimmering across the fields. Strongest now is the smell of it, impregnating the clothing of the men, spreading far throughout the air.

So it lies a week or more drying, dying, till the sap is out of the stalks, till leaves and blossoms and earliest ripened or un-ripened fruits wither and drop off, giving back to the soil the nourishment they have drawn from it; the whole top being thus otherwise wasted—that part of the hemp which every year the dreamy millions of the Orient still consume in quantities beyond human computation,



and for the love of which the very history of this plant is lost in the antiquity of India and Persia, its home—land of narcotics and desires and dreams.

Then the rakers with enormous wooden rakes; they draw the stalks into bundles, tying each with the hemp itself. Following the binders, move the wagon-beds or slides, gathering the bundles and carrying them to where, huge, flat, and round, the stacks begin to rise. At last these are well built; the gates of the field are closed or the bars put up; wagons and laborers are gone; the brown fields stand deserted.

One day something is gone from earth and sky: Autumn has come, season of scales and balances, when the Earth, brought to judgment for its fruits, says, "I have done what I could—now let me rest!"

Fall!—and everywhere the sights and sounds of falling. In the woods, through the cool silvery air, the leaves, so indispensable once, so useless now. Bright day after bright day, dripping night after dripping night, the never-ending filtering or gusty fall of leaves. The fall of walnuts, dropping from bare boughs with muffled boom into the deep grass. The fall of the hickory-nut, rattling noisily down through the scaly limbs and scattering its hulls among the stones of the brook below.

The fall of buckeyes, rolling like balls of mahogany into the little dust paths made by sheep in the hot months when they had sought those roofs of leaves. The fall of acorns, leaping out of their matted, green cups as they strike the rooty earth. The fall of red haw, persimmon, and pawpaw, and the odorous wild plum in its valley thickets. The fall of all seeds whatsoever of the forest, now made ripe in their high places and sent back to the ground, there to be folded in against the time when they shall arise again as the living generations; the homing, downward flight of the seeds in the many-colored woods all over the quiet land.

In the fields, too, the sights and sounds of falling, the fall of the standing fatness. The silent fall of the tobacco, to be hung head downward in fragrant sheds and barns. The felling whack of the corn-knife and the rustling of the blades, as the workman gathers within his arm the top-heavy stalks and presses them into the bulging shock. The fall of pumpkins into the slow-drawn wagons, the shaded side of them still white with the morning rime. In the orchards, the fall of apples shaken thunderously down, and the piling of these in sprawling heaps near the cider mills. In the vineyards the fall of sugaring grapes into the baskets and the bearing of them to the winepress in the cool sunshine, where there is the late droning of bees about the sweet pomace.

But of all that the earth has yielded with or without the farmer's help, of all that he can call his own within the limits of his land, nothing pleases him better than those still, brown fields where the shapely stacks stand amid the deadened trees. Two months have passed, the workmen are at it again. The stacks are torn down, the bundles scattered, the hemp spread out as once before. There to lie till it shall be dew-retted or rotted; there to suffer freeze and thaw, chill rains, locking frosts and loosening snows—all the action of the elements—until the gums holding together the filaments of the fibre rot out and dissolve, until the bast be separated from the woody portion of the stalk, and the stalk itself be decayed and easily broken.

Some day you walk across the spread hemp, your foot goes through at each step, you stoop and taking several stalks, snap them readily in your fingers. The ends stick out clean apart; and lo! hanging between them, there it is at last—a festoon of wet, coarse, dark gray riband, wealth of the hemp, sail of the wild Scythian centuries before Horace ever sang of him, sail of the Roman, dress of the Saxon and Celt, dress of the Kentucky pioneer.

The rakers reappear at intervals of dry weather, and draw the hemp into armfuls and set it up in shocks of convenient size, wide flared at the bottom, well pressed in and bound at the top, so that the slanting sides may catch the drying sun and the sturdy base resist the strong winds. And now the fields are as the dark brown camps of armies—each shock a soldier's tent. Yet not dark always; at times snow-covered; and then the white tents gleam for miles in the winter sunshine—the snow-white tents of the camping hemp.



Throughout the winter and on into early spring, as days may be warm or the hemp dry, the breaking continues. At each nightfall, cleaned and baled, it is hauled on wagon-beds or slides to the barns or the hemphouses, where it is weighed for the work and wages of the day.

Last of all, the brakes having been taken from the field, some night—dear sport for the lads!—takes place the burning of the "hempherds," thus returning their elements to the soil. To kindle a handful of tow and fling it as a firebrand into one of those masses of tinder; to see the flames spread and the sparks rush like swarms of red bees skyward through the smoke into the awful abysses of the night; to run from gray heap to gray heap, igniting the long line of signal fires, until the whole earth seems a conflagration and the heavens are as rosy as at morn; to look far away and descry on the horizon an array of answering lights; not in one direction only, but leagues away, to see the fainter ever fainter glow of burning hempherds—this, too, is one of the experiences, one of the memories.

And now along the turnpikes the great loaded creaking wagons pass slowly to the towns, bearing the hemp to the factories, thence to be scattered over land and sea. Some day, when the winds of March are dying down, the sower enters the field and begins where he began twelve months before.

A round year of the earth's changes enters into the creation of the hemp. The planet has described its vast orbit ere it be grown and finished. All seasons are its servitors; all contradictions and extremes of nature meet in its making. The vernal patience of the warming soil; the long, fierce arrows of the summer heat, the long, silvery arrows of the summer rain; autumn's dead skies and sobbing winds; winter's sternest, all-tightening frosts. Of none but strong virtues is it the sum. Sickness or infirmity it knows not. It will have a mother young and vigorous, or none; an old or weak or exhausted soil cannot produce it. It will endure no roof of shade, basking only in the eye of the fatherly sun, and demanding the whole sky for the walls of its nursery.

Ah! type, too, of our life, which also is earth-sown, earth-rooted; which must struggle upward, be cut down, rotted and broken, ere the separation take place between our dross and our worth—poor perishable shard and immortal fibre. Oh, the mystery, the mystery of that growth from the casting of the soul as a seed into the dark earth, until the time when, led through all natural changes and cleansed of weakness, it is borne from the fields of its nativity for the long service.

## I

The century just past had not begun the race of its many-footed years when a neighborhood of Kentucky pioneers, settled throughout the green valleys of the silvery Elkhorn, built a church in the wilderness, and constituted themselves a worshipping association. For some time peace of one sort prevailed among them, if no peace of any other sort was procurable around. But by and by there arose sectarian quarrels with other backwoods folk who also wished to worship God in Kentucky, and hot personal disputes among the members—as is the eternal law. So that the church grew as grow infusorians and certain worms,—by fissure, by periodical splittings and breakings to pieces, each spontaneous division becoming a new organism. The first church, however, for all that it split off and cast off, seemed to lose nothing of its vitality or fighting qualities spiritual and physical (the strenuous life in those days!); and there came a time when it took offence at one particular man in its membership on account of the liberality of his religious opinions. This settler, an old Indian fighter whose vast estate lay about halfway between the church and the nearest village, had built himself a good brick house in the Virginian style; and it was his pleasure and his custom to ask travelling preachers to rest under his roof as they rode hither and thither throughout the wilderness—Zion's weather-beaten, solitary scouts.

While giving entertainment to man and beast, if a Sunday came round, he would further invite his guest, no matter what kind of faith the vessel held, if it only held any faith, to ride with him through the woods and preach to his brethren. This was the front of his offending. For since he seemed brother to men of every creed, they charged that he was no longer of THEIR faith (the only true one). They considered his case, and notified him that it was their duty under God to expel him.

After the sermon one Sunday morning of summer the scene took place. They had asked what he had to say, and silence had followed. Not far from the church doors the bright Elkhorn (now nearly dry) swept past in its stately shimmering flood. The rush of the water over the stopped mill-wheel, that earliest woodland music of civilization, sounded loud amid the suspense and the stillness.

He rose slowly from his seat on the bench in front of the pulpit—for he was a deacon—and turned squarely at them; speechless just then, for he was choking with rage.

"My brethren," he said at length slowly, for he would not speak until he had himself under control, "I think we all remember what it is to be persecuted for religion's sake. Long before we came together in Spottsylvania County, Virginia, and organized ourselves into a church and travelled as a church over the mountains into this wilderness, worshipping by the way, we knew what it was to be persecuted. Some of us were sent to jail for preaching the Gospel and kept there; we preached to the people through the bars of our dungeons. Mobs were collected outside to drown our voices; we preached the louder and some jeered, but some felt sorry and began to serve God. They burned matches and pods of red pepper to choke us; they hired strolls to beat drums that we might not be heard for the din. Some of us knew what it was to have live snakes thrown into our assemblages while at worship; or nests of live hornets. Or to have a crowd rush into the church with farming tools and whips and clubs. Or to see a gun levelled at one of us in the pulpit, and to be dispersed with firearms. Harder than any of these things to stand, we have known what it is to be slandered. But no single man of us, thank God, ever stopped for these things or for anything. Thirty years and more this lasted, until we and all such as we found a friend in Patrick Henry. Now, we hear that by statute all religious believers in Virginia have been made equal as respects the rights and favors of the law.

"But you know it was partly to escape intolerable tyranny that we left our mother country and travelled a path paved with suffering and lined with death into this wilderness. For in this virgin land we thought we should be free to worship God according to our consciences."

"Since we arrived you know what our life has been,—how we have fought and toiled and suffered all things together. You recall how lately it was that when we met in the woods for worship,

—having no church and no seats,—we men listened and sang and prayed with our rifles on our shoulders."

He paused, for the memories hurt him cruelly.

"And now you notify me that you intend to expel me from this church as a man no longer fit to worship my Maker in your company. Do you bring any charge against my life, my conduct? None. Nothing but that, as a believer in the living God—whom honestly I try to serve according to my erring light—I can no longer have a seat among you—not believing as you believe. But this is the same tyranny that you found unendurable in Spottsylvania. You have begun it in Kentucky. You have been at it already how long? Well, my brethren, I'll soon end your tyranny over me. You need not TURN me out. And I need not change my religious opinions. I will GO out. But—"

He wheeled round to the rough pulpit on which lay the copy of the Bible that they had brought with them from Virginia, their Ark of the Covenant on the way, seized it, and faced them again. He strode toward the congregation as far as the benches would allow—not seeing clearly, for he was sightless with his tears.

"But," he roared, and as he spoke he struck the Bible repeatedly with his clenched fist, "by the Almighty, I will build a church of my own to Him! To Him! do you hear? not to your opinions of Him nor mine nor any man's! I will cut off a parcel of my farm and make a perpetual deed of it in the courts, to be held in trust forever. And while the earth stands, it shall stand, free to all Christian believers. I will build a school-house and a meeting-house, where any child may be free to learn and any man or woman free to worship."

He put the Bible back with shaking arms and turned on them again.

"As for you, my brethren," he said, his face purple and distorted with passion, "you may be saved in your crooked, narrow way, if the mercy of God is able to do it. But you are close to the jaws of Hell this day!"

He went over into a corner for his hat, took his wife by the hand and held it tightly, gathered the flock of his children before him, and drove them out of the church. He mounted his horse, lifted his wife to her seat behind him, saw his children loaded on two other horses, and, leading the way across the creek, disappeared in the wilderness.

## II

Some sixty-five years later, one hot day of midsummer in 1865—one Saturday afternoon—a lad was cutting weeds in a woodland pasture; a big, raw-boned, demure boy of near eighteen.

He had on heavy shoes, the toes green with grass stain; the leather so seasoned by morning dews as to be like wood for hardness. These were to keep his feet protected from briars or from the bees scattered upon the wild white clover or from the terrible hidden thorns of the honey-locust. No socks. A pair of scant homespun trousers, long outgrown. A coarse clean shirt. His big shock-head thatched with yellow straw, a dilapidated sun-and-rain shed.

The lanky young giant cut and cut and cut: great purple-bodied poke, strung with crimson-juiced seed; great burdock, its green burrs a plague; great milkweed, its creamy sap gushing at every gash; great thistles, thousand-nettled; great ironweed, plumed with royal purple; now and then a straggling bramble prone with velvety berries—the outpost of a patch behind him; now and then—more carefully, lest he notch his blade—low sprouts of wild cane, survivals of the impenetrable brakes of pioneer days. All these and more, the rank, mighty measure of the soil's fertility—low down.

Measure of its fertility aloft, the tops of the trees, from which the call of the red-headed woodpecker sounded as faint as the memory of a sound and the bark of the squirrels was elfin-thin. A hot crowded land, crammed with undergrowth and overgrowth wherever a woodland stood; and around every woodland dense cornfields; or, denser still, the leagues of swaying hemp. The smell of this now lay heavy on the air, seeming to be dragged hither and thither like a slow scum on the breeze, like a moss on a sluggish pond. A deep robust land; and among its growths he—this lad, in his way a self-unconscious human weed, the seed of his kind borne in from far some generations back, but springing out of the soil naturally now, sap of its sap, strength of its strength.

He paused by and by and passed his forefinger across his forehead, brushing the sweat away from above his quiet eyes. He moistened the tip of his thumb and slid it along the blade of his hemp hook—he was using that for lack of a scythe. Turning, he walked back to the edge of the brier thicket, sat down in the shade of a black walnut, threw off his tattered head-gear, and, reaching for his bucket of water covered with poke leaves, lifted it to his lips and drank deeply, gratefully. Then he drew a whetstone from his pocket, spat on it, and fell to sharpening his blade.

The heat of his work, the stifling air, the many-toned woods, the sense of the vast summering land—these things were not in his thoughts. Some days before, despatched from homestead to homestead, rumors had reached him away off here at work on his father's farm, of a great university to be opened the following autumn at Lexington. The like of it with its many colleges Kentucky, the South, the Mississippi valley had never seen. It had been the talk among the farming people in their harvest fields, at the cross-roads, on their porches—the one deep sensation among them since the war.

For solemn, heart-stirring as such tidings would have been at any other time, more so at this. Here, on the tableland of this unique border state, Kentucky—between the halves of the nation lately at strife—scene of their advancing and retreating armies—pit of a frenzied commonwealth—here was to arise this calm university, pledge of the new times, plea for the peace and amity of learning, fresh chance for study of the revelation of the Lord of Hosts and God of battles. The animosities were over, the humanities re-begun.

Can you remember your youth well enough to be able to recall the time when the great things happened for which you seemed to be waiting? The boy who is to be a soldier—one day he hears a distant bugle: at once HE knows. A second glimpses a bellying sail: straightway the ocean path beckons to him. A third discovers a college, and toward its kindly lamps of learning turns young eyes that have been kindled and will stay kindled to the end.

For some years this particular lad, this obscure item in Nature's plan which always passes understanding, had been growing more unhappy in his place in creation. By temperament he was of a

type the most joyous and self-reliant—those sure signs of health; and discontent now was due to the fact that he had outgrown his place. Parentage—a farm and its tasks—a country neighborhood and its narrowness—what more are these sometimes than a starting-point for a young life; as a flowerpot might serve to sprout an oak, and as the oak would inevitably reach the hour when it would either die or burst out, root and branch, into the whole heavens and the earth; as the shell and yolk of an egg are the starting-point for the wing and eye of the eagle. One thing only he had not outgrown, in one thing only he was not unhappy: his religious nature. This had always been in him as breath was in him, as blood was in him: it was his life. Dissatisfied now with his position in the world, it was this alone that kept him contented in himself. Often the religious are the weary; and perhaps nowhere else does a perpetual vision of Heaven so disclose itself to the weary as above lonely toiling fields. The lad had long been lifting his inner eye to this vision.

When, therefore, the tidings of the university with its Bible College reached him, whose outward mould was hardship, whose inner bliss was piety, at once they fitted his ear as the right sound, as the gladness of long awaited intelligence. It was bugle to the soldier, sail to the sailor, lamp of learning to the innate student. At once he knew that he was going to the university—sometime, somehow—and from that moment felt no more discontent, void, restlessness, nor longing.

It was of this university, then, that he was happily day-dreaming as he whetted his hemp hook in the depths of the woods that Saturday afternoon. Sitting low amid heat and weeds and thorns, he was already as one who had climbed above the earth's eternal snow-line and sees only white peaks and pinnacles—the last sublimities.

He felt impatient for to-morrow. One of the professors of the university, of the faculty of the Bible College, had been travelling over the state during the summer, pleading its cause before the people. He had come into that neighborhood to preach and to plead. The lad would be there to hear.

The church in which the professor was to plead for learning and religion was the one first set up in the Kentucky wilderness as a house of religious liberty; and the lad was a great-grandchild of the founder of that church, here emerging mysteriously from the deeps of life four generations down the line.

### III

The church which David's grim old Indian-fighting great-grandfather had dedicated to freedom of belief in the wilderness, cutting off a parcel of his lands as he had hotly sworn and building on it a schoolhouse also, stood some miles distant across the country. The vast estate of the pioneer had been cut to pieces for his many sons. With the next generation the law of partible inheritance had further subdivided each of these; so that in David's time a single small farm was all that had fallen to his father; and his father had never increased it. The church was situated on what had been the opposite boundary of the original grant. But he with most of the other boys in the neighborhood had received his simple education in that school; and he had always gone to worship under that broad-minded roof, whatsoever the doctrines and dogmas haply preached.

These doctrines and dogmas of a truth were varied and conflicting enough; for the different flocks and herds of Protestant believers with their parti-colored guides had for over fifty years found the place a very convenient strip of spiritual pasture: one congregation now grazing there jealously and exclusively; afterwards another.

On this quiet bright Sunday morning in the summer of 1865, the building (a better than the original one, which had long before been destroyed by accidental burning) was overcrowded with farming folk, husbands and wives, of all denominations in the neighborhood, eager to hear the new plea, the new pleader. David's father and mother, intense sectarians and dully pious souls, sat among them. He himself, on a rearmost bench, was wedged fast between two other lads of about his own age—they dumb with dread lest they should be sent away to this university. The minister soon turned the course of his sermon to the one topic that was uppermost and bottommost in the minds of all.

He bade them understand now, if they had never realized it before, that from the entrance of educated men and women into the western wilderness, those real founders and builders of the great commonwealth, the dream of the Kentuckians had been the establishment of a broad, free institution of learning for their sons. He gave the history of the efforts and the failures to found such an institution, from the year 1780 to the beginning of the Civil War; next he showed how, during those few awful years, the slow precious accumulations of that preceding time had been scattered; books lost, apparatus ruined, the furniture of lecture rooms destroyed, one college building burned, another seized and held as a hospital by the federal government; and he concluded with painting for them a vision of the real university which was now to arise at last, oldest, best passion of the people, measure of the height and breadth of the better times: knowing no North, no South, no latitude, creed, bias, or political end. In speaking of its magnificent new endowments, he dwelt upon the share contributed by the liberal-minded farmers of the state, to some of whom he was speaking: showing how, forgetful of the disappointments and failures of their fathers, they had poured out money by the thousands and tens of thousands, as soon as the idea was presented to them again—the rearing of a great institution by the people and for the people in their own land for the training of their sons, that they might not be sent away to New England or to Europe.

His closing words were solemn indeed; they related to the college of the Bible, where his own labors were to be performed. For this, he declared, he pleaded not in the name of the new State, the new nation, but in the name of the Father. The work of this college was to be the preparation of young men for the Christian ministry, that they might go into all the world and preach the Gospel. One truth he bade them bear in mind: that this training was to be given without sectarian theology; that his brethren themselves represented a revolution among believers, having cast aside the dogmas of modern teachers, and taken, as the one infallible guide of their faith and practice, the Bible simply; so making it their sole work to bring all modern believers together into one church, and that one church the church of the apostles.

For this university, for this college of the Bible especially, he asked, then, the gift and consecration of their sons.

Toward dusk that day David's father and mother were sitting side by side on the steps of their front porch. Some neighbors who had spent the afternoon with them were just gone. The two were talking over in low, confidential tones certain subjects discussed less frankly with their guests. These related to the sermon of the morning, to the university, to what boys in the neighborhood would probably be entered as students. Their neighbors had asked whether David would go. The father and mother had exchanged quick glances and made no reply. Something in the father's mind now lay like worm-wood on the lips.

He sat leaning his head on his hand, his eyes on the ground, brooding, embittered.

"If I had only had a son to have been proud of!" he muttered. "It's of no use; he wouldn't go. It isn't in him to take an education."

"No," said the mother, comforting him resignedly, after a pause in which she seemed to be surveying the boy's whole life; "it's of no use; there never was much in David."

"Then he shall work!" cried the father, striking his knee with clenched fist. "I'll see that he is kept at work."

Just then the lad came round from behind the house, walking rapidly. Since dinner he had been off somewhere, alone, having it out with himself, perhaps shrinking, most of all, from this first exposure to his parents. Such an ordeal is it for us to reveal what we really are to those who have known us longest and have never discovered us.

He walked quickly around and stood before them, pallid and shaking from head to foot.

"Father!"—

There was filial dutifulness in the voice, but what they had never heard from those lips—authority.

"I am going to the university, to the Bible College. It will be hard for you to spare me, I know, and I don't expect to go at once. But I shall begin my preparations, and as soon as it is possible I am going. I have felt that you and mother ought to know my decision at once."

As he stood before them in the dusk and saw on their countenances an incredible change of expression, he naturally mistook it, and spoke again with more authority.

"Don't say anything to me now, father! And don't oppose me when the time comes; it would be useless. Try to learn while I am getting ready to give your consent and to obtain mother's. That is all I have to say."

He turned quickly away and passed out of the yard gate toward the barn, for the evening feeding.

The father and mother followed his figure with their eyes, forgetting each other, as long as it remained in sight. If the flesh of their son had parted and dissolved away into nothingness, disclosing a hidden light within him like the evening star, shining close to their faces, they could scarce have been struck more speechless. But after a few moments they had adjusted themselves to this lofty annunciation. The mother, unmindful of what she had just said, began to recall little incidents of the lad's life to show that this was what he was always meant to be. She loosened from her throat the breast-pin containing the hair of the three heads braided together, and drew her husband's attention to it with a smile. He, too, disregarding his disparagement of the few minutes previous, now began to admit with warmth how good a mind David had always had. He prophesied that at college he would outstrip the other boys from that neighborhood. This, in its way, was also fresh happiness to him; for, smarting under his poverty among rich neighbors, and fallen from the social rank to which he was actually entitled, he now welcomed the secondary joy which originates in the revenge men take upon each other through the superiority of their children.

One thing both agreed in: that this explained their son. He had certainly always needed an explanation. But no wonder; he was to be a minister. And who had a right to understand a minister? He was entitled to be peculiar.



When David came in to supper that night and took his seat, shame-faced, frowning and blinking at the candle-light, his father began to talk to him as he had never believed possible; and his mother, placing his coffee before him, let her hand rest on his shoulder.

He, long ahungered for their affection and finding it now when least expected, filled to the brim, choked at every morsel, got away as soon as he could into the sacred joy of the night Ah, those thrilling hours when the young disciple, having for the first time confessed openly his love of the Divine, feels that the Divine returns his love and accepts his service!

## IV

Autumn came, the university opened wide its harmonious doors, welcoming Youth and Peace.

All that day a lad, alone at his field work away off on the edge of the bluegrass lands, toiled as one listening to a sublime sound in the distance—the tramping, tramping, tramping of the students as they assembled from the farms of the state and from other states. Some boys out of his own neighborhood had started that morning, old schoolfellows. He had gone to say good-by; had sat on the bed and watched them pack their fine new trunks—cramming these with fond maternal gifts and the thoughtless affluence of necessary and unnecessary things; had heard all the wonderful talk about classes and professors and societies; had wrung their hands at last with eyes turned away, that none might see the look in them—the immortal hunger.

How empty now the whole land without those two or three boys! Not far away across the fields, soft-white in the clear sunshine, stood the home of one of them—the green shutters of a single upper room tightly closed. His heart-strings were twisted tight and wrung sore this day; and more than once he stopped short in his work (the cutting of briers along a fence), arrested by the temptation to throw down his hook and go. The sacred arguments were on his side. Without choice or search of his they clamored and battered at his inner ear—those commands of the Gospels, the long reverberations of that absolute Voice, bidding irresolute workaday disciples leave the plough in the furrow, leave whatsoever task was impending or duty uppermost to the living or the dead, and follow,—"Follow Me!"

Arguments, verily, had he in plenty; but raiment—no; nor scrip. And knew he ever so little of the world, sure he felt of this: that for young Elijahs at the university there were no ravens; nor wild honey for St. John; nor Galilean basketfuls left over by hungry fisherfolk, fishers of men.

So back to his briers. And back to the autumn soil, days of hard drudging, days of hard thinking. The chief problem for the nigh future being, how soonest to provide the raiment, fill the scrip; and so with time enough to find out what, on its first appearance, is so terrible a discovery to the young, straining against restraint: that just the lack of a coarse garment or two—of a little money for a little plain food—of a few candles and a few coverlets for light and warmth with a book or two thrown in—that a need so poor, paltry as this, may keep mind and heart back for years. Ah, happy ye! with whom this last not too long—or for always!

Yet happy ye, whether the waiting be for short time or long time, if only it bring on meanwhile, as it brought on with him, the struggle! One sure reward ye have, then, as he had, though there may be none other—just the struggle: the marshalling to the front of rightful forces—will, effort, endurance, devotion; the putting resolutely back of forces wrongful; the hardening of all that is soft within, the softening of all that is hard: until out of the hardening and the softening results the better tempering of the soul's metal, and higher development of those two qualities which are best in man and best in his ideal of his Maker—strength and kindness, power and mercy. With an added reward also, if the struggle lead you to perceive (what he did not perceive), as the light of your darkness, the sweet of bitter, that real struggling is itself real living, and that no ennobling thing of this earth is ever to be had by man on any other terms: so teaching him, none too soon, that any divine end is to be reached but through divine means, that a great work requires a great preparation.

Of the lad's desperate experience henceforth in mere outward matters the recital may be suppressed: the struggle of the earth's poor has grown too common to make fresh reading. He toiled direfully, economized direfully, to get to his college, but in this showed only the heroism too ordinary among American boys to be marvelled at more. One fact may be set down, as limning some true figure of him on the landscape of those years in that peculiar country.

The war had just closed. The farmers, recollecting the fortunes made in hemp before, had hurried to the fields. All the more as the long interruption of agriculture in the South had resulted

in scarcity of cotton; so that the earnest cry came to Kentucky for hemp at once to take many of its places. But meantime the slaves had been set free: where before ordered, they must now be hired. A difficult agreement to effect at all times, because will and word and bond were of no account. Most difficult when the breaking of hemp was to be bargained for; since the laborer is kept all day in the winter fields, away from the fireside, and must toil solitary at his brake, cut off from the talk and laughter which lighten work among that race. So that wages rose steadily, and the cost of hemp with them.

The lad saw in this demand for the lowest work at the highest prices his golden opportunity—and seized it. When the hemp-breaking season opened that winter, he made his appearance on the farm of a rich farmer near by, taking his place with the negroes.

There is little art in breaking hemp. He soon had the knack of that: his muscles were toughened already. He learned what it was sometimes to eat his dinner in the fields, warming it, maybe, on the coals of a stump set on fire near his brake; to bale his hemp at nightfall and follow the slide or wagon to the barn; there to wait with the negroes till it was weighed on the steelyards; and at last, with muscles stiff and sore, throat husky with dust, to stride away rapidly over the bitter darkening land to other work awaiting him at home.

Had there been call to do this before the war, it might not have been done. But now men young and old, who had never known what work was, were replacing their former slaves. The preexisting order had indeed rolled away like a scroll; and there was the strange fresh universal stir of humanity over the land like the stir of nature in a boundless wood under a new spring firmament. He was one of a multitude of new toilers; but the first in his neighborhood, and alone in his grim choice of work.

So dragged that winter through. When spring returned, he did better. With his father's approval, he put in some acres for himself—sowed it, watched it, prayed for it; in summer cut it; with hired help stacked it in autumn; broke it himself the winter following; sold it the next spring; and so found in his pocket the sorely coveted money.

This was increased that summer from the sale of cord wood, through dribblets saved by his father and mother; and when, autumn once more advanced with her days of shadow and thoughtfulness—two years having now passed—he was in possession of his meagre fortune, wrung out of earth, out of sweat and strength and devotion.

Only a few days remained now before his leaving for the university—very solemn tender days about the house with his father and mother.

And now for the lad's own sake, as for the clearer guidance of those who may care to understand what so incredibly befell him afterward, an attempt must be made to reveal somewhat of his spiritual life during those two years. It was this, not hard work, that writ his history.

As soon as he had made up his mind to study for the ministry, he had begun to read his Bible absorbingly, sweeping through that primitive dawn of life among the Hebrews and that second, brilliant one of the Christian era. He had few other books, none important; he knew nothing of modern theology or modern science. Thus he was brought wholly under the influence of that view of Man's place in Nature which was held by the earliest Biblical writers, has imposed itself upon countless millions of minds since then, and will continue to impose itself—how much longer?

As regarded, then, his place in Nature, this boy became a contemporary of the Psalmist; looked out upon the physical universe with the eye of Job; placed himself back beside that simple, audacious, sublime child—Man but awakening from his cradle of faith in the morning of civilization. The meaning of all which to him was this: that the most important among the worlds swung in space was the Earth, on account of a single inhabitant—Man. Its shape had been moulded, its surface fitted up, as the dwelling-place of Man. Land, ocean, mountain-range, desert, valley—these were designed alike for Man. The sun—it was for him; and the moon; and the stars, hung about the earth as its lights—guides to the mariner, reminders to the landsman of the Eye that never slumbered. The clouds—shade and shower—they were mercifully for Man. Nothing had meaning, possessed value, save as it

derived meaning and value from him. The great laws of Nature—they, too, were ordered for Man's service, like the ox and the ass; and as he drove his ox and his ass whither he would, caused them to move forward or to stop at the word of command, so Man had only to speak properly (in prayer) and these laws would move faster or less fast, stop still, turn to the right or the left side of the road that he desired to travel. Always Man, Man, Man, nothing but Man! To himself measure of the universe as to himself a little boy is sole reason for the food and furnishings of his nursery.

This conception of Man's place in Nature has perhaps furnished a very large part of the history of the world. Even at this close of the nineteenth century, it is still, in all probability, the most important fact in the faith and conduct of the race, running with endless applications throughout the spheres of practical life and vibrating away to the extremities of the imagination. In the case of this poor, devout, high-minded Kentucky boy, at work on a farm in the years 1866 and 1867, saving his earnings and reading his Bible as the twofold preparation for his entrance into the Christian ministry, this belief took on one of its purest shapes and wrought out in him some of its loftiest results.

Let it be remembered that he lived in a temperate, beautiful, bountiful country; that his work was done mostly in the fields, with the aspects of land and sky ever before him; that he was much alone; that his thinking was nearly always of his Bible and his Bible college. Let it be remembered that he had an eye which was not merely an opening and closing but a seeing eye—full of health and of enjoyment of the pageantry of things; and that behind this eye, looking through it as through its window, stood the dim soul of the lad, itself in a temple of perpetual worship: these are some of the conditions which yielded him during these two years the intense, exalted realities of his inner life.

When of morning he stepped out of the plain farm-house with its rotting doors and leaking roof and started off joyously to his day's work, at the sight of the great sun just rising above the low dew-wet hills, his soul would go soaring away to heaven's gate. Sometimes he would be abroad late at night, summoning the doctor for his father or returning from a visit to another neighborhood. In every farmhouse that he passed on the country road the people were asleep—over all the shadowy land they were asleep. And everywhere, guardian in the darkness, watched the moon, pouring its searching beams upon every roof, around every entrance, on kennel and fold, sty and barn—with light not enough to awaken but enough to protect: how he worshipped toward that lamp tended by the Sleepless! There were summer noons when he would be lying under a solitary tree in a field—in the edge of its shade, resting; his face turned toward the sky. This would be one over-bending vault of serenest blue, save for a distant flight of snow-white clouds, making him think of some earthward-wandering company of angels. He would lie motionless, scarce breathing, in that peace of the earth, that smile of the Father. Or if this same vault remained serene too long; if the soil of the fields became dusty to his boots and his young grain began to wither, when at last, in response to his prayer, the clouds were brought directly over them and emptied down, as he stepped forth into the cooled, dripping, soaking green, how his heart blessed the Power that reigned above and did all things well!

It was always praise, gratitude, thanks-giving, whatever happened. If he prayed for rain for his crops and none was sent, then he thought his prayer lacked faith or was unwise, he knew not how; if too much rain fell, so that his grain rotted, this again was from some fault of his or for his good; or perhaps it was the evil work of the prince of the powers of the air—by permission of the Omnipotent. In the case of one crop all the labor of nearly a year went for nothing: he explained this as a reminder that he must be chastened.

Come good, come ill, then, crops or no crops, increase or decrease, it was all the same to him: he traced the cause of all plenty as of all disappointment and disaster reaching him through the laws of nature to some benevolent purpose of the Ruler. And ever before his eyes also he kept that spotless Figure which once walked among men on earth—that Saviour of the world whose service he was soon to enter, whose words of everlasting life he was to preach: his father's farm became as the vineyard of the parables in the Gospels, he a laborer in it.

Thus this lad was nearer the first century and yet earlier ages than the nineteenth. He knew more of prophets and apostles than modern doctors of divinity. When the long-looked-for day arrived for him to throw his arms around his father and mother and bid them good-by, he should have mounted a camel, like a youth of the Holy Land of old, and taken his solemn, tender way across the country toward Jerusalem.

## V

One crisp, autumn morning, then, of that year 1867, a big, raw-boned, bashful lad, having passed at the turnstile into the twenty-acre campus, stood reverently still before the majestic front of Morrison College. Browned by heat and wind, rain and sun; straight of spine, fine of nerve, tough of muscle. In one hand he carried an enormous, faded valise, made of Brussels carpet copiously sprinkled with small, pink roses; in the other, held like a horizontal javelin, a family umbrella. A broken rib escaped his fingers.

It was no time and place for observation or emotion. The turnstile behind him was kept in a whirl by students pushing through and hurrying toward the college a few hundred yards distant; others, who had just left it, came tramping toward him and passing out. In a retired part of the campus, he could see several pacing slowly to and fro in the grass, holding text-books before their faces. Some were grouped at the bases of the big Doric columns, at work together. From behind the college on the right, two or three appeared running and disappeared through a basement entrance. Out of the grass somewhere came the sound of a whistle as clear and happy as of a quail in the wheat; from another direction, the shouts and wrangling of a playground. Once, barely audible, through the air surged and died away the last bars of a glorious hymn, sung by a chorus of fresh male voices. The whole scene was one of bustle, work, sport, worship.

A few moments the lad remained where he had halted, drinking through every thirsting pore; but most of all with his eyes satisfied by the sight of that venerable building which, morning and night, for over two years had shaped itself to his imagination—that seat of the university—that entrance into his future.

Three students came strolling along the path toward him on their way down town. One was slapping his book against his thigh; one was blowing a ditty through his nose, like music on a comb; one, in the middle, had his arms thrown over the shoulders of the others, and was at intervals using them as crutches. As they were about to pass the lad, who had stepped a few feet to one side of the path, they wheeled and laughed at him.

"Hello, preachy!" cried one. His face was round, red, and soft, like the full moon; the disk was now broken up by smiling creases.

"Can you tell me," inquired the lad, coloring and wondering how it was already known that he was to be a preacher, "Can you tell me just the way to the Bible College?"

The one of the three on the right turned to the middle man and repeated the question gravely:—

"Can you tell me just the way to the Bible College?"

The middle man turned and repeated it gravely to the one on the left:—

"Can you tell me just the way to the Bible College?"

The one on the left seized a passing student:—

"Can you tell us all just the way to the Bible College?"

"Ministers of grace!" he said, "without the angels!" Then turning to the lad, he continued: "You see this path? Take it! Those steps? Go straight up those steps. Those doors? Enter! Then, if you don't see the Bible College, maybe you'll see the janitor—if he is there. But don't you fear! You may get lost, but you'll never get away!"

The lad knew he was being guyed, but he didn't mind: what hurt him was that his Bible College should be treated with such levity.

"Thank you," he said pleasantly but proudly.

"Have you matriculated?" one of the three called after him as he started forward.

David had never heard that word; but he entertained such a respect for knowledge that he hated to appear unnecessarily ignorant.

"I don't think—I have," he observed vaguely.

The small eyes of the full moon disappeared altogether this time.

"Well, you've got to matriculate, you know," he said. "You'd better do that sometime. But don't speak of it to your professors, or to anybody connected with the college. It must be kept secret."

"Will I be too late for the first recitations?"

The eager question was on the lad's lips but never uttered. The trio had wheeled carelessly away.

There passed them, coming toward David, a tall, gaunt, rough-whiskered man, wearing a paper collar without a cravat, and a shiny, long-tailed, black cloth coat. He held a Bible opened at Genesis.

"Good morning, brother," he said frankly, speaking in the simple kindness which comes from being a husband and father. "You are going to enter the Bible College, I see."

"Yes, sir," replied the lad. "Are you one of the professors?"

The middle-aged man laughed painfully.

"I am one of the students."

David felt that he had inflicted a wound. "How many students are here?" he asked quickly.

"About a thousand."

The two walked side by side toward the college.

"Have you matriculated?" inquired the lad's companion. There was that awful word again!

"I don't know HOW to matriculate. How DO you matriculate? What is matriculating?"

"I'LL go with you. I'LL show you," said the simple fatherly guide.

"Thank you, if you will," breathed the lad, gratefully.

After a brief silence his companion spoke again.

"I'm late in life in entering college. I've got a son half as big as you and a baby; and my wife's here. But, you see, I've had a hard time. I've preached for years. But I wasn't satisfied. I wanted to understand the Bible better. And this is the place to do that." Now that he had explained himself, he looked relieved.

"Well," said David, fervently, entering at once into a brotherhood with this kindly soul, "that's what I've come for, too. I want to understand the Bible better—and if I am ever worthy—I want to preach it. And you have baptized people already?"

"Hundreds of them. Here we are," said his companion, as they passed under a low doorway, on one side of the pillared steps.

"Here I am at last," repeated the lad to himself with solemn joy, "And now God be with me!"

By the end of that week he had the run of things; had met his professors, one of whom had preached that sermon two summers before, and now, on being told who the lad was, welcomed him as a sheaf out of that sowing; had been assigned to his classes; had gone down town to the little packed and crowded book-store and bought the needful student's supplies—so making the first draught on his money; been assigned to a poor room in the austere dormitory behind the college; made his first failures in recitations, standing before his professor with no more articulate voice and no more courage than a sheep; and had awakened to a new sense—the brotherhood of young souls about him, the men of his college.

A revelation they were! Nearly all poor like himself; nearly all having worked their way to the university: some from farms, some by teaching distant country or mountain schools; some by the peddling of books—out of unknown byways, from the hedges and ditches of life, they had assembled: Calvary's regulars.

One scene in his new life struck upon the lad's imagination like a vision out of the New Testament,—his first supper in the bare dining room of that dormitory: the single long, rough table; the coarse, frugal food; the shadows of the evening hour; at every chair a form reverently standing; the saying of the brief grace—ah, that first supper with the disciples!

Among the things he had to describe in his letter to his father and mother, this scene came last; and his final words to them were a blessing that they had made him one of this company of young men.



## VI

The lad could not study eternally. The change from a toiling body and idle mind to an idle body and toiling mind requires time to make the latter condition unirksome. Happily there was small need to delve at learning. His brain was like that of a healthy wild animal freshly captured from nature. And as such an animal learns to snap at flung bits of food, springing to meet them and sinking back on his haunches keen-eyed for more; so mentally he caught at the lessons prepared for him by his professors: every faculty asked only to be fed—and remained hungry after the feeding.

Of afternoons, therefore, when recitations were over and his muscles ached for exercise, he donned his old farm hat and went, stepping in his high, awkward, investigating way around the town—unaware of himself, unaware of the light-minded who often turned to smile at that great gawk in grotesque garments, with his face full of beatitudes and his pockets full of apples. For apples were beginning to come in from the frosty orchards; and the fruit dealers along the streets piled them into pyramids of temptation. It seemed a hardship to him to have to spend priceless money for a thing like apples, which had always been as cheap and plentiful as spring water. But those evening suppers in the dormitory with the disciples! Even when he was filled (which was not often) he was never comforted; and one day happening upon one of those pomological pyramids, he paused, yearned, and bought the apex. It was harder not to buy than to buy. After that he fell into this fruitful vice almost diurnally; and with mortifying worldly-mindedness he would sometimes find his thoughts straying apple-wards while his professors were personally conducting him through Canaan or leading him dry-shod across the Red Sea. The little dealer soon learned to anticipate his approach; and as he drew up would have the requisite number ready and slide them into his pockets without a word—and without the chance of inspection. A man's candy famine attacked him also. He usually bought some intractable, resisting medium: it left him rather tired of pleasure.

So during those crude days he went strolling solemnly about the town, eating, exploring, filling with sweetmeats and filled with wonder. It was the first city he had ever seen, the chief interior city of the state. From childhood he had longed to visit it. The thronged streets, the curious stores, the splendid residences, the flashing equipages—what a new world it was to him! But the first place he inquired his way to was the factory where he had sold his hemp. Awhile he watched the men at work, wondering whether they might not then be handling some that he had broken.

At an early date also he went to look up his dear old neighborhood schoolfellows who two years before had left him, to enter another college of the University. By inquiry he found out where they lived—in a big, handsome boarding-house on a fashionable street. He thought he had never even dreamed of anything so fine as was this house—nor had he. As he sat in the rich parlors, waiting to learn whether his friends were at home, he glanced uneasily at his shoes to see whether they might not be soiling the carpet; and he vigorously dusted himself with his breath and hands—thus depositing on the furniture whatever dust there was to transfer.

Having been invited to come up to his friends' room, he mounted and found one of them waiting at the head of the stairs in his shirt sleeves, smoking. His greeting was hearty in its way yet betokened some surprise, a little uneasiness, condescension. David followed his host into a magnificent room with enormous windows, now raised and opening upon a veranda. Below was a garden full of old vines black with grapes and pear trees bent down with pears and beds bright with cool autumn flowers. (The lad made a note of how much money he would save on apples if he could only live in reach of those pear trees.) There was a big rumpled bed in the room; and stretched across this bed on his stomach lay a student studying and waving his heels slowly in the air. A table stood in the middle of the room: the books and papers had been scraped off to the floor; four students were seated at it playing cards and smoking. Among them his other friend, who rose and gave him a hearty grip and resuming his seat asked what was trumps. A voice he had heard before called out to him from the table:—

"Hello, preachy! Did you find your way to the Bible College?"

Whereupon the student on the bed rolled heavily over, sat up dejectedly, and ogled him with red eyes and a sagging jaw.

"Have you matriculated?" he asked.

David did not think of the cards, and he liked the greeting of the two strangers who geyed him better than the welcome of his old friends. That hurt: he had never supposed there was anything just like it in the nature of man. But during the years since he had seen them, old times were gone, old manners changed. And was it not in the hemp fields of the father of one of them that he had meantime worked with the negroes? And is there any other country in the world where the clean laborer is so theoretically honored and so practically despised as by the American snob of each sex?

One afternoon he went over to the courthouse and got the county clerk to show him the entry where his great-grandfather had had the deed to his church recorded. There it all was!—all written down to hold good while the world lasted: that perpetual grant of part and parcel of his land, for the use of a free school and a free church. The lad went reverently over the plain, rough speech of the mighty old pioneer, as he spoke out his purpose.

During those early days also he sought out the different churches, scrutinizing respectfully their exteriors. How many they were, and how grand nearly all! Beyond anything he had imagined. He reasoned that if the buildings were so fine, how fine must be the singing and the sermons! The unconscious assumption, the false logic here, was creditable to his heart at least—to that green trust of the young in things as they should be which becomes in time the best seasoned staff of age. He hunted out especially the Catholic Church. His great-grandfather had founded his as free for Catholics as Protestants, but he recalled the fact that no priest had ever preached there. He felt very curious to see a priest. A synagogue in the town he could not find. He was sorry. He had a great desire to lay eyes on a synagogue—temple of that ancient faith which had flowed on its deep way across the centuries without a ripple of disturbance from the Christ. He had made up his mind that when he began to preach he would often preach especially to the Jews: the time perhaps had come when the Father, their Father, would reveal his Son to them also. Thus he promptly fixed in mind the sites of all the churches, because he intended in time to go to them all.

Meantime he attended his own, the size and elegance of which were a marvel; and in it especially the red velvet pulpit and the vast chandelier (he had never seen a chandelier before), blazing with stars (he had never seen illuminating gas). It was under this chandelier that he himself soon found a seat. All the Bible students sat there who could get there, that being the choir of male voices; and before a month passed he had been taken into this choir: for a storm-like bass rolled out of him as easily as thunder out of a June cloud. Thus uneventful flowed the tenor of his student life during those several initiatory weeks: then something occurred that began to make grave history for him.

The pastor announced at service one morning that he would that day begin a series of sermons on errors in the faith and practice of the different Protestant sects; though he would also consider in time the cases of the Catholics and Jews: it would scarcely be necessary to speak of the Mohammedans and such others. He was driven to do this, he declared, and was anxious to do it, as part of the work of his brethren all over the country; which was the restoration of Apostolic Christianity to the world. He asked the especial attention of the Bible students of the University to these sermons: the first of which he then proceeded to preach.

That night the lad was absent from his place: he was seated in the church which had been riddled with logic in the morning. Just why it would be hard to say. Perhaps his motive resembled that which prompts us to visit a battle-field and count the slain. Only, not a soul of those people seemed even to have been wounded. They sang, prayed, preached, demeaned themselves generally as those who believed that THEY were the express chosen of the Lord, and greatly enjoyed the notorious fact.

The series of sermons went on: every night the lad was missing from his place—gone to see for himself and to learn more about those worldly churches which had departed from the faith once delivered to the saints, and if saved at all, then by the mercy of God and much of it.

In the history of any human soul it is impossible to grasp the first event that starts up a revolution. But perhaps the troubles of the lad began here. His absences from Sunday night service of course attracted notice under the chandelier. His bass was missed. Another student was glad to take his place. His roommate and the several other dormitory students who had become his acquaintances, discussed with him the impropriety of these absences: they agreed that he would better stick to his own church. He gave reasons why he should follow up the pastor's demonstrations with actual visits to the others: he contended that the pastor established the fact of the errors; but that the best way to understand any error was to study the erring. This was all new to him, however. He had not supposed that in educating himself to preach the simple Gospel, to the end that the world might believe in Christ, he must also preach against those who believed in Christ already. Besides, no one seemed to be convinced by the pastor but those who agreed with him in advance: the other churches flourished quite the same.

He cited a sermon he had heard in one, which, to the satisfaction of all present, had riddled his own church, every word of the proof being based on Scripture: so there you were!

A little cloud came that instant between David and the students to whom he expressed these views. Some rejoined hotly at once; some maintained the cold silence which intends to speak in its own time. The next thing the lad knew was that a professor requested him to remain after class one day; and speaking with grave kindness, advised him to go regularly to his own church thereafter. The lad entered ardently into the reasons why he had gone to the others. The professor heard him through and without comment repeated his grave, kind advice.

Thereafter the lad was regularly in his own seat there—but with a certain mysterious, beautiful feeling gone. He could not have said what this feeling was, did not himself know. Only, a slight film seemed to pass before his eyes when he looked at his professor, so that he saw him less clearly and as more remote.

One morning there was a sermon on the Catholics. David went dutifully to his professor. He said he had never been to a Catholic Church and would like to go. His professor assented cordially, evincing his pleasure in the lad's frankness. But the next Sunday morning he was in the Catholic Church again, thus for the first time missing the communion in his own. Of all the congregations of Christian believers that the lad had now visited, the Catholic impressed him as being the most solemn, reverent, and best mannered. In his own church the place did not seem to become the house of God till services began; and one morning in particular, two old farmers in the pew behind him talked in smothered tones of stock and crops, till it fairly made him homesick. The sermon of the priest, too, filled him with amazement. It weighed the claims of various Protestant sects to be reckoned as parts of the one true historic church of God. In passing, he barely referred to the most modern of these self-constituted Protestant bodies—David's own church—and dismissed it with one blast of scorn, which seemed to strike the lad's face like a hot wind: it left it burning. But to the Episcopal Church the priest dispensed the most vitriolic criticism. And that night, carried away by the old impulse, which had grown now almost into a habit, David went to the Episcopal Church: went to number the slain. The Bishop of the diocese, as it happened, was preaching that night—preaching on the union of Christian believers. He showed how ready the Episcopal Church was for such a union if the rest would only consent: but no other church, he averred, must expect the Episcopal Church ever to surrender one article of its creed, namely: that it alone was descended not by historical continuity simply, but by Divine succession from the Apostles themselves. The lad walked slowly back to the dormitory that night with knit brows and a heavy heart.

A great change was coming over him. His old religious peace had been unexpectedly disturbed. He found himself in the thick of the wars of dogmatic theology. At that time and in that part of the

United States these were impassioned and rancorous to a degree which even now, less than half a century later, can scarce be understood; so rapidly has developed meantime that modern spirit which is for us the tolerant transition to a yet broader future. Had Kentucky been peopled by her same people several generations earlier, the land would have run red with the blood of religious persecutions, as never were England and Scotland at their worst. So that this lad, brought in from his solemn, cloistered fields and introduced to wrangling, sarcastic, envious creeds, had already begun to feel doubtful and distressed, not knowing what to believe nor whom to follow. He had commenced by being so plastic a medium for faith, that he had tried to believe them all. Now he was in the intermediate state of trying to ascertain which. From that state there are two and two only final ones to emerge: "I shall among them believe this one only;" or, "I shall among them believe—none." The constant discussion of some dogma and disproof of some dogma inevitably begets in a certain order of mind the temper to discuss and distrust ALL dogma.

Not over their theologies alone were the churches wrangling before the lad's distracted thoughts. If the theologies were rending religion, politics was rending the theologies. The war just ended had not brought, as the summer sermon of the Bible College professor had stated, breadth of mind for narrowness, calm for passion. Not while men are fighting their wars of conscience do they hate most, but after they have fought; and Southern and Union now hated to the bottom and nowhere else as at their prayers. David found a Presbyterian Church on one street called "Southern" and one a few blocks away called "Northern": how those brethren dwelt together. The Methodists were similarly divided. Of Baptists, the lad ascertained there had been so many kinds and parts of kinds since the settlement of Kentucky, that apparently any large-sized family anywhere could reasonably have constituted itself a church, if the parents and children had only been fortunate enough to agree.

Where politics did not cleave, other issues did. The Episcopal Church was cleft into a reform movement (and one unreformable). In his own denomination internal discord raged over such questions as diabolic pleasures and Apostolic music. He saw young people haled before the pulpit as before a tribunal of exact statutes and expelled for moving their feet in certain ways. If in dancing they whirled like a top instead of being shot straight back and forth like a bobbin in a weaver's shuttle, their moral conduct was aggravated. A church organ was ridiculed as a sort of musical Behemoth—as a dark chamber of howling, roaring Belial.

These controversies overflowed from the congregation to the Bible College. The lad in his room at the dormitory one Sunday afternoon heard a debate on whether a tuning fork is a violation of the word of God. The debaters turned to him excited and angry:—

"What do you think?" they asked.

"I don't think it is worth talking about," he replied quietly.

They soon became reconciled to each other; they never forgave him.

Meantime as for his Biblical studies, they enlarged enormously his knowledge of the Bible; but they added enormously to the questions that may be asked about the Bible—questions he had never thought of before. And in adding to the questions that may be asked, they multiplied those that cannot be answered. The lad began to ask these questions, began to get no answers. The ground of his interest in the great Book shifted. Out on the farm alone with it for two years, reading it never with a critical but always with a worshipping mind, it had been to him simply the summons to a great and good life, earthly and immortal. As he sat in the lecture rooms, studying it book by book, paragraph by paragraph, writing chalk notes about it on the blackboard, hearing the students recite it as they recited arithmetic or rhetoric, a little homesickness overcame him for the hours when he had read it at the end of a furrow in the fields, or by his candle the last thing at night before he kneeled to say his prayers, or of Sunday afternoons off by himself in the sacred leafy woods. The mysterious untouched Christ-feeling was in him so strong, that he shrank from these critical analyses as he would from dissecting the body of the crucified Redeemer.

A significant occurrence took place one afternoon some seven months after he had entered the University.

On that day, recitations over, the lad left the college alone and with a most thoughtful air crossed the campus and took his course into the city. Reaching a great central street, he turned to the left and proceeded until he stood opposite a large brick church. Passing along the outside of this, he descended a few steps, traversed an alley, knocked timidly at a door, and by a voice within was bidden to enter. He did so, and stood in his pastor's study. He had told his pastor that he would like to have a little talk with him, and the pastor was there to have the little talk.

During those seven months the lad had been attracting notice more and more. The Bible students had cast up his reckoning unfavorably: he was not of their kind—they moved through their studies as one flock of sheep through a valley, drinking the same water, nipping the same grass, and finding it what they wanted. His professors had singled him out as a case needing peculiar guidance. Not in his decorum as a student: he was the very soul of discipline. Not in slackness of study: his mind consumed knowledge as a flame tinder. Not in any irregularities of private life: his morals were as snow for whiteness. Yet none other caused such concern.

All this the pastor knew; he had himself long had his eye on this lad. During his sermons, among the rows of heads and brows and eyes upturned to him, oftenest he felt himself looking at that big shock-head, at those grave brows, into those eager, troubled eyes. His persistent demonstrations that he and his brethren alone were right and all other churches Scripturally wrong—they always seemed to take the light out of that countenance. There was silence in the study now as the lad modestly seated himself in a chair which the pastor had pointed out.

After fidgeting a few moments, he addressed the logician with a stupefying premise:—

"My great-grandfather," he said, "once built a church simply to God, not to any man's opinions of Him."

He broke off abruptly.

"So did Voltaire," remarked the pastor dryly, coming to the rescue. "Voltaire built a church to God: 'Erexit deo Voltaire' Your great-grandfather and Voltaire must have been kin to each other."

The lad had never heard of Voltaire. The information was rather prepossessing.

"I think I should admire Voltaire," he observed reflectively.

"So did the Devil," remarked the pastor. Then he added pleasantly, for he had a Scotch relish for a theological jest:—

"You may meet Voltaire some day."

"I should like to. Is he coming here?" asked the lad.

"Not immediately. He is in hell—or will be after the Resurrection of the Dead."

The silence in the study grew intense.

"I understand you now," said the lad, speaking composedly all at once. "You think that perhaps I will go to the Devil also."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the pastor, hiding his smile and stroking his beard with syllogistic self-respect. "My dear young brother, did you want to see me on any—BUSINESS?"

"I did. I was trying to tell you. My great-grandfather—"

"Couldn't you begin with more modern times?"

"The story begins back there," insisted the lad, firmly. "The part of it, at least, that affects me. My great-grandfather founded a church free to all Christian believers. It stands in our neighborhood. I have always gone there. I joined the church there. All the different denominations in our part of the country have held services there. Sometimes they have all had services together. I grew up to think they were all equally good Christians in their different ways."

"Did you?" inquired the pastor. "You and your grandfather and Voltaire must ALL be kin to each other."

His visage was not pleasant.

"My trouble since coming to College," said the lad, pressing across the interruption, "has been to know which IS the right church—"

"Are you a member of THIS church?" inquired the pastor sharply, calling a halt to this folly.

"I am."

"Then don't you know that it is the only right one?"

"I do not. All the others declare it a wrong one. They stand ready to prove this by the Scriptures and do prove it to their satisfaction. They declare that if I become a preacher of what my church believes, I shall become a false teacher of men and be responsible to God for the souls I may lead astray. They honestly believe this."

"Don't you know that when Satan has entered into a man, he can make him honestly believe anything?"

"And you think it is Satan that keeps the other churches from seeing this is the only right one?"

"I do! And beware, young man, that Satan does not get into YOU!"

"He must be in me already." There was silence again, then the lad continued.

"All this is becoming a great trouble to me. It interferes with my studies—takes my interest out of my future. I come to you then. You are my pastor. Where is the truth—the reason—the proof—the authority? Where is the guiding LAW in all this? I must find THE LAW and that quickly."

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