

Thorne Guy

The Angel



Guy Thorne

The Angel

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23160891

The Angel:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	9
CHAPTER II	28
CHAPTER III	41
CHAPTER IV	55
CHAPTER V	66
CHAPTER VI	82
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	90

Thorne Guy

The Angel

PREFACE

I do not think a book of this sort requires a very lengthy foreword, but one or two things I feel it necessary to say concerning it. In the first place, I have to thank Mr. Hamilton Edwards for many valuable suggestions concerning it, suggestions which, undoubtedly, helped me very much in the writing.

The story is an attempt to impress upon readers the fact that we are, without doubt, surrounded on our way through life by unseen presences, unseen intelligences, which guard or attack that real portion of us which is ourselves – the soul.

Superficially, but only superficially, this is a very material age. We are surrounded by so many material wonders that the unthinking person is inclined to believe, at any rate to state, that the material is everything. Yet there is nothing more unsatisfying than the purely material aspect of life, after all.

How can any one be surprised if the ordinary man is perplexed when he is called upon to decide questions of economy and morality, when the material point of view is all that he can see? For all questions of morality must necessarily depend – as long

ago Plato pointed out – upon a belief in something which we cannot touch or see. Otherwise, morality has no significance and no meaning, except that of expediency.

If, when our body dies, our personality stops, then I can see no logical reason whatever for trying to be good. To get all this life in itself has to offer by means of any sort – provided they do not entail personal discomfort – is the logical philosophy of the materialist. Yet the materialist, at the same time, is very frequently an honest and good-living man. This is not *because* he is a materialist, for there is no reason for being honest, unless one is found out in one's dishonesty, but because there is implanted within that soul which he denies a spark of the Divine Fire.

Of course, amongst thinking and really educated men and women, materialism is as out-moded as the bow and arrow in modern warfare, yet the majority of people do not think very much, nor are they well educated.

This story is an endeavour to point out that people who assert nowadays that Matthew Arnold's dogma, "miracles do not happen," are hopelessly out of the run of modern thought.

Men like Sir Oliver Lodge are laboriously discovering some of the laws of the Universe which give us portents and signs. No one who knows to-day dares to sneer at parthenogenesis, or to repeat the slander of Celsus about the Mother of God. It is only men who do not know, and men who have grown rusty in reposing on their past reputations, who cannot see that Materialism as a philosophy is dead.

Day by day fresh evidence of the power of the Spirit over Matter bursts upon us. A plea for "philosophic doubt," for Professor Huxley's infallibility, is no longer necessary. The very distinction between Matter and Spirit grows more and more difficult as Science develops analytical power. The minds of men are being again prepared to receive that supreme revelation which told of the wedding of the earth and Heaven, the taking of the Manhood into God.

The processes by which the hero of this story – Joseph – became what he was have been carefully thought out, in order to provide an opportunity for those who read the story, to get near to the explanation of some of those psychical truths which need not necessarily be supernatural, but only supernormal. It seems to me the wildest of folly to say that because a thing is not capable of being explained by the laws of Nature as we know them, that it is *above* the laws of Nature. Every week is a witness to the fact that the laws of Nature are only imperfectly known by us, and therefore, to say that anything is *outside* Nature is, to put it plainly, simply nonsense.

For Nature does not exist, nor is there any possibility that it has ever existed, without a Controlling Power which created it.

At the very end of his famous and wonderful life, Lord Kelvin himself stated it as his unalterable opinion, after all the investigations he had made into the primary causes of phenomena as we know them, that the only possible explanation was that a Controlling Intelligence animated and produced them

all.

I was reading a few days ago one of a series of weekly articles which an eminent modern scientist, Sir Ray Lankester, is writing in a famous newspaper. He was speaking of Darwin and "The Origin of Species," and he seemed to imagine that the great discovery of Darwin finally disposed of the truth of the first chapter of Genesis, as we have it in the pages of the Holy Bible. Surely nothing was ever more limited than such a view as this! God manifests Himself in His own way, at His own time, and in a fashion which is modified and adjusted to the intelligences and opportunities of those who live at the time of this or that Revelation in the progressive scheme of Revelation itself. To say that because modern science has proved that God did not, as a human potter or modeller of clay would do, make the whole of living things in full being, and at a definite time, that therefore the Bible is untrue, is simply the blindness of those who do not realize that Truth must often wear a robe to hide its glory from the eyes of those who are unable to appreciate its full splendour and magnificence.

If we are descended or evolved from primeval protoplasm, as I for one am quite prepared to believe, one simply goes back to the simple question – "Who made the protoplasm?"

It is no use. We cannot get away, try as we will, from the fact of God, and we cannot also get away from the fact of the Incarnation, when God revealed Himself more fully than ever before, and when God Himself became Man.

My idea in this story is to show that, by means of processes of which we have at present but little idea, a man may be drained and emptied, under special circumstances, of himself and the influences of his past life, and be made as a vessel for the special in-pouring of the Holy Spirit.

The death of Lluellyn Lys for Joseph, the mysterious interplay of a soul going, and meeting on its way, another soul about to go into the Unknown, aided by the special dispensation of God, might, I think, well produce some such supernormal being as the Joseph of this tale. Perhaps an angel, one of those mysterious beings – whom Christians believe to be the forces and the messengers of God – may have animated Joseph in his mission, without entirely destroying or obscuring his personality. Be this as it may, I offer this story as an effort to attract my readers' minds towards a consideration of the Unseen which is all around us, and which – more probably than not – is the real world, after all, and one in which we, as we are now, walk as phantoms and simulacrum of what we shall one day be in the glorious hereafter.

GUY THORNE.

CHAPTER I

AND GOD SPAKE —

Two men stood outside a bird-fancier's shop in the East End of London. The shop was not far from the docks, and had a great traffic with sailors. Tiny emerald and gamboge love-birds squawked in their cages, there was a glass box of lizards with eyes like live rubies set in the shop window, while a hideous little ape — chained to a hook — clattered in an impish frenzy.

Outside the shop door hung a cage containing a huge parrot, and it was this at which the two men were looking.

Hampson, a little wrinkled man in very shabby clothes, but of a brave and confident aspect, pointed to the parrot.

"I wonder if it talks?" he said.

Immediately upon his words the grey bird, its watchful eye gleaming with mischievous fire, began a stream of disconnected words and sentences, very voluble, very rapid, and very clear.

Hampson shuddered.

"Do you know, Joseph," he said, "I am always afraid when I hear that sound — that noise of a bird talking human words. To me, there is no more dreadful sound in the world."

Hampson's companion, a taller and much more considerable man, looked at the little fellow with surprise.

"Afraid?" he said. "Why should you be afraid? The sound is

grotesque, and nothing more. Has hunger completed her work, and privation conquered at last? Are your nerves going?"

"Never better, my dear Joseph," the little man replied cheerfully. "It will take a long time to knock me out. It's you I'm afraid about. But to return to the parrot. Has it ever struck you that in all nature the voice of a bird that has been taught to speak is unique? There is no other sound even remotely resembling it. We hear a voice using human words, and, in this instance, and this alone, we hear the spoken words of a thing that has no soul!"

The other man started.

"How fantastic you are," he said impatiently. "The thing has a brain, hasn't it? You have in a larger and far more developed measure exactly what that bird has; so have I. But that is all. Soul! There is no such thing!"

The bird in the cage had caught the word, which excited its mechanical and oral memory to the repetition of one of its stock phrases.

"Soul! Soul! 'Pon my soul, that's too good. Ha, ha, ha!" said the parrot.

"Polly differs, apparently," Hampson said drily, as they moved on down the Commercial Road; "but what a hopeless materialist you are, Joseph. You go back to the dogmatism of the pre-Socratic philosophers or voice the drab materialism of the modern animal man who thinks with his skin. Yet you've read your Plato! – you observe that I carefully refrain from bringing in Christian philosophy even! You believe in nothing that you

have not touched or handled. Because you can't find the soul at a post-mortem examination of the body you at once go and say there is no such thing. Scholars and men of science like you seem astonishingly blind to the value of evidence when it comes to religious matters. You, my dear Joseph, have never seen India. Yet you know a place called India exists. How do you know it? Simply through the evidence of other people who have been there. You have just as much right to tell the captain of a P. & O. steamer that what he thought was Calcutta was merely a delusion as to tell me or any other professing Christian that there is no such thing as the Kingdom of Heaven! Well, I must be off; I have a bit of work to do that may bring in a few shillings. There may be dinner to-night, Joseph!"

With a quick smile, Hampson turned down a side street and was gone. The man called Joseph continued his way, walking slowly and listlessly, his head sunk upon his breast in thought.

The teeming life of the great artery of East London went on all round him; but he saw nothing of it. A Chinaman, with a yellow, wrinkled face, jostled up against him, and he did not know it; a bloated girl, in a stained plush blouse, wine-coloured like her face, and with an immense necklace of false pearls, coughed out some witticism as he passed; a hooligan surveyed him at leisure, decided that there could be nothing worth stealing upon him, and strolled away whistling a popular tune – one and all were no more to the wanderer than a dream, some dream dim-panelled upon the painted scenes of sleep.

Shabbily dressed as he was, there was yet something about the man which attracted attention. He drew the eye. He was quite unlike any one else. One could not say of him, "Here is an Englishman," or "There is a German." He would have looked like a foreigner – something alien from the crowd – in any country to which he went.

Joseph's age was probably about thirty-three, but time and sorrow had etched and graven upon his face a record of harsh experience which made him seem much older.

The cheeks were gashed and furrowed with thought. Looking carefully at him, one would have discovered that he was a distinctly handsome man. The mouth was strong and manly in its curves, though there was something gentle and compassionate in it also. The nose was Greek, straight and clearly cut; the hair thick, and of a dark reddish-brown. But the wonder of the man's face lay in his eyes. These were large and lustrous; full of changing light in their dark and almost Eastern depth. They were those rare eyes which seem to be lit up from within as if illuminated by the lamp of the soul.

Soul! Yes, it was that of which those eyes told in an extraordinary and almost overwhelming measure.

The soul is not a sort of fixed essence, as people are apt to forget. It is a fluid thing, and expands or contracts according to the life of its owner. We do not, for example, see any soul in the eyes of a gross, over-fed, and sensual man. Yet this very man in the Commercial Road, who denied the very existence of

the soul with convinced and impatient mockery, was himself, in appearance, at any rate, one of those rare beings of whom we say, "That man is all soul."

The man's full name was Joseph Bethune. To the tiny circle of his friends and acquaintances he was simply Joseph. If they had ever known his surname, they had forgotten it. He was one of those men who are always called by their Christian names because, whatever their circumstances may be, they are real, accepted, and unquestioned facts in the lives of their friends.

Joseph Bethune's history, to which he never referred, had been, up to the present, drab, monotonous, and dismal. When an event had occurred it was another failure, and he could point to no red-letter days in his career. Joseph had never known either father or mother. Both had died during his infancy, leaving him in the care of guardians.

His father had been a pastor of the Methodist sect – a man of singular holiness of life and deep spiritual fervour. Possessed of some private means, he had been able to leave a sufficient sum for his son's education upon a generous and liberal scale.

The boy's guardians were distant relatives in each case. One was a clergyman, the other a prosperous London solicitor. The strange, studious child, quiet, dreamy, and devoted to his books, found himself out of touch with both.

The clergyman was a Low Churchman, but of the worst type. There was nothing of the tolerant outlook and strong evangelical piety of a Robertson in Mr. St. John. He was as narrow as his

creed, condemning all that he had not experienced, or could not understand, hating the devil more than he loved God. If he had been sent to the rack he could not have truthfully confessed to an original thought.

Joseph Bethune was sent to an English public school of good, though not of first, rank. Here he was unpopular, and made no friends. His nature was too strong, and, even as a boy, his personality too striking, for him to experience any actual physical discomfort from his unpopularity. He was never bullied, and no one interfered with him; but he remained utterly lonely.

In contradiction of the usual custom in the English public school of his day, Hamilton possessed splendid laboratories, and great attention was paid to modern science and mathematics.

Of these advantages Joseph Bethune availed himself to the full. His temper of mind was accurate and inquiring, and though his manner was dreamy and abstracted, it was the romance of science over which he pored; the cold, glacial heights of the higher mathematics among which his imagination roamed.

He gained a scholarship at Cambridge, lived a retired and monotonous life of work, shunning the natural and innocent amusements of youth while at the university, and was bracketed Third Wrangler as a result of his degree examination.

By this time his moderate patrimony was nearly exhausted, though, of course, his success in the schools had placed many lucrative posts within his reach. He had actually been offered a fellowship and a tutorial post at his own college, when he

wrecked his university career by an extraordinary and quite unexpected proceeding.

At a great meeting in the Corn Exchange, convened by the Bishop of London for a discussion of certain vexed questions of the Christian faith, Joseph Bethune rose, and, in a speech of some fifteen minutes' duration, delivered an impassioned condemnation of Christianity, concluding with a fierce avowal of his disbelief in God, and in anything but the purely material.

We are tolerant enough nowadays. The red horror of the Inquisition has departed, and men are no longer "clothed in a shirt of living fire" for a chance word. A "Protestant" ruler no longer hangs the priests of the Italian Mission for saying the Mass. Any one is at liberty to believe what he pleases. But men about to occupy official positions must not bawl unadulterated atheism from the housetops.

The offence was too flagrant, the offer of the fellowship was withdrawn, and Joseph, so far as Cambridge was concerned, was ruined.

It is perfectly true that there were many people who believed exactly as he did. They sympathized with him, but in secret, and no word or hint of their sympathy ever reached him. He had done the unpardonable thing: he had dared to speak out his thoughts, and men of the world do not care to champion openly one who is publicly disgraced.

The news got about in many quarters. The man was not an "agnostic" – polite and windy word! But he was an atheist!

Terrible word, recalling shuddering memories of Tom Paine and Bradlaugh even in the minds of men and women who themselves believed in nothing at all. Some men would have only been locally harmed by such an episode as this. But Bethune's case was peculiar, and it ruined him.

He had nothing to sell in any market but the academic. He was a born lecturer; demonstrator of scientific truth. But he had just overstepped the limit allowed in even these liberal times. Moreover, he was too young. Such a speech as he had made, had it been delivered at sixty, with a long and distinguished record behind the speaker, would have been regarded as a valuable and interesting contribution to modern thought. It might even have been taken as a sort of fifth Gospel – the Gospel according to St. Thomas the Doubter!

Joseph, however, was done for.

He disappeared from the university. His name was no more heard, and after the traditional nine days was utterly forgotten.

It is true that three or four men who saw further than their fellows realized that a force, a potential but very real force, had departed. Some one who, as they believed, was to have done extraordinary things was now crushed and robbed of his power. They perceived that virtue had departed from the intellectual garment that shelters the men who *can*!

Joseph tried, and tried in vain, to make such a living as his vast mental acquirements and achievements entitled him to. Obscure tutorships, ill-paid lecturing to coteries of cock-cure Socialists,

who believed in nothing but their chances of getting a slice of the wealth of men who had worked, and not merely talked – these were his dismal and pitiful endeavours.

He came at last to the very lowest pitch of all. He, the high wrangler, the eminent young mathematician, earned a squalid and horribly precarious living by teaching elementary science to the sons of struggling East End shopkeepers who were ambitious of County Council scholarships for their progeny.

His health was impaired, but his spirit was as a reed bruised and shaken by the winds of adversity, yet not broken. He had known sorrow, was acquainted with grief.

He had plumbed the depths of poverty, and his body was a wreck. Want of food – the mean and squalid resting-places he had perforce to seek – the degradation and vileness of his surroundings, had sapped the life blood. He did not know the defiant trumpet words of a poet of our time, but had he done so, they would have well expressed his attitude —

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.

He turned off into a by-street, and walked on till he came to the docks. His progress was quite aimless. Once he stopped and wearily asked himself whither he was going; but the next moment he was lost in thought, and moved on again.

Once he stumbled over a steel hawser. He nearly lost his balance, and had his arm not shot out with an involuntary movement to clutch the bollard on his left, he would have fallen over the granite-bound edge of the wharf into the foul, black, slimy depths below.

Hardly giving a thought to the danger he had just escaped, he moved on and on.

Through open sheds – where freight was heaped up waiting the onslaught of stevedores and labourers – across jutting portions of cobbled space and shunting grounds, he came to a remote corner, far removed from the rattle of cranes and the shouts of the workmen.

Something drew him out of himself, and fixed his attention. It was a shadow. It caught his gaze, and his eyes became fixed on it. He knew that a shadow was only the phenomenon produced when streams of radiant energy are intercepted by an object which is unable to transmit them. His scientific training had taught him that even *sound* shadows may be produced, though to recognize the existence of them the ear must pass from the unshadowed to the shadowed part. Perhaps it was a symbol! He himself was in darkness and shadow. Would his ear ever catch those mysterious harmonies that come to those who suffer? – Hampson heard

them...

A woman crept stealthily behind the wall, and the shadow disappeared.

The woman bore a burden; what it was he could not see. But she held it close to her breast with the tense clasp of some fierce emotion.

She had not noticed the dreamer. She stopped by some steps leading down to the waters of a small section of the dock.

Joseph sat down on a capstan and looked steadily at her.

The woman unclasped the burden she bore, drew aside a part of the covering, and kissed – a baby face. He knew at once what she was doing. She was bidding it good-bye. She was going to drown it.

"And they say that there is a God," Joseph thought. "A conscious Intelligence that directs human affairs. Even Lord Kelvin himself thought so! Yet God does nothing to save this woman from her sin – or rather crime!"

He gazed fiercely. Those eyes, through which his rebellious unconquerable soul shone out, caught the startled stare of the woman as she saw the strange man who watched her.

The man said nothing. The woman thought: "If he prevents me now, I shall – I must do it later. He can't change me. If he gives me in charge he can't prove it. I've done nothing yet."

Yet she looked again, and this time did not turn away.

A strange magnetism which seemed to run through her, projected from those eyes, was making even her finger-tips tingle

as with a new sensation, and one she had never known before. Her purpose melted and dissolved in that flow of more than electric influence; it changed as fire changes a material thing. It melted like snow before the radiant energy of the sun.

Slowly she unwrapped the bundle. The paper, the cloth wrappings she threw into the black and oily water, but the child she clasped to her breast.

"My baby," she murmured, very quietly, but in tones that pierced the tense atmosphere and reached Joseph's ear. "I bore you in shame, and was about to kill you to save you from shame like mine; but I will bear my cross and love you for the sake of Jesus. Amen."

She stole away, trembling. There was a great fear and wonder at her heart, and the watcher saw no more.

Joseph smiled bitterly. His brain seemed some detached thing, a theatre upon the stage of which wild thoughts were the conflicting actors and his sub-conscious intelligence the spectator.

The simile of the shadow returned to him, and was it not all a shadow – this dark, unhappy life of his? The words "radiant energy," the words "God" "conscious force" danced before him. The whole sentient world was reeling – the blood that fed the grey matter of his brain was poor and thin – this was the reason.

Yet, was it the reason, after all? What had happened to him in the last few minutes? He felt as he had never in his whole life felt before. There was a sense of extraordinary impotence.

Something had come into him; something had gone out of him.

No! – something had gone *through* him – that was the way to describe it to himself...

Oh for food, rich nourishing food, quiet and fresh air – then all this sickness would go...

Joseph left the docks, and was soon back in the teeming Commercial Road. He walked, lost in thought, unconscious of all his surroundings.

"Nah, then, Monkey Brand, 'oo y'r shovin'? I can see y'r gettin' a thick ear, young feller-my-lad. Owns the bloomin' pyvement – "

A string of obscene oaths and the above words brought Joseph the dreamer down to earth again – the world of the Commercial Road.

He had stumbled against a typical bullet-headed, wicked-eyed East End rough.

The man stepped close up to Joseph, lifting an impudent and dirty face, holding the right arm ready to strike the short, jabbing blow so dear to the hooligan.

Then a strange thing happened.

Joseph, roused so suddenly and rudely from his bitter reverie, became aware of what was toward. He was about to apologize to the man when his words were checked in his mouth by the fellow's filthy profanity. Joseph suddenly, instead of speaking, turned his full face to him. The great, blazing eyes, their brilliancy accentuated a hundred times by hunger and scorn, seemed to cleave their way through the thick skull of the

aggressor, to pierce the muddy and besotted brain within, to strike fear into the small leathern heart.

The man lifted his arm and covered his face, just like a street child who expects a blow; and then with a curious sound, half whimper, half snarl, turned and made off in a moment.

It was an extraordinary instance of magnetic power inherent in this starving scholar who roamed the streets in a sad dream.

On his own part, Joseph's action had been quite unconscious. He had no thought of the force stored up in him as in an electric accumulator. Some experiments in animal magnetism he had certainly made, when he had taken a passing interest in the subject at Cambridge. He had cured his "gyp" of a bad attack of neuralgia once, or at least the man said he had, but that was as far as it had gone.

He turned his steps towards the stifling attic he called "home." After all, he was better there than in the streets. Besides, he was using up what little strength remained to him in this aimless wandering.

He had eaten nothing that day, but at nine in the evening he had a lesson to give. This would mean a shilling, and there were two more owing from his pupil, so that even if Hampson, who lived in the next garret, failed to get any money, both might eat ere they slept.

As he turned into the court and began to mount the stairs, Joseph thought with an involuntary sigh of "hall" at Cambridge, the groaning tables, the generous fare, the comely and gracious

life of it all.

And he had thrown it all away – for what? Just for the privilege of speaking out his thoughts, thoughts which nobody particularly wanted to hear.

With a sigh of exhaustion he sat down on the miserable little bed under the rafters, and stared out of the dirty window over the roofs of Whitechapel.

Had he been right, after all? Was it worth while to do as he had done, to give up all for the truth that was in him. The old spirit of revolt awoke. Yes, he had been right a thousand times! No man must act or live a lie.

But supposing it *was* all true? Supposing there was a God after all. Supposing that the Christ upon whom that woman had called so glibly really was the Saviour of mankind? Then – The thought fell upon his consciousness like a blow from a whip.

He leapt to his feet in something like fear.

"It's this physical exhaustion," he said to himself aloud, trying to find an anodyne to thought in the sound of his own voice. "My brain is starved for want of blood. No one can live as I have been living and retain a sane judgment. It was because the hermits of old starved themselves in the desert that they saw visions. Yet it is odd that I, of all men, should weaken thus. I must go out into the streets again, come what may. The mind feeds upon itself and conjures up wild and foolish thoughts in a horrible little box like this."

With a heavy sigh he went slowly out of the room and down the

steep stairs. Never in all his life had he felt so lost and hopeless; so alone and deserted.

Another man in his position would have called out upon God, either with mad and puny revilings in that He had forsaken him, or with a last piteous cry for help.

Joseph did not believe in God.

All his life he had lived without God. He had ignored the love of the Father and the necessity of faith in His Son Jesus Christ. The temple of his body was all empty of the Paraclete. Now he felt sure that there was no God; never had been any God; never would be any God.

He was at the darkest hour of all, and yet, with a strange nervous force, he clenched one lean hand until the shrunken muscle sprang up in coils upon the back of it, resolving that come what might he would not give in. There was no God, only a blind giant, Circumstance – well, he would fight that!

His mental attitude was a curious one, curiously illogical. Keen and well-balanced as the scientific side of him was, the man – like all those who openly profess disbelief – was unable to see what might almost be called the grim humor of his attitude.

"I do not believe in God!" the atheist cries, and then immediately afterwards shakes his fist at the Almighty and bids Him to do His worst!

Man challenging God! There is no more grotesque and terrible thing in human life than this.

But, as the world knows now, God had a special purpose in

his dealings with this man.

All unconscious of what was to befall him, of his high destiny to come, Joseph walked aimlessly in Whitechapel, cursing in his heart the God in whom he did not believe, and yet who had already chosen him to be the centre and head of mighty issues... A channel as we may think now...

We may well believe that each single step that Joseph took was known and regulated by unseen hands, voices which were unheard by ear or brain, but which the unconscious and sleeping soul nevertheless obeyed.

At last the Almighty spoke, and the first link in the chain of His mysterious operations was forged.

Joseph was walking slowly past a great building which was in course of erection or alteration. A network of scaffolding rose up into the smoky, dun-colored sky.

The clipping of steel chisels upon stone, the echoing noise of falling planks, the hoarse voices of the workmen as they called to each other high up on their insecure perches, all rose above the deep diapason note of the traffic in a welter of sharply-defined sound.

Joseph stepped upon the pavement beneath the busy works. He was, he noticed, just opposite the office of the small East End newspaper for which Hampson, the poor, half-starved, but cheery little journalist did occasional jobs.

Hampson – good, kind, little Hampson! It was pleasant to think of him, and as he did so Joseph's thoughts lost their

bitterness for a moment. Only the utterly vile can contemplate real unassuming goodness and unselfishness without a certain warming of the heart.

Hampson was only half educated – he had the very greatest difficulty in making a living, yet he was always bright and happy, ever illuminated by some inward joy.

Even as he thought of Hampson – almost his only friend – Joseph saw the man himself coming out of the narrow doorway. Hampson saw the scholar at once in his quick, bird-like way, and waved his hand with a significant and triumphant gesture.

There was to be dinner, then!

It was not so. The two poor friends were not to share a humble meal together on that night, at any rate.

High above Joseph's head, two planks were being slowly hauled upwards to the topmost part of the scaffolding. They were secured by the usual halter knot round the centre. The noose, however, had slipped, as the rope was a new one, and the two heavy pieces of timber hung downwards with the securing tie perilously near the upper end.

There was a sudden shout of alarm which sent a hundred startled faces peering upwards and then the planks fell right upon the man who stood beneath, crushing him to the ground, face downwards, like a broken blade of grass.

With the magic celerity which is part of the psychology of crowds, a ring of excited people sprang round the crushed, motionless figure, as if at the bidding of a magician's wand.

Willing hands began to lift the great beams from it. Hampson had been one of the first to see and realize the accident.

He was by the side of his friend in three or four seconds after the planks had struck him down. And he saw something that, even in his horror and excitement, sent a strange inexplicable throb through his blood and made all his pulses drum with a sense of quickening, of nearness to the Unseen, such as he had never experienced in all his life before.

It is given to those who are very near to God to see visions, sometimes to draw very close to the Great Veil.

The two planks of timber had fallen over Joseph's back in the exact form of the Cross. To the little journalist, if to no one else in the rapidly-gathering crowd, the wood and the bowed figure below it brought back the memory of a great picture he had seen, a picture of the Via Dolorosa, when Jesus fainted and fell under the weight He bore.

CHAPTER II

"SOMETHING MARVELLOUS IS GOING TO HAPPEN"

In the drawing-room of a house in Berkeley Square, Lady Kirwan – the wife of Sir Augustus Kirwan, the great banker – was arguing with her niece, Mary Lys.

The elder lady was tall and stately, and although not aggressive in any way, her manner was distinctly that of one accustomed to rule. Her steady grey eyes and curved, rather beak-like nose gave her an aspect of sternness which was genially relieved by a large, good-humored mouth. At fifty, Lady Kirwan's hair was still dark and glossy, and time had dealt very gently with her.

Of the old Welsh family of Lys, now bereft of all its great heritage of the past, but with a serene and lofty pride in its great name still, she had married Sir Augustus, then Mr. Kirwan, in early girlhood. As the years went on, and her husband's vast wealth grew vaster still, and he rose to be one of the financial princes of the world, Lady Kirwan became a very prominent figure in society, and at fifty she had made herself one of the hundred people who really rule it.

One daughter, Marjorie, was born to Sir Augustus and his wife, a beauty, and one of the most popular girls in society.

"You may say what you like, but I have no patience at all with

either you or your crack-brained brother, Mary!" Lady Kirwan exclaimed, with an irritable rapping of her fingers upon a little lapis lazuli table at her side.

Mary Lys was a tall girl, dressed in the blue uniform of a hospital nurse. The cloak was thrown back over her shoulders, and its scarlet lining threw up the perfect oval contour of her face and the glorious masses of black hair that crowned it. If Marjorie Kirwan was generally said to be one of the prettiest girls in London – and the couple of millions she would inherit by no means detracted from her good looks – certainly Mary Lys might have been called one of the most beautiful.

The perfect lips, graver than the lips of most girls, almost maternal in their gentleness, formed, as it were, the just complement to the great grey eyes, with their long dark lashes and delicately-curved black brows. The chin was broad and firm, but very womanly, and over all that lovely face brooded a holy peace, a high serenity, and a watchful tenderness that one sees in the pictures of the old masters when they drew the pious maids and matrons who followed the footsteps of Our Lord on earth.

Her beauty was not the sort of beauty which would attract every one. It was, indeed, physical beauty in perfection, but irradiated also by loveliness of soul. The common-minded man who prefers the conscious and vulgar prettiness of some theatre girl, posed for the lens of the camera or the admiring glances of the crowd, would have said: —

"Oh, yes, she's beautiful, of course! One can't help admitting

that. But she's not my style a bit. Give me something with a little more life in it."

But there were not wanting many men and women who said that they had thought that the mother of the Saviour must have looked like Mary Lys.

"No! I've really no patience with either of you!" Lady Kirwan repeated.

"But, Aunt Ethel, surely we ought to live our own lives. I am quite happy with my nursing in the East End. One can't do more good than by trying to nurse and cure the sick, can one? And Lluellyn is happy also in his Welsh mountains. He lives a very saintly life, auntie – a life of prayer and preaching and good works, even if it is unconventional and seems strange to you. I would not have it otherwise. Lluellyn is not suited for the modern world."

"Fiddlesticks, Mary!" Lady Kirwan answered. "'Modern world,' indeed! You speak as if you said 'Modern pestilence'! Who made the world, I should like to know? And what right have you and your brother to despise it? I'm sick of all this nonsense. How a girl with your looks and of your blood, for there is hardly a peer in England with such a pedigree as that of our family, can go on grubbing away nursing horrible people with horrible diseases in that dreadful East End I can't possibly imagine. You've no money, of course, for your two hundred a year is a mere nothing. But what does that matter? Haven't your uncle and I more than we know what to do with? Marjorie has already an enormous

fortune settled upon her. She is almost certain to marry the Duke of Dover next season. Well, what do we offer you – you and Lluellyn? You are to be as our second daughter. We will give you everything that a girl can have in this world. You shall share in our wealth as if you were my own daughter. With your looks and the money which is available for you, you may marry any one. We stand well at Court. His Majesty is pleased when one of the great old families of the realm restores its fallen fortunes. Every chance and opportunity is yours. As for your brother, as I have so often written and told him, he will be a son to us. We have not been given a son; he shall become one. There is enough and to spare for all. Give up this nonsense of yours. Make Lluellyn come to his senses and leave his absurd hermit life, and this mad preaching about in the mountain villages. Come to us at once, both of you. What more could any one offer you, child? Am I not pleading with you out of my love for you and my nephew, out of a sincere desire to see you both take your proper place in the world?"

Lady Kirwan stopped, a little out of breath after her long speech, every word of which had been uttered with the sincerest conviction and prompted by real affection.

There was probably no more worldly woman in London than the kindly wife of the great financier. The world was all in all to her, and she was as destitute of religion or any knowledge of spiritual things as the parish pump. She would not have divided her last shilling with any one, but she was generous with her

superfluity.

And certainly one of the great wishes of her life was to see the ancient family from which she had sprung once more take a great place in life. She felt within her veins the blood of those old wild princes of the "stormy hills of Wales" – those Arthurs and Uthers, Caradocs and Lluellyns innumerable, who had kept their warlike courts in the dear mountains of her home.

It was monstrous, it was incredible to Lady Kirwan that the last two survivors of the Lys family in the direct line should live obscure, strange lives away from the world. Mary Lys a hospital nurse in the East End! Lluellyn Lys a sort of anchorite and itinerant preacher! It was inconceivable; it must be stopped.

"I will write to Lluellyn again, auntie," Mary said, rising from her chair. "But, honestly, I fear it will be of little use. And as for myself – "

As she spoke the door opened, and a footman entered the room.

"Miss Marjorie has returned, my lady," he said. "She is waiting below in the motor-brougham. I was to say that if Miss Lys was ready Miss Marjorie has a free hour, and will drive Miss Lys back to the hospital."

"There, there!" Lady Kirwan said to her niece, "Marjorie will take you back to that place. It will be more comfortable than a horrid, stuffy omnibus. Now don't give me any answer at present, but just think over what I have said very seriously. Come again in a week, and we will have another talk. Don't be in a hurry to

decide. And remember, dear, that with all your exaggerated ideas of duty, you may owe a duty to your relations and to society quite as much as to indigent aliens in Whitechapel. Run along, and be a dear good girl, and be sure you don't catch some dreadful infectious disease."

A couple of footmen in knee-breeches, silk stockings, and powdered hair stood on each side of the door. A ponderous butler opened it, another footman in motor livery jumped down from his seat beside the driver and held open the door of the brougham.

"All this pomp and circumstance," Mary thought sadly, "to get a poor hospital nurse out of a house and into a carriage. Four great men are employed to do so simple a thing as that, and whole families of my dear people are starving while the breadwinner lies sick in the hospital!"

She sighed heavily, and her face was sad as she kissed the brilliant, vivacious cousin who was waiting in the brougham.

"Well, you poor dear," Marjorie Kirwan said. "And how are you? I suppose the usual thing has happened? Mother has been imploring you to take a proper place in the world – you and my delightfully mysterious cousin Lluellyn, who is quite like an old Hebrew prophet – and you have said that you prefer your grubby scarlet-fever friends in Whitechapel!"

Mary nodded.

"Dear auntie," she said. "She is wonderfully kind and good, but she doesn't quite understand. But don't let us talk about it."

"Very well, then, we won't," Marjorie answered affectionately.

"Every one must gang their own gait! You don't like what I like; I don't like what you like. The great thing is to be happy, and we're both that. Tell me something of your work. It always interests me. Have you had any new adventures in Whitechapel?"

"Everything has been much the same," she said, "except that a very wonderful personality has come into the hospital."

"Oh, how delightful! A man, of course! Do tell me all about him!"

"His name is Joseph. It sounds odd, but he doesn't seem to use his surname at all. I did hear it, but I have forgotten. He is simply Joseph. He was hurt, though not nearly as badly as he might have been, by some falling planks from a house they were building. But he was in a dreadfully exhausted and rundown condition – nearly starved indeed. He is a great scholar and scientist, but he was ruined some years ago because he made a speech against God and religion at Cambridge, before all the dignitaries."

"And are you converting him?"

"No. That is no woman's work, with this man. He is in a strange state. We have nursed him back to something like health, but his mind seems quite empty. At first, when we had some talks together, he railed against God – always with the proviso that there wasn't any God! Now he is changed, with returning health. He is like an empty vessel, waiting for something to be poured into it. He neither disbelieves nor believes. Something has washed his mind clear."

"How extraordinary!"

"Extraordinary you say; but listen! Three days ago – it was in the early evening – he called me to his bedside. He drew his hand from the bedclothes and laid it on my arm. How I thrilled at the touch, I cannot explain..."

"But, my dear, think of Tom – This is extraordinary!"

"I've thought of Thomas; but, Marjorie, you cannot know – it was not that kind of love. It was nothing like love. Perhaps I put it badly, but you jumped to quite a wrong conclusion. It was something quite different. His eyes seemed to transfix me. The touch – the eyes – the thrill they sent through me will remain as long as I live! But listen. He spoke to me as he hadn't spoken before. 'Mary,' he said – "

"Did he call you *Mary*?"

"He had never done so before – he did then. Before I had always been 'Nurse' to him."

"Well, go on, dear – I am quite interested."

"He said, 'Mary, you are going off duty in a few minutes. Go to the upper chamber of 24, Grey Street, Hoxton, and walk straight in. There is one that has need of you.' I was about to expostulate, but he fell back in exhaustion, and I called the house surgeon."

"You surely didn't go?"

"Yes, I went," Mary went on rapidly. "Something made me go. The low door of Number 24 was open. I climbed till I got to the top. There was no light anywhere. It was a miserable foggy evening. I felt for a door and found one at last. It yielded to my hand and I entered an attic which was immediately under the

roof.

"Nothing could be seen. I had come unprepared for such darkness. But taking courage I asked aloud if there was any one there.

"There was no answer. Yet I felt – I had a curious certainty – that I was not alone. I waited – and waited. Then I moved slowly about the room. I was afraid to move with any freedom for fear of stumbling over – something or other.

"Suddenly a costermonger's barrow came into the court below. The naphtha lamps lit up the whole place and the room was suddenly illuminated with a flickering red light. I could see quite well now.

"I am accustomed to rather dreadful things, as you know, Marjorie – or at least things which you would think rather dreadful. But I will confess I was frightened out of my life now. I gave a shriek of terror, and then stood trembling, utterly unable to move!"

"What was it?"

"I saw a man hanging by a rope to the rafters. His jaw had fallen down, and his tongue was protruding. I shall never forget how the red light from the court below glistened on his tongue – His eyes were starting out of his head... It was horrible."

"Oh, how frightful! I should have been frightened to death," said Marjorie, and a cold shiver ran through her whole body, which Mary could feel as her cousin nestled closer to her in the brougham.

"Yes, it was awful! I had never seen anything so awful before – except once, perhaps, at an operation for cancer. But do you know, Marjorie, I was quite unlike my usual self. I was acting under some strange influence. The eyes of that poor man, Joseph, seemed to be following me. I acted as I never should have been able to act unless something very curious and inexplicable was urging me. I knew exactly what I had to do.

"I am experienced in these things, as you know, and I saw at once that the man who was hanging from the roof was not dead. He was only just beginning the last agony. There was a big box by the window, and upon a little table I saw an ordinary table-knife. I dragged the box to the man's feet, put them upon it, caught hold of the knife, and cut him down.

"He was a small man, and fell limply back into my arms, nearly knocking me over the box, but I managed to support him, and staggered down on to the floor.

"Then I got the rope from round his neck, and tried to restore breathing by Hall's method – you know, one can use this method by oneself. It is really the basis of all methods, and is used very successfully in cases of drowning."

"What did you do then?" Marjorie asked.

"As soon as he began to breathe again I rushed downstairs. In a room at the bottom of the stairs, which was lit by a little cheap paraffin lamp there was a horrid old woman, an evil-looking young man, and several children. The old woman was frying some dreadful sort of fish for supper, and I was nearly stifled.

"To cut a long story short, I sent the children out for a cab, made the young fellow come upstairs, and together we brought down the man, who was in a semi-conscious state. No questions were asked because, as you know, or at least, as is a fact, a nurse's uniform commands respect everywhere. I took the man straight to the hospital and managed to hush the matter up, and to arrange with the house surgeon. Of course I could not tell the doctors everything, but they trusted me and nothing was said at all. The man was discharged as cured a few days ago. The poor fellow had attempted his life in a fit of temporary madness. He was very nearly starving. There is no doubt at all about it. He proved it to the satisfaction of the hospital authorities."

"And have you found out who he is?"

"He is a friend of Joseph's – a comrade in his poverty, a journalist called Hampson, and the garret was where Joseph and he had lived together."

"Extraordinary is not the word for all this," Marjorie interrupted. "It almost frightens me to hear about it."

"But even that is not all. When I got back to the hospital after seeing the would-be suicide in safe keeping, I went straight to my own ward.

"Joseph was awake. He turned to me as I entered, smiled, and said in a sort of whisper, 'Inasmuch.' I could hear no more.

"From that time his mind seemed to lapse into the same state – a state of complete blank. He is waiting."

"For what?"

"Ah, here comes the most strange part of it all. I have received an extraordinary letter from Lluellyn. My brother has strange psychic powers, Marjorie – powers that have often been manifested in a way which the world knows nothing of, in a way which you would find it impossible to believe. In some way my brother has known of this man's presence in the hospital. Our minds have acted one upon the other over all the vast material distance which separates us. He wrote to me: 'As soon as the man Joseph is recovered, send him to me. He will question, but he will come. The Lord has need of him, for he shall be as a great sword in the hand of the Most High.'"

Marjorie Kirwan shivered.

"You speak of mystical things," she said. "They are too deep for me. They frighten me. Mary, you speak as if something was going to happen! What do you mean?"

"I speak as I feel, dear," Mary answered, with a deep-ringing certainty in her voice. "How or why, I do not know, but a marvellous thing is going to happen! I feel the sense of it. It quickens all my life. I wait for that which is to come. A new force is to be born into the world, a new light is to be kindled in the present darkness. The lonely mystic of the mountain and the strange-eyed man who has come into my life are, even now, in mysterious spiritual communion. This very afternoon Joseph goes to Lluellyn. I said good-bye to him before I left the East End. What will be the issue my poor vision cannot tell me yet."

Through the hum the maiden of the world heard Mary's deep,

steadfast voice.

"Something great is going to happen. Now is the acceptable hour!"

It was utterly outside her experience. It was a voice which chilled and frightened her. She didn't want to hear voices like this.

Even as Mary spoke, Marjorie Kirwan heard a change in her voice. The brougham was quite still, and the long string of vehicles which were passing in the other direction were motionless also.

Mary was staring out of the window at a hansom cab that was its immediate *vis-à-vis*.

Two men were in the cab.

One of them, a small, eager-faced man flushed with excitement, was bowing to Mary.

The other, taller, and very pale of face, was looking at the hospital nurse with the wildest and most burning gaze the society girl had ever seen.

"Who are they?" Marjorie whispered, though even as she asked she knew.

"The man I saved from death," Mary answered, in a low, quivering voice, "and the man Joseph – Joseph!"

She sank back against the cushions of the carriage in a dead faint.

CHAPTER III

NEARER

Joseph turned to his companion.

His face was white and worn by his long illness, but now it was suddenly overspread with a ghastly and livid greyness.

He murmured something far down in his throat, and at the inarticulate sound, Hampson, who had been bowing with a flush of gratitude to Mary, turned in alarm.

He saw a strange sight, and though he – in common with many others – was to become accustomed to it in the future, he never forgot his first impression.

Joseph's head had sunk back against the cushions of the cab. His mouth was open, the jaw having fallen a little, as though he had no control of it.

In a flash the terrible thought came to the journalist that his friend was in the actual throes of death.

Then, in another second or two, just as the block in the traffic ceased, and the cab moved on again, he knew that Joseph lived. The eyes which at first were dark and lustreless – had seemed to be turned inward, as it were – suddenly blazed out into life. Their expression was extraordinary. It appeared to Hampson as if Joseph saw far away into an illimitable distance. So some breathless watcher upon a mountain-top, who searched a far

horizon for the coming of a great army might have looked. A huge eagle circling round the lonely summit of an Alp might have such a strange light in its far-seeing eyes.

At what was the man looking? Surely it was no narrow vision bounded by the bricks and mortar, the busy vista of the London Strand!

Then, in a flash, the journalist knew.

Those eyes saw no mortal vision, were not bounded by the material circumstance of place and time. They looked into the future.

It was thus that Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah looked when the word of the Lord came to him.

Unconsciously Hampson spoke a verse from Holy Writ: —

"Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth."

Then Joseph began to speak, and never had his friend heard a man speak in this fashion.

The lips moved very little. The fixed far-off light remained in the eyes, the face did not change with the word's as the face of an ordinary man does.

"I hear a voice; and the voice says to me, 'Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.' The words, which seemed to come from a vast distance, though they were very keen, vibrant and clear, dropped in tone,

and ceased for a moment. Then once more they began —

"And I see the woman Mary and the one that was with her. They are with me upon an hill-top. And they are as maids that have forgotten their ornaments, and as brides that have not remembered their attire. And below us I see great cities and busy markets, the movements of multitudes, and the coming and going of ships. And I see that the maid and I and those others who are with us upon the mountain pray to God. And God touches my mouth, and I go down from the hill and those that are with me, to root out, to pull down and destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant."

Trembling with eagerness and excitement, Hampson listened to these extraordinary words.

Ever since the black hour when he had been rescued from the consequences of his sudden madness, the journalist had known that there was something very wonderful about his friend. Hampson could not in justice to himself blame himself for his attempt at suicide. He knew that he had not been responsible for what he did. The long privations of his life, the sudden accident to Joseph in the Whitechapel Road, had been too much for a sensitive and highly-strung nature. Gradually but surely reason had been temporarily undermined, and Hampson had only a very slight remembrance of the events in the fortnight which had preceded his attempt. It was in the hospital, after the careful nursing and the generous food, that his brain was restored to its balance. And it was in the hospital also that Mary Lys had told

him of the strange and supernatural occurrence that had saved his life.

"Nurse," he had said to her, "I know nothing of what you tell me. I was mad – quite unconscious of what I did. But I have always known that there was something about my dear friend that tells me that he is not as other men are. He is a man set apart, though for what end I do not know, and cannot foresee. But one thing I plainly know and recognize – the Almighty Father chose Joseph to be the medium by which I was saved. God moves in a mysterious way, but he has destined my friend for wonderful things."

Mary Lys had agreed with her patient.

"I also have a prescience," she had said, "that Joseph has a work to do for God. He does not know it. He cannot realize it. He has made no submission to the Divine Will, but nevertheless he will be an instrument of It. I know with a strange certainty that this is his high destiny."

The rapid and vivid remembrance of all this went through Hampson's brain as a bullet goes through a board, when he heard Joseph's last words.

He caught him by the hand, holding the long, wasted fingers in his own, chafing them to bring back some living warmth into their icy coldness.

The strange voice ceased finally, and Joseph closed his eyes. The rigid tension of his face relaxed and a little color came back into it.

Then he gave a long sigh, shuddered and once more opened his eyes.

"I feel unwell," he said, in faint and hesitating tones. "I saw our dear, kind nurse in a carriage with another lady. We were all stopped by a block in the traffic, weren't we? I saw Nurse Mary, and then I can remember nothing more. I have been in a faint. I did not know I was still so weak."

"Don't you remember anything then, Joseph?"

"Nothing at all. But I feel exactly as I felt when I was lying in hospital, and suddenly fainted there. It was the time when I said those extraordinary words to nurse and she went and found you, poor old chap, just in the nick of time."

Hampson quivered with excitement.

"Then you felt just the same sensation a few minutes ago as you did when you were inspired to save my life by some mysterious influence?"

"Exactly the same. It is a weird feeling. It is as though suddenly my whole mind and body are filled with a great wind. I seem to lose my personality entirely, and to be under the dominion of an enormous overwhelming power and force. Then everything goes away like a stone falling through water, and I remember nothing until I regain consciousness."

Hampson took his friend's hand.

"Joseph," he said in tones that were strangely moved and stirred, "have you yourself no explanation? How do you account for the fact that you told Nurse Mary to go and save my life?"

"I suppose it was owing to some sort of telepathy. The mind, so I believe, gives off waves of electricity exactly like the instrument which sends the wireless telegraphy messages. You know that if a receiver in Marconi's system is tuned exactly to the pitch of a transmitter it picks up the messages automatically, even if they are not intended for it in the first instance. Some thought wave from your sub-conscious brain must have reached mine when you were preparing to hang yourself. That is the only explanation possible."

"No, Joseph," Hampson answered. "It is not the only explanation. There is another, and if you could know the words that you spoke in your trance but a few moments ago, you would think as I do."

"Did I speak? What did I say?"

"I think I will not tell you yet. Some day I will tell you. But I am certain that every act of yours, every word you say, and every step you take, are under special and marvellous guidance. The Holy Spirit is guiding and leading you."

Joseph made a slight movement with his hand. There was something almost petulant in the gesture.

"Let us not talk of that," he said. "I think we are agreed not to speak of it. Certainly I will own that some curious things have happened. That there is a destiny that shapes our ends may possibly be true. But that any man does know anything of the nature and qualities of that destiny I am unable to believe. You and that dear, sweet Nurse Mary have put your

own interpretation on the strange events of the last few weeks. Certainly I seem to be the sport of some dominating influence. I admit it, my friend. But it is coincidence, and nothing more. In my weaker moments I have something of this sense; in my stronger ones I know that it cannot be so."

"Well, Joseph, we shall see what the future has in store. For my part I am certain it is big with events for you."

"I shall owe everything to Nurse Mary," Joseph answered, changing the conversation. "It was extraordinarily kind of her to write to her brother, and ask him to have me as his guest until I recover! Such charity is rare in life. I have not often met with it, at any rate, on my way through the world."

"She is a saint," Hampson answered, with deep reverence in his voice.

"She is something very like it," Joseph answered. "Some day I hope to repay her. This long stay in the beautiful Welsh hills will give me the necessary strength and quietness of nerve to get to work again. The brother, I understand, is a sort of mystic. He lives a hermit's life, and is a sort of mountain prophet. It is a strange thing, Hampson, that I should be going as a pauper to stay with the brother of a dear girl who took pity on my misfortunes! They have given me the money for my journey. When I am well again I shall be given the money to return to London, I, who am a graduate of Cambridge, and I may say it without ostentation, a mathematician of repute, depend for my present sustenance upon the charity of strangers. Yet I don't feel in the least embarrassed.

That is more curious than anything else. I have a sense that my troubles are over now, that I shall come into my own again. We are nearly at the station, are we not?"

Hampson made some ordinary remark of assent. He knew the history of the almost incredible circumstances which had led to this journey of Joseph to Wales. He had seen the letter from Lluellyn Lys which bade Mary to send the man Joseph to him.

But Joseph did not know.

The patient had been told nothing of the mysterious circumstances that had brought about this plan of his journey. Joseph simply thought that he was invited to stay with Mary's brother, so that he might get well and strong and recover power to enter the battle of life once more. But Hampson was quite certain that before many days had passed his friend would realize not only the truth about his mysterious summons, but also the eternal truths of the Divine forces which were animating his unconscious will and bringing him nearer and nearer to the consummation of a Will which was not of this world, and of which he was the instrument.

The cab was rolling through the wide squares and streets of Bloomsbury. In three or four minutes it would arrive at Euston.

"You will soon be in splendid health, old fellow," Hampson said, anxious to turn the conversation into an ordinary and conventional channel. "Meanwhile, I'll have a cigarette. You mustn't smoke, of course, but you won't grudge me the single comfort that my poor health allows me?"

He felt in his pocket for the packet of cigarettes that he had bought that morning. Then, quite suddenly, he paused.

A sense of the tremendous incongruity of the present situation came to him.

He was riding in a London cab to a London station. He was going to see a sick friend start in a modern train for healing airs and a quiet sojourn among the hills.

And yet – and yet he firmly believed – almost knew, indeed – that this friend, this man who was called Joseph, was, so to speak, under the especial convoy of the Holy Ghost!

It was incredible! Were there indeed miracles going on each day in the heart of modern London? Was the world the same, even now, as it was in the old, dim days when Jesus the Lord walked among the valleys and the hills of Palestine?

Euston and cabs, and yet the modern world was full of mystery, of wonder. Yes, indeed, God ruled now as He had always ruled.

Joseph was going towards some divinely-appointed goal! He had been told nothing of the vision which had made Lluellyn Lys, the recluse of Wales, write to Mary, commanding her to send him to his mountains. He was moving blindly to meet his destiny.

Yet soon Joseph also would know what his friends knew. And with that knowledge —

Hampson's thoughts had passed through his brain in a single instant, while he was feeling for the cigarettes. He withdrew his hand mechanically from his pocket and found that it grasped a

letter – a letter which had not been opened.

"Hullo," he said, "I have quite forgotten about my letter! It came by the afternoon post just as I was leaving my room to go to the hospital and meet you. I put it in my pocket and then thought no more about it."

He began to open the type-written envelope.

Joseph said nothing, but gazed out upon the panorama of the London streets with dreamy eyes. He was thinking deeply.

Suddenly he was startled by an exclamation from Hampson.

Turning, he saw that the little man's face was alive with excitement and flushed with pleasure.

"What is it, my dear fellow?" he asked.

"The most wonderful thing, Joseph! Fortune and prosperity at last! The big newspaper firm of Rees – Sir David Rees is the head of it – have offered me the editorship of their religious weekly, *The Sunday Friend*. I have written a dozen articles or so for them from time to time, and I suppose this is the result! I am to go and see Mr. Marston, the managing editor, to-morrow."

The words tumbled breathlessly from his lips – he could hardly articulate them in his enthusiasm and excitement. Joseph pressed his friend's hand. He knew well what this opportunity meant to the conscientious and hard-working little journalist, who had never had a chance before.

It meant freedom from the terrible and nerve-destroying hunt for food – the horrible living from meal to meal – the life of an animal in this regard, at least, but without the animal's faculties

for satisfying its hunger. It meant that Hampson's real talent would now be expressed in its fullest power.

"I cannot congratulate you enough, dear friend," he said in a voice which trembled with emotion. "Of all men, you deserve it. I cannot say how happy this makes me, my friend, my brother – for it is as brothers that you and I have lived this long while. I always knew your chance would come. In the long run it always comes to those who are worthy of it. To some it comes early, to others late, but it always comes."

"It means everything to me, Joseph," Hampson answered. "And think what it will mean to you also! When you return cured and robust from Wales I shall be able to give you regular employment. You will be able to write any amount of articles for me. It means safety and a new start for us both."

For some curious reason Joseph did not immediately reply.

Then he spoke slowly, just as the cab rolled under the massive archway which guards the station courtyard.

"Thank you, indeed!" he answered. "But when you spoke, I had a sort of presentiment that I should never need your aid. I can't account for it, but it was strong and sudden."

"Oh, don't say that, old fellow! You must not be morbid, you know. You will outlive most of us, without a doubt."

"I did not mean that I felt that I should die, Hampson. Rather a sensation came to me that I was about to enter some new and strange life which – "

The cab stopped.

"You and the porter must help me down," Joseph said, with a faint, musing smile of singular sweetness and – so Hampson thought – of inward anticipation and hope.

There was yet half an hour before the train was to start. It had been thought better that Joseph should make a night journey to Wales. The weather was very hot, and he would have more chance of rest.

"I'll take you to the waiting-room," Hampson said, "and then I will go and get your ticket and some papers. I have told the porter who has your bag what train you are going by. And the guard will come and see if you want anything."

Joseph waited in the dingy, empty room while Hampson went away.

It was the ordinary bare, uncomfortable place with the hard leather seats, the colored advertisements of seaside resorts, and the long, heavy table shining with hideous yellow varnish.

Hampson seemed a long time, Joseph thought, though when he looked up at the clock over the mantel-shelf he saw that the journalist had only been gone about four minutes.

The waiting-room was absolutely silent save for the droning of a huge blue fly that was circling round and round in the long beam of dusty sunlight which poured in from one window.

The noise of the station outside seemed far away – a drowsy diapason.

Joseph, soothed by the distant murmur, leaned back in his chair and emptied his mind of thought.

Then his eye fell idly and carelessly upon an open book that lay upon the table.

The book was a copy of the Holy Bible, one of those large print books which a pious society presents to places of temporary sojourn, if perchance some passing may fall upon the Word of God and find comfort therein.

From where he sat, however, Joseph could not see what the book was.

Nevertheless, for some strange reason or other, it began to fascinate him. He stared at it fixedly, as a patient stares at a disc of metal given him by the trained hypnotist of a French hospital when a trance is to be induced.

Something within began to urge him to rise from his seat, cross the room, and see exactly what it was that lay there. The prompting grew stronger and stronger, until it filled his brain with an intensity of compulsion such as he had never known before.

He resented the extraordinary influence bitterly. A mad, unreasoning anger welled up within him.

"I will not go!" he said aloud. "Nothing in the world shall make me go!"

All that an ordinary spectator – had there been one in the waiting-room – would have seen was a pale-faced man staring at the table.

Yet, nevertheless, a wild battle was going on, almost frightful in its strength and power, though the end of it came simply

enough.

The man could bear the fierce striving against this unknown and mysterious compulsion no longer. His will suddenly dissolved, melted away, fell to pieces like a child's house of cards, and with a deep sigh that was almost a groan he rose and moved unsteadily towards the table.

He looked down at the book.

At first there was a mist before his eyes; then it rolled up like a curtain and these words sprang out clear and vividly distinct from the printed page: "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy."

CHAPTER IV

ON THE MOUNTAIN

The long journey was over. A company of grave-faced men had met Joseph at a little wayside station. On one side stretched the sea, on the other great mountains towered up into the still, morning air.

It was early dawn. The sun in its first glory sent floods of joyous light over the placid waters. How splendid the air was – this ozone-laden breeze of the ocean – how cool, invigorating, and sweet!

Joseph turned to a tall, white-haired old man who seemed to be the leader of the band of people who stood upon the platform.

"I have come to a new world," he said simply.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord who has sent you to Wales," came the answer in deep and fervent tones.

Joseph looked at the man and his companions with astonishment. Why had Lluellyn Lys, the mysterious recluse and hermit of the mountains, sent these people to meet him? Why was there such a look of respect, almost of awe, upon the face of each man there, such eagerness and anticipation? It was all incomprehensible, utterly strange. He felt at a loss what to do or say.

He bowed, and then, as if in a dream, mingled with the group

and passed out of the station. A carriage with two horses was waiting. By the side of it stood the station-master; the man's peaked cap was in his hand, and his face was lit up with welcome.

"The Teacher is waiting for you, sir," he said.

In a state of mind which was almost hypnotic Joseph was helped into the carriage. Three of the people who had come to meet him entered also, and they started up along the white mountain-road. Joseph felt that this progress was all too slow. He was going to a definite goal; he had come this vast distance to meet some one, and he was impatient of delay.

He looked up. High above his head the great slate mountain towered into the sky, a white cap of cloud hid the summit.

The prospect was august, and it thrilled him strangely. In that great cloud – like the cloud upon Sinai – what might lie hid? He was conscious of strange unseen forces, whose depths, measures, or intensity he could not understand, round him and controlling him. His life was utterly changed. The hard wall of materialism against which he had leant his sick life for support was melting and dissolving.

He gazed upwards once more at the great mountain.

Lluellyn Lys, the mysterious Teacher, was there! Who and what was this man of the mountains, this teacher who was so revered? Mary's brother, the brother of the beautiful girl who had saved him and sent him to these wild solitudes of Wales.

Mary's brother, yes; but what besides? And what was Lluellyn Lys to be to him?

They came to a point at which the road ended and died away into a mere grass track.

The old man who sat by Joseph's side rose from his seat and left the carriage.

"Master," he said, and, as he said it, Joseph bowed his head and could not look at him. "Master, here the road ends, and we must take you up the mountain-side to the Teacher by a steep path."

Another deep Celtic voice broke in upon the old man's speech.

"Ay, it is a steep path to the Teacher, Lluellyn is ever near to Heaven!"

Joseph had never heard Welsh before. He did not know a single word of that old tongue which all our ancestors of Britain used before ever St. Augustine came to England's shores with the news and message of Christ's death and passion.

Yet, at that moment Joseph *understood exactly what the man said*. The extraordinary fact did not strike him at the time, it was long afterwards that he remembered it as one of the least of the wondrous things that had befallen him.

He answered at once without a moment's pause.

"Lead on," he said; "I am with you. Take me to Lluellyn, the Teacher!"

Joseph turned. He saw that by the wayside there was a rough arm-chair hung between two long poles. Still moving as a man in a dream, he sat down on it. In a moment he was lifted up on the shoulders of four men, and began to ascend a narrow, winding

path among the heather.

On and up! On and up!

Now they have passed out of ordinary ways, and are high upon the trackless hills. A dead silence surrounds them; the air is keen and life-giving; the workaday world seems very far away.

On and up! Joseph is carried to his fate. Suddenly the old man who walked in front stopped.

"Blessed be him who cometh in the name of the Lord!" he cried, in a deep, musical voice that woke thunderous echoes in the lonely way.

For near upon an hour the strange procession continued among the heather and bracken, through wild defiles and passes. At last, with singular and startling suddenness, the party entered the huge mass of fleecy cloud that veiled the mountain-top. All around was thick, impenetrable mist. Everything was blotted out by the thick curtain, the footsteps of the chair-bearers sounded like footsteps upon wool.

Then, without any other intimation than a few low words from the leader of the party, the journey came to an end, the chair was carefully lowered to the ground, and Joseph alighted.

A huge granite boulder stood close by. He sat down upon it, wondering with eager curiosity what was to happen next, looking round him with keen, searching eyes in a vain endeavor to pierce the ghostly, swaying walls of mist which hemmed him in on every side.

The old man stepped up to him.

"Master," he said again, "our business is at an end. We have brought you to the place where we have been told to bring you, and must say farewell until we meet again."

Joseph started.

"I do not understand," he said, in a voice into which something almost like fear had come...

"I do not understand. Do you mean to leave me here alone? I am a sick man. I know nothing of where I am. Where is Lluellyn Lys?"

His voice sounded strained and almost shrill in its discomfort and surprise.

If the old man appreciated the intonation in the voice of his questioner he did not show it.

"Have no fear, master," he said. "What I do, I do by command of the Teacher. No harm will come to you."

Joseph suddenly seemed to wake from his dream. A great sense of irritation, almost of anger, began to animate him. He was once more the old Joseph – the man who had walked with Hampson in the Commercial Road before the accident had struck him down.

"That's all very well," he said sharply. "Perhaps no harm will happen to me, but will Mr. Lluellyn Lys come to me? That is the question in which I am particularly interested at this moment. I don't know in the least where I am! I am too feeble to walk more than a few yards. I can't stay here alone until – "

He found that he was speaking to the air, the white and lonely

mist. Suddenly, without a word of answer, his strange conductors had melted away – withdrawn and vanished.

He was alone on a mountain-top in Wales, surrounded by an impenetrable curtain of mist, unable to move in any direction. What was all this?

Was he the victim of some colossal trick, some cruel hoax, some immense and indefensible practical joke?

It was difficult to believe it, and yet he cursed his folly in accepting this strange invitation to Wales. What a foolish and unconsidered business it all seemed – now that he sat alone in the white stillness, the terrible solitude.

Still, mad as the action seemed to him now, he remembered that it was the result of a long chain of coincidences. Certainly – yes, of that there could be no doubt – he seemed to have been led to this place. Something stronger than himself had influenced him. No, he was not here by chance —

Had he fallen asleep?

Still he sat upon the lichen-covered boulder, still the grey curtain of the mist hid all the mountain world.

Yet what was that sound – that deep, ringing voice which sounded in his ears, falling from some distant height, falling through the air like an arrow?

A voice! A voice! And these were the words it chanted —

"Rise up, Joseph, and come to me! Fear not, for God is with you! Come to me, that the things that are appointed may be done!"

The great voice rolled through the mist like a cathedral bell.

Cold and trembling, Joseph rose to his feet. One hand rested against the granite rock to support him as he answered, in a loud cry of terror —

"Who are you? What is this? Are you the man Lluellyn? I cannot come. I know not where to come. I am too weak to move. I am frightened."

Again the organ voice came pealing through the gloom.

"Joseph, Joseph, rise up and come! Come and fear not, for the power of the Holy Ghost broods upon the mountains."

Joseph stood for a moment trembling, and swaying from side to side. Then he was conscious of the most extraordinary sensation of his life.

Through the mist, invisible, impalpable, a great current of force seemed flowing to him and around him.

It poured into every fibre of his being, body, mind, and soul alike. It was not a delusion. It was wonderfully, marvellously real. Each second he grew stronger, power returned to his tired limbs, the weariness left his brain. He called out aloud —

"Teacher, I am coming to you!" And, with the swinging, easy step of a man in perfect health, together with the ease and certainty of a practised mountaineer, he began to climb upward through the mist.

It was as though he was floating on air, buoyant as a bird is. On and on he went, and all the while the invisible electric force poured into him and gave him strength and power.

Suddenly thin yellow beams of sunshine began to penetrate and irradiate the thick white blanket of mist. Stronger and stronger they grew, throwing a thousand prismatic colors on the thinning vapor, until at last Joseph emerged into full and glorious day.

This is what he saw.

The actual top of the mountain was only two or three yards above him, and formed a little rock-strewn plateau some twenty or thirty yards square – now bathed in vivid sunshine.

Against a cairn of boulders in the exact centre of the space a tall man was standing.

Both his arms were stretched out rigidly towards Joseph, the *fingers of each hand outspread and pointing to him*, as he emerged from the fog-belt with the sunshine. The man, who wore a long black cloak, was well over six feet high, and very thin. His face was pale, but the strong, rugged features gave it an impression of immense vitality and force.

Joseph stopped in sudden amazement at the sight of this strange figure up in the clouds. He suddenly remembered a picture he had seen showing Dante standing upon a great crag, and looking down into the abyss of the Inferno.

Lluellyn Lys looks like that – exactly like that, Joseph thought.

He went straight up to the Teacher. As he did so, Lluellyn's arms suddenly collapsed and fell loosely to his sides. His eyes, which had been fixed steadily upon Joseph, closed with a simultaneous movement, and he leant back against the cairn as

if utterly exhausted.

But this was only for a moment. As Joseph came up to him he roused himself, and his face lit up with welcome. The Teacher's smile was singularly winning and sweet – it was just like Mary's smile, Joseph thought – but it was also a very sad smile.

"Brother," Lluellyn said, "the peace of God be with you. May you be full of the Holy Ghost, that you may better accomplish those high things for which the Father has destined you, and for which He has brought you here."

Joseph took Lluellyn's hand, and was about to answer him when the former sank back once more against the boulders. His face grew white as linen, and he seemed about to swoon.

"You are ill!" Joseph cried in alarm. "What can I do to help you?"

"It is nothing," Lluellyn answered in a moment or two. "I have been giving you of my strength, Joseph, that you might mount the last stage of your journey. The voice of the Lord came to me as I communed here with Him, and the Holy Spirit sent the power to you through this unworthy body of mine."

Joseph bowed.

"I am moving in deep waters," he said. "Many strange and wonderful things have happened to me of late. My mind is shaken, and my old life with its old point of view already seems very far away. But let me say, first, how much I appreciate your extreme kindness in asking me here, through Miss Lys. As Miss Mary will have told you, I am a poor, battered scholar with few

friends, and often hard put to live at all. Your kindness will enable me to recover after my accident."

Lluellyn took Joseph by the arm.

He led him to the edge of the plateau.

"Look!" he said.

The mist had gone. From that great height they looked down the steep, pine-clothed sides of the mountain to the little white village, far, far below. Beyond was the shining, illimitable ocean.

"The world is very fair," Joseph said.

"The world is very fair because God is immanent in all things. God is in the sea, and on the sides of the hills. The Holy Ghost broods over those distant waters, and is with us here in this high place. Joseph, from the moment when the cross-wise timbers struck you down in Whitechapel, until this very moment now, you have been led here under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost. There is a certain work for you to do."

Joseph looked at the tall man with the grave, sweet smile in startled astonishment.

"What do I bring?" he said. "I, the poor, battered wreck, the unknown, the downtrodden? What do I bring *you*?"

Lluellyn looked Joseph in the face, and placed one long, lean hand upon his shoulder.

"Ask rather what you bring God," he said. "It were a more profitable question. For me, in the power and guidance of the Lord, it is ordained that you bring one thing only."

"And what is that?"

"Death!" said Lluellyn Lys.

CHAPTER V

THE POURING

Lluellyn Lys lived in a cottage on the side of the mountain where Joseph had first been taken to meet him. His small income was enough for his almost incredibly simple wants, and an ancient widow woman who loved and revered him more than anything else in the world kept the cottage for him, milked the cow, and did such frugal cooking as was necessary.

Lluellyn was known far and wide in that part of Wales. The miners, the small crofting farmers, and the scattered shepherds revered and honored the mysterious "Teacher" as men of God, were revered in the old times.

His influence was very great in the surrounding mining villages; he had been able to do what sometimes even the parish priests had tried in vain. The drunkard, the man of a foul and blasphemous tongue, loose-livers and gamblers, had become sober and God-fearing folk, with their hearts set upon the Eternal Light.

No one knew when the tall ascetic figure would appear among them with a strange appropriateness. It was said that he possessed the gift of second sight, and many extraordinary stories were told of him.

His sermons were wonderful in their directness and force,

their strange magnetic power. He had a mysterious knowledge of men's hearts, and would often make a personal appeal to some sinner who had stayed to hear him – an appeal full of such accurate and intimate knowledge of his listener's inner life and secret actions that it appeared miraculous.

And in addition to this power of divination, it was whispered that the Teacher possessed the power of healing, that his touch had raised the sick from couches of pain. It was certain that several people who had been regarded as at death's door had recovered with singular rapidity after Lluellyn had paid them one or two visits. But in every case the folk who had got well refused to speak of their experiences, though it was remarked that their devotion to the recluse became almost passionate.

A continual mystery enveloped him. Sometimes no one saw him for weeks. He would spend day after day locked up in the room he used in the cottage, and people who had climbed the mountain to seek him, were told by the housekeeper that it was impossible, and that she herself had not looked upon his face for many days.

Occasionally some late returning shepherd or miner would see the tall, dark figure kneeling, lost in prayer, on the summit of some cloudy peak, or the edge of some terrible abyss – stark and sharply outlined in the moonlight.

And then again would come those sudden periods of mighty activity, of great gatherings on the hillside, fiery words of warning and exhortation in the villages.

Joseph had been with Lluellyn Lys for ten days. After the first strange meeting on the mountain, when the Teacher had uttered the enigmatic word "Death!" he had refused to give his newly arrived guest any explanation of his saying.

"Brother," he said, "ask me not anything of the meaning of these things. The time when they shall be revealed is not yet come, neither do I myself see clearly in what manner they shall be accomplished."

Lluellyn had prayed.

"You are faint with the long journey, Joseph," he said, "but my house is not far away, where you will find food and rest. But first let us pray for a blessing upon your arrival, and that all things may befall as Our Lord would have them."

And there, in the glorious noontide sunshine, on the highest point of that great mountain from which they could survey the distant, shining sea, and range beyond range of mighty hills, the two men knelt down and prayed.

Joseph knelt with folded hands by the side of the Teacher.

It did not seem strange to him that he should do this. He no longer knew the fierce revolt of the intellect against the promptings of the conscience and the soul.

Rebellion had ceased. He bowed his head in prayer.

"Oh, Holy Ghost, descend upon us now, upon two sinful men, and fill us with Thyself. Fill and permeate us with Thy divine power. Send down Thy blessing upon us, and especially guard and influence Joseph that those things which Thou hast designed

for him be not too heavy for him.

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Three in One, and One in Three – Amen."

Then had come a ten minutes' descent, by an easier path on the other side of the principal cone, till the house of the Teacher was reached.

Joseph, after a simple meal, had fallen asleep. He was wearied to death, and when the housekeeper told him that he had slept for a whole revolution of the clock hands his surprise was great.

For the first two or three days of his stay Joseph saw but little of his host. They met at the frugal midday and evening repasts, but that was all. Even then Lluellyn talked but little, though his manner was always kind and almost deferential.

The Teacher, so his guest could not avoid thinking, regarded him from some standpoint which he could not enter into. Lluellyn spoke to, and regarded Joseph as if he were a man set apart, for some reason or other.

It was very mysterious and piqued the convalescent's curiosity, sometimes to an almost unbearable degree. There were constant veiled references to the future, hints of a time to come – of some imminent happening of tremendous importance.

What was to happen? How was he concerned in these matters? This was the question that Joseph constantly asked himself with growing impatience and nervous anticipation.

After the first three days Joseph saw more of his host. They went for walks together over the hills, and once or twice the

guest was present at a great gathering on the mountain-side, when Lluellyn preached to the people, and swayed them as the wind sways a field of corn.

More and more Joseph began to realize the holiness of this man with whom he lived. His love for God and for men glowed within him like a white flame. Joseph no longer said or believed that there was no God. His experiences had been too wonderful for that. It was impossible for any sane mind to be with Lluellyn Lys daily and not to recognize that some influence which was supernatural both in essence and fact made him what he was.

But Christ? Ah, that was a different matter! As yet the Man of Sorrows had touched no responsive chord in Joseph's heart.

It was, then, under these conditions, and while his mental development was just at this point, that the finger of God moved at last, and the stupendous drama of Joseph's life began.

He had been alone all day, and as evening fell went out to see if he could find Lluellyn. There was a sense of loneliness upon him. For some reason or other he felt forsaken and forlorn. After all, life was empty, and held very little for him.

Such were his thoughts as he walked along a familiar path towards an ancient Druid circle, some half a mile from the cottage, where he thought he might find his host.

A faint watery moonlight illuminated the path among the heather, a wan and spectral radiance, which gave the mountain-pass a strange, unearthly aspect.

And as Joseph walked there, with a heavy heart, he became

aware that some one was coming towards him. It was not Lluellyn Lys. Of that he was certain, an instinct told him so.

The figure came rapidly and noiselessly over the heath, and as it came Joseph began to tremble. His knees knocked together, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, the palms of his hands were wet.

Yet, as far as we may judge, it was not unmixed fear that Joseph felt. Never, at any time, did he describe his sensations at that supreme moment.

When questioned afterwards he was always silent.

But it was not all fear.

The figure drew nearer until at last it stood in the centre of the path, closing the way to the wanderer.

The dark moors, the faint and spectral sky, the whole visible world flashed away. There was a noise in Joseph's ears as of many waters, and through the great rush that was overwhelming him, body, mind, and soul, he seemed to hear a voice speaking —

Then a thick darkness blotted out all sensation, and he knew no more.

Joseph tried to lift his arm. He was conscious of the desire to do so, but for some reason or other he was unable to move it for a moment.

The arm felt like lead.

Slowly – and this also was with an effort – he opened his eyes.

He was in bed, lying in the familiar room at Lluellyn's cottage, though how he had come there he had no idea whatever.

His eyes wandered vaguely round the place, and as they grew accustomed to conscious use he saw that some changes had been made in the aspect of the room. A table had been removed, and a larger one substituted for it. The new table was covered with bottles – square bottles with white labels pasted on them. And there was a faint medicinal smell in the air also. Then, a sofa-couch had made its appearance which had not been there before. What did it all mean?

Suddenly the memory of the figure that had walked towards him upon the moor when all was late and dark came back to him in a rush of sensation. Why had everything flashed away as that silent figure approached? Who or what was it that had come noiselessly upon him through the gloom? Why had he been struck down?

Struck down? Yes; that was what had happened. He began to think a little more clearly. He had been struck down, and now, of course, he was ill. They had found him on the moor probably, and brought him back to the cottage.

He began to realize more and more that he was ill – very ill. He tried to turn in bed, and could hardly do so. Once more he endeavored to lift the arm that felt like a limb of lead, and, partially succeeding, he saw that it was thin and wasted.

There was a chair standing not far away from the bed, and on it a copy of a religious journal. He started. His eye had fallen upon the date of the paper.

Slowly and painfully he recalled the date of his first arrival in

Wales – the expiration of time since his sojourn with the Teacher began until the date indicated upon the front page of the journal.

There could be no doubt about it, he had been lying unconscious of the outside world, and heedless of the passage of time, for at least eight days – possibly even more.

He gave a little gasp of astonishment – a gasp which was almost a moan – and as he did so the door of the bedroom opened, and Mrs. Price, the old housekeeper, entered.

She came straight up to the bedside and looked down upon Joseph. There was something very strange in the expression of the old, wrinkled face. It was changed from its usual expression of resigned and quiet joy. There were red circles round the eyes, as if she had been weeping; the kind old mouth was drawn with pain.

"Ah, my dear," she said to Joseph, "you've come to yourself at last! It was what the doctor said – that it would be about this time that you would come to. The Lord be praised!"

Joseph tried to answer her. The words came slowly from his lips. He articulated with difficulty, and his voice was strange to his own ears.

"Have I been ill long?"

"For near ten days, sir, you have lain at death's door. The doctor from Penmaenbach said that you would surely die. But the Teacher knew that you would not. And oh, and oh, woe's the day when you came here!"

With a sudden convulsive movement, the old lady threw her

hands up into the air, and then burst into a passion of weeping.

Joseph had heard her with a languid interest. His question was answered; he knew now exactly what had happened, but he was still too weak and weary for anything to have much effect upon him. Yet the sudden tears and the curious words of the kindly old dame troubled him.

"I am sorry," he said faintly. "I know that I must have been a great trouble to you. But I had no idea I should fall ill again."

For answer she stooped over and kissed him upon the forehead.

"Trouble!" she cried, through her tears. "That's no word to say to me. I spoke hastily, and what I said I said wrongly. It was the Teacher that was in my mind. But it is all the will of the Lord to Whom all must bow – you'll take your medicine now, if you please."

So she ended, with a sudden descent from high matters to the practical occupations of the ministering angel.

Joseph drank the potion which the old lady held to his lips. Her arm was round his head as she raised it, her brown, tear-stained face was close to his.

He felt a sudden rush of affection for her. In the past he had ever been a little cold in his relations with all men and women. Save, perhaps, for Hampson, the journalist, he had not experienced anything like love for his kind. Yet now he felt his heart going out to this dear old nurse, and, more than that even, something cold and hard within him seemed to have melted. He

realized in his mind, as a man may realize a whole vast landscape in a sudden flash of lightning, how much love there was in the world after all.

Even as his whole weak frame was animated by this new and gracious discovery, the door of the bedroom opened once more and Lluellyn Lys came in.

Mrs. Price turned from the bed upon which Joseph was lying, and went up to the Teacher.

She caught him by the arm – Joseph was witness of it all – and bowed her head upon it. Then once more she began to sob.

"Oh, man, man," she said, "I've loved ye and tended ye for many years now. And my father, and my mother, and my people for a hundred years before, have served the house of Lys. But you have led me from the bondage of darkness and sin into peace and light. Ye brought me to the Lord Jesus, Lluellyn Lys. Aye and the Holy Ghost came down upon me when I gave my heart to the Lord! And now, 'tis near over, 'tis all near done, and my heart is bitter heavy, Lys. Master, my heart is bowed down with woe and grief!"

Lluellyn gently took the poor old thing by the arm. He led her to the bedside where Joseph lay.

"Old friend," he said – "dear old faithful friend and servant, it is not me whom you must call Master any more. My work is nearly done, the time of my departure draws near. Here is your Master."

The old dame, clinging to Lluellyn's arm, looked down at

Joseph. Then she started violently, and began to tremble like an autumn leaf in the wind.

The old face, browned by a thousand days of mountain sun and storm, grew pale under its tan. She looked up into Lluellyn's eyes with an interrogation that was almost fierce in its intensity.

"I see something, Lys!" she said. "I see something! What does it mean – what is it, Master? I never saw it before!"

Lluellyn answered her gravely and slowly.

"I know not," he said, "save only that it is God's will. All has not yet been revealed to me. But I shall know soon, very soon, Anna, old friend. And, as you are a godly woman of the Lord, I charge you that you go with this man when he departs from this place. Leave us now, Anna. I have somewhat to do with Joseph."

As his voice fell and ceased, the old lady went weeping from the room.

For some little time there was a dead silence in the place.

Joseph's brain was in a whirl, but his eyes were fixed upon the tall figure of the Teacher.

Lluellyn Lys was strangely altered. His thin form was thinner still. Always fragile in appearance, he now seemed as if a breath would blow him away. His face and hands were deathly white, and his whole appearance suggested a man almost bloodless, from whom all vitality had been literally drained away.

"You are ill, Lluellyn," Joseph said at length.

The Teacher shook his head.

"No, dear friend," he answered. "I do what I have to do, that

is all."

As he spoke, he drew a chair up to the bedside, and, stretching out his long, thin hands, placed the finger-tips of one upon Joseph's forehead, and those of the other upon his pulse.

A dim memory, faint and misty, came to Joseph of his recent illness. Lluellyn had sat in this position before, the touch of his fingers was familiar somehow or other, the stooping form awoke a chord of memory.

"Why," he said, "since I have been ill you have been doing this many times. It is all coming back to me. What are you doing?"

Lluellyn smiled faintly.

"I am giving you strength for the work God intends you to do," he said. "Do not talk, Joseph. Lie very still, and fix your thoughts on God."

Already the Teacher's voice seemed thin and far away to Joseph. It was as though he was moving rapidly away from Lluellyn, carried by a strange force, a vital fluid which was pouring into his veins.

He experienced exactly the same sensation as when he had first climbed the mountain-top to meet Lluellyn – that of receiving power, of being a vessel into which life itself was flowing.

At some time or another most people have been under the influence of an anæsthetic, if only for the extraction of a tooth. Joseph now began to lose consciousness in exactly the same way, rapidly, with a sense of falling and a roaring noise in the ears.

The falling motion seemed to stop, the noise ceased, everything was dark.

Then the black swayed like a curtain. Light came swiftly and silently, and in one single moment Joseph saw stretched before him and below him a vast panorama.

It was London that he saw, but in a way that no human eye has ever beheld the modern Babylon. Nor does the word "saw" accurately express the nature of the vision.

He apprehended rather than saw. The inner spiritual eye conveyed its message to the brain far more clearly and swiftly than even the delicate lenses and tissues of the flesh can ever do. Color, form, movement, all these were not seen physically, but felt in the soul.

He had passed out of the dimensions of mortal things into another state.

London lay below him, and in the spirit he heard the noise of its abominations, and saw the reek of its sin hanging over it like a vast, lurid cloud.

They say, and the fact is well authenticated, that a drowning man sees the whole of his past life, clear, distinct, minutely detailed, in a second of time.

It was with some such flash as this that Joseph saw London. He did not see a picture or a landscape of it. He did not receive an impression of it. He saw it *whole*. He seemed to know the thoughts of every human heart, nothing was secret from him.

His heart was filled with a terrible anguish, a sorrow so

profound and deep, so piercing and poignant, that it was even as death – as bitter as death. He cried out aloud, "Lord Jesus, purge this city, and save the people. Forgive them, O Lord, out of Thy bountiful goodness and mercy! I that am as dust and ashes have taken it upon me to speak to the Lord. O Lord, purge this city of its abominations, and save this Thy servant. Teach me to love Thee and to labor for Thee!"

The vision changed. Into Joseph's heart there came an ineffable glow of reverence and love. In its mighty power it was supersensual, an ecstasy for which there are no words, a love in which self passed trembling away like a chord of music, a supreme awe and adoration.

For he thought that a face was looking upon him, a face full of the Divine love, the face of Our Lord.

A voice spoke in his heart – or was it an actual physical voice?

"Lo, this has touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me.'"

A silence, a darkness of soul and mind, the rushing of many waters, falling, falling, falling...

Joseph awoke, the voice rang in his ears still.

He saw the walls of the cottage room; he had come back to the world and to life, a terrible, overmastering fear and awe shook him like a reed.

He cried out with a loud voice, calling for his friend, calling for the Teacher.

"Lluellyn! Lluellyn Lys, come to me!"

He was lying upon his back still, in exactly the same position as that in which he had lost consciousness while Lluellyn's hands were upon him giving him life and strength.

Now he sat up suddenly, without an effort, as a strong and healthy man moves.

"Lluellyn! Lluellyn!"

His loud call for help was suddenly strangled into silence. Lying upon the floor, close to the bedside, was the body of Lluellyn Lys, a long white shell, from which the holy soul had fled to meet its Lord.

The Teacher had given his life for his friend. In obedience to some mysterious revelation he had received of the Divine Will, Lluellyn Lys had poured his life into the body of another.

Joseph stared for a moment at the corpse, and then glanced wildly round the room. He could call no more, speech had left him, his lips were shrivelled, his tongue paralysed.

As he did so, his whole body suddenly stiffened and remained motionless.

Exactly opposite to him, looking at him, he saw once more the face of his vision, the countenance of the Man of Sorrows.

In mute appeal, powerless to speak, he stretched out his arms in supplication.

But what was this?

Even as he moved, the figure moved also. Hands were stretched out towards him, even as his were extended.

He leapt from the bed, passed by the still, white body upon the floor – and learned the truth.

A large mirror hung upon the opposite wall.

What he had thought to be the face of Christ – the veritable face of his vision – was his own face!

His own face, bearded, changed, and moulded by his illness, altered entirely.

His own face had become as an image and simulacrum of the traditional pictures and representations of Our Lord's.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROSS AT ST. PAUL'S

Hampson had been in the editorial chair of the religious weekly for nearly a month, and the change in the little journalist's circumstances was enormous; from the most grinding poverty, the most precarious existence, he had arrived at what to him was wealth.

He felt himself a rich man, and, indeed, the big firm of newspaper proprietors which had singled him out to occupy his present position was not niggardly in the matter of salary. With careful discrimination they sought out the best man for this or that post, and when they found him paid him sufficiently well to secure his continued adherence to their interests.

Hampson generally arrived at his office about eleven, and opened his letters. On the day of which this chapter treats he came earlier as he had to "pass the paper for press."

A large amount of correspondence awaited him, and he waded steadily through it for about an hour, giving directions to his secretary as each letter was opened. When the man had gone to his own room Hampson leant back in his comfortable chair with a sigh. His usually cheerful face wore an expression of perplexity and annoyance.

More than a fortnight had elapsed since he had received any

communication from his friend Joseph.

When Joseph had first left London he had written every two or three days to Hampson – brilliant, if slightly caustic letters, describing his new environment and the life he was leading on the mountain with Lluellyn Lys. These letters had concealed nothing, and had told the journalist exactly what had occurred. Yet every time that the writer recorded some strange happening, or wrote of some unusual experience and sensation, he had given a *material* explanation of it at considerable length.

The astonishing climb up the final peak of the mountain, for example, was recorded with great accuracy. The voice of the Teacher as it pealed down through the mist, the sudden access of strength that made it possible for Joseph to join his host – all this, and much more, was set down with orderly and scientific precision. But the explanation had been that the tonic power of the mountain air had provided the muscular impetus necessary for the climb, and that its heady influence upon a mind unaccustomed to so much oxygen had engendered the delusion of a supernatural force.

Hampson had his own opinion about these strange things. He saw further into them than Joseph appeared to be able to see. Yet his friend's letters were a constant source of pleasure and inspiration to him – even while he deplored Joseph's evident resolve to admit nothing into his life that did not allow of a purely material explanation.

And now the letters had stopped.

He had heard no single word for days and days. His own communications had remained unanswered, nor had he received any reply to an anxious inquiry after Joseph's health, addressed to Lluellyn Lys himself.

This morning, again, there was nothing at all, and the faithful little man was gravely disturbed. Something serious had indubitably happened, and how to find out what it was he did not know.

It was a day of thick and lurid fog. London lay under a pall – the whole world around was sombre and depressing.

The well-furnished editorial sanctum, with its electric lights, leather-covered armchairs, gleaming telephones, and huge writing-table was comfortable enough, but the leaden light outside, upon the Thames Embankment, made London seem a city of dreadful night.

Hampson rose from his chair, and stood at the window for a moment, lost in thought.

Yes, London was indeed a terrible city. More terrible than Babylon of old, more awful when one remembered that Christ had come to the world with His Message of Salvation.

The ancient city of palaces, in its eternal sunlit majesty, had never known the advent of the Redeemer. Yet, were those forgotten people who worshipped the God Merodach really worse than the Londoners of to-day?

Only on the day before, a West End clergyman had come to Hampson with detailed statistics of the vice in his own parish

in the neighborhood of Piccadilly. The vicar's statements were horrible. To some people they would have sounded incredible. Yet they were absolutely true, as Hampson was very well aware – naked, shameful horrors in Christian London.

"Ah," the clergyman said, "if only Our Lord came to London now how awful would His condemnation be!"

As the editor looked out upon the gloom he felt that the material darkness was symbolic of a spiritual darkness which sometimes appalled him when he realized it.

The door opened, and the sub-editor came in with "pulls" of the final sheets of the paper. Hampson had to read these carefully, initial them, and send them to the composing-room marked as ready for the printing-machines. Then his work was done for the day.

At lunch time, the fog still continuing, he left the office. An idea had come to him which might be of service in obtaining news of Joseph.

He would take a cab down to the East End Hospital, and ask Mary Lys if she knew anything about his friend. Probably she would know something, her brother, Lluellyn Lys, would almost certainly have written to her.

Hampson had met Mary two or three times during the last weeks. He revered the beautiful girl who had saved him from the consequences of his sudden madness, with all the force of his nature.

In her he saw a simple and serene holiness, an absolute

abnegation of self which was unique in his experience. She represented to him all that was finest, noblest, and best in Christian womanhood.

Since his appointment to the editorial chair he had gloried in the fact that he had been able to send her various sums of money for distribution among the most destitute of the patients under her charge.

At four o'clock he had an appointment with the clerk of the works at St. Paul's Cathedral, but until then he was free. The *Sunday Friend* covered a very wide field, and hardly any question of interest to religious people was left untouched. At the moment grave fears were entertained as to the safety of the huge building upon Ludgate Hill. The continual burrowing for various purposes beneath the fabric had caused a slight subsidence of one of the great central piers. A minute crack had made its appearance in the dome itself.

Hampson had obtained permission from the dean to inspect the work of repair that was proceeding, knowing that his readers would be interested in the subject.

Until four, however, he was perfectly free, and he drove straight towards Whitechapel.

His cab drove slowly through the congested arteries of the City, where the black-coated business men scurried about like rats in the gloom. But in half an hour Hampson arrived at the door of the hospital, and was making inquiries if Nurse Lys was off duty or no, and that if she were would she see him.

He had not come at this time entirely on speculation. He knew that, as a general rule, Mary was free at this hour.

She proved to be so to-day, and in a moment or two came into the reception-room where he was waiting.

She was like a star in the gloom, he thought.

How beautiful her pure and noble face was, how gracious her walk and bearing! All that spiritual beauty which comes from a life lived with utter unselfishness for others, the holy tranquillity that goodness paints upon the face, the light God lends the eyes when His light burns within – all these, added to Mary's remarkable physical beauty, marked her out as rare among women.

The little journalist worshipped her. She seemed to him a being so wonderful that there was a sort of desecration even in touching her hand.

"Ah, my friend," she said to him, with a flashing smile of welcome, "I am glad to see you. To tell you the truth, I have a melancholy mood to-day, a thing so very rare with me that it makes me all the more glad to see a friend's face. How are you, and how is your work?"

"I am very well, Nurse Mary, thank you, but I am troubled in mind about Joseph. I cannot get an answer to any of my letters, though at first he wrote constantly. I even wrote to Mr. Lluellyn Lys, hoping to hear from him that all was well. But I have received no answer to that letter either. I came to ask you if you had any news."

Mary looked at him strangely, and with perplexity in her eyes.

"No," she said. "I have had no news at all from either of them for some time. I have been disturbed in mind about it for some days. Of course I have written, too, but there has been no response. That is why I have been feeling rather downhearted to-day. It is curious that you, Mr. Hampson, should have come to me with this question, and at this moment."

They looked at each other apprehensively, and for this reason: they were not talking of two ordinary men and their doings.

Both felt this strongly.

There had been too many unusual and inexplicable occurrences in connection with Joseph's accident and arrival at the hospital for either Mary or Hampson to disregard any seeming coincidence. Both knew, both had always felt, that they were spectators of – or, rather, actors in – a drama upon which the curtain had but lately risen.

"When did you last hear from Joseph?" Mary asked.

Hampson mentioned the date. It was, though, of course, he did not know it, the date of Joseph's strange experience upon the midnight moor, the date on which he had been struck down, and on which his second illness began.

"It was at that time that I received my last letter from my brother," the girl answered – "the exact day, in fact. The letter troubled me when it came; it has troubled me ever since. It spoke of the end of his work here, hinted that he felt he had almost done what he was sent into the world to do, though at the same time he

bade me prepare myself for great events immediately imminent."

There was a silence in the big, bare reception-room. Mary broke it.

"What a dreadful day it is, Mr. Hampson," she said, with an effort to give the conversation a less gloomy turn. "I have rarely seen the fog lie so low over town. Oh, for a breath of fresh air – just five short minutes of fresh, unclouded air! I think I would give almost anything for that at this moment."

A sudden thought came to the journalist.

"Do you know, nurse," he said, "I think I am one of the few men in London who can give you just what you ask at this moment; that is, if you don't mind doing something slightly unconventional?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.