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# THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

By Winston Churchill

## Volume 2. V. THE RECTOR HAS MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT. VI. "WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT" VII. THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD VIII. THE LINE of LEAST RESISTANCE.

CHAPTER V

**THE RECTOR HAS MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

**I**

Sunday after Sunday Hodder looked upon the same picture, the winter light filtering through emblazoned windows, falling athwart stone pillars, and staining with rich colours the marble of the centre aisle. The organ rolled out hymns and anthems, the voices of the white robed choir echoed among the arches. And Hodder's eye, sweeping over the decorous congregation, grew to recognize certain landmarks: Eldon Parr, rigid at one end of his empty pew; little Everett Constable, comfortably,

but always pompously settled at one end of his, his white-haired and distinguished-looking wife at the other. The space between them had once been filled by their children. There was Mr. Ferguson, who occasionally stroked his black whiskers with a prodigious solemnity; Mrs. Ferguson, resplendent and always a little warm, and their daughter Nan, dainty and appealing, her eyes uplifted and questioning.

The Plimptons, with their rubicund and aggressively healthy offspring, were always in evidence. And there was Mrs. Larrabbee. What between wealth and youth, independence and initiative, a widowhood now emerged from a mourning unexceptionable, an elegance so unobtrusive as to border on mystery, she never failed to agitate any atmosphere she entered, even that of prayer. From time to time, Hodder himself was uncomfortably aware of her presence, and he read in her upturned face an interest which, by a little stretch of the imagination, might have been deemed personal . . . .

Another was Gordon Atterbury, still known as "young Gordon," though his father was dead, and he was in the vestry. He was unmarried and forty-five, and Mrs. Larrabbee had said he reminded her of a shrivelling seed set aside from a once fruitful crop. He wore, invariably, checked trousers and a black cutaway coat, eyeglasses that fell off when he squinted, and were saved from destruction by a gold chain. No wedding or funeral was complete without him. And one morning, as he joined Mr. Parr and the other gentlemen who responded to the appeal, "Let your light so shine before men," a strange, ironical question entered the rector's mind—was Gordon Atterbury the logical product of those doctrines which he, Hodder, preached with such feeling and conviction?

None, at least, was so fervent a defender of the faith, so punctilious in all observances, so constant at the altar rail; none so versed in rubrics, ritual, and canon law; none had such a knowledge of the Church fathers. Mr. Atterbury delighted to discuss them with the rector at the dinner parties where they met; none was more zealous for foreign missions. He was the treasurer of St. John's.

It should undoubtedly have been a consolation to any rector to possess Mr. Atterbury's unqualified approval, to listen to his somewhat delphic compliments,—heralded by a clearing of the throat. He represented the faith as delivered to the saints, and he spoke for those in the congregation to whom it was precious. Why was it that, to Hodder, he should gradually have assumed something of the aspect of a Cerberus? Why was it that he incited a perverse desire to utter heresies?

Hodder invariably turned from his contemplation of Gordon Atterbury to the double blaring pew, which went from aisle to aisle. In his heart, he would have preferred the approval of Eleanor Goodrich and her husband, and of Asa Waring. Instinct spoke to him here; he seemed to read in their faces that he failed to strike in them responsive chords. He was drawn to them: the conviction grew upon him that he did not reach them, and it troubled him, as he thought, disproportionately.

He could not expect to reach all. But they were the type to which he most wished to appeal; of all of his flock, this family seemed best to preserve the vitality and ideals of the city and nation. Asa Waring was a splendid, uncompromising survival; his piercing eyes sometimes met Hodder's across the church, and they held for him a question and a riddle. Eleanor Goodrich bore on her features the stamp of true nobility of character, and her husband, Hodder knew, was a man among men. In addition to a respected lineage, he possessed an unusual blending of aggressiveness and personal charm that men found irresistible.

The rector's office in the parish house was a businesslike room on the first floor, fitted up with a desk, a table, straight-backed chairs, and a revolving bookcase. And to it, one windy morning in March, came Eleanor Goodrich. Hodder rose to greet her with an eagerness which, from his kindly yet penetrating glance, she did not suspect.

"Am I interrupting you, Mr. Hodder?" she asked, a little breathlessly.

"Not at all," he said, drawing up a chair. "Won't you sit down?"

She obeyed. There was an awkward pause during which the colour slowly rose to her face.

"I wanted to ask you one or two things," she began, not very steadily. "As perhaps you may know, I was brought up in this church, baptized and confirmed in it. I've come to fear that, when I was confirmed, I wasn't old enough to know what I was doing."

She took a deep breath, amazed at her boldness, for this wasn't in the least how she had meant to begin. And she gazed at the rector anxiously. To her surprise, he did not appear to be inordinately shocked.

"Do you know any better now?" he asked.

"Perhaps not," she admitted. "But the things of which I was sure at that time I am not sure of now.

My faith is—is not as complete."

"Faith may be likened to an egg, Mrs. Goodrich," he said. "It must be kept whole. If the shell is chipped, it is spoiled."

Eleanor plucked up her courage. Eggs, she declared, had been used as illustrations by conservatives before now.

Hodder relieved her by smiling in ready appreciation.

"Columbus had reference to this world," he said. "I was thinking of a more perfect cue."

"Oh!" she cried, "I dare say there is a more perfect one. I should hate to think there wasn't—but I can't imagine it. There's nothing in the Bible in the way of description of it to make me really wish to go there. The New Jerusalem is too insipid, too material. I'm sure I'm shocking you, but I must be honest, and say what I feel."

"If some others were as honest," said the rector, "the problems of clergymen would be much easier. And it is precisely because people will not tell us what they feel that we are left in the dark and cannot help them. Of course, the language of St. John about the future is figurative."

"Figurative,—yes," she consented, "but not figurative in a way that helps me, a modern American woman. The figures, to be of any use, ought to appeal to my imagination—oughtn't they? But they don't. I can't see any utility in such a heaven—it seems powerless to enter as a factor into my life."

"It is probable that we are not meant to know anything about the future."

"Then I wish it hadn't been made so explicit. Its very definiteness is somehow—stultifying. And, Mr. Hodder, if we were not meant to know its details, it seems to me that if the hereafter is to have any real value and influence over our lives here, we should know something of its conditions, because it must be in some sense a continuation of this. I'm not sure that I make myself clear."

"Admirably clear. But we have our Lord's example of how to live here."

"If we could be sure," said Eleanor, "just what that example meant."

Hodder was silent a moment.

"You mean that you cannot accept what the Church teaches about his life?" he asked.

"No, I can't," she faltered. "You have helped me to say it. I want to have the Church's side better explained,—that's why I'm here." She glanced up at him, hesitatingly, with a puzzled wonder, such a positive, dynamic representative of that teaching did he appear. "And my husband can't,—so many people I know can't, Mr. Hodder. Only, some of them don't mention the fact. They accept it. And you say things with such a certainty—" she paused.

"I know," he replied, "I know. I have felt it since I have come here more than ever before." He did not add that he had felt it particularly about her, about her husband: nor did he give voice to his instinctive conviction that he respected and admired these two more than a hundred others whose professed orthodoxy was without a flaw. "What is it in particular," he asked, troubled, "that you cannot accept? I will do my best to help you."

"Well—" she hesitated again.

"Please continue to be frank," he begged.

"I can't believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth," she responded in a low voice; "it seems to me so—so material. And I feel I am stating a difficulty that many have, Mr. Hodder. Why should it have been thought necessary for God to have departed from what is really a sacred and sublime fact in nature, to resort to a material proof in order to convince a doubting humanity that Jesus was his Son? Oughtn't the proof of Christ's essential God-ship to lie in his life, to be discerned by the spiritual; and wasn't he continually rebuking those who demanded material proof? The very acceptance of a material proof, it seems to me, is a denial of faith, since faith ceases to have any worth whatever the moment the demand for such proof is gratified. Knowledge puts faith out of the question, for faith to me means a trusting on spiritual grounds. And surely the acceptance of scriptural statements like that of the miraculous birth without investigation is not faith—it is mere credulity. If Jesus had been born in a miraculous way, the disciples must have known it. Joseph must have known it when he heard the answer 'I must be about my father's business,' and their doubts are unexplained."

"I see you have been investigating," said the rector.

"Yes," replied Eleanor, with an unconscious shade of defiance, "people want to know, Mr. Dodder,—they want to know the truth. And if you consider the preponderance of the evidence of the Gospels themselves—my brother-in-law says—you will find that the miraculous birth has very little to stand on. Take out the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, and the rest of the four Gospels practically contradict it. The genealogies differ, and they both trace through Joseph."

"I think people suffer in these days from giving too much weight to the critics of Christianity," said the rector, "from not pondering more deeply on its underlying truths. Do not think that I am accusing you of superficiality, Mrs. Goodrich; I am sure you wish to go to the bottom, or else you would be satisfied with what you have already read and heard."

"I do," she murmured.

"And the more one reflects on the life of our Lord, the more one is convinced that the doctrine of the virgin birth is a vital essential; without it Christianity falls to pieces. Let us go at the matter the other way round. If we attribute to our Lord a natural birth, we come at once to the dilemma of having to admit that he was merely an individual human person,—in an unsurpassed relationship with God, it is true, but still a human person. That doctrine makes Christ historical, some one to go back to, instead of the ever-present, preexistent Son of God and mankind. I will go as far as to assert that if the virgin birth had never been mentioned in the Gospels, it would nevertheless inevitably have become a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Such a truth is too vast, too far-reaching to have been neglected, and it has a much higher significance than the mere record of a fact. In spite of the contradictions of science, it explains as nothing else can the mystery of the divinity as well as the humanity of the Saviour."

Eleanor was unconvinced. She felt, as she listened, the pressure of his sincerity and force, and had to strive to prevent her thoughts from becoming confused.

"No, Mr. Hodder, I simply can't see any reason for resorting to a physical miracle in order to explain a spiritual mystery. I can see why the ancients demanded a sign of divinity as it were. But for us it has ceased even to be that. It can't be proved. You ask me, in the face of overwhelming evidence against it, to teach my children that the Incarnation depends on it, but when they grow up and go to college and find it discredited they run the risk of losing everything else with it. And for my part, I fail utterly to see why, if with God all things are possible, it isn't quite as believable, as we gather from St. Mark's Gospel, that he incarnated himself in one naturally born. If you reach the conclusion that Jesus was not a mere individual human person, you reach it through the contemplation of his life and death."

"Then it isn't the physical miracle you object to, especially?" he asked.

"It's the uselessness of it, for this age," she exclaimed. "I think clergymen don't understand the harm it is doing in concentrating the attention on such a vulnerable and non-essential point. Those of us who are striving to reorganize our beliefs and make them tenable, do not bother our heads about miracles. They may be true, or may not, or some of them may be. We are beginning to see that the virgin birth does not add anything to Christ. We are beginning to see that perfection and individuality are not incompatible,—one is divine, and the other human. And isn't it by his very individuality that we are able to recognize Jesus to-day?"

"You have evidently thought and read a great deal," Dodder said, genuinely surprised. "Why didn't you come to me earlier?"

Eleanor bit her lip. He smiled a little.

"I think I can answer that for you," he went on; "you believe we are prejudiced,—I've no doubt many of us are. You think we are bound to stand up for certain dogmas, or go down, and that our minds are consequently closed. I am not blaming you," he added quickly, as she gave a sign of protest, "but I assure you that most of us, so far as my observation has gone, are honestly trying to proclaim the truth as we see it."

"Insincerity is the last thing I should have accused you of, Mr. Hodder," she said flushing. "As I told you, you seem so sure."

"I don't pretend to infallibility, except so far as I maintain that the Church is the guardian of certain truths which human experience has verified. Let me ask you if you have thought out the difference your conception of the Incarnation;—the lack of a patently divine commission, as it were,—makes in the doctrine of grace?"

"Yes, I have," she answered, "a little. It gives me more hope. I cannot think I am totally depraved. I do

not believe that God wishes me to think so. And while I am still aware of the distance between Christ's perfection and my own imperfection, I feel that the possibility is greater of lessening that distance. It gives me more self-respect, more self-reliance. George Bridges says that the logical conclusion of that old doctrine is what philosophers call determinism—Calvinistic predestination. I can't believe in that. The kind of grace God gives me is the grace to help myself by drawing force from the element of him in my soul. He gives me the satisfaction of developing."

"Of one thing I am assured, Mrs. Goodrich," Hodder replied, "that the logical result of independent thinking is anarchy. Under this modern tendency toward individual creeds, the Church has split and split again until, if it keeps on, we shall have no Church at all to carry on the work of our Lord on earth. History proves that to take anything away from the faith is to atrophy, to destroy it. The answer to your arguments is to be seen on every side, atheism, hypocrisy, vice, misery, insane and cruel grasping after wealth. There is only one remedy I can see," he added, inflexibly, yet with a touch of sadness, "believe."

"What if we can't believe?" she asked.

"You can." He spoke with unshaken conviction.

"You can if you make the effort, and I am sure you will. My experience is that in the early stages of spiritual development we are impervious to certain truths. Will you permit me to recommend to you certain books dealing with these questions in a modern way?"

"I will read them gladly," she said, and rose.

"And then, perhaps, we may have another talk," he added, looking down at her. "Give my regards to your husband."

Yet, as he stood in the window looking after her retreating figure, there gradually grew upon him a vague and uncomfortable feeling that he had not been satisfactory, and this was curiously coupled with the realization that the visit had added a considerable increment to his already pronounced liking for Eleanor Goodrich. She was, paradoxically, his kind of a person—such was the form the puzzle took. And so ably had she presented her difficulties that, at one point of the discussion, it had ironically occurred to him to refer her to Gordon Atterbury. Mr. Atterbury's faith was like an egg, and he took precious care not to have it broken or chipped.

Hodder found himself smiling. It was perhaps inevitable that he began at once to contrast Mrs. Goodrich with other feminine parishioners who had sought him out, and who had surrendered unconditionally. They had evinced an equally disturbing tendency,—a willingness to be overborne. For had he not, indeed, overborne them? He could not help suspecting these other ladies of a craving for the luxury of the confessional. One thing was certain,—he had much less respect for them than for Eleanor Goodrich . . . .

That afternoon he sent her the list of books. But the weeks passed, and she did not come back. Once, when he met her at a dinner of Mrs. Preston's, both avoided the subject of her visit, both were conscious of a constraint. She did not know how often, unseen by her, his eyes had sought her out from the chancel. For she continued to come to church as frequently as before, and often brought her husband.

## II

One bright and boisterous afternoon in March, Hodder alighted from an electric car amid a swirl of dust and stood gazing for a moment at the stone gate-houses of that 'rus in urbe', Waverley Place, and at the gold block-letters written thereon, "No Thoroughfare." Against those gates and their contiguous grill the rude onward rush of the city had beaten in vain, and, baffled, had swept around their serene enclosure, westward.

Within, a silvery sunlight lit up the grass of the island running down the middle, and in the beds the softening earth had already been broken by the crocus sheaves. The bare branches of the trees swayed in the gusts. As Hodder penetrated this hallowed precinct he recognized, on either hand, the residences of several of his parishioners, each in its ample allotted space: Mrs. Larrabbee's; the Laureston Greys'; Thurston Gore's, of which Mr. Wallis Plimpton was now the master,—Mr. Plimpton, before whose pertinacity the walls of Jericho had fallen; and finally the queer, twisted Richardson mansion of the Everett Constables, whither he was bound, with its recessed doorway and tiny windows peeping out from under mediaeval penthouses.

He was ushered into a library where the shades were already drawn, where a-white-clothed tea-table

was set before the fire, the red rays dancing on the silver tea-kettle. On the centre-table he was always sure to find, neatly set in a rack, the books about which the world was talking, or rather would soon begin to talk; and beside them were ranged magazines; French, English, and American, Punch, the Spectator, the Nation, the 'Revue des deux Mondes'. Like the able general she was, Mrs. Constable kept her communications open, and her acquaintance was by no means confined to the city of her nativity. And if a celebrity were passing through, it were pretty safe, if in doubt, to address him in her care.

Hodder liked and admired her, but somehow she gave him the impression of having attained her ascendancy at a price, an ascendancy which had apparently been gained by impressing upon her environment a new note —literary, aesthetic, cosmopolitan. She held herself, and those she carried with her, abreast of the times, and he was at a loss to see how so congenial an effort could have left despite her sweetness—the little mark of hardness he discerned, of worldliness. For she was as well born as any woman in the city, and her husband was a Constable. He had inherited, so the rector had been informed, one of those modest fortunes that were deemed affluence in the eighties. His keeping abreast of the times was the enigma, and Hodder had often wondered how financial genius had contrived to house itself in the well-dressed, gently pompous little man whose lack of force seemed at times so painfully evident. And yet he was rated one of the rich men of the city, and his name Hodder had read on many boards with Mr. Parr's!

A person more versed in the modern world of affairs than the late rector of Bremerton would not have been so long in arriving at the answer to this riddle. Hodder was astute, he saw into people more than they suspected, but he was not sophisticated.

He stood picturing, now, the woman in answer to whose summons he had come. With her finely chiselled features, her abundant white hair, her slim figure and erect carriage she reminded him always of a Vigee Lebrun portrait. He turned at the sound of her voice behind him.

"How good of you to come, Mr. Hodder, when you were so busy," she said, taking his hand as she seated herself behind the tea-kettle. "I wanted the chance to talk to you, and it seemed the best way. What is that you have, Soter's book?"

"I pinked it up on the table," he explained.

"Then you haven't read it? You ought to. As a clergyman, it would interest you. Religion treated from the economic side, you know, the effect of lack of nutrition on character. Very unorthodox, of course."

"I find that I have very little time to read," he said. "I sometimes take a book along in the cars."

"Your profession is not so leisurely as it once was, I often think it such a pity. But you, too, are paying the penalty of complexity." She smiled at him sympathetically. "How is Mr. Parr? I haven't seen him for several weeks."

"He seemed well when I saw him last," replied Hodder.

"He's a wonderful man; the amount of work he accomplishes without apparent effort is stupendous." Mrs. Constable cast what seemed a tentative glance at the powerful head, and handed him his tea. "I wanted to talk to you about Gertrude," she said.

He looked unenlightened.

"About my daughter, Mrs. Warren. She lives in New York, you know —on Long Island."

Then he had remembered something he had heard.

"Yes," he said.

"She met you, at the Fergusons', just for a moment, when she was out here last autumn. What really nice and simple people the Fergusons are, with all their money!"

"Very nice indeed," he agreed, puzzled.

"I have been sorry for them in the past," she went on evenly. "They had rather a hard time—perhaps you may have heard. Nobody appreciated them. They were entombed, so to speak, in a hideous big house over on the South Side, which fortunately burned down, and then they bought in Park Street, and took a pew in St. John's. I suppose the idea of that huge department store was rather difficult to get used to. But I made up my mind it was nonsense to draw the line at department stores, especially since Mr. Ferguson's was such a useful and remarkable one, so I went across and called. Mrs. Ferguson was so grateful, it was almost pathetic. And she's a very good friend—she came here everyday when

Genevieve had appendicitis."

"She's a good woman," the rector said.

"And Nan,—I adore Nan, everybody adores Nan. She reminds me of one of those exquisite, blue-eyed dolls her father imports. Now if I were a bachelor, Mr. Hodder—!" Mrs. Constable left the rest to his imagination.

He smiled.

"I'm afraid Miss Ferguson has her own ideas." Running through Hodder's mind, a troubled current, were certain memories connected with Mrs. Warren. Was she the divorced daughter, or was she not?

"But I was going to speak to you about Gertrude. She's had such a hard time, poor dear, my heart has bled for her." There was a barely perceptible tremor in Mrs. Constable's voice. "All that publicity, and the inevitable suffering connected with it! And no one can know the misery she went through, she is so sensitive. But now, at last, she has a chance for happiness—the real thing has come."

"The real thing!" he echoed.

"Yes. She's going to marry a splendid man, Eldridge Sumner. I know the family well. They have always stood for public spirit, and this Mr. Summer, although he is little over thirty, was chairman of that Vice Commission which made such a stir in New York a year ago. He's a lawyer, with a fine future, and they're madly in love. And Gertrude realizes now, after her experience, the true values in life. She was only a child when she married Victor Warren."

"But Mr. Warren," Hodder managed to say, "is still living."

"I sometimes wonder, Mr. Hodder," she went on hurriedly, "whether we can realize how different the world is today from what it was twenty years ago, until something of this kind is actually brought home to us. I shall never forget how distressed, how overwhelmed Mr. Constable and I were when Gertrude got her divorce. I know that they are regarding such things differently in the East, but out here!—We never dreamed that such a thing could happen to us, and we regarded it as a disgrace. But gradually—" she hesitated, and looked at the motionless clergyman —"gradually I began to see Gertrude's point of view, to understand that she had made a mistake, that she had been too young to comprehend what she was doing. Victor Warren had been ruined by money, he wasn't faithful to her, but an extraordinary thing has happened in his case. He's married again, and Gertrude tells me he's absurdly happy, and has two children."

As he listened, Hodder's dominating feeling was amazement that such a course as her daughter had taken should be condoned by this middle-aged lady, a prominent member of his congregation and the wife of a vestryman, who had been nurtured and steeped in Christianity. And not only that: Mrs. Constable was plainly defending a further step, which in his opinion involved a breach of the Seventh Commandment! To have invaded these precincts, the muddy, turbulent river of individualism had risen higher than he would have thought possible . . . .

"Wait!" she implored, checking his speech,—she had been watching him with what was plainly anxiety, "don't say anything yet. I have a letter here which she wrote me—at the time. I kept it. Let me read a part of it to you, that you may understand more fully the tragedy of it."

Mrs. Constable thrust her hand into her lap and drew forth a thickly covered sheet.

"It was written just after she left him—it is an answer to my protest," she explained, and began to read:

"I know I promised to love Victor, mother, but how can one promise to do a thing over which one has no control? I loved him after he stopped loving me. He wasn't a bit suited to me—I see that now—he was attracted by the outside of me, and I never knew what he was like until I married him. His character seemed to change completely; he grew morose and quick-tempered and secretive, and nothing I did pleased him. We led a cat-and-dog life. I never let you know—and yet I see now we might have got along in any other relationship. We were very friendly when we parted, and I'm not a bit jealous because he cares for another woman who I can see is much better suited to him.

"'I can't honestly regret leaving him, and I'm not conscious of having done anything wrong. I don't want to shock you, and I know how terribly you and father must feel, but I can see now, somehow, that I had to go through this experience, terrible as it was, to find myself. If it were thirty years ago, before people began to be liberal in such matters, I shudder to think what might have become of me. I should now be one of those terrible women between fifty and sixty who have tried one frivolity and excess

after another—but I'm not coming to that! And my friends have really been awfully kind, and supported me—even Victor's family. Don't, don't think that I'm not respectable! I know how you look at such things.'" Mrs. Constable closed the letter abruptly.

"I did look at such things in that way," she added, "but I've changed. That letter helped to change me, and the fact that it was Gertrude who had been through this. If you only knew Gertrude, Mr. Hodder, you couldn't possibly think of her as anything but sweet and pure."

Although the extent of Hodder's acquaintance with Mrs. Warren had been but five minutes, the letter had surprisingly retouched to something like brilliancy her faded portrait, the glow in her cheeks, the iris blue in her eyes. He recalled the little shock he had experienced when told that she was divorced, for her appeal had lain in her very freshness, her frank and confiding manner. She was one of those women who seem to say, "Here I am, you can't but like me:" And he had responded—he remembered that—he had liked her. And now her letter, despite his resistance, had made its appeal, so genuinely human was it, so honest, although it expressed a philosophy he abhorred.

Mrs. Constable was watching him mutely, striving to read in his grave eyes the effect of her pleadings.

"You are telling me this, Mrs. Constable—why?" he asked.

"Because I wished you to know the exact situation before I asked you, as a great favour to me, to Mr. Constable, to—to marry her in St. John's. Of course," she went on, controlling her rising agitation, and anticipating a sign of protest, "we shouldn't expect to have any people, —-and Gertrude wasn't married in St. John's before; that wedding was at Passumset our seashore place. Oh, Mr. Hodder, before you answer, think of our feelings, Mr. Constable's and mine! If you could see Mr. Constable, you would know how he suffers—this thing has upset him more than the divorce. His family have such pride. I am so worried about him, and he doesn't eat anything and looks so haggard. I told him I would see you and explain and that seemed to comfort him a little. She is, after all, our child, and we don't want to feel, so far as our church is concerned, that she is an Ishmaelite; we don't want to have the spectacle of her having to go around, outside, to find a clergyman—that would be too dreadful! I know how strict, how unflinching you are, and I admire you for it. But this is a special case."

She paused, breathing deeply, and Hodder gazed at her with pity. What he felt was more than pity; he was experiencing, indeed, but with a deeper emotion, something of that same confusion of values into which Eleanor Goodrich's visit had thrown him. At the same time it had not escaped his logical mind that Mrs. Constable had made her final plea on the score of respectability.

"It gives me great pain to have to refuse you," he said gently.

"Oh, don't," she said sharply, "don't say that! I can't have made the case clear. You are too big, too comprehending, Mr. Hodder, to have a hard-and-fast rule. There must be times—extenuating circumstances—and I believe the canons make it optional for a clergyman to marry the innocent person."

"Yes, it is optional, but I do, not believe it should be. The question is left to the clergyman's' conscience. According to my view, Mrs. Constable, the Church, as the agent of God, effects an indissoluble bond. And much as I should like to do anything in my power for you and Mr. Constable, you have asked the impossible,—believing as I do, there can be no special case, no extenuating circumstance. And it is my duty to tell you it is because people to-day are losing their beliefs that we have this lenient attitude toward the sacred things. If they still held the conviction that marriage is of God, they would labour to make it a success, instead of flying apart at the first sign of what they choose to call incompatibility."

"But surely," she said, "we ought not to be punished for our mistakes! I cannot believe that Christ himself intended that his religion should be so inelastic, so hard and fast, so cruel as you imply. Surely there is enough unhappiness without making more. You speak of incompatibility —but is it in all cases such an insignificant matter? We are beginning to realize in these days something of the effects of character on character,—deteriorating effects, in many instances. With certain persons we are lifted up, inspired to face the battle of life and overcome its difficulties. I have known fine men and women whose lives have been stultified or ruined because they were badly mated. And I cannot see that the character of my own daughter has deteriorated because she has got a divorce from a man with whom she was profoundly out of sympathy—of harmony. On the contrary, she seems more of a person than she was; she has clearer, saner views of life; she has made her mistake and profited by it. Her views changed—Victor Warren's did not. She began to realize that some other woman might have an influence over his life—she had none, simply because he did not love her. And love is not a thing we can compel."

"You are making it very hard for me, Mrs. Constable," he said. "You are now advocating an individualism with which the Church can have no sympathy. Christianity teaches us that life is probationary, and if we seek to avoid the trials sent us, instead of overcoming them, we find ourselves farther than ever from any solution. We have to stand by our mistakes. If marriage is to be a mere trial of compatibility, why go through a ceremony than which there is none more binding in human and divine institutions? One either believes in it, or one does not. And, if belief be lacking, the state provides for the legalization of marriages."

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"If persons wish to be married in church in these days merely because it is respectable, if such be their only reason, they are committing a great wrong. They are taking an oath before God with reservations, knowing that public opinion will release them if the marriage does not fulfil their expectations."

For a moment she gazed at him with parted lips, and pressing her handkerchief to her eyes began silently to cry. The sudden spectacle, in this condition, of a self-controlled woman of the world was infinitely distressing to Hodder, whose sympathies were even more sensitive than (in her attempt to play upon them) she had suspected. . . She was aware that he had got to his feet, and was standing beside her, speaking with an oddly penetrating tenderness.

"I did not mean to be harsh," he said, "and it is not that I do not understand how you feel. You have made my duty peculiarly difficult."

She raised up to him a face from which the mask had fallen, from which the illusory look of youth had fled. He turned away. . . And presently she began to speak again; in disconnected sentences.

"I so want her to be happy—I cannot think, I will not think that she has wrecked her life—it would be too unjust, too cruel. You cannot know what it is to be a woman!"

Before this cry he was silent.

"I don't ask anything of God except that she shall have a chance, and it seems to me that he is making the world better—less harsh for women."

He did not reply. And presently she looked up at him again, steadfastly now, searchingly. The barriers of the conventions were down, she had cast her pride to the winds. He seemed to read in her a certain relief.

"I am going to tell you something, Mr. Hodder, which you may think strange, but I have a reason for saying it. You are still a young man, and I feel instinctively that you have an unusual career before you. You interested me the first time you stepped into the pulpit of St. John's —and it will do me good to talk to you, this once, frankly. You have reiterated to-day, in no uncertain terms, doctrines which I once believed, which I was brought up to think infallible. But I have lived since then, and life itself has made me doubt them.

"I recognize in you a humanity, a sympathy and breadth which you are yourself probably not aware of, all of which is greater than the rule which you so confidently apply to fit all cases. It seems to me that Christ did not intend us to have such rules. He went beyond them, into the spirit.

"Under the conditions of society—of civilization to-day, most marriages are merely a matter of chance. Even judgment cannot foresee the development of character brought about by circumstances, by environment. And in many marriages I have known about intimately both the man and the woman have missed the most precious thing that life can give something I cannot but think—God intends us to have. You see,"—she smiled at him sadly—"I am still a little of an idealist.

"I missed—the thing I am talking about, and it has been the great sorrow of my life—not only on my account, but on my husband's. And so far as I am concerned, I am telling you the truth when I say I should have been content to have lived in a log cabin if—if the gift had been mine. Not all the money in the world, nor the intellect, nor the philanthropy—the so-called interests of life, will satisfy me for its denial. I am a disappointed woman, I sometimes think a bitter woman. I can't believe that life is meant to be so. Those energies have gone into ambition which should have been absorbed by—by something more worth while.

"And I can see so plainly now that my husband would have been far, far happier with another kind of woman. I drew him away from the only work he ever enjoyed—his painting. I do not say he ever could have been a great artist, but he had a little of the divine spark, in his enthusiasm at least—in his assiduity. I shall never forget our first trip abroad, after we were married—he was like a boy in the

galleries, in the studios. I could not understand it then. I had no real sympathy with art, but I tried to make sacrifices, what I thought were Christian sacrifices. The motive power was lacking, and no matter how hard I tried, I was only half-hearted, and he realized it instinctively—no amount of feigning could deceive him. Something deep in me, which was a part of my nature, was antagonistic, stultifying to the essentials of his own being. Of course neither of us saw that then, but the results were not long in developing. To him, art was a sacred thing, and it was impossible for me to regard it with equal seriousness. He drew into himself,—closed up, as it were,—no longer discussed it. I was hurt. And when we came home he kept on in business—he still had his father's affairs to look after—but he had a little workroom at the top of the house where he used to go in the afternoon . . . .

"It was a question which one of us should be warped,—which personality should be annihilated, so to speak, and I was the stronger. And as I look back, Mr. Hodder, what occurred seems to me absolutely inevitable, given the ingredients, as inevitable as a chemical process. We were both striving against each other, and I won—at a tremendous cost. The conflict, one might say, was subconscious, instinctive rather than deliberate. My attitude forced him back into business, although we had enough to live on very comfortably, and then the scale of life began to increase, luxuries formerly unthought of seemed to become necessities. And while it was still afar off I saw a great wave rolling toward us, the wave of that new prosperity which threatened to submerge us, and I seized the buoy fate had placed in our hands,—or rather, by suggestion, I induced my husband to seize it—his name.

"I recognized the genius, the future of Eldon Parr at a time when he was not yet independent and supreme, when association with a Constable meant much to him. Mr. Parr made us, as the saying goes. Needless to say; money has not brought happiness, but a host of hard, false ambitions which culminated in Gertrude's marriage with Victor Warren. I set my heart on the match, helped it in every, way, and until now nothing but sorrow has come of it. But my point—is this,—I see so clearly, now that it is too late, that two excellent persons may demoralize each other if they are ill-mated. It may be possible that I had the germs of false ambition in me when I was a girl, yet I was conscious only of the ideal which is in most women's hearts . . . .

"You must not think that I have laid my soul bare in the hope of changing your mind in regard to Gertrude. I recognize clearly, now, that that is impossible. Oh, I know you do not so misjudge me," she added, reading his quick protest in his face.

"Indeed, I cannot analyze my reasons for telling you something of which I have never spoken to any one else."

Mrs. Constable regarded him fixedly. "You are the strongest reason. You have somehow drawn it out of me . . . . And I suppose I wish some one to profit by it. You can, Mr. Hodder,—I feel sure of that. You may insist now that my argument against your present conviction of the indissolubility of marriage is mere individualism, but I want you to think of what I have told you, not to answer me now. I know your argument by heart, that Christian character develops by submission, by suffering, that it is the woman's place to submit, to efface herself. But the root of the matter goes deeper than that. I am far from deploring sacrifice, yet common-sense tells us that our sacrifice should be guided by judgment, that foolish sacrifices are worse than useless. And there are times when the very limitations of our individuality —necessary limitation's for us—prevent our sacrifices from counting.

"I was wrong, I grant you, grievously wrong in the course I took, even though it were not consciously deliberate. But if my husband had been an artist I should always have remained separated from his real life by a limitation I had no power to remove. The more I tried, the more apparent my lack of insight became to him, the more irritated he grew. I studied his sketches, I studied masterpieces, but it was all hopeless. The thing wasn't in me, and he knew it wasn't. Every remark made him quiver.

"The Church, I think, will grow more liberal, must grow more liberal, if it wishes to keep in touch with people in an age when they are thinking out these questions for themselves. The law cannot fit all cases, I am sure the Gospel can. And sometimes women have an instinct, a kind of second sight into persons, Mr. Hodder. I cannot explain why I feel that you have in you elements of growth which will eventually bring you more into sympathy with the point of view I have set forth, but I do feel it."

Hodder did not attempt to refute her—she had, indeed, made discussion impossible. She knew his arguments, as she had declared, and he had the intelligence to realize that a repetition of them, on his part, would be useless. She brought home to him, as never before, a sense of the anomalistic position of the Church in these modern days, of its appallingly lessened weight even with its own members. As a successor of the Apostles, he had no power over this woman, or very little; he could neither rebuke her, nor sentence her to penance. She recognized his authority to marry her daughter, to baptize her daughter's children, but not to interfere in any way with her spiritual life. It was as a personality he had moved her—a personality apparently not in harmony with his doctrine. Women had hinted at this before. And while Mrs. Constable had not, as she perceived, shaken his conviction, the very vividness

and unexpectedness of a confession from her—had stirred him to the marrow, had opened doors, perforce, which he, himself had marked forbidden, and given him a glimpse beyond before he could lower his eyes. Was there, after all, something in him that responded in spite of himself?

He sat gazing at her, his head bent, his strong hands on the arms of the chair.

"We never can foresee how we may change," he answered, a light in his eyes that was like a smile, yet having no suggestion of levity. And his voice—despite his disagreement—maintained the quality of his sympathy. Neither felt the oddity, then, of the absence of a jarring note. "You may be sure, at least, of my confidence, and of my gratitude for what you have told me."

His tone belied the formality of his speech. Mrs. Constable returned his gaze in silence, and before words came again to either, a step sounded on the threshold and Mr. Constable entered.

Hodder looked at him with a new vision. His face was indeed lined and worn, and dark circles here under his eyes. But at Mrs. Constable's "Here's Mr. Hodder, dear," he came forward briskly to welcome the clergyman.

"How do you do?" he said cordially. "We don't see you very often."

"I have been telling Mr. Hodder that modern rectors of big parishes have far too many duties," said his wife.

And after a few minutes of desultory conversation, the rector left.

# CHAPTER VI

#### "WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

It was one of those moist nights of spring when the air is pungent with the odour of the softened earth, and the gentle breaths that stirred the curtains in Mr. Parr's big dining-room wafted, from the garden, the perfumes of a revived creation,—delicious, hothouse smells. At intervals, showers might be heard pattering on the walk outside. The rector of St. John's was dining with his great parishioner.

Here indeed were a subject for some modern master, a chance to picture for generations to come an aspect of a mighty age, an age that may some day be deemed but a grotesque and anomalistic survival of a more ancient logic; a gargoyle carved out of chaos, that bears on its features a resemblance to the past and the future.

Our scene might almost be mediaeval with its encircling gloom, through which the heavy tapestries and shadowy corners of the huge apartment may be dimly made out. In the center, the soft red glow of the candles, the gleaming silver, the shining cloth, the Church on one side—and what on the other? No name given it now, no royal name, but still Power. The two are still in apposition, not yet in opposition, but the discerning may perchance read a prophecy in the salient features of the priest.

The Man of Power of the beginning of the twentieth century demands a subtler analysis, presents an enigma to which the immortal portraits of forgotten Medicis and Capets give no clew. Imagine, if you can, a Lorenzo or a Grand Louis in a tightly-buttoned frock coat! There must be some logical connection between the habit and the age, since crimson velvet and gold brocade would have made Eldon Parr merely ridiculous.

He is by no means ridiculous, yet take him out of the setting and put him in the street, and you might pass him a dozen times without noticing him. Nature, and perhaps unconscious art, have provided him with a protective exterior; he is the colour of his jungle. After he has crippled you —if you survive—you will never forget him. You will remember his eye, which can be unsheathed like a rapier; you will recall his lips as the expression of a relentless negative. The significance of the slight bridge on the narrow nose is less easy to define. He is neither tall nor short; his face is clean-shaven, save for scanty, unobtrusive reddish tufts high on the cheeks; his hair is thin.

It must be borne in mind, however, that our rector did not see him in his jungle, and perhaps in the traditional nobility of the lion there is a certain truth. An interesting biography of some of the powerful of this earth might be written from the point of view of the confessor or the physician, who find something to love, something to pity, and nothing to fear—thus reversing the sentiments of the public.

Yet the friendship between John Hodder and Eldon Parr defied any definite analysis on the rector's part, and was perhaps the strangest—and most disquieting element that had as yet come into Hodder's life. The nature of his intimacy with the banker, if intimacy it might be called, might have surprised his other parishioners if they could have been hidden spectators of one of these dinners. There were long silences when the medium of communication, tenuous at best, seemed to snap, and the two sat gazing at each other as from mountain peaks across impassable valleys. With all the will in the world, their souls lost touch, though the sense in the clergyman of the other's vague yearning for human companionship was never absent. It was this yearning that attracted Hodder, who found in it a deep pathos.

After one of these intervals of silence, Eldon Parr looked up from his claret.

"I congratulate you, Hodder, on the stand you took in regard to
Constable's daughter," he said.

"I didn't suppose it was known," answered the rector, in surprise.

"Constable told me. I have reason to believe that he doesn't sympathize with his wife in her attitude on this matter. It's pulled him down, —you've noticed that he looks badly?"

"Yes," said the rector. He did not care to discuss the affair; he had hoped it would not become known; and he shunned the congratulations of Gordon Atterbury, which in such case would be inevitable. And in spite of the conviction that he had done his duty, the memory of his talk with Mrs. Constable never failed to make him, uncomfortable.

Exasperation crept into Mr. Pares voice.

"I can't think what's got into women in these times—at Mrs. Constable's age they ought to know better. Nothing restrains them. They have reached a point where they don't even respect the Church. And when that happens, it is serious indeed. The Church is the governor on our social engine, and it is supposed to impose a restraint upon the lawless."

Hodder could not refrain from smiling a little at the banker's conception.

"Doesn't that reduce the Church somewhere to the level of the police force?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Eldon Parr, whose feelings seemed to be rising. "I am sorry for Constable. He feels the shame of this thing keenly, and he ought to go away for a while to one of these quiet resorts. I offered him my car. Sometimes I think that women have no morals. At any rate, this modern notion of giving them their liberty is sheer folly. Look what they have done with it! Instead of remaining at home, where they belong, they are going out into the world and turning it topsy-turvy. And if a man doesn't let them have a free hand, they get a divorce and marry some idiot who will."

Mr. Parr pushed back his chair and rose abruptly, starting for the door. The rector followed him, forcibly struck by the unusual bitterness in his tone.

"If I have spoken strongly, it is because I feel strongly," he said in a strange, thickened voice. "Hodder, how would you like to live in this house—alone?"

The rector looked down upon him with keen, comprehending eyes, and saw Eldon Parr as he only, of all men, had seen him. For he himself did not understand his own strange power of drawing forth the spirit from its shell, of compelling the inner, suffering thing to reveal itself.

"This poison," Eldon Parr went on unevenly, "has eaten into my own family. My daughter, who might have been a comfort and a companion, since she chose not to marry, was carried away by it, and thought it incumbent upon her to have a career of her own. And now I have a choice of thirty rooms, and not a soul to share them with. Sometimes, at night, I make up my mind to sell this house. But I can't do it—something holds me back, hope, superstition, or whatever you've a mind to call it. You've never seen all of the house, have you?" he asked.

The rector slowly shook his head, and the movement might have been one that he would have used in acquiescence to the odd whim of a child. Mr. Parr led the way up the wide staircase to the corridor above, traversing chamber after chamber, turning on the lights.

"These were my wife's rooms," he said, "they are just as she left them. And these my daughter Alison's, when she chooses to pay me a visit. I didn't realize that I should have to spend the last years of my life alone. And I meant, when I gave my wife a house, to have it the best in the city. I spared nothing on it, as you see, neither care nor money. I had the best architect I could find, and used the best material. And what good is it to me? Only a reminder—of what might have been. But I've got a boy,

Hodder,—I don't know whether I've ever spoken of him to you—Preston. He's gone away, too. But I've always had the hope that he might come back and get decently married, and live, here. That's why I stay. I'll show you his picture."

They climbed to the third floor, and while Mr. Parr way searching for the electric switch, a lightning flash broke over the forests of the park, prematurely revealing the room. It was a boy's room, hung with photographs of school and college crews and teams and groups of intimates, with deep window seats, and draped pennons of Harvard University over the fireplace. Eldon Parr turned to one of the groups on the will, the earliest taken at school.

"There he is," he said, pointing out a sunny little face at the bottom, a boy of twelve, bareheaded, with short, crisping yellow hair, smiling lips and laughing eyes. "And here he is again," indicating another group. Thus he traced him through succeeding years until they came to those of college.

"There he is," said the rector. "I think I can pick him out now."

"Yes; that's Preston," said his father, staring hard at the picture. The face had developed, the body had grown almost to man's estate, but the hint of crispness was still in the hair, the mischievous laughter in the eyes. The rector gazed earnestly at the face, remembering his own boyhood, his own youth, his mind dwelling, too, on what he had heard of the original of the portrait. What had happened to the boy, to bring to naught the fair promise of this earlier presentment?

He was aroused by the voice of Eldon Parr, who had sunk into one of the leather chairs.

"I can see him now," he was saying, "as he used to come running down that long flight of stone steps in Ransome Street to meet me when I came home. Such laughter! And once, in his eagerness, he fell and cut his forehead. I shall never forget how I felt. And when I picked him up he tried to laugh still, with the tears rolling down his face. You know the way a child's breath catches, Hodder? He was always laughing. And how he used to cling to me, and beg me to take him out, and show such an interest in everything! He was a bright boy, a remarkable child, I thought, but I suppose it was my foolishness. He analyzed all he saw, and when he used to go off in my car, Brennan, the engineer, would always beg to have him in the cab. And such sympathy! He knew in an instant when I was worried. I had dreams of what that boy would become, but I was too sure of it. I went on doing other things—there were so many things, and I was a slave to them. And before I knew it, he'd gone off to school. That was the year I moved up here, and my wife died. And after that, all seemed to go wrong. Perhaps I was too severe; perhaps they didn't understand him at boarding-school; perhaps I didn't pay enough attention to him. At any rate, the first thing I knew his whole nature seemed to have changed. He got into scrape after scrape at Harvard, and later he came within an ace of marrying a woman.

"He's my weakness to-day. I can say no to everybody in the world but to him, and when I try to remember him as he used to come down those steps on Ransome Street . . . .

"He never knew how much I cared—that what I was doing was all for him, building for him, that he might carry on my work. I had dreams of developing this city, the great Southwest, and after I had gone Preston was to bring them to fruition.

"For some reason I never was able to tell him all this—as I am telling you. The words would not come. We had grown apart. And he seemed to think—God knows why!—he seemed to think I disliked him. I had Langmaid talk to him, and other men I trusted—tell him what an unparalleled opportunity he had to be of use in the world. Once I thought I had him started straight and then a woman came along—off the streets, or little better. He insisted on marrying her and wrecking his life, and when I got her out of the way, as any father would have done, he left me. He has never forgiven me. Most of the time I haven't even the satisfaction of knowing were he is—London, Paris, or New York. I try not to think of what he does. I ought to cut him off,—I can't do it—I can't do it, Hodder—he's my one weakness still. I'm afraid—he'd sink out of sight entirely, and it's the one hold I have left on him."

Eldon Parr paused, with a groan that betokened not only a poignant sorrow, but also something of relief—for the tortures of not being able to unburden himself had plainly become intolerable. He glanced up and met the compassionate eyes of the rector, who stood leaning against the mantel.

"With Alison it was different," he said. "I never understood her—even when she was a child—and I used to look at her and wonder that she could be my daughter. She was moody, intense, with a yearning for affection I've since sometimes thought—she could not express. I did not feel the need of affection in those days, so absorbed was I in building up, —so absorbed and driven, you might say. I suppose I must accept my punishment as just. But the child was always distant with me, and I always remember her in rebellion; a dark little thing with a quivering lip, hair awry, and eyes that flashed through her tears. She would take any amount of punishment rather than admit she had been in the

wrong. I recall she had once a fox terrier that never left her, that fought all the dogs in the neighbourhood and destroyed the rugs and cushions in the house. I got rid of it one summer when she was at the sea, and I think she never forgave me. The first question she asked when she came home was for that dog—Mischief, his name was—for Mischief. I told her what I had done. It took more courage than I had thought. She went to her room, locked herself in, and stayed there, and we couldn't get her to come out for two days; she wouldn't even eat.

"Perhaps she was jealous of Preston, but she never acknowledged it. When she was little she used once in a while to come shyly and sit on my lap, and look at me without saying anything. I hadn't the slightest notion what was in the child's mind, and her reserve increased as she grew older. She seemed to have developed a sort of philosophy of her own even before she went away to school, and to have certain strongly defined tastes. She liked, for instance, to listen to music, and for that very reason would never learn to play. We couldn't make her, as a child.

"Bad music, she said, offended her. She painted, she was passionately fond of flowers, and her room was always filled with them. When she came back from school to live with me, she built a studio upstairs. After the first winter, she didn't care to go out much. By so pronounced a character, young men in general were not attracted, but there were a few who fell under a sort of spell. I can think of no other words strong enough, and I used to watch them when they came here with a curious interest. I didn't approve of all of them. Alison would dismiss them or ignore them or be kind to them as she happened to feel, yet it didn't seem to make any difference. One I suspect she was in love with —a fellow without a cent.

"Then there was Bedloe Hubbell. I have reason enough to be thankful now that she didn't care for him. They've made him president, you know, of this idiotic Municipal League, as they call it. But in those days he hadn't developed any nonsense, he was making a good start at the bar, and was well off. His father was Elias Hubbell, who gave the Botanical Garden to the city. I wanted her to marry Gordon Atterbury. He hung on longer than any of them—five or six years; but she wouldn't hear of it. That was how the real difference developed between us, although the trouble was deep rooted, for we never really understood each other. I had set my heart on it, and perhaps I was too dictatorial and insistent. I don't know. I meant the best for her, God knows . . . . Gordon never got over it. It dried him up." . . . . Irritation was creeping back into the banker's voice.

"Then it came into Alison's head that she wanted to 'make something of her life,'—as she expressed it. She said she was wasting herself, and began going to lectures with a lot of faddish women, became saturated with these nonsensical ideas about her sex that are doing so much harm nowadays. I suppose I was wrong in my treatment from the first. I never knew how to handle her, but we grew like flint and steel. I'll say this for her, she kept quiet enough, but she used to sit opposite me at the table, and I knew all the time what she was thinking of, and then I'd break out. Of course she'd defend herself, but she had her temper under better control than I. She wanted to go away for a year or two and study landscape gardening, and then come back and establish herself in an office here. I wouldn't listen to it. And one morning, when she was late to breakfast, I delivered an ultimatum. I gave her a lecture on a woman's place and a woman's duty, and told her that if she didn't marry she'd have to stay here and live quietly with me, or I'd disinherit her."

Hodder had become absorbed in this portrait of Alison Parr, drawn by her father with such unconscious vividness.

"And then?" he asked.

In spite of the tone of bitterness in which he had spoken, Eldon Parr smiled. It was a reluctant tribute to his daughter.

"I got an ultimatum in return," he said. "Alison should have been a man." His anger mounted quickly as he recalled the scene. "She said she had thought it all out: that our relationship had become impossible; that she had no doubt it was largely her fault, but that was the way she was made, and she couldn't change. She had, naturally, an affection for me as her father, but it was very plain we couldn't get along together: she was convinced that she had a right to individual freedom,—as she spoke of it,—to develop herself. She knew, if she continued to live with me on the terms I demanded, that her character would deteriorate. Certain kinds of sacrifice she was capable of, she thought, but what I asked would be a useless one. Perhaps I didn't realize it, but it was slavery. Slavery!" he repeated, "the kind of slavery her mother had lived . . . ."

He took a turn around the room.

"So far as money was concerned, she was indifferent to it. She had enough from her mother to last until she began to make more. She wouldn't take any from me in any case. I laughed, yet I have never

been so angry in my life. Nor was it wholly anger, Hodder, but a queer tangle of feelings I can't describe. There was affection mixed up in it—I realized afterward—but I longed to take her and shake her and lock her up until she should come to her senses: I couldn't. I didn't dare. I was helpless. I told her to go. She didn't say anything more, but there was a determined look in her eyes when she kissed me as I left for the office. I spent a miserable day. More than once I made up my mind to go home, but pride stopped me. I really didn't think she meant what she said. When I got back to the house in the afternoon she had left for New York.

"Then I began to look forward to the time when her money would give out. She went to Paris with another young woman, and studied there, and then to England. She came back to New York, hired an apartment and a studio, and has made a success."

The rector seemed to detect an unwilling note of pride at the magic word.

"It isn't the kind of success I think much of, but it's what she started out to do. She comes out to see me, once in a while, and she designed that garden."

He halted in front of the clergyman.

"I suppose you think it's strange, my telling you this," he said. "It has come to the point," he declared vehemently, "where it relieves me to tell somebody, and you seem to be a man of discretion and common-sense."

Hodder looked down into Mr. Parr's face, and was silent. Perhaps he recognized, as never before, the futility of the traditional words of comfort, of rebuke. He beheld a soul in torture, and realized with sudden sharpness how limited was his knowledge of the conditions of existence of his own time. Everywhere individualism reared its ugly head, everywhere it seemed plausible to plead justification; and once more he encountered that incompatibility of which Mrs. Constable had spoken! He might blame the son, blame the daughter, yet he could not condemn them utterly . . . . One thing he saw clearly, that Eldon Parr had slipped into what was still, for him, a meaningless hell.

The banker's manner suddenly changed, reverted to what it had been. He arose.

"I've tried to do my duty as I saw it, and it comes to this—that we who have spent the best years of our lives in striving to develop this country have no thanks from our children or from any one else."

With his hand on the electric switch, he faced Hodder almost defiantly as he spoke these words, and suddenly snapped off the light, as though the matter admitted of no discussion. In semi-darkness they groped down the upper flight of stairs . . . .

# CHAPTER VII

### THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD

### I

When summer arrived, the birds of brilliant plumage of Mr. Hodder's flock arose and flew lightly away, thus reversing the seasons. Only the soberer ones came fluttering into the cool church out of the blinding heat, and settled here and there throughout the nave. The ample Mr. Bradley, perspiring in an alpaca coat, took up the meagre collection on the right of the centre aisle; for Mr. Parr, properly heralded, had gone abroad on one of those periodical, though lonely tours that sent anticipatory shivers of delight down the spines of foreign picture-dealers. The faithful Gordon Atterbury was worshipping at the sea, and even Mr. Constable and Mr. Plimpton, when recalled to the city by financial cares, succumbed to the pagan influence of the sun, and were usually to be found on Sunday mornings on the wide veranda of the country club, with glasses containing liquid and ice beside them, and surrounded by heaps of newspapers.

To judge by St. John's, the city was empty. But on occasions, before he himself somewhat tardily departed,—drawn thither by a morbid though impelling attraction, Hodder occasionally walked through Dalton Street of an evening. If not in St. John's, summer was the season in Dalton Street. It flung open its doors and windows and moved out on the steps and the pavements, and even on the asphalt; and the music of its cafes and dance-halls throbbed feverishly through the hot nights. Dalton Street resorted

neither to country club nor church.

Mr. McCrae, Hodder's assistant, seemed to regard these annual phenomena with a grim philosophy,—a relic, perhaps, of the Calvinistic determinism of his ancestors. He preached the same indefinite sermons, with the same imperturbability, to the dwindled congregations in summer and the enlarged ones in winter. But Hodder was capable of no such resignation—if resignation it were, for the self-contained assistant continued to be an enigma; and it was not without compunction that he left, about the middle of July, on his own vacation. He was tired, and yet he seemed to have accomplished nothing in this first year of the city parish whereof he had dreamed. And it was, no doubt, for that very reason that he was conscious of a depressing exhaustion as his train rolled eastward over that same high bridge that spanned the hot and muddy waters of the river. He felt a fugitive. In no months since he had left the theological seminary, had he seemingly accomplished so little; in no months had he had so magnificent an opportunity.

After he had reached the peaceful hills at Bremerton—where he had gone on Mrs. Whitely's invitation—he began to look back upon the spring and winter as a kind of mad nightmare, a period of ceaseless, distracted, and dissipated activity, of rushing hither and thither with no results. He had been aware of invisible barriers, restricting, hemming him in on all sides. There had been no time for reflection; and now that he had a breathing space, he was unable to see how he might reorganize his work in order to make it more efficient.

There were other perplexities, brought about by the glimpses he had had into the lives and beliefs—or rather unbeliefs—of his new parishioners. And sometimes, in an unwonted moment of pessimism, he asked himself why they thought it necessary to keep all that machinery going when it had so little apparent effect on their lives? He sat wistfully in the chancel of the little Bremerton church and looked into the familiar faces of those he had found in it when he came to it, and of those he had brought into it, wondering why he had been foolish enough to think himself endowed for the larger work. Here, he had been a factor, a force in the community, had entered into its life and affections. What was he there?

Nor did it tend to ease his mind that he was treated as one who has passed on to higher things.

"I was afraid you'd work too hard," said Mrs. Whitely, in her motherly way. "I warned you against it, Mr. Hodder. You never spared yourself, but in a big city parish it's different. But you've made such a success, Nelson tells me, and everybody likes you there. I knew they would, of course. That is our only comfort in losing you, that you have gone to the greater work. But we do miss you."

## II

The air of Bremerton, and later the air of Bar Harbor had a certain reviving effect. And John Hodder, although he might be cast down, had never once entertained the notion of surrender. He was inclined to attribute the depression through which he had passed, the disappointment he had undergone as a just punishment for an overabundance of ego,—only Hodder used the theological term for the same sin. Had he not, after all, laboured largely for his own glory, and not Gods? Had he ever forgotten himself? Had the idea ever been far from his thoughts that it was he, John Hodder, who would build up the parish of St. John's into a living organization of faith and works? The curious thing was that he had the power, and save in moments of weariness he felt it in him. He must try to remember always that this power was from God. But why had he been unable to apply it?

And there remained disturbingly in his memory certain phrases of Mrs.
Constable's, such as "elements of growth."

He would change, she had said; and he had appeared to her as one with depths. Unsuspected depths—pockets that held the steam, which was increasing in pressure. At Bremerton, it had not gathered in the pockets, he had used it all—all had counted; but in the feverish, ceaseless activity of the city parish he had never once felt that intense satisfaction of emptying himself, nor, the sweet weariness that follows it. His seemed the weariness of futility. And introspection was revealing a crack—after so many years—in that self that he had believed to be so strongly welded. Such was the strain of the pent-up force. He recognized the danger-signal. The same phenomenon had driven him into the Church, where the steam had found an outlet—until now. And yet, so far as his examination went, he had not lost his beliefs, but the power of communicating them to others.

Bremerton, and the sight of another carrying on the work in which he had been happy, weighed upon him, and Bar Harbor offered distraction. Mrs. Larrabbee had not hesitated to remind him of his promise to visit her. If the gallery of portraits of the congregation of St. John's were to be painted, this lady's, at the age of thirty, would not be the least interesting. It would have been out of place in no

ancestral hall, and many of her friends were surprised, after her husband's death, that she did not choose one wherein to hang it. She might have. For she was the quintessence of that feminine product of our country at which Europe has never ceased to wonder, and to give her history would no more account for her than the process of manufacture explains the most delicate of scents. Her poise, her quick detection of sham in others not so fortunate, her absolute conviction that all things were as they ought to be; her charity, her interest in its recipients; her smile, which was kindness itself; her delicate features, her white skin with its natural bloom; the grace of her movements, and her hair, which had a different color in changing lights—such an ensemble is not to be depicted save by a skilled hand.

The late Mr. Larrabbee's name was still printed on millions of bright labels encircling cubes of tobacco, now manufactured by a Trust. However, since the kind that entered Mrs. Larrabbee's house, or houses, was all imported from Egypt or Cuba, what might have been in the nature of an unpleasant reminder was remote from her sight, and she never drove into the northern part of the city, where some hundreds of young women bent all day over the cutting-machines. To enter too definitely into Mrs. Larrabbee's history, therefore, were merely to be crude, for she is not a lady to caricature. Her father had been a steamboat captain—once an honoured calling in the city of her nativity—a devout Presbyterian who believed in the most rigid simplicity. Few who remembered the gaucheries of Captain Corington's daughter on her first presentation to his family's friends could recognize her in the cosmopolitan Mrs. Larrabbee. Why, with New York and London at her disposal, she elected to remain in the Middle West, puzzled them, though they found her answer, "that she belonged there," satisfying Grace Larrabbee's cosmopolitanism was of that apperception that knows the value of roots, and during her widowhood she had been thrusting them out. Mrs. Larrabbee followed by "of" was much more important than just Mrs. Larrabbee. And she was, moreover, genuinely attached to her roots.

Her girlhood shyness—rudeness, some called it, mistaking the effect for the cause—had refined into a manner that might be characterized as 'difficile', though Hodder had never found her so. She liked direct men; to discover no guile on first acquaintance went a long way with her, and not the least of the new rector's social triumphs had been his simple conquest.

Enveloped in white flannel, she met his early train at the Ferry; an unusual compliment to a guest, had he but known it, but he accepted it as a tribute to the Church.

"I was so afraid you wouldn't come," she said, in a voice that conveyed indeed more than a perfunctory expression. She glanced at him as he sat beside her on the cushions of the flying motor boat, his strange eyes fixed upon the blue mountains of the island whither they were bound, his unruly hair fanned by the wind.

"Why?" he asked, smiling at the face beneath the flying veil.

"You need the rest. I believe in men taking their work seriously, but not so seriously as you do."

She was so undisguisedly glad to see him that he could scarcely have been human if he had not responded. And she gave him, in that fortnight, a glimpse of a life that was new and distracting: at times made him forget —and he was willing to forget—the lower forms of which it was the quintessence,—the factories that hummed, the forges that flung their fires into the night in order that it might exist; the Dalton Streets that went without. The effluvia from hot asphalt bore no resemblance to the salt-laden air that rattled the Venetian blinds of the big bedroom to which he was assigned. Her villa was set high above the curving shore, facing a sheltered terrace-garden resplendent in its August glory; to seaward, islands danced in the haze; and behind the house, in the sunlight, were massed spruces of a brilliant arsenic green with purple cones. The fluttering awnings were striped cardinal and white.

Nature and man seemed to have conspired to make this place vividly unreal, as a toy village comes painted from the shop. There were no half-tones, no poverty—in sight, at least; no litter. On the streets and roads, at the casino attached to the swimming-pool and at the golf club were to be seen bewildering arrays of well-dressed, well-fed women intent upon pleasure and exercise. Some of them gave him glances that seemed to say, "You belong to us," and almost succeeded in establishing the delusion. The whole effect upon Hodder, in the state of mind in which he found himself, was reacting, stimulating, disquieting. At luncheons and dinners, he was what is known as a "success"—always that magic word.

He resisted, and none so quick as women to scent resistance. His very unbending attitude aroused their inherent craving for rigidity in his profession; he was neither plastic, unctuous, nor subservient; his very homeliness, redeemed by the eyes and mouth, compelled their attention. One of them told Mrs. Larrabbee that that rector of hers would "do something."

But what, he asked himself, was he resisting? He was by no means a Puritan; and while he looked

upon a reasonable asceticism as having its place in the faith that he professed, it was no asceticism that prevented a more complete acquiescence on his part in the mad carnival that surrounded him.

"I'm afraid you don't wholly approve of Bar Harbor," his hostess remarked; one morning.

"At first sight, it is somewhat staggering to the provincial mind," he replied.

She smiled at him, yet with knitted brows.

"You are always putting me off—I never can tell what you think. And yet I'm sure you have opinions. You think these people frivolous, of course."

"Most of them are so," he answered, "but that is a very superficial criticism. The question is, why are they so? The sight of Bar Harbor leads a stranger to the reflection that the carnival mood has become permanent with our countrymen, and especially our countrywomen."

"The carnival mood," she repeated thoughtfully, "yes, that expresses it. We are light, we are always trying to get away from ourselves, and sometimes I wonder whether there are any selves to get away from. You ought to atop us," she added, almost accusingly, "to bring us to our senses."

"That's just it," he agreed, "why don't we? Why can't we?"

"If more clergymen were like you, I think perhaps you might."

His tone, his expression, were revelations.

"I—!" he exclaimed sharply, and controlled himself. But in that moment Grace Larrabbee had a glimpse of the man who had come to arouse in her an intense curiosity. For an instant a tongue of the fires of Vulcan had shot forth, fires that she had suspected.

"Aren't you too ambitious?" she asked gently. And again, although she did not often blunder, she saw him wince. "I don't mean ambitious for yourself. But surely you have made a remarkable beginning at St. John's. Everybody admires and respects you, has confidence in you. You are so sure of yourself," she hesitated a moment, for she had never ventured to discuss religion with him, "of your faith. Clergymen ought not to be apologetic, and your conviction cannot fail, in the long run, to have its effect."

"Its effect,—on what?" he asked.

Mrs. Larrabbee was suddenly, at sea. And she prided herself on a lack of that vagueness generally attributed to her sex.

"On—on everything. On what we were talking about,—the carnival feeling, the levity, on the unbelief of the age. Isn't it because the control has been taken off?"

He saw an opportunity to slip into smoother waters.

"The engine has lost its governor?"

"Exactly!" cried Mrs. Larrabbee. "What a clever simile!"

"It is Mr. Pares," said Hodder. "Only he was speaking of other symptoms,
Socialism, and its opposite, individualism,—not carnivalism."

"Poor man," said Mrs. Larrabbee, accepting the new ground as safer, yet with a baffled feeling that Hodder had evaded her once more, "he has had his share of individualism and carnivalism. His son Preston was here last month, and was taken out to the yacht every night in an unspeakable state. And Alison hasn't been what might be called a blessing."

"She must be unusual," said the rector, musingly.

"Oh, Alison is a Person. She has become quite the fashion, and has more work than she can possibly attend to. Very few women with her good looks could have done what she has without severe criticism, and something worse, perhaps. The most extraordinary thing about her is her contempt for what her father has gained, and for conventionalities. It always amuses me when I think that she might have been the wife of Gordon Atterbury. The Goddess of Liberty linked to—what?"

Hodder thought instinctively of the Church. But he remained silent.

"As a rule, men are such fools about the women they wish to marry," she continued. "She would have led him a dance for a year or two, and then calmly and inexorably left him. And there was her father, with all his ability and genius, couldn't see it either, but fondly imagined that Alison as Gordon

Atterbury's wife, would magically become an Atterbury and a bourgeoise, see that the corners were dusted in the big house, sew underwear for the poor, and fast in Lent."

"And she is happy—where she is?" he inquired somewhat naively.

"She is self-sufficient," said Mrs. Larrabbee, with unusual feeling, "and that is just what most women are not, in these days. Oh, why has life become such a problem? Sometimes I think, with all that I have, I'm not, so well off as one of those salesgirls in Ferguson's, at home. I'm always searching for things to do—nothing is thrust on me. There are the charities—Galt House, and all that, but I never seem to get at anything, at the people I'd like to help. It's like sending money to China. There is no direct touch any more. It's like seeing one's opportunities through an iron grating."

Hodder started at the phrase, so exactly had she expressed his own case.

"Ah," he said, "the iron grating bars the path of the Church, too."

And just what was the iron grating?

They had many moments of intimacy during that fort night, though none in which the plumb of their conversation descended to such a depth. For he was, as she had said, always "putting her off." Was it because he couldn't satisfy her craving? give her the solution for which—he began to see—she thirsted? Why didn't that religion that she seemed outwardly to profess and accept without qualification—the religion he taught set her at rest? show her the path?

Down in his heart he knew that he feared to ask.

That Mrs. Larrabbee was still another revelation, that she was not at rest, was gradually revealed to him as the days passed. Her spirit, too, like his own, like 'Mrs Constable's, like Eldon Parr's, like Eleanor Goodrich's, was divided against itself; and this phenomenon in Mrs. Larrabbee was perhaps a greater shock to him, since he had always regarded her as essentially in equilibrium. One of his reasons, indeed, —in addition to the friendship that had grown up between them,—for coming to visit her had been to gain the effect of her poise on his own. Poise in a modern woman, leading a modern life. It was thus she attracted him. It was not that he ignored her frivolous side; it was nicely balanced by the other, and that other seemed growing. The social, she accepted at what appeared to be its own worth. Unlike Mrs. Plimpton, for instance, she was so innately a lady that she had met with no resistance in the Eastern watering places, and her sense of values had remained the truer for it.

He did not admire her the less now he had discovered that the poise was not so adjusted as he had thought it, but his feeling about her changed, grew more personal, more complicated. She was showing an alarming tendency to lean on him at a time when he was examining with some concern his own supports. She possessed intelligence and fascination, she was a woman whose attentions would have flattered and disturbed any man with a spark of virility, and Hodder had constantly before his eyes the spectacle of others paying her court. Here were danger-signals again!

Mrs. Plaice, a middle-aged English lady staying in the house, never appeared until noon. Breakfast was set out in the tiled and sheltered loggia, where they were fanned by the cool airs of a softly breathing ocean. The world, on these mornings, had a sparkling unreality, the cold, cobalt sea stretching to sun-lit isles, and beyond, the vividly painted shore,—the setting of luxury had never been so complete. And the woman who sat opposite him seemed, like one of her own nectarines, to be the fruit that crowned it all.

Why not yield to the enchantment? Why rebel, when nobody else complained? Were it not more simple to accept what life sent in its orderly course instead of striving for an impossible and shadowy ideal? Very shadowy indeed! And to what end were his labours in that smoky, western city, with its heedless Dalton Streets, which went their inevitable ways? For he had the choice.

To do him justice, he was slow in arriving at a realization that seemed to him so incredible, so preposterous. He was her rector! And he had accepted, all unconsciously, the worldly point of view as to Mrs. Larrabbee,—that she was reserved for a worldly match. A clergyman's wife! What would become of the clergyman? And yet other clergymen had married rich women, despite the warning of the needle's eye.

She drove him in her buckboard to Jordan's Pond, set, like a jewel in the hills, and even to the deep, cliff bordered inlet beyond North East, which reminded her, she said, of a Norway fiord. And sometimes they walked together through wooded paths that led them to beetling shores, and sat listening to the waves crashing far below. Silences and commonplaces became the rule instead of the eager discussions

with which they had begun,—on such safer topics as the problem of the social work of modern churches. Her aromatic presence, and in this setting, continually disturbed him: nature's perfumes, more definable, —exhalations of the sea and spruce,—mingled with hers, anaesthetics compelling lethargy. He felt himself drowning, even wished to drown, —and yet strangely resisted.

"I must go to-morrow," he said.

"To-morrow—why? There is a dinner, you know, and Mrs. Waterman wished so particularly to meet you."

He did not look at her. The undisguised note of pain found an echo within him. And this was Mrs. Larrabbee!

"I am sorry, but I must," he told her, and she may not have suspected the extent to which the firmness was feigned.

"You have promised to make other visits? The Fergusons,—they said they expected you."

"I'm going west—home," he said, and the word sounded odd.

"At this season! But there is nobody in church, at least only a few, and Mr. McCrae can take care of those—he always does. He likes it."

Hodder smiled in spite of himself. He might have told her that those outside the church were troubling him. But he did not, since he had small confidence in being able to bring them in.

"I have been away too long, I am getting spoiled," he replied, with an attempt at lightness. He forced his eyes to meet hers, and she read in them an unalterable resolution.

"It is my opinion you are too conscientious, even for a clergyman," she said, and now it was her lightness that hurt. She protested no more. And as she led the way homeward through the narrow forest path, her head erect, still maintaining this lighter tone, he wondered how deeply she had read him; how far her intuition had carried her below the surface; whether she guessed the presence of that stifled thing in him which was crying feebly for life; whether it was that she had discovered, or something else? He must give it the chance it craved. He must get away—he must think. To surrender now would mean destruction. . .

Early the next morning, as he left the pier in the motor boat, he saw a pink scarf waving high above him from the loggia. And he flung up his hand in return. Mingled with a faint sense of freedom was intense sadness.

# CHAPTER VIII

#### THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE

From the vantage point of his rooms in the parish house, Hodder reviewed the situation. And despite the desires thronging after him in his flight he had the feeling of once who, in the dark, has been very near to annihilation. What had shaken him most was the revelation of an old enemy which, watching its chance, had beset him at the first opportunity; and at a time when the scheme of life, which he flattered himself to have solved forever, was threatening once more to resolve itself into fragments. He had, as if by a miracle, escaped destruction in some insidious form.

He shrank instinctively from an analysis of the woman in regard to whom his feelings were, so complicated, and yet by no means lacking in tenderness. But as time went on, he recognized more and more that she had come into his life at a moment when he was peculiarly vulnerable. She had taken him off his guard. That the brilliant Mrs. Larrabbee should have desired him—or what she believed was him—was food enough for thought, was an indication of an idealism in her nature that he would not have suspected. From a worldly point of view, the marriage would have commended itself to none of her friends. Yet Hodder perceived clearly that he could not have given her what she desired, since the marriage would have killed it in him. She offered him the other thing. Once again he had managed somehow to cling to his dream of what the relationship between man and woman should be, and he saw more and more distinctly that he had coveted not only the jewel, but its setting. He could not see her out of it—she faded. Nor could he see himself in it.

Luxury,—of course,—that was what he had spurned. Luxury in contrast to Dalton Street, to the whirring factories near the church which discharged, at nightfall, their quotas of wan women and stunted children. And yet here he was catering to luxury, providing religion for it! Religion!

Early in November he heard that Mrs. Larrabbee had suddenly decided to go abroad without returning home. . . .

That winter Hodder might have been likened to a Niagara for energy; an unharnessed Niagara—such would have been his own comment. He seemed to turn no wheels, or only a few at least, and feebly. And while the spectacle of their rector's zeal was no doubt an edifying one to his parishioners, they gave him to understand that they would have been satisfied with less. They admired, but chided him gently; and in February Mr. Parr offered to take him to Florida. He was tired, and it was largely because he dreaded the reflection inevitable in a period of rest, that he refused. . . . And throughout these months, the feeling recurred, with increased strength, that McCrae was still watching him, —the notion persisted that his assistant held to a theory of his own, if he could but be induced to reveal it. Hodder refrained from making the appeal. Sometimes he was on the point of losing patience with this enigmatic person.

Congratulations on the fact that his congregation was increasing brought him little comfort, since a cold analysis of the newcomers who were renting pews was in itself an indication of the lack of that thing he so vainly sought. The decorous families who were now allying themselves with St. John's did so at the expense of other churches either more radical or less fashionable. What was it he sought? What did he wish? To fill the church to overflowing with the poor and needy as well as the rich, and to enter into the lives of all. Yet at a certain point he met a resistance that was no less firm because it was baffling. The Word, on his lips at least, seemed to have lost it efficacy. The poor heeded it not, and he preached to the rich as from behind a glass. They went on with their carnival. Why this insatiate ambition on his part in an age of unbelief? Other clergymen, not half so fortunate, were apparently satisfied; or else—from his conversation with them—either oddly optimistic or resigned. Why not he?

It was strange, in spite of everything, that hope sprang up within him, a recurrent geyser.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, he found himself turning more and more towards that line of least resistance which other churches were following, as the one Modern Solution,—institutional work. After all, in the rescuing of bodies some method might yet be discovered to revive the souls. And there were the children! Hodder might have been likened to an explorer, seeking a direct path when there was none—a royal road. And if this were oblique it offered, at least, a definite outlet for his energy.

Such was, approximately, the state of his mind early in March when Gordon Atterbury came back from a conference in New York on institutional work, and filled with enthusiasm. St. John's was incredibly behind the times, so he told Hodder, and later the vestry. Now that they had, in Mr. Hodder, a man of action and ability—ahem! there was no excuse for a parish as wealthy as St. John's, a parish with their opportunities, considering the proximity of Dalton Street neighbourhood, not enlarging and modernizing the parish house, not building a settlement house with kindergartens, schools, workshops, libraries, a dispensary and day nurseries. It would undoubtedly be an expense—and Mr. Atterbury looked at Mr. Parr, who drummed on the vestry table. They would need extra assistants, deaconesses, trained nurses, and all that. But there were other churches in the city that were ahead of St. John's—a reproach —ahem!

Mr. Parr replied that he had told the rector that he stood ready to contribute to such a scheme when he, the rector; should be ready to approve it. And he looked at Mr. Hodder.

Mr. Hodder said he had been considering the matter ever since his arrival. He had only one criticism of institutional work, that in his observation it did not bring the people whom it reached into the Church in any great numbers. Perhaps that were too much to ask, in these days. For his part he would willingly assume the extra burden, and he was far from denying the positive good such work accomplished through association and by the raising of standards.

Mr. Ferguson declared his readiness to help. Many of his salesgirls, he said, lived in this part of the city, and he would be glad to do anything in his power towards keeping them out of the dance-halls and such places.

A committee was finally appointed consisting of Mr. Parr, Mr. Atterbury, and the rector, to consult architects and to decide upon a site.

Hodder began a correspondence with experts in other cities, collected plans, pamphlets, statistics; spent hours with the great child-specialist, Dr. Jarvis, and with certain clergymen who believed in institutionalism as the hope of the future.

But McCrae was provokingly non-committal.

"Oh, they may try it," he assented somewhat grudgingly, one day when the rector had laid out for his inspection the architects' sketch for the settlement house. "No doubt it will help many poor bodies along."

"Is there anything else?" the rector asked, looking searchingly at his assistant.

"It may as well be that," replied McCrae.

The suspicion began to dawn on Hodder that the Scotch man's ideals were as high as his own. Both of them, secretly, regarded the new scheme as a compromise, a yielding to the inevitable . . . .

Mr. Ferguson's remark that an enlarged parish house and a new settlement house might help to keep some of the young women employed in his department store out of the dance-halls interested Hodder, who conceived the idea of a dance-hall of their own. For the rector, in the course of his bachelor shopping, often resorted to the emporium of his vestryman, to stand on the stairway which carried him upward without lifting his feet, to roam, fascinated, through the mazes of its aisles, where he invariably got lost, and was rescued by suave floor-walkers or pert young women in black gowns and white collars and cuffs. But they were not all pert—there were many characters, many types. And he often wondered whether they did not get tired standing on their feet all day long, hesitating to ask them; speculated on their lives—flung as most of them were on a heedless city, and left to shift for themselves. Why was it that the Church which cared for Mr. Ferguson's soul was unable to get in touch with, or make an appeal to, those of his thousand employees?

It might indeed have been said that Francis Ferguson cared for his own soul, as he cared for the rest of his property, and kept it carefully insured,—somewhat, perhaps, on the principle of Pascal's wager. That he had been a benefactor to his city no one would deny who had seen the facade that covered a whole block in the business district from Tower to Vine, surmounted by a red standard with the familiar motto, "When in doubt, go to Ferguson's." At Ferguson's you could buy anything from a pen-wiper to a piano or a Paris gown; sit in a cool restaurant in summer or in a palm garden in winter; leave your baby —if you had one—in charge of the most capable trained nurses; if your taste were literary, mull over the novels in the Book Department; if you were stout, you might be reduced in the Hygiene Department, unknown to your husband and intimate friends. In short, if there were any virtuous human wish in the power of genius to gratify, Ferguson's was the place. They, even taught you how to cook. It was a modern Aladdin's palace: and, like everything else modern, much more wonderful than the original. And the soda might be likened to the waters of Trevi,—to partake of which is to return.

"When in doubt, go to Ferguson!" Thus Mrs. Larrabbee and other ladies interested in good works had altered his motto. He was one of the supporters of Galt House, into which some of his own young saleswomen had occasionally strayed; and none, save Mr. Parr alone, had been so liberal in his gifts. Holder invariably found it difficult to reconcile the unassuming man, whose conversation was so commonplace, with the titanic genius who had created Ferguson's; nor indeed with the owner of the imposing marble mansion at Number 5, Park Street.

The rector occasionally dined there. He had acquired a real affection for Mrs. Ferguson, who resembled a burgomaster's wife in her evening gowns and jewels, and whose simple social ambitions had been gratified beyond her dreams. Her heart had not shrunken in the process, nor had she forgotten her somewhat heterogeneous acquaintances in the southern part of the city. And it was true that when Gertrude Constable had nearly died of appendicitis, it was on this lady's broad bosom that Mrs. Constable had wept. Mrs. Ferguson had haunted the house, regardless of criticism, and actually quivering with sympathy. Her more important dinner parties might have been likened to ill-matched fours-in-hand, and Holder had sometimes felt more of pity than of amusement as she sat with an expression of terror on her face, helplessly watching certain unruly individuals taking their bits in their teeth and galloping madly downhill. On one occasion, when he sat beside her, a young man, who shall be nameless, was suddenly heard to remark in the midst of an accidental lull:

"I never go to church. What's the use? I'm afraid most of us don't believe in hell any more."

A silence followed: of the sort that chills. And the young man, glancing down the long board at the clergyman, became as red as the carnation in his buttonhole, and in his extremity gulped down more champagne.

"Things are in a dreadful state nowadays!" Mrs. Ferguson gasped to a paralyzed company, and turned an agonized face to Holder. "I'm so sorry," she said, "I don't know why I asked him to-night, except that I have to have a young man for Nan, and he's just come to the city, and I was sorry for him. He's very promising in a business way; he's in Mr. Plimpton's trust company."

"Please don't let it trouble you." Holder turned and smiled a little, and added whimsically: "We may as well face the truth."

"Oh, I should expect you to be good about it, but it was unpardonable," she cried . . . .

In the intervals when he gained her attention he strove, by talking lightly of other things, to take her mind off the incident, but somehow it had left him strangely and—he felt—disproportionately depressed, —although he had believed himself capable of facing more or less philosophically that condition which the speaker had so frankly expressed. Yet the remark, somehow, had had an illuminating effect like a flashlight, revealing to him the isolation of the Church as never before. And after dinner, as they were going to the smoking-room, the offender accosted him shamefacedly.

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Holder," he stammered.

That the tall rector's regard was kindly did not relieve his discomfort.
Hodder laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't worry about it," he answered, "I have only one regret as to what you said—that it is true."

The other looked at him curiously.

"It's mighty decent of you to take it this way," he laid. Further speech failed him.

He was a nice-looking young man, with firm white teeth, and honesty was written all over his boyish face. And the palpable fact that his regret was more on the clergyman's account than for the social faux pas drew Holder the more, since it bespoke a genuineness of character.

He did not see the yearning in the rector's eyes as he turned away. . . Why was it they could not be standing side by side, fighting the same fight? The Church had lost him, and thousands like him, and she needed them; could not, indeed, do without them.

Where, indeed, were the young men? They did not bother their heads about spiritual matters any more. But were they not, he asked himself, franker than many of these others, the so-called pillars of the spiritual structure?

Mr. Plimpton accosted him. "I congratulate you upon the new plans, Mr. Hodder,—they're great," he said. "Mr. Parr and our host are coming down handsomely, eh? When we get the new settlement house we'll have a plant as up-to-date as any church in the country. When do you break ground?"

"Not until autumn, I believe," Hodder replied. "There are a good many details to decide upon yet."

"Well, I congratulate you."

Mr. Plimpton was forever congratulating.

"Up-to-date"—"plant"! More illuminating words, eloquent of Mr. Plimpton's ideals. St. John's down at the heels, to be brought up to the state of efficiency of Mr. Plimpton's trust company! It was by no means the first time he had heard modern attributes on Mr. Plimpton's lips applied to a sacred institution, but to-night they had a profoundly disquieting effect. To-night, a certain clairvoyance had been vouchsafed him, and he beheld these men, his associates and supporters, with a detachment never before achieved.

They settled in groups about the room, which was square and high, and panelled in Italian walnut, with fluted pilasters,—the capitals of which were elaborately carved. And Hodder found himself on a deep leather sofa in a corner engaged in a desultory and automatic conversation with Everett Constable. Mr. Plimpton, with a large cigar between his lips, was the radiating centre of one of the liveliest groups, and of him the rector had fallen into a consideration, piecing together bits of information that hitherto had floated meaninglessly in his mind. It was Mrs. Larrabbee who had given character to the career of the still comparatively youthful and unquestionably energetic president of the Chamber of Commerce by likening it to a great spiral, starting somewhere in outer regions of twilight, and gradually drawing nearer to the centre, from which he had never taken his eyes. At the centre were Eldon Parr and Charlotte Gore. Wallis Plimpton had made himself indispensable to both.

His campaign for the daughter of Thurston Gore had been comparable to one of the great sieges of history, for Mr. Plimpton was a laughing-stock when he sat down before that fortress. At the end of ten years, Charlotte had capitulated, with a sigh of relief, realizing at last her destiny. She had become slightly stout, revealing, as time went on, no wrinkles—a proof that the union was founded on something more enduring than poetry: Statesmanship—that was the secret! Step by step, slowly but surely, the memoranda in that matrimonial portfolio were growing into accomplished facts; all events,

such as displacements of power, were foreseen; and the Plimptons, like Bismarck, had only to indicate, in case of sudden news, the pigeonhole where the plan of any particular campaign was filed.

Mrs. Larrabbee's temptation to be witty at the expense of those for whom she had no liking had led Hodder to discount the sketch. He had not disliked Mr. Plimpton, who had done him many little kindnesses. He was good-natured, never ruffled, widely tolerant, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, and he had enlivened many a vestry meeting with his stories. It were hypercritical to accuse him of a lack of originality. And if by taking thought, he had arrived, from nowhere, at his present position of ease and eminence, success had not turned to ashes in his mouth. He fairly exhaled well-being, happiness, and good cheer. Life had gone well with him, he wished the same to others.

But to-night, from his corner, Hodder seemed to see Mr. Plimpton with new eyes. Not that he stood revealed a villain, which he was far from being; it was the air of sophistication, of good-natured if cynical acceptance of things as they were—and plenty good enough, too!—that jarred upon the rector in his new mood, and it was made manifest to him as never before why his appeals from the pulpit had lacked efficacy. Mr. Plimpton didn't want the world changed! And in this desire he represented the men in that room, and the majority of the congregation of St. John's. The rector had felt something of this before, and it seemed to him astonishing that the revelation had not come to him sooner. Did any one of them, in his heart, care anything for the ideals and aspirations of the Church?

As he gazed at them through the gathering smoke they had become strangers, receded all at once to a great distance. . . . Across the room he caught the name, Bedloe Hubbell, pronounced with peculiar bitterness by Mr. Ferguson. At his side Everett Constable was alert, listening.

"Ten years ago," said a stout Mr. Varnum, the President of the Third National Bank, "if you'd told me that that man was to become a demagogue and a reformer, I wouldn't have believed you. Why, his company used to take rebates from the L. & G., and the Southern—I know it." He emphasized the statement with a blow on the table that made the liqueur glasses dance. "And now, with his Municipal League, he's going to clean up the city, is he? Put in a reform mayor. Show up what he calls the Consolidated Tractions Company scandal. Pooh!"

"You got out all right, Varnum. You won't be locked up," said Mr.
Plimpton, banteringly.

"So did you," retorted Varnum.

"So did Ferguson, so did Constable."

"So did Eldon Parr," remarked another man, amidst a climax of laughter.

"Langmaid handled that pretty well."

Hodder felt Everett Constable fidget.

"Bedloe's all right, but he's a dreamer," Mr. Plimpton volunteered.

"Then I wish he'd stop dreaming," said Mr. Ferguson, and there was more laughter, although he had spoken savagely.

"That's what he is, a dreamer," Varnum ejaculated. "Say, he told George Carter the other day that prostitution wasn't necessary, that in fifty years we'd have largely done away with it. Think of that, and it's as old as Sodom and Gomorrah!"

"If Hubbell had his way, he'd make this town look like a Connecticut hill village—he'd drive all the prosperity out of it. All the railroads would have to abandon their terminals—there'd be no more traffic, and you'd have to walk across the bridge to get a drink."

"Well," said Mr. Plimpton, "Tom Beatty's good enough for me, for a while."

Beatty, Hodder knew, was the "boss," of the city, with headquarters in a downtown saloon.

"Beatty's been maligned," Mr. Varnum declared. "I don't say he's a saint, but he's run the town pretty well, on the whole, and kept the vice where it belongs, out of sight. He's made his pile, but he's entitled to something we all are. You always know where you stand with Beatty. But say, if Hubbell and his crowd—"

"Don't worry about Bedloe,—he'll get called in, he'll come home to roost like the rest of them," said Mr. Plimpton, cheerfully. "The people can't govern themselves,—only Bedloe doesn't know it. Some day he'll find it out." . . .

The French window beside him was open, and Hodder slipped out, unnoticed, into the warm night and stood staring at the darkness. His one desire had been to get away, out of hearing, and he pressed forward over the tiled pavement until he stumbled against a stone balustrade that guarded a drop of five feet or so to the lawn below. At the same time he heard his name called.

"Is that you, Mr. Hodder?"

He started. The voice had a wistful tremulousness, and might almost have been the echo of the leaves stirring in the night air. Then he perceived, in a shaft of light from one of the drawing-room windows near by, a girl standing beside the balustrade; and as she came towards him, with tentative steps, the light played conjurer, catching the silvery gauze of her dress and striking an aura through the film of her hair.

"It's Nan Ferguson," she said.

"Of course," he exclaimed, collecting himself. "How stupid of me not to have recognized you!"

"I'm so glad you came out," she went on impulsively, yet shyly, "I wanted to tell you how sorry I was that that thing happened at the table."

"I like that young man," he said.

"Do you?" she exclaimed, with unexpected gratitude. So do I. He really isn't—so bad as he must seem."

"I'm sure of it," said the rector, laughing.

"I was afraid you'd think him wicked," said Nan. "He works awfully hard, and he's sending a brother through college. He isn't a bit like—some others I know. He wants to make something of himself. And I feel responsible, because I had mother ask him to-night."

He read her secret. No doubt she meant him to do so.

"You know we're going away next week, for the summer—that is, mother and I," she continued. "Father comes later. And I do hope you'll make us a visit, Mr. Hodder—we were disappointed you couldn't come last year." Nan hesitated, and thrusting her hand into her gown drew forth an envelope and held it out to him. "I intended to give you this to-night, to use—for anything you thought best."

He took it gravely. She looked up at him.

"It seems so little—such a selfish way of discharging one's obligations, just to write out a cheque, when there is so much trouble in the world that demands human kindness as well as material help. I drove up Dalton Street yesterday, from downtown. You know how hot it was! And I couldn't help thinking how terrible it is that we who have everything are so heedless of all that misery. The thought of it took away all my pleasure.

"I'd do something more, something personal, if I could. Perhaps I shall be able to, next winter. Why is it so difficult for all of us to know what to do?"

"We have taken a step forward, at any rate, when we know that it is difficult," he said.

She gazed up at him fixedly, her attention caught by an indefinable something in his voice, in his smile, that thrilled and vaguely disturbed her. She remembered it long afterwards. It suddenly made her shy again; as if, in faring forth into the darkness, she had come to the threshold of a mystery, of a revelation withheld; and it brought back the sense of adventure, of the palpitating fear and daring with which she had come to meet him.

"It is something to know," she repeated, half comprehending. The scraping of chairs within alarmed her, and she stood ready to fly.

"But I haven't thanked you for this," he said, holding up the envelope.
"It may be that I shall find some one in Dalton Street—"

"Oh, I hope so," she faltered, breathlessly, hesitating a moment. And then she was gone, into the house.

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