

# FATHER AND SON

A STUDY OF TWO TEMPERAMENTS

BY  
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“Der Glaube ist wie die Liebe: er lässt sich nicht erzwingen.”  
SCHOPENHAUER

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PREFACE  
TO THE FIRST EDITION, PUBLISHED ANONYMOUSLY

AT the present hour, when fiction takes forms so ingenious and so specious, it is perhaps necessary to say that the following narrative, in all its parts, and so far as the punctilious attention of the writer has been able to keep it so, is scrupulously true. If it were not true, in this strict sense, to publish it would be to trifle with all those who may be induced to read it. It is offered to them as a document, as a record of educational and religious conditions which, having passed away, will never return. In this respect, as the diagnosis of a dying Puritanism, it is hoped that the narrative will not be altogether without significance.

It offers, too, in a subsidiary sense, a study of the development of moral and intellectual ideas during the progress of infancy. These have been closely and conscientiously noted, and may have some value in consequence of the unusual conditions in which they were produced. The author has observed that those who have written about the facts of their own childhood have usually delayed to note them down until age has dimmed their recollections. Perhaps an even more common fault in such autobiographies is that they are sentimental, and are falsified by self-admiration and self-pity. The writer of these recollections has thought that if the examination of his earliest years was to be undertaken at all, it should be attempted while his memory is still perfectly vivid and while he is still unbiased by the forgetfulness or the sensibility of advancing years.

At one point only has there been any tampering with precise fact. It is believed that, with the exception of the son, there is but one person mentioned in this book who is still alive. Nevertheless, it has been thought well, in order to avoid any appearance of offence, to alter the majority of the proper names of the private persons spoken of.

As regards the anonymous writer himself, whether the reader does or does not recognise an old acquaintance, occasionally met with in quite other fields, is a matter of no importance. Here no effort has been made to conceal or to identify.

It is not usual, perhaps, that the narrative of a spiritual struggle should mingle merriment and humour with a discussion of the most solemn subjects. It has, however, been inevitable that they should be so mingled in this narrative. It is true that most funny books try to be funny throughout, while theology is scandalised if it awakens a single smile. But life is not constituted thus, and this book is nothing if it is not a genuine slice of life. There was an extraordinary mixture of comedy and tragedy in the situation which is here described, and those who are affected by the pathos of it will not need to have it explained to them that the comedy was superficial and the tragedy essential.

*--September, 1907*

## CHAPTER I

THIS book is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs. It ended, as was inevitable, in disruption. Of the two human beings here described, one was born to fly backward, the other could not help being carried forward. There came a time when neither spoke the same language as the other, or encompassed the same hopes, or was fortified by the same desires. But, at least, it is some consolation to the survivor, that neither, to the very last hour, ceased to respect the other, or to regard him with a sad indulgence. The affection of these two persons was assailed by forces in comparison with which the changes that health or fortune or place introduce are as nothing. It is a mournful satisfaction, but yet a satisfaction, that they were both of them able to obey the law which says that ties of close family relationship must be honoured and sustained. Had it not been so, this story would never have been told.

The struggle began soon, yet of course it did not begin in early infancy. But to familiarise my readers with the conditions of the two persons (which were unusual) and with the outlines of their temperaments (which were, perhaps innately, antagonistic), it is needful to open with some account of all that I can truly and independently recollect, as well as with some statements which are, as will be obvious, due to household tradition.

My parents were poor gentlefolks; not young; solitary, sensitive and, although they did not know it, proud. They both belonged to what is called the Middle Class, and there was this further resemblance between them that they each descended from families which had been more than well-to-do in the eighteenth century, and had gradually sunken in fortune. In both houses there had been a decay of energy which had led to decay in wealth. In the case of my Father's family it had been a slow decline; in that of my Mother's, it had been rapid. My maternal grandfather was born wealthy, and in the opening years of the nineteenth century, immediately after his marriage, he bought a little estate in North Wales, on the slopes of Snowdon. Here he seems to have lived in a pretentious way, keeping a pack of hounds and entertaining on an extravagant scale. He had a wife who encouraged him in this vivid life, and three children, my Mother and her two brothers. His best trait was his devotion to the education of his children, in which he proclaimed himself a disciple of Rousseau. But he can hardly have followed the teaching of "Émile" very closely, since he employed tutors to teach his daughter, at an extremely early age, the very subjects which Rousseau forbade, such as history, literature and foreign languages.

My Mother was his special favourite, and his vanity did its best to make a blue-stocking of her. She read Greek, Latin and even a little Hebrew, and, what was more important, her mind was trained





















































































































































































































































































ism of humanity which has been the agony of mature years, of this I had not a trace when I was a boy. Of those fragile loves to which most men look back with tenderness and passion, emotions to be explained only as Montaigne explained them, "*parceque c'était lui, parceque c'était moi,*" I knew nothing. I, to whom friendship has since been like sunlight and like sleep, left school unbrightened and unrefreshed by commerce with a single friend.

If I had been clever, I should doubtless have attracted the jealousy of my fellows, but I was spared this by the mediocrity of my success in the classes. One little fact I may mention, because it exemplifies the advance in observation which has been made in forty years. I was extremely nearsighted and in consequence was placed at a gross disadvantage, by being unable to see the slate or the black-board on which our tasks were explained. It seems almost incredible, when one reflects upon it, but during the whole of my school life, this fact was never commented upon or taken into account by a single person, until the Polish lady who taught us the elements of German and French drew some one's attention to it in my sixteenth year. I was not quick, but I passed for being denser than I was because of the myopic haze that enveloped me. But this is not an autobiography, and with the cold and shrouded details of my uninteresting school life I will not fatigue the reader.

I was not content, however, to be the cipher that I found myself, and when I had been at school for about a year, I "broke out," greatly, I think, to my own surprise, in a popular act. We had a young usher whom we disliked. I suppose, poor half-starved phthisic lad, that he was the most miserable of us all. He was, I think, unfitted for the task which had been forced upon him; he was fretful, unsympathetic, agitated. The school-house, an old rambling place, possessed a long cellar-like room that opened from our general corridor and was lighted by deep windows, carefully barred, which looked into an inner garden. This vault was devoted to us and to our play-boxes: by a tacit law, no master entered it. One evening, just at dusk, a great number of us were here when the bell for night-school rang, and many of us dawdled at the summons. Mr. B., tactless in his anger, bustled in among us, scolding in a shrill voice, and proceeded to drive us forth. I was the latest to emerge, and as he turned away to see if any other truant might not be hiding, I determined upon action. With a quick movement, I drew the door behind me and bolted it, just in time to hear the imprisoned usher scream with vexation. We boys all trooped upstairs, and it is characteristic of my isolation that I had not one "chum" to whom I could confide my feat.

That Mr. B. had been shut in became, however, almost instantly known, and the night-class, usually so unruly, was awed by the event into exemplary decorum. There, with no master near us, in a silence rarely broken by a giggle or a catcall, we sat diligently working, or



## FATHER AND SON

pretending to work. Through my brain, as I hung over my book, a thousand new thoughts began to surge. I was the liberator, the tyrannicide; I had freed all my fellows from the odious oppressor. Surely, when they learned that it was I, they would cluster round me; surely, now, I should be somebody in the school-life, no longer a mere trotting shadow or invisible presence. The interval seemed long; at length Mr. B. was released by a servant, and he came up into the school-room to find us in that ominous condition of suspense.

At first he said nothing. He sank upon a chair in a half-fainting attitude, while he pressed his hand to his side; his distress and silence redoubled the boys' surprise, and filled me with something like remorse. For the first time, I reflected that he was human, that perhaps he suffered. He rose presently and took a slate, upon which he wrote two questions: "Did you do it?" "Do you know who did?" and these he propounded to each boy in rotation. The prompt, redoubled "No" in every case seemed to pile up his despair.

One of the last to whom he held, in silence, the trembling slate was the perpetrator. As I saw the moment approach, an unspeakable timidity swept over me. I reflected that no one had seen me, that no one could accuse me. Nothing could be easier or safer than to deny, nothing more perplexing to the enemy, nothing less perilous for the culprit. A flood of plausible reasons invaded my brain; I seemed to see this to be a case in which to tell the truth would be not merely foolish, it would be wrong. Yet when the usher stood before me, holding the slate out in his white and shaking hand, I seized the pencil, and, ignoring the first question, I wrote "Yes" firmly against the second. I suppose that the ambiguity of this action puzzled Mr. B. He pressed me to answer: "Did you do it?" but to that I was obstinately dumb; and away I was hurried to an empty bed-room, where for the whole of that night and the next day I was held a prisoner, visited at intervals by the head-master and other inquisitorial persons, until I was gradually persuaded to make a full confession and apology.

This absurd little incident had one effect, it revealed me to my school-fellows as an existence. From that time forth I lay no longer under the stigma of invisibility; I had produced my material shape and had thrown my shadow for a moment into a legend. But, in other respects, things went on much as before: curiously uninfluenced by my surroundings, I in my turn failed to exercise influence, and my practical isolation was no less than it had been before. It was thus that it came about that my social memories of my boarding-school life are monotonous and vague. It was a period during which, as it appears to me now on looking back, the stream of my spiritual nature spread out into a shallow pool which was almost stagnant. I was labouring to gain those elements of conventional knowledge, which had, in many cases, up to that time been singularly lacking.

## FATHER AND SON

But my brain was starved, and my intellectual perceptions were veiled. Elder persons who in later years would speak to me frankly of my school-days assured me that, while I had often struck them as a smart and quaint and even interesting child, all promise seemed to fade out of me as a school-boy, and that those who were most inclined to be indulgent gave up the hope that I should prove a man in a way remarkable. This was particularly the case with the most indulgent of my protectors, my refined and gentle step-mother.

As this record can, however, have no value that is not based on its rigorous adhesion to the truth, I am bound to say that the dreariness and sterility of my school-life were more apparent than real. I was pursuing certain lines of moral and mental development all the time, and if my school-masters and my school-fellows combined in thinking me so dull, I will display a tardy touch of "proper spirit" and ask whether it may not partly have been because they were themselves so commonplace. I think that if some drops of sympathy, that magic dew of Paradise, had fallen upon my desert, it might have blossomed like the rose, or at all events like that chimerical flower, the Rose of Jericho. As it was, the conventionality around me, the intellectual drought, gave me no opportunity of outward growth. They did not destroy, but they cooped up, and rendered slow and inefficient, that internal life which continued, as I have said, to live on unseen. This took the form of dreams and speculations, in the course of which I went through many tortuous processes of the mind, the actual aims of which were futile, although the movements themselves were useful. If I may more minutely define my meaning, I would say that in my school-days, without possessing thoughts, I yet prepared my mind for thinking, and learned how to think.

The great subject of my curiosity at this time was words, as instruments of expression. I was incessant in adding to my vocabulary, and in finding accurate and individual terms for things. Here, too, the exercise preceded the employment, since I was busy providing myself with words before I had any idea to express with them. When I read Shakespeare and came upon the passage in which Prospero tells Caliban that he had no thoughts till his master taught him words, I remember starting with amazement at the poet's intuition, for such a Caliban had I been:

I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other, when thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble, like  
A thing most brutish; I endow'd thy purposes  
With words that made them known.

For my Prosperos I sought vaguely in such books as I had access to, and I was conscious that as the inevitable word seized hold of

me, with it out of the darkness into strong light came the image and the idea.

My Father possessed a copy of Bailey's "Etymological Dictionary," a book published early in the eighteenth century. Over this I would pore for hours, playing with the words in a fashion which I can no longer reconstruct, and delighting in the savour of the rich, old-fashioned country phrases. My Father finding me thus employed, fell to wondering at the nature of my pursuit, and I could offer him, indeed, no very intelligible explanation of it. He urged me to give up such idleness, and to make practical use of language. For this purpose he conceived an exercise which he obliged me to adopt, although it was hateful to me. He sent me forth, it might be, up the lane to Warbury Hill and round home by the copses; or else down one chine to the sea and along the shingle to the next cutting in the cliff, and so back by way of the village; and he desired me to put down, in language as full as I could, all that I had seen in each excursion. As I have said, this practice was detestable and irksome to me, but, as I look back, I am inclined to believe it to have been the most salutary, the most practical piece of training which my Father ever gave me. It forced me to observe sharply and clearly, to form visual impressions, to retain them in the brain, and to clothe them in punctilious and accurate language.

It was in my fifteenth year that I became again, this time intelligently, acquainted with Shakespeare. I got hold of a single play, *The Tempest*, in a school edition, prepared, I suppose, for one of the university examinations which were then being instituted in the provinces. This I read through and through, not disdaining the help of the notes, and revelling in the glossary. I studied *The Tempest* as I had hitherto studied no classic work, and it filled my whole being with music and romance. This book was my own hoarded possession; the rest of Shakespeare's works were beyond my hopes. But gradually I contrived to borrow a volume here and a volume there. I completed *The Merchant of Venice*, read *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar* and *Much Ado*; most of the others, I think, remained closed to me for a long time. But these were enough to steep my horizon with all the colours of sunrise. It was due, no doubt, to my bringing up, that the plays never appealed to me as bounded by the exigencies of a stage or played by actors. The images they raised in my mind were of real people moving in the open air, and uttering in the natural play of life sentiments that were clothed in the most lovely and yet, as it seemed to me, the most obvious and the most inevitable language.

It was while I was thus under the full spell of the Shakespearean necromancy that a significant event occurred. My Father took me up to London for the first time since my infancy. Our visit was one of a few days only, and its purpose was that we might take part in some enormous Evangelical conference. We stayed in a dark hotel off the

Strand, where I found the noise by day and night very afflicting. When we were not at the conference, I spent long hours, among crumbs and blue-bottle flies, in the coffee-room of this hotel, my Father being busy at the British Museum and the Royal Society. The conference was held in an immense hall, somewhere in the north of London. I remember my short-sighted sense of the terrible vastness of the crowd, with rings on rings of dim white faces fading in the fog. My Father, as a privileged visitor, was obliged with seats on the platform, and we were in the heart of the first really large assemblage of persons that I had ever seen.

The interminable ritual of prayers, hymns and addresses left no impression on my memory, but my attention was suddenly stung into life by a remark. An elderly man, fat and greasy, with a voice like a bassoon, and an imperturbable assurance, was denouncing the spread of infidelity, and the lukewarmness of professing Christians, who refrained from battling the wickedness at their doors. They were like the Laodiceans, whom the angel of the Apocalypse spewed out of his mouth. For instance, who, the orator asked, is now rising to check the outburst of idolatry in our midst? "At this very moment," he went on, "there is proceeding, unreproved, a blasphemous celebration of the birth of Shakespeare, a lost soul now suffering for his sins in hell!" My sensation was that of one who has suddenly been struck on the head; stars and sparks beat round me. If some person I loved had been grossly insulted in my presence, I could not have felt more powerless in anguish. No one in that vast audience raised a word of protest, and my spirits fell to their nadir. This, be it remarked, was the earliest intimation that had reached me of the tercentenary of the Birth at Stratford, and I had not the least idea what could have provoked the outburst of outraged godliness.

But Shakespeare was certainly in the air. When we returned to the hotel that noon, my Father of his own accord reverted to the subject. I held my breath, prepared to endure fresh torment. What he said, however, surprised and relieved me. "Brother So-and-so," he remarked, "was not in my judgment justified in saying what he did. The uncovenanted mercies of God are not revealed to us. Before so rashly speaking of Shakespeare as 'a lost soul in hell,' he should have remembered how little we know of the poet's history. The light of salvation was widely disseminated in the land during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and we cannot know that Shakespeare did not accept the atonement of Christ in simple faith before he came to die." The concession will to-day seem meagre to gay and worldly spirits, but words cannot express how comfortable it was to me. I gazed at my Father with loving eyes across the cheese and celerly, and if the waiter had not been present I believe I might have hugged him in my arms.

This anecdote may serve to illustrate the attitude of my con-

## FATHER AND SON

science, at this time, with regard to theology. I was not consciously in any revolt against the strict faith in which I had been brought up, but I could not fail to be aware of the fact that literature tempted me to stray up innumerable paths which meandered in directions at right angles to that direct strait way which leadeth to salvation. I fancied, if I may pursue the image, that I was still safe up these pleasant lanes if I did not stray far enough to lose sight of the main road. If, for instance, it had been quite certain that Shakespeare had been irrecoverably damnable and damned, it would scarcely have been possible for me to have justified myself in going on reading *Cymbeline*. One who broke bread with the Saints every Sunday morning, who "took a class" at Sunday school, who made, as my Father loved to remind me, a public weekly confession of his willingness to bear the Cross of Christ, such an one could hardly, however bewildering and torturing the thought, continue to admire a lost soul. But that happy possibility of an ultimate repentance, how it eased me! I could always console myself with the belief that when Shakespeare wrote any passage of intoxicating beauty, it was just then that he was beginning to breathe the rapture that faith in Christ brings to the anointed soul. And it was with a like casuistry that I condoned my other intellectual and personal pleasures.

My Father continued to be under the impression that my boarding-school, which he never again visited after originally leaving me there, was conducted upon the same principles as his own household. I was frequently tempted to enlighten him, but I never found the courage to do so. As a matter of fact the piety of the establishment, which collected to it the sons of a large number of evangelically minded parents throughout that part of the country, resided mainly in the prospectus. It proceeded no further than the practice of reading the Bible aloud, each boy in successive order one verse, in the early morning before breakfast. There was no selection and no exposition; where the last boy sat, there the day's reading ended, even if it were in the middle of a sentence, and there it began next morning.

Such reading of "the chapter" was followed by a long dry prayer. I do not know that this morning service would appear more perfunctory than usual to other boys, but it astounded and disgusted me, accustomed as I was to the ministrations at home, where my Father read "the word of God" in a loud passionate voice, with dramatic emphasis, pausing for commentary and paraphrase, and treating every phrase as if it were part of a personal message or of thrilling family history. At school, "morning prayer" was a dreary, unintelligible exercise, and with this piece of mumbo-jumbo, religion for the day began and ended. The discretion of little boys is extraordinary. I am quite certain no one of us ever revealed this fact to our godly parents at home.

If any one was to do this, it was of course I who should first of all

have "testified." But I had grown cautious about making confidences. One never knew how awkwardly they might develop or to what disturbing excesses of zeal they might precipitously lead. I was on my guard against my Father, who was, all the time, only too openly yearning that I should approach him for help, for comfort, for ghostly counsel. Still "delicate," though steadily gaining in solidity of constitution, I was liable to severe chills and to fugitive neuralgic pangs. My Father was, almost maddeningly, desirous that these afflictions should be sanctified to me, and it was in my bed, often when I was much bowed in spirit by indisposition, that he used to triumph over me most pitilessly. He retained the singular superstition, amazing in a man of scientific knowledge and long human experience, that all pains and ailments were directly sent by the Lord in chastisement for some definite fault, and not in relation to any physical cause. The result was sometimes quite startling, and in particular I recollect that my step-mother and I exchanged impressions of astonishment at my Father's action when Mrs. Goodyer, who was one of the "Saints" and the wife of a young journeyman cobbler, broke her leg. My Father, puzzled for an instant as to the meaning of this accident, since Mrs. Goodyer was the gentlest and most inoffensive of our church members, decided that it must be because she had made an idol of her husband, and he reduced the poor thing to tears by standing at her bed-side and imploring the Holy Spirit to bring this sin home to her conscience.

When, therefore, I was ill at home with one of my trifling disorders, the problem of my spiritual state always pressed violently upon my Father, and this caused me no little mental uneasiness. He would appear at my bed-side, with solemn solicitude, and sinking on his knees would earnestly pray aloud that the purpose of the Lord in sending me this affliction might graciously be made plain to me, and then, rising and standing by my pillow, he would put me through a searching spiritual inquiry as to the fault which was thus divinely indicated to me as observed and reprobated on high.

It was not on points of moral behaviour that he thus cross-examined me; I think he disdained such ignoble game as that. But uncertainties of doctrine, relinquishment of faith in the purity of this dogma or of that, lukewarm zeal in "taking up the cross of Christ," growth of intellectual pride—such were the insidious offences in consequence of which, as he supposed, the cold in the head or the toothache had been sent as heavenly messengers to recall my straggling conscience to its plain path of duty.

What made me very uncomfortable on these occasions was my consciousness that confinement to bed was hardly an affliction at all. It kept me from the boredom of school, in a fire-lit bed-room at home, with my pretty, smiling step-mother lavishing luxurious attendance upon me, and it gave me long, unbroken days for reading. I was awkwardly aware that I simply had not the effrontery to "ap-

proach the Throne of Grace” with a request to know for what sin I was condemned to such a very pleasant disposition of my hours.

The current of my life ran, during my schooldays, most merrily and fully in the holidays, when I resumed my out-door exercises with those friends in the village of whom I have spoken earlier. I think they were more refined and better bred than any of my school-fellows, at all events it was among these homely companions alone that I continued to form congenial and sympathetic relations. In one of these boys—one of whom I have heard or seen nothing now for nearly a generation—I found tastes singularly parallel to my own, and we scoured the horizon in search of books in prose and verse, but particularly in verse.

As I grew stronger in muscle, I was capable of adding considerably to my income by an exercise of my legs. I was allowed money for the railway ticket between the town where the school lay and the station nearest to my home. But, if I chose to walk six or seven miles along the coast, thus more than halving the distance by rail from school-house to home, I might spend as pocket-money the railway fare I thus saved. Such considerable sums I fostered in order to buy with them editions of the poets. These were not in those days, as they are now, at the beck and call of every purse, and the attainment of each little masterpiece was a separate triumph. In particular I shall never forget the excitement of reaching at last the exorbitant price the bookseller asked for the only, although imperfect, edition of the poems of S. T. Coleridge. At last I could meet his demand, and my friend and I went down to consummate the solemn purchase. Coming away with our treasure, we read aloud from the orange-coloured volume in turns, as we strolled along, until at last we sat down on the bulging root of an elm-tree in a secluded lane. Here we stayed, in a sort of poetical Nirvana, reading, reading, forgetting the passage of time, until the hour of our neglected mid-day meal was a long while past, and we had to hurry home to bread and cheese and a scolding.

There was occasionally some trouble about my reading, but now not much nor often. I was rather adroit, and careful not to bring prominently into sight anything of a literary kind which could become a stone of stumbling. But, when I was nearly sixteen, I made a purchase which brought me into sad trouble, and was the cause of a permanent wound to my self-respect. I had long coveted in the book-shop window a volume in which the poetical works of Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe were said to be combined. This I bought at length, and I carried it with me to devour as I trod the desolate road that brought me along the edge of the cliff on Saturday afternoons. Ben Jonson I could make nothing of, but when I turned to “Hero and Leander,” I was lifted to a heaven of passion and music. It was a marvellous revelation of romantic beauty to me, and as I paced along that lonely and exquisite high-way, with its immense

## FATHER AND SON

command of the sea, and its peeps every now and then, through slanting thickets, far down to the snow-white shingle, I lifted up my voice, singing the verses, as I strolled along:

Buskins of shells, all silver'd, used she,  
And branch'd with blushing coral to the knee,  
Where sparrows perched, of hollow pearl and gold,  
Such as the world would wonder to behold—

so it went on, and I thought I had never read anything so lovely—

Amorous Leander, beautiful and young,  
Whose tragedy divine Musaeus sung—

it all seemed to my fancy intoxicating beyond anything I had ever even dreamed of, since I had not yet become acquainted with any of the modern romanticists.

When I reached home, tired out with enthusiasm and exercise, I must needs, so soon as I had eaten, search out my step-mother that she might be a partner in my joys. It is remarkable to me now, and a disconcerting proof of my still almost infantile innocence, that, having induced her to settle to her knitting embroidery, I began, without hesitation, to read Marlowe's voluptuous poem aloud to that blameless Christian gentlewoman. We got on very well in the opening, but at the episode of Cupid's pining, my step-mother's needles began nervously to clash, and when we launched on the description of Leander's person, she interrupted me by saying, rather sharply, "Give me that book, please, I should like to read the rest to myself." I resigned the reading in amazement, and was stupefied to see her take the volume, shut it with a snap and hide it under her needlework. Nor could I extract from her another word on the subject.

The matter passed from my mind, and I was therefore extremely alarmed when, soon after my going to bed that night, my Father came into my room with a pale face and burning eyes, the prey of violent perturbation. He set down the candle and stood by the bed, and it was some time before he could resolve on a form of speech. Then he denounced me, in unmeasured terms, for bringing into the house, for possessing at all or reading, so abominable a book. He explained that my step-mother had shown it to him, and that he had looked through it, and had burned it. The sentence in his tirade which principally affected me was this. He said, "You will soon be leaving us, and going up to lodgings in London, and if your landlady should come into your room, and find such a book lying about, she would immediately set you down as a profligate." I did not understand this at all, and it seems to me now that the fact that I had so very simply and childishly volunteered to read the verses to my step-mother should have proved to my Father that I connected it with no ideas of an immoral nature.



## FATHER AND SON

I was greatly wounded and offended, but my indignation was smothered up in the alarm and excitement which followed the news that I was to go up to live in lodgings, and, as it was evident, alone, in London. Of this no hint or whisper had previously reached me. On reflection, I can but admit that my Father, who was little accustomed to seventeenth-century literature, must have come across some startling exposures in Ben Jonson, and probably never reached "Hero and Leander" at all. The artistic effect of such poetry on an innocently pagan mind did not come within the circle of his experience. He judged the outspoken Elizabethan poets, no doubt, very much in the spirit of the problematical landlady.

Of the world outside, of the dim wild whirlpool of London, I was much afraid, but I was now ready to be willing to leave the narrow Devonshire circle, to see the last of the red mud, of the dreary village street, of the plethoric elders, to hear the last of the drawling voices of the "Saints." Yet I had a great difficulty in persuading myself that I could ever be happy away from home, and again I compared my lot with that of one of the speckled soldier-crabs that roamed about in my Father's aquarium, dragging after them great whorl-shells. They, if by chance they were turned out of their whelk-habitations, trailed about a pale soft body in search of another house, visibly broken-hearted and the victims of every ignominious accident.

My spirits were divided pathetically between the wish to stay on, a guarded child, and to proceed into the world a budding man, and, in my utter ignorance, I sought in vain to conjure up what my immediate future would be. My Father threw no light upon the subject, for he had not formed any definite idea of what I could possibly do to earn an honest living. As a matter of fact I was to stay another year at school and home.

This last year of my boyish life passed rapidly and pleasantly. My sluggish brain waked up at last and I was able to study with application. In the public examinations I did pretty well, and may even have been thought something of a credit to the school. Yet I formed no close associations, and I even contrived to avoid, as I had afterwards occasion to regret, such lessons as were distasteful to me, and therefore particularly valuable. But I read with unchecked voracity, and in several curious directions. Shakespeare now passed into my possession entire, in the shape of a reprint more hideous and more offensive to the eyesight than would in these days appear conceivable. I made acquaintance with Keats, who entirely captivated me; with Shelley, whose "Queen Mab" at first repelled me from the threshold of his edifice; and with Wordsworth, for the exercise of whose magic I was still far too young. My Father presented me with the entire bulk of Southey's stony verse, which I found it impossible to penetrate, but my step-mother lent me "The Golden Treasury," in which almost everything seemed exquisite.

## FATHER AND SON

Upon this extension of my intellectual powers, however, there did not follow any spirit of doubt or hostility to the faith. On the contrary, at first there came a considerable quickening of fervour. My prayers became less frigid and mechanical; I no longer avoided as far as possible the contemplation of religious ideas; I began to search the Scriptures for myself with interest and sympathy, if scarcely with ardour. I began to perceive, without animosity, the strange narrowness of my Father's system, which seemed to take into consideration only a selected circle of persons, a group of disciples peculiarly illuminated, and to have no message whatever for the wider Christian community.

On this subject I had some instructive conversations with my Father, whom I found not reluctant to have his convictions pushed to their logical extremity. He did not wish to judge, he protested; but he could not admit that a single Unitarian (or "Socinian," as he preferred to say) could possibly be redeemed; and he had no hope of eternal salvation for the inhabitants of Catholic countries. I recollect his speaking of Austria. He questioned whether a single Austrian subject, except, as he said, here and there a pious and extremely ignorant individual, who had not comprehended the errors of the Papacy, but had humbly studied his Bible, could hope to find eternal life. He thought that the ordinary Chinaman or savage native of Fiji had a better chance of salvation than any cardinal in the Vatican. And even in the priesthood of the Church of England he believed that while many were called, few indeed would be found to have been chosen.

I could not sympathise, even in my then state of ignorance, with so rigid a conception of the Divine mercy. Little inclined as I was to be sceptical, I still thought it impossible that a secret of such stupendous importance should have been entrusted to a little group of Plymouth Brethren, and have been hidden from millions of disinterested and pious theologians. That the leaders of European Christianity were sincere, my Father did not attempt to question. But they were all of them wrong, *incorrect*; and no matter how holy their lives, how self-sacrificing their actions, they would have to suffer for their inexactitude through aeons of undefined torment. He would speak with a solemn complacency of the aged nun, who, after a long life of renunciation and devotion, died at last, "only to discover her mistake."

He who was so tender-hearted that he could not bear to witness the pain or distress of any person, however disagreeable or undeserving, was quite acquiescent in believing that God would punish human beings, in millions forever, for a purely intellectual error of comprehension.

My Father's inconsistencies of perception seem to me to have been the result of a curious irregularity of equipment. Taking for granted, as he did, the absolute integrity of the Scriptures, and apply-

ing to them his trained scientific spirit, he contrived to stifle with a deplorable success alike the function of the imagination, the sense of moral justice and his own deep and instinctive tenderness of heart.

There presently came over me a strong desire to know what doctrine indeed it was that the other Churches taught. I expressed a wish to be made aware of the practices of Rome, or at least of Canterbury, and I longed to attend the Anglican and the Roman services. But to do so was impossible. My Father did not forbid me to enter the fine parish church of our village, or the stately Puginesque cathedral which Rome had just erected at its side, but I knew that I could not be seen at either service without his immediately knowing it, or without his being deeply wounded. Although I was sixteen years of age, and although I was treated with indulgence and affection, I was still but a bird fluttering in the net-work of my Father's will, and incapable of the smallest independent action. I resigned all thought of attending any other services than those at our "Room," but I did no longer regard this exclusion as a final one. I bowed, but it was in the house of Rimmon, from which I now knew that I must inevitably escape. All the liberation, however, which I desired or dreamed of was only just so much as would bring me into communion with the outer world of Christianity, without divesting me of the pure and simple principles of faith.

Of so much emancipation, indeed, I now became ardently desirous, and in the contemplation of it I rose to a more considerable degree of religious fervour than I had ever reached before or was ever to experience later. Our thoughts were at this time abundantly exercised with the expectation of the immediate coming of the Lord, who, as my Father and those who thought with him believed, would suddenly appear, without the least warning, and would catch up to be with Him in everlasting glory all whom acceptance of the Atonement had sealed for immortality. These were, on the whole, not numerous, and our belief was that the world, after a few days' amazement at the total disappearance of these persons, would revert to its customary habits of life, merely sinking more rapidly into a moral corruption due to the removal of these souls of salt. This event an examination of prophecy had led my Father to regard as absolutely imminent, and sometimes, when we parted for the night, he would say with a sparkling rapture in his eyes, "Who knows? We may meet next in the air, with all the cohorts of God's saints!"

This conviction I shared, without a doubt; and, indeed—in perfect innocency, I hope, but perhaps with a touch of slyness too—I proposed at the end of the summer holidays that I should stay at home. "What is the use of my going to school? Let me be with you when we rise to meet the Lord in the air!" To this my Father sharply and firmly replied that it was our duty to carry on our usual avocations to the last, for we knew not the moment of His coming, and we should be together in an instant on that day, how far soever we

## FATHER AND SON

might be parted upon earth. I was ashamed, but his argument was logical, and, as it proved, judicious. My Father lived for nearly a quarter of a century more, never losing the hope of "not tasting death," and as the last moments of mortality approached, he was bitterly disappointed at what he held to be a scanty reward of his long faith and patience. But if my own life's work had been, as I proposed, shelved in expectation of the Lord's imminent advent, I should have cumbered the ground until this day.

To school, therefore, I returned with a brain full of strange discords, in a huddled mixture of "Endymion" and the Book of Revelation, John Wesley's hymns and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Few boys of my age, I suppose, carried about with them such a confused throng of immature impressions and contradictory hopes. I was at one moment devoutly pious, at the next haunted by visions of material beauty and longing for sensuous impressions. In my hot and silly brain, Jesus and Pan held sway together, as in a wayside chapel discordantly and impishly consecrated to Pagan and to Christian rites. But for the present, as in the great chorus which so marvellously portrays our double nature, "the folding-star of Bethlehem" was still dominant. I became more and more pietistic. Beginning now to versify, I wrote a tragedy in pale imitation of Shakespeare, but on a Biblical and evangelistic subject, and odes that were imitations of those in "Prometheus Unbound," but dealt with the approaching advent of our Lord and the rapture of his saints. My unwholesome excitement, bubbling up in this violent way, reached at last a climax and foamed over.

It was a summer afternoon, and, being now left very free in my movements, I had escaped from going out with the rest of my school-fellows in their formal walk in charge of an usher. I had been reading a good deal of poetry, but my heart had translated Apollo and Bacchus into terms of exalted Christian faith. I was alone, and I lay on a sofa, drawn across a large open window at the top of the school-house, in a room which was used as a study by the boys who were "going up for examination." I gazed down on a labyrinth of gardens sloping to the sea, which twinkled faintly beyond the towers of the town. Each of these gardens held a villa in it, but all the near landscape below me was drowned in foliage. A wonderful warm light of approaching sunset modelled the shadows and set the broad summits of the trees in a rich glow. There was an absolute silence below and around me, a magic of suspense seemed to keep every topmost twig from waving.

Over my soul there swept an immense wave of emotion. Now, surely, now the great final change must be approaching. I gazed up into the faintly-coloured sky, and I broke irresistibly into speech. "Come now, Lord Jesus," I cried, "come now and take me to be for ever with Thee in Thy Paradise. I am ready to come. My heart is purged from sin, there is nothing that keeps me rooted to this

## FATHER AND SON

wicked world. Oh, come now, now, and take me before I have known the temptations of life, before I have to go to London and all the dreadful things that happen there!" And I raised myself on the sofa, and leaned upon the window-sill, and waited for the glorious apparition.

This was the highest moment of my religious life, the apex of my striving after holiness. I waited awhile, watching; and then I had a little shame at the theatrical attitude I had adopted, although I was alone. Still I gazed and still I hoped. Then a little breeze sprang up, and the branches danced. Sounds began to rise from the road beneath me. Presently the colour deepened, the evening came on. From far below there rose to me the chatter of the boys returning home. The tea-bell rang—last word of prose to shatter my mystical poetry. "The Lord has not come, the Lord will never come," I muttered, and in my heart the artificial edifice of extravagant faith began to totter and crumble. From that moment forth my Father and I, though the fact was long successfully concealed from him and even from myself, walked in opposite hemispheres of the soul, with "the thick o' the world between us."

## EPILOGUE

THIS narrative, however, must not be allowed to close with the son in the foreground of the piece. If it has a value, that value consists in what light it may contrive to throw upon the unique and noble figure of the father. With the advance of years, the characteristics of this figure became more severely outlined, more rigorously confined within settled limits. In relation to the son—who presently departed, at a very immature age, for the new life in London—the attitude of the father continued to be one of extreme solicitude, deepening by degrees into disappointment and disenchantment. He abated no jot or tittle of his demands upon human frailty. He kept the spiritual cord drawn tight; the Biblical bearing-rein was incessantly busy, jerking into position the head of the dejected neophyte.

That young soul, removed from the father's personal inspection, began to blossom forth crudely and irregularly enough into new provinces of thought, through fresh layers of experience. To the painful mentor at home in the West, the centre of anxiety was still the meek and docile heart, dedicated to the Lord's service, which must, at all hazards and with all defiance of the rules of life, be kept unspotted from the world.

The torment of a postal inquisition began directly I was settled in my London lodgings. To my Father—with his ample leisure, his palpitating apprehension, his ready pen—the flow of correspondence offered no trouble at all; it was a grave but gratifying occupation. To me the almost daily letter of exhortation, with its string of questions

## FATHER AND SON

about conduct, its series of warnings, grew to be a burden which could hardly be borne, particularly because it involved a reply as punctual and if possible as full as itself. At the age of seventeen, the metaphysics of the soul are shadowy, and it is a dreadful thing to be forced to define the exact outline of what is so undulating and so shapeless. To my Father there seemed no reason why I should hesitate to give answers of full metallic ring to his hard and oft-repeated questions; but to me this correspondence was torture. When I feebly expostulated, when I begged to be left a little to myself, these appeals of mine automatically stimulated, and indeed blew up into fierce flames, the ardour of my Father's alarm.

The letter, the only too-confidently expected letter, would lie on the table as I descended to breakfast. It would commonly be, of course, my only letter, unless tempered by a cosy and chatty note from my dear and comfortable stepmother, dealing with such perfectly tranquillising subjects as the harvest of roses in the garden or the state of health of various neighbours. But the other, the solitary letter, in its threatening whiteness, with its exquisitely penned address—there it would lie awaiting me, destroying the taste of the bacon, reducing the flavour of the tea to insipidity. I might fatuously dally with it, I might pretend not to observe it, but there it lay. Before the morning's exercise began, I knew that it had to be read, and what was worse, that it had to be answered. Useless the effort to conceal from myself what it contained. Like all its precursors, like all its followers, it would insist, with every variety of appeal, on a reiterated declaration that I still fully intended, as in the days of my earliest childhood, "to be on the Lord's side" in everything.

In my replies, I would sometimes answer precisely as I was desired to answer; sometimes I would evade the queries, and write about other things; sometimes I would turn upon the tormentor, and urge that my tender youth might be let alone. It little mattered what form of weakness I put forth by way of baffling my Father's direct, firm, unflinching strength. To an appeal against the bondage of a correspondence of such unbroken solemnity I would receive—with what a paralysing promptitude!—such a reply as this:—

"Let me say that the 'solemnity' you complain of has only been the expression of tender anxiousness of a father's heart, that his only child, just turned out upon the world, and very far out of his sight and hearing, should be walking in God's way. Recollect that it is not now as it was when you were at school, when we had personal communication with you at intervals of five days:—we now know absolutely nothing of you, save from your letters, and if they do not indicate your spiritual prosperity, the deepest solitudes of our hearts have nothing to feed on. But I will try henceforth to trust you, and lay aside my fears; for you are worthy of my confidence; and your own God and your father's God will hold you with His right hand."

Over such letters as these I am not ashamed to say that I sometimes wept; the old paper I have just been copying shows traces of

## FATHER AND SON

tears shed upon it more than forty years ago, tears commingled of despair at my own feebleness, distraction at my want of will, pity for my Father's manifest and pathetic distress. He would "try henceforth to trust" me, he said. Alas! the effort would be in vain; after a day or two, after a hollow attempt to write of other things, the importunate subject would recur; there would intrude again the inevitable questions about the Atonement and the Means of Grace, the old anxious fears lest I was "yielding" my intimacy to agreeable companions who were not "one with me in Christ," fresh passionate entreaties to be assured, in every letter, that I was walking in the clear light of God's presence.

It seems to me now profoundly strange, although I knew too little of the world to remark it at the time, that these incessant exhortations dealt, not with conduct, but with faith. Earlier in this narrative I have noted how disdainfully, with what an austere pride, my Father refused to entertain the subject of personal shortcomings in my behaviour. There were enough of them to blame, heaven knows, but he was too lofty-minded a gentleman to dwell upon them, and, though by nature deeply suspicious of the possibility of frequent moral lapses, even in the very elect, he refused to stoop to anything like espionage.

I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his beautiful faith in me in this respect, and now that I was alone in London, at this tender time of life, "exposed," as they say, to all sorts of dangers, as defenceless as a fledgling that has been turned out of its nest, yet my Father did not, in his uplifted Quixotism, allow himself to fancy me guilty of any moral misbehaviour, but concentrated his fears entirely upon my faith.

"Let me know more of your inner light. Does the candle of the Lord shine on your soul?" This would be the ceaseless inquiry. Or, again, "Do you get any spiritual companionship with young men? You passed over last Sunday without even a word, yet this day is the most interesting to me in your whole week. Do you find the ministry of the Word pleasant, and, above all, profitable? Does it bring your soul into exercise before God? The Coming of Christ draweth nigh. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man."

If I quote such passages as this from my Father's letters to me, it is not that I seek entertainment in a contrast between his earnestness and the casuistical inattention and provoked distractedness of a young man to whom the real world now offered its irritating and stimulating scenes of animal and intellectual life, but to call out sympathy, and perhaps wonder, at the spectacle of so blind a Roman firmness as my Father's spiritual attitude displayed.

His aspirations were individual and metaphysical. At the present hour, so complete is the revolution which has overturned the puritanism of which he was perhaps the latest surviving type, that all

classes of religious persons combine in placing philanthropic activity, the objective attitude, in the foreground. It is extraordinary how far-reaching the change has been, so that nowadays a religion which does not combine with its subjective faith a strenuous labour for the good of others is hardly held to possess any religious principle worth holding.

This propaganda of beneficence, this constant attention to the moral and physical improvement of persons who have been neglected, is quite recent as a leading feature of religion, though indeed it seems to have formed some part of the Saviour's original design. It was unknown to the great divines of the seventeenth century, whether Catholic or Protestant, and it offered but a shadowy attraction to my Father, who was the last of their disciples. When Bossuet desired his hearers to listen to the "*cri de misère à l'entour de nous, qui devrait nous fondre le coeur,*" he started a new thing in the world of theology. We may search the famous "Rule and Exercises of Holy Living" from cover to cover, and not learn that Jeremy Taylor would have thought that any activity of the district-visitor or the Salvation lassie came within the category of saintliness.

My Father, then, like an old divine, concentrated his thoughts upon the intellectual part of faith. In his obsession about me, he believed that if my brain could be kept unaffected by any of the tempting errors of the age, and my heart centred in the adoring love of God, all would be well with me in perpetuity. He was still convinced that by intensely directing my thoughts, he could compel them to flow in a certain channel, since he had not begun to learn the lesson, so mournful for saintly men of his complexion, that "virtue would not be virtue, could it be given by one fellow creature to another." He had recognised, with reluctance, that holiness was not hereditary, but he continued to hope that it might be compulsive. I was still "the child of many prayers," and it was not to be conceded that these prayers could remain unanswered.

The great panacea was now, as always, the study of the Bible, and this my Father never ceased to urge upon me. He presented to me a copy of Dean Alford's edition of the Greek New Testament, in four great volumes, and these he had had so magnificently bound in full morocco that the work shone on my poor shelf of sixpenny poets like a duchess among dairy-maids. He extracted from me a written promise that I would translate and meditate upon a portion of the Greek text every morning before I started for business. This promise I presently failed to keep, my good intentions being undermined by an invincible *ennui*; I concealed the dereliction from him, and the sense that I was deceiving my Father ate into my conscience like a canker. But the dilemma was now before me that I must either deceive my Father in such things or paralyse my own character.

My growing distaste for the Holy Scriptures began to occupy my



thoughts, and to surprise as much as it scandalised me. My desire was to continue to delight in those sacred pages, for which I still had an instinctive veneration. Yet I could not but observe the difference between the zeal with which I snatched at a volume of Carlyle or Ruskin—since these magicians were now first revealing themselves to me—and the increasing languor with which I took up Alford for my daily “passage.” Of course, although I did not know it, and believed my reluctance to be sinful, the real reason why I now found the Bible so difficult to read was my familiarity with its contents. These had the colourless triteness of a story retold a hundred times. I longed for something new, something that would gratify curiosity and excite surprise. Whether the facts and doctrines contained in the Bible were true or false was not the question that appealed to me; it was rather that they had been presented to me so often and had sunken into me so far that, as some one has said, they “lay be-dridden in the dormitory of the soul,” and made no impression of any kind upon me.

It often amazed me, and I am still unable to understand the fact, that my Father, through his long life—or till nearly the close of it—continued to take an eager pleasure in the text of the Bible. As I think I have already said, before he reached middle life, he had committed practically the whole of it to memory, and if started anywhere, even in a Minor Prophet, he could go on without a break as long as ever he was inclined for that exercise. He, therefore, at no time can have been assailed by the satiety of which I have spoken, and that it came so soon to me I must take simply as an indication of difference of temperament. It was not possible, even through the dark glass of correspondence, to deceive his eagle eye in this matter, and his suspicions accordingly took another turn. He conceived me to have become, or to be becoming, a victim of “the infidelity of the age.”

In this new difficulty, he appealed to forms of modern literature by the side of which the least attractive pages of Leviticus or Deuteronomy struck me as even thrilling. In particular, he urged upon me a work, then just published, called “The Continuity of Scripture” by William Page Wood, afterwards Lord Chancellor Hatherley. I do not know why he supposed that the lucubrations of an exemplary lawyer, delivered in a style that was like the trickling sawdust, would succeed in rousing emotions which the glorious rhetoric of the Orient had failed to awaken; but Page Wood had been a Sunday School teacher for thirty years, and my Father was always unduly impressed by the acumen of pious barristers.

As time went on, and I grew older and more independent in mind, my Father’s anxiety about what he called “the pitfalls and snares which surround on every hand the thoughtless giddy youth of London” became extremely painful to himself. By harping in private upon these “pitfalls”—which brought to my imagination a funny













## FATHER AND SON

The reader who has done me the favour to follow this record of the clash of two temperaments will not fail to perceive the crowning importance of the letter from which I have just made a long quotation. It sums up, with the closest logic, the whole history of the situation, and I may leave it to form the epigraph of this little book.

All that I need further say is to point out that when such defiance is offered to the intelligence of a thoughtful and honest young man with the normal impulses of his twenty-one years, there are but two alternatives. Either he must cease to think for himself; or his individualism must be instantly confirmed, and the necessity of religious independence must be emphasised.

No compromise, it is seen, was offered; no proposal of a truce would have been acceptable. It was a case of "Everything or Nothing;" and thus desperately challenged, the young man's conscience threw off once for all the yoke of his "dedication," and, as respectfully as he could, without parade or remonstrance, he took a human being's privilege to fashion his inner life for himself.