only too plain both to himself and to others how much out of place he now was.

So the crisis came, as come it must.

Autumn had given place to winter, to the first snows, thawing during the day, freezing at night. The roofs of the town were partly brown, partly white; icicles hung lengthening from the eaves. It was the date on which the university closed for the Christmas holidays — Friday afternoon preceding. All day through the college corridors, or along the snow-paths leading to the town, there had been the glad noises of that wild riotous time: whistle and song and shout and hurrying feet, gripping hands, good wishes, and good-bys. One by one the sounds had grown fewer, fainter, and had ceased; the college was left in emptiness and silence, except in a single lecture room in one corner of the building, from the windows of which you looked out across the town and toward the west; there the scene took place.

It was at the door of this room that the lad, having paused a moment outside to

draw a deep, quivering breath, knocked, and being told to come in, entered, closed the door behind him, and sat down white and trembling in the nearest chair. About the middle of the room were seated the professors of the Bible College and his pastor. They rose, and calling him forward shook hands with him kindly, sorrowfully, and pointed to a seat before them, resuming their own.

Before them, then, sat the lad, facing the wintry light; and there was a long silence. Every one knew beforehand what the result would be. It was the best part of a year since that first interview in the pastor's study; there had been other interviews — with the pastor, with the professors. They had done what they could to check him, to bring him back. They had long been counsellors; now in duty they were authorities, sitting to hear him finally to the end, that they might pronounce sentence: that would be the severance of his connection with the university and his expulsion from the church.

Old, old scene in the history of Man — the trial of his Doubt by his Faith: strange day of judgment, when one half of the human spirit arraigns and condemns the other half. Only five persons sat in that room — four men and a boy. The room was of four bare walls and a blackboard, with perhaps a map or two of Palestine, Egypt, and the Roman Empire in the time of Paul. The era was the winter of the year 1868, the place was an old town of the Anglo-Saxon backwoodsmen, on the blue-grass highlands of Kentucky. But in how many other places has that scene been enacted, before what other audiences of the accusing and the accused, under what laws of trial, with what degrees and rigors of judgment! Behind David, sitting solitary there in the flesh, the imagination beheld a throng so countless as to have been summoned and controlled by the deep arraigning eye of Dante alone. Unawares, he stood at the head of an invisible host, which stretched backward through time till it could be traced no farther. Witnesses all to that sublime, indispensable part of man which is his Doubt — Doubt respecting his origin, his meaning, his Maker, and his destiny. That perpetual half-night of his planet-mind — that shadowed side of his orbit-life — forever attracted and held in place by the force of Deity, but destined never to receive its light. Yet from that chill, bleak side what things have not reached round and caught the sun! And as of the earth's plants, some grow best and are sweetest in darkness, what strange blossoms of faith open and are fragrant in that eternal umbra! Sacred, sacred Doubt of Man. His agony, his searching! which has led him always onward from more ignorance to less ignorance, from less truth to more truth; which is the inspiration of his mind, the sorrow of his heart; which has spoken everywhere in his science, philosophy, literature, art — in his religion itself; which keeps him humble not vain, changing not immutable, charitable not bigoted; which attempts to solve the universe and knows that it does

not solve it, but ever seeks to trace law, to clarify reason, and so to find whatever truth it can.

As David sat before his professors and his pastor, it was one of the moments that sum up civilization.

Across the room, behind them also, what a throng! Over on that side was Faith, that radiant part of the soul which directly basks in the light of God, the sun. There, visible to the eye of imagination, were those of all times, places, and races, who have sat in judgment on doubters, actual or suspected. In whatsoever else differing, united in this: that they have always held themselves to be divinely appointed agents of the Judge of all the earth: His creatures chosen to punish His creatures. And so behind those professors, away back in history, were ranged Catholic popes and Protestant archbishops, and kings and queens, Protestant and Catholic, and great mediæval jurists, and mailed knights and palm-bearing soldiers of the cross, and holy

inquisitors drowning poor old bewildered women, tearing living flesh from flesh as paper, crushing bones like glass, burning the shrieking human body to cinders: this in the name of a Christ whose Gospel was mercy, and by the authority of a God whose law was love. They were all there, tier after tier, row above row, a vast shadowy colosseum of intent judicial faces — Defenders of the Faith.

But no inquisitor was in this room now, nor punitive intention, nor unkind thought. Slowly throughout the emerging life of man this identical trial has gained steadily in charity and mildness. Looking backward over his long pathway through bordering mysteries, man himself has been brought to see, time and again, that what was his doubt was his ignorance; what was his faith was his error; that things rejected have become believed, and that things believed have become rejected; that both his doubt and his faith are the temporary condition of his knowledge, which is ever growing;

and that rend him faith and doubt ever will, but destroy him, never.

No Smithfield fire, then, no Jesuitical rack, no cup of hemlock, no thumb-screw, no torture of any kind for David. Still, here was a duty to be done, an awful responsibility to be discharged in sorrow and with prayer; and grave good men they were. Blameless was this lad in all their eyes save in his doubt. But to doubt — was not that the greatest of sins?

The lad soon grew composed. These judges were still his friends, not his masters. His masters were the writers of the books in which he believed, and he spoke for them, for what he believed to be the truth, so far as man had learned it. The conference lasted through that short winter afternoon. In all that he said the lad showed that he was full of many confusing voices: the voices of the new science, the voices of the new doubt. One voice only had fallen silent in him: the voice of the old faith.

It had grown late. Twilight was descending on the white campus, on the snow-capped town. Away in the west, beyond the clustered house-tops, there had formed itself the solemn picture of a red winter sunset. The light entered the windows and fell on the lad's face. One last question had just been asked him by the most venerable and beloved of his professors — in tones awe-stricken, and tremulous with his own humility, and with compassion for the erring boy before him, —

"Do you not even believe in God?"

Ah, that question! which shuts the gates of consciousness upon us when we enter sleep, and sits close outside our eyelids as we waken; which was framed in us ere we were born, which comes fullest to life in us as life itself ebbs fastest. That question which exacts of the finite to affirm whether it apprehends the Infinite, that prodding of the evening midge for its opinion of the polar star.

"Do you not even believe in God?"

The lad stood up, he whose life until

these months had been a prayer, whose very slumbers had been worship. He stood up, from some impulse — perhaps the respectful habit of rising when addressed in class by this professor. At first he made no reply, but remained looking over the still heads of his elders into that low red sunset sky. How often had he beheld it, when feeding the stock at frozen twilights. One vision rose before him now of his boyhood life at home — his hopes of the ministry — the hemp fields where he had toiled — his father and mother waiting before the embers this moment, mindful of him. He recalled how often, in the last year, he had sat upon his bedside at midnight when all were asleep, asking himself that question: —

"Do I believe in God?"

And now he was required to lay bare what his young soul had been able to do with that eternal mystery.

He thrust his big coarse hand into his breast-pocket and drew out a little red morocco Testament which had been given

him when he was received into the congregation. He opened it at a place where it seemed used to lie apart. He held it before his face, but could not read. At last, controlling himself, he said to them with dignity, and with the common honesty which was the life of him: —

"I read you a line which is the best answer I can give just now to your last question."

And so he read: —

"*Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief!*"

A few moments later he turned to another page and said to them: —

"These lines also I desire to read to you who believe in Christ and believe that Christ and God are one. I may not understand them, but I have thought of them a great deal: —

"'*And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world but to save the world.*

"'*He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the*

word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' "

He shut his Testament and put it back into his pocket and looked at his judges.

"I understand this declaration of Christ to mean," he said, "that whether I believe in Him or do not believe in Him, I am not to be judged till God's Day of Judgment."

IX

A FEW days later David was walking across the fields on his way home: it was past the middle of the afternoon.

At early candle-light that morning, the huge red stage-coach, leaving town for his distant part of the country, had rolled, creaking and rattling, to the dormitory entrance, the same stage that had conveyed him thither. Throwing up his window he had looked out at the curling white breath of the horses and at the driver, who, buried in coats and rugs, and holding the lash of his whip in his mittened fist, peered up and called out with no uncertain temper.

The lad was ready. He hastily carried down the family umbrella and the Brussels carpet valise with its copious pink roses, looking strangely out of season amid all that hoar frost. Then he leaped back upstairs for something which had been added to his worldly goods since he entered college — a small, cheap trunk, containing a few garments and the priceless books. These things the driver stored in the boot of the stage, bespattered with mud now frozen. Then, running back once more, the lad seized his coat and hat, cast one troubled glance around the meaningless room which had been the theatre of such a drama in his life, went over to the little table, and blew out his Bible Student's lamp forever; and hurrying down with a cordial "all ready," climbed to the seat beside the driver and was whirled away.

He turned as he passed from the campus to take a last look at Morrison College, standing back there on the hill, venerable, majestical, tight-closed, its fires put out. As he crossed the city (for there were pas-