

awful downfall, Gabriella felt a desire to go straight to him. She did not reason or hesitate: she went.

And now for two months they had been seeing each other every few days.

Thus by the working out of vast forces, the lives of Gabriella and David had been jostled violently together. They were the children of two revolutions, separate yet having a common end: she produced by the social revolution of the New World, which overthrew mediæval slavery; he by the intellectual revolution of the Old World, which began to put forth scientific law, but in doing this brought on one of the greatest ages of religious doubt. So that both were early vestiges of the same immeasurable race evolution, proceeding along converging lines. She, living on the artificial summits of a decaying social order, had farthest to fall, in its collapse, ere she reached the natural earth; he, toiling at the bottom, had farthest to rise before he could look out upon the plains

of widening modern thought and man's evolving destiny. Through her fall and his rise, they had been brought to a common level. But on that level all that had befallen her had driven her as out of a blinding storm into the church, the seat and asylum of religion; all that had befallen him had driven him out of the churches as the fortifications of theology. She had been drawn to that part of worship which lasts and is divine; he had been repelled by the part that passes and is human.

XVI

ALTHOUGH Gabriella had joyously greeted the day, as bringing exemption from stifling hours in school, her spirits had drooped ere evening with monotony. There were no books in use among the members of that lovable household except school-books; they were too busy with the primary joys of life to notice the secondary resources of literature. She had no pleasant sewing. To escape the noise of the

pent-up children, she must restrict herself to that part of the house which comprised her room. A walk out of doors was impracticable, although she ventured once into the yard to study more closely the marvels of the ice-work; and to the edge of the orchard, to ascertain how the apple trees were bearing up under those avalanches of frozen silver slipped from the clouds.

So there were empty hours for her that day; and always the emptiest are the heaviest—those unfilled baskets of time which strangely become lightest only after we have heaped them with the best we have to give. Gabriella filled the hour-baskets this day with thoughts of David, whose field work she knew would be interrupted by the storm, and whose movements about the house she vainly tried to follow in imagination.

Two months of close association with him in that dull country neighborhood had wrought great changes in the simple feeling with which she had sought him at first.

He had then been to her only a Prodigal who had squandered his substance, tried to feed his soul on the swinish husks of Doubt, and returning to his father's house unrepentant, had been admitted yet remained rejected: a Prodigal not of the flesh and the world but of the spirit and the Lord. But what has ever interested the heart of woman as a prodigal of some kind?

At other times he was figured by her sympathies as a young Samaritan gone travelling into a Divine country but fallen among spiritual thieves, who had stripped him of his seamless robe of Faith and left him bruised by Life's wayside: a maltreated Christ-neighbor whom it was her duty to succor if she could. But a woman's nursing of a man's wound—how often it becomes the nursing of the wounded! Moreover, Gabriella had now long been aware of what she had become to her prodigal, her Samaritan; she saw the truth and watched it growing from day to day; for he was incapable of disguises. But often what effect has such watching upon

the watcher, a watcher who is alone in the world? So that while she fathomed with many feminine soundings all that she was to David, Gabriella did not dream what David had become to her.

Shortly after nightfall, when she heard his heavy tread on the porch below, the tedium of the day instantly vanished. Happiness rose in her like a clear fountain set suddenly playing — rose to her eyes — bathed her in refreshing vital emotions.

"I am so glad you came," she said as she entered the parlor, gave him her hand, and stood looking up into his softened rugged face, at his majestic head, which overawed her a little always. Large as was the mould in which nature had cast his body, this seemed to her dwarfed by the inner largeness of the man, whose development she could note as now going forward almost visibly from day to day: he had risen so far already and was still so young.

He did not reply to her greeting except with a look. In matters which involved

his feeling for her, he was habitually hampered and ill at ease; only on general subjects did she ever see him master of his resources. Gabriella had fallen into the habit of looking into his eyes for the best answers: there he always spoke not only with ideas but emotions: a double speech much cared for by woman.

They seated themselves on opposite sides of the wide deep fire-place: a grate for soft coal had not yet destroyed that.

"Your schoolhouse is safe," he announced briefly.

"Oh, I've been wanting to know all day but had no one to send! How do *you* know?" she inquired quickly.

"It's safe. The yard will have to be cleared of brush: that's all."

She looked at him gratefully. "You are always so kind!"

"Well," observed David, with a great forward stride, "aren't you?"

Gabriella, being a woman, did not particularly prize this remark: it suggested his being kind because she had been kind;

and a woman likes nothing as reward, everything as tribute.

"And now if the apple trees are only not killed!" she exclaimed joyously, changing the subject.

"Why the apple trees?"

"If you had been here last spring, you would have understood. When they bloom, they are mine, I take possession." After a moment she added: "They bring back the recollection of such happy times — springs long ago. Some time I'll tell you."

"When you were a little girl?"

"Yes."

"I wish I had known you when you were a little girl," said David, in an undertone, looking into the fire.

Gabriella reflected how impossible this would have been: the thought caused her sharp pain.

Some time later, David, who had appeared more and more involved in some inward struggle, suddenly asked a relieving question: —

"Do you know the first time I ever saw you?"

She did not answer at once.

"In the smoke-house," she said with a ripple of laughter. Gabriella, when she was merry, made one think of some lovely green April hill, snow-capped.

David shook his head slowly. His eyes grew soft and mysterious.

"It was the first time *I* ever saw *you*," she protested.

He continued to shake his head, and she looked puzzled.

"You saw me once before that, and smiled at me."

Gabriella seemed incredulous and not well pleased.

After a little while David began in the manner of one who sets out to tell a story he is secretly fond of.

"Do you remember standing on the steps of a church the Friday evening before Christmas — a little after dark?"

Gabriella's eyes began to express remembrance.

"A wagon-load of cedar had just been thrown out on the sidewalk, the sexton was carrying it into the church, some children were helping, you were making a wreath: do you remember?"

She knew every word of this.

"A young man — a Bible student — passed, or tried to pass. You smiled at his difficulty. Not unkindly," he added, smiling not unkindly himself.

"And that was you? This explains why I have always believed I had seen you before. But it was only for a moment, your face was in the dark; how should I remember?"

After she said this, she looked grave: his face that night had been far from a happy one.

"That day," continued David, quickly grave also, "that day I saw my professors and pastor for the last time; it ended me as a Bible student. I had left the University and the scene of my trial only a little while before."

He rose as he concluded and took a

turn across the room. Then he faced her, smiling a little sadly.

"Once I might have thought all that Providential. I mean, seeing the faces of my professors — my judges — last, as the end of my old life; then seeing your face next — the beginning of the new."

He had long used frankness like this, making no secret of himself, of her influence over him. It was embarrassing; it declared so much, assumed so much, that had never been declared or assumed in any other way. But her stripped and beaten young Samaritan was no labyrinthine courtier, bescented and bedraped and bedyed with worldliness and conventions: he came ever in her presence naked of soul. It was this that empowered her to take the measure of his feeling for her: it had its effect.

David returned to his chair and looked across with a mixture of hesitancy and determination.

"I have never spoken to you about my expulsion — my unbelief."

After a painful pause she answered.

"You must be aware that I have noticed your silence. Perhaps you do not realize how much I have regretted it."

"You know why I have not?"

She did not answer.

"I have been afraid. It's the only thing in the world I've ever been afraid of."

"Why should you have been?"

"I dreaded to know how you might feel. It has caused a difficulty with every one so far. It separated me from my friends among the Bible students. It separated me from my professors, my pastor. It has alienated my father and mother. I did not know how you would regard it."

"Have I not known it all the time? Has it made any difference?"

"Ah! but that might be only your toleration! Meantime it has become a question with me how far your toleration will go — what is back of your toleration! We tolerate so much in people who are merely acquaintances — people that we do not care particularly for and that we are

never to have anything to do with in life. But if the tie begins to be closer, then the things we tolerated at a distance — what becomes of them then?"

He was looking at her steadily, and she dropped her eyes. This was another one of the Prodigal's assumptions — but never before put so pointedly.

"So I have feared that when I myself told you what I believe and what I do not believe, it might be the end of me. And when you learned my feelings toward what *you* believe — that might be more troublesome still. But the time has come when I must know."

He turned his face away from her, and rising, walked several times across the room.

At last also the moment had arrived for which she had been waiting. Freely as they had spoken to each other of their pasts — she giving him glimpses of the world in which she had been reared, he taking her into his world which was equally unfamiliar — on this subject silence be-

tween them had never been broken. She had often sought to pass the guard he placed around this tragical episode but had always been turned away. The only original ground of her interest in him, therefore, still remained a background, obscure and unexplored. She regretted this for many reasons. Her belief was that he was merely passing through a phase of religious life not uncommon with those who were born to go far in mental travels before they settled in their Holy Land. She believed it would be over the sooner if he had the chance to live it out in discussion; and she herself offered the only possibility of this. Gabriella was in a position to know by experience what it means in hours of trouble to need the relief of companionship. Ideas, she had learned, long shut up in the mind tend to germinate and take root. There had been discords which had ceased sounding in her own ear as soon as they were poured into another.

"I have always hoped," she repeated, as he seated himself, "that you would talk

with me about these things." And then to divert the conversation into less difficult channels, she added:—

"As to what you may think of my beliefs, I have no fear; they need not be discussed and they cannot be attacked."

"You are an Episcopalian," he suggested hesitatingly. "I do not wish to be rude, but—your church has its dogmas."

"There is not a dogma of my church that I have ever thought of for a moment: or of any other church," she replied instantly and clearly.

In those simple words she had uttered unaware a long historic truth: that religion, not theology, forms the spiritual life of women. In the whole history of the world's opinions, no dogma of any weight has ever originated with a woman; wherein, as in many other ways, she shows points of superiority in her intellect. It is a man who tries to apprehend God through his logic and psychology; a woman understands Him better through emotions and deeds. It is the men who are concerned