

about the cubits, the cedar wood, the Urim and Thummim of the Tabernacle; woman walks straight into the Holy of Holies. Men constructed the Cross; women wept for the Crucified. It was a man—a Jew defending his faith in his own supernatural revelation—who tried to ram a sponge of vinegar into the mouth of Christ, dying; it was women who gathered at the sepulchre of Resurrection. If Christ could have had a few women among his Apostles, there might have been more of His religion in the world and fewer creeds barnacled on the World's Ship of Souls.

"How can you remain in your church without either believing or disbelieving its dogmas?" asked David, squarely.

"My church is the altar of Christ and the house of God," replied Gabriella, simply. "And so is any other church." That was all the logic she had and all the faith she needed; beyond that limit she did not even think.

"And you believe in *them all*?" he asked with wondering admiration.

"I believe in them all."

"Once I did also," observed David, reverently and with new reverence for her.

"What I regret is that you should have thrown away your religion on account of your difficulties with theology. Nothing more awful could have befallen you than that."

"It was the churches that made the difficulties," said David, "I did not. But there is more than theology in it. You do not know what I think about religions—revelations—inspirations—man's place in nature."

"What *do* you think?" she asked eagerly. "I suppose now I shall hear something about those great books."

She put herself at ease in her chair like one who prepares to listen quietly.

"Shall I tell you how the whole argument runs as I have arranged it? I shall have to begin far away and come down to the subject by degrees." He looked apologetic.



"Tell me everything; I have been waiting a long time."

David reflected a few moments and then began:—

"The first of my books as I have arranged them, considers what we call the physical universe as a whole—our heavens—the stars—and discusses the little that man knows about it. I used to think the earth was the centre of this universe, the most important world in it, on account of Man. That is what the ancient Hebrews thought. In this room float millions of dust-particles too small to be seen by us. To say that the universe is made for the sake of the earth would be something like saying that the earth was created for the sake of one of these particles of its own dust."

He paused to see how she received this.

"That ought to be a great book," she said approvingly. "I should like to study it."

"The second takes up that small part of the universe which we call our solar system

and sums up the little we have learned regarding it. I used to think the earth the most important part of the solar system, on account of Man. So the earliest natural philosophers believed. That is like believing that the American continent was created for the sake, say, of my father's farm."

He awaited her comment.

"That should be a great book," she said simply. "Some day let me see *that*."

"The third detaches for study one small planet of that system—our earth—and reviews our latest knowledge of that: as to how it has been evolved into its present stage of existence through other stages requiring unknown millions and millions and millions of years. Once I thought it was created in six days. So it is written. Do you believe that?"

There was silence.

"What is the next book?" she asked.

"The fourth," said David, with a twinkle in his eye at her refusal to answer his question, "takes up the history of the



earth's surface — its crust — the layers of this — as one might study the skin of an apple as large as the globe. In the course of an almost infinite time, as we measure things, it discovers the appearance of Life on this crust, and then tries to follow the progress of Life from the lowest forms upward, always upward, to Man: another time infinitely vast, according to our standards."

He looked over for some comment but she made none, and he continued, his interest deepening, his face kindling: —

"The fifth takes up the subject of Man, as a single one of the myriads of forms of Life that have grown on the earth's crust, and gives the best of what we know of him viewed as a species of animal. Does this tire you?"

Gabriella made the only gesture of displeasure he had ever seen.

"Now," said David, straightening himself up, "I draw near to the root of the matter. A sixth book takes up what we call the civilization of this animal species, Man. It subdivides his civilization into

different civilizations. It analyzes these civilizations, where it is possible, into their arts, governments, literatures, religions, and other elements. And the seventh," he resumed after a grave pause, scrutinizing her face most eagerly, "the seventh takes up just one part of his civilizations — the religions of the globe — and gives an account of these. It describes how they have grown and flourished, how some have passed as absolutely away as the civilizations that produced them. It teaches that those religions were as natural a part of those civilizations as their civil laws, their games, their wars, their philosophy; that the religious books of these races, which they themselves often thought inspired revelations, were no more inspired and no more revelations than their secular books; that Buddha's faith or Brahma's were no more direct from God than Buddhist or Brahman temples were from God; that the Koran is no more inspired than Moorish architecture is inspired; that the ancient religion of the Jewish race stands



on the same footing as the other great religions of the globe — as to being Supernatural; that the second religion of the Hebrews, starting out of them, but rejected by them, the Christian religion, the greatest of all to us, takes its place with the others as a perfectly natural expression of the same human desire and effort to find God and to worship Him through all the best that we know in ourselves and of the universe outside us."

"Ah," said Gabriella, suddenly leaning forward in her chair, "that is the book that has done all the harm."

"One moment! All these books," continued David, for he was aroused now and did not pause to consider her passionate protest, "have this in common: that they try to discover and to trace Law. The universe — it is the expression of Law. Our solar system — it has been formed by Law. The sun — the driving force of Law has made it. Our earth — Law has shaped that; brought Life out of it; evolved Life on it from the lowest to the highest; lifted

primeval Man to modern Man; out of barbarism developed civilization; out of prehistoric religions, historic religions. And this one order — method — purpose — ever running and unfolding through the universe, is all that we know of Him whom we call Creator, God, our Father. So that His reign is the Reign of Law. He, Himself, is the author of the Law that we should seek Him. We obey, and our seekings are our religions.

"If you ask me whether I believe in the God of the Hebrews, I say 'Yes'; just as I believe in the God of the Babylonians, of the Egyptians, of the Greeks, of the Romans, of all men. But if you ask whether I believe what the Hebrews wrote of God, or what any other age or people thought of God, I say 'No.' I believe what the best thought of my own age thinks of Him in the light of man's whole past and of our greater present knowledge of the Laws of His universe," said David, stoutly, speaking for his masters.

"As for the theologies," he resumed



hastily, as if not wishing to be interrupted, "I know of no book that has undertaken to number them. They, too, are part of Man's nature and civilization, of his never ceasing search. But they are merely what he thinks of God — never anything more. They often contain the highest thought of which he is capable in his time and place; but the awful mistake and cruelty of them is that they have regularly been put forth as the voice of God Himself, authoritative, inviolable, and unchanging. An assemblage of men have a perfect right to turn a man out of their church on theological grounds; but they have no right to do it in the name of God. With as much propriety a man might be expelled from a political party in the name of God. In the long life of any one of the great religions of the globe, how many brief theologies have grown up under it like annual plants under a tree! How many has the Christian religion itself sprouted, nourished, and trampled down as dead weeds! What do we think now of the Christian theology

of the tenth century? of the twelfth? of the fifteenth? In the nineteenth century alone, how many systems of theology have there been? In the Protestantism of the United States, how many are there to-day? Think of the names they bear — older and newer! According to founders, and places, and sources, and contents, and methods: Arminian — Augustinian — Calvinistic — Lutheran — Gallican — Genevan — Merceburg — New England — Oxford — national — revealed — Catholic — evangelical — fundamental — historical — homiletical — moral — mystical — pastoral — practical — dogmatic — exegetical — polemic — rational — systematic. That sounds a little like Polonius," said David, stopping suddenly, "but there is no humor in it! One great lesson in the history of them all is not to be neglected: that through them also runs the great Law of Evolution, of the widening thoughts of men; so that now, in civilized countries at least, the churches persecute to the death no longer. You know what the Egyptian Priesthood



would have done with me at my trial. What the Mediæval hierarchy would have done. What the Protestant or the Catholic theology of two centuries ago might have done. Now mankind is developing better ideas of these little arrangements of human psychology on the subject of God, though the churches still try to enforce them in His name. But the time is coming when the churches will be deserted by all thinking men, unless they cease trying to uphold, as the teachings of God, mere creeds of their ecclesiastical founders. Very few men reject all belief in God; and it is no man's right to inquire in what any man's belief consists; men do reject and have a right to reject what some man writes out as the eternal truth of the matter.

"And now," he said, turning to her sorrowfully, "that is the best or the worst of what I believe—according as one may like it or not like it. I see all things as a growth, a sublime unfolding by the Laws of God. The race ever rises toward Him. The old things which were its best once die off from

it as no longer good. Its charity grows, its justice grows. All the nobler, finer elements of its spirit come forth more and more—a continuous advance along the paths of Law. And the better the world, the larger its knowledge, the easier its faith in Him who made it and who leads it on. The development of Man is itself the great Revelation of Him! But I have studied these things ignorantly, only a little while. I am at the beginning of my life, and hope to grow. Still I stand where I have placed myself. And now, are you like the others: do you give me up?"

He faced her with the manner in which he had sat before his professors, conceiving himself as on trial a second time. He had in him the stuff of martyrs and was prepared to stand by his faith at the cost of all things.

The silence in the room lasted. Her feeling for him was so much deeper than all this—so centred, not in what his faith was to her but in what *he* was to her, that she did not trust herself to speak. He was



not on trial in these matters in the least: without his knowing it, he had been on trial in many other ways for a long time.

He misunderstood her silence, read wrongly her expression which was obeying with some severity the need she felt to conceal what she had no right to show.

"Ah, well! Ah, well!" he cried piteously, rising slowly.

When she saw his face a moment later across the room as he turned, it was the face she had first seen in the dark street. It had stopped her singing then; it drew an immediate response from her now. She crossed over to him and took one of his hands in both of hers. Her cheeks were flushed, her voice trembled.

"I am not your judge," she said, "and in all this there is only one thing that is too sad, too awful, for me to accept. I am sorry you should have been misled into believing that the Christian religion is nothing more than one of the religions of the world, and Christ merely one of its religious teachers. I wish with all my strength you be-

lieved as you once believed, that the Bible is a direct Revelation from God, making known to us, beyond all doubt, the Resurrection of the dead, the Immortality of the Soul, in a better world than this, and the presence with us of a Father who knows our wants, pities our weakness, and answers our prayers. But I believe you will one day regain your faith: you will come back to the Church."

He shook his head.

"Don't be deceived," he said.

"Men, great men, have said that before and they have come back. I am a woman, and these questions never trouble us; but is it not a common occurrence that men who think deeply on such mysteries pass through their period of doubt?"

"But suppose I never pass through mine! You have not answered my question," he said determinedly. "Does this make no difference in your feeling for me? Would it make none?"

"Will you bring me that book on the religions of the world?"



"Ah," he said, "you have not answered."

"I have told you that I am not your judge."

"Ah, but that tells nothing: a woman is never a judge. She is either with one or against him."

"Which do I look like?" — she laughed evasively — "Mercy or Vengeance? And have you forgotten that it is late — too late to ask questions?"

He stood, comprehending her doubtfully, with immeasurable joy, and then went out to get his overcoat.

"Bring your things in here," she said, "it is cold in the hall. And wrap up warmly! That is more important than all the Geneva and the homiletical!"

He bade her good night, subdued with happiness that seemed to blot out the troublous past, to be the beginning of new life. New happiness brought new awkwardness:—

"This was not my regular night," he said threateningly. "I came to-night instead of to-morrow night."

Gabriella could answer a remark like that quickly enough.

"Certainly: it is hard to wait even for a slight pleasure, and it is best to be through with suffering."

He looked as if cold water and hot water had been thrown on him at the same time: he received shocks of different kinds and was doubtful as to the result. He shook his head questioningly.

"I may do very well with science, but I am not so sure about women."

"Aren't women science?"

"They are a branch of theology," he said; "they are what a man thinks about when he begins to probe his Destiny!"

## XVII

DAVID slept peacefully that night, like a man who has reached the end of long suspense. When he threw his shutters open late, he found that the storm had finished its work and gone and that the weather had settled stinging cold. The heavens