worlds; he was dumb in her presence—she bewitched him.

Here, under the snows, amid the ice-fields, this heavenly flower had blossomed on the stem—the flower to which his hopes went up, till now deceived, whose mere presence gave rise to the new aspirations, the ideas, the feelings, that crowd around us to lift us up to higher realms, as angels transport the elect to heaven in the symbolical pictures suggested to painters by some familiar spirit. Celestial odours softened the granite of this rock, light endowed with language poured forth the divine melodies which escort the pilgrim on his way to heaven. Having drained the cup of earthly love and crushed it with his teeth, he now saw the cup of election, sparkling with limpid waters, the chalice that gives a thirst for unfading joys to all who approach it with lips of faith so ardent that the crystal does not break at their touch. He had met with the walls of brass he had been seeking throughout the world that he might climb them.

He flew to Seraphita, intending to express to her the vehemence of a passion under which he was plunging, like the horse in the story under the bronze rider whom nothing can move, who sits firm, and whose weight grows greater as the fiery steed tries to throw him. He went to tell her his life, to display the greatness of his soul by the greatness of his sins, to show her the ruins in his desert. But as soon as he had entered the precincts, and found himself in the vast domain surveyed by those eyes whose heavenly blue knew no limits in the present or in the past, he became as calm and submissive as a lion when, rushing on his prey in the African plain, he scents a love message on the wings of the breeze, and stands still. A gulf opened before him in which the words of his delirium were lost, and when a voice came up that transformed him: he was a boy again, a boy of sixteen, shy and bashful before this
maiden of the tranquil brow, this white creature whose immovable calm was like the stern impassibility of human justice. And the struggle had never ceased till this evening when, with a single look, she had at length stricken him down like a hawk, which, after describing bewildering spirals round its prey, makes it drop stunned before carrying it off to its eyrie.

We have long struggles with ourself, of which the outcome is one of our actions; they are, as it were, the inner side of human nature. This inner side is God’s; the outer side belongs to men.

More than once had Seraphita chosen to show Wilfrid that she knew that motley inner part which forms the second life of most men. She had often said to him, in her dove-like tone, when Wilfrid had vowed on the way up that he would carry her off to be his own possession, ‘Why so much vehemence?’ Wilfrid, when alone, was strong enough to utter the cry of rebellion he had given vent to at Pastor Becker’s, to be soothed by the old man’s narrative. This man—a mocker, a scorner—at last saw the light of a starlike belief rising in his darkness; he wondered whether Seraphita were not an exile from the upper spheres on her homeward road. He did not offer this Norwegian lily the homage of such idealisation as lovers of every land are apt to squander; he really believed in her divinity.

Why was she buried in the depths of this fiord? What was she doing there? Unanswerable questions crowded on his mind. What could happen between him and her? What fate had led him hither?

To him Seraphita was the motionless statue, as light as a shade, that Minna had just seen standing on the brink of the abyss. Seraphita could thus confront every abyss, and nothing could hurt her; the line of her brow would be unmoved, the light in her eye would never tremble. His love, then, was without hope, but not without curiosity.
From the first moment when Wilfrid suspected the ethereal nature in this sorceress, who had told him the secret of his life in harmonious dreams, he resolved to try to subjugate her, to keep her, to steal her from heaven, where perhaps they awaited her. He would be the representative of humanity, of this earth, recapturing their prey. His pride, the only sentiment which can uplift a man for any length of time, would make him rejoice in that triumph for the rest of his life. At the mere thought his blood boiled in his veins, his heart swelled. If he could not succeed, he would crush her. It is so natural to destroy what you cannot get possession of, to deny what you do not understand, to insult what you covet.

Next day Wilfrid, full of the ideas to which the extraordinary spectacle he had witnessed had naturally given rise, wanted to cross-question David, and came to see him, making a pretext of his wish for news of Seraphita. Though Pastor Becker thought the poor old man was childish, the stranger trusted to his own perspicacity to guide him in discovering the grains of truth the old serving-man might drop in the torrent of his wandering talk.

David had the rigid but undecided expression of a man of eighty; under his white hair his brow showed deep wrinkles, forming broken stratifications, and his whole face was furrowed like the dry bed of a torrent. All his vitality seemed to be concentrated in his eyes, where a spark still gleamed; but that light even was hidden behind clouds, and might be either the fitful activity of a feeble mind, or the stupid glare of intoxication. His slow, heavy movements betrayed the chill of old age, and seemed to communicate it to any one who gazed at him for long, for he had the strength of inertia. His narrow intelligence awoke only at the sound of his mistress's voice, at the sight or the thought of her. She was the soul of this merely material wreck. When David was
alone you would have thought him a corpse; if Seraphita appeared, or spoke, or was spoken of, the dead rose from the grave and recovered motion and speech.

Never were the dry bones that the breath of God shall revive in the valley of Jehoshaphat—never was that Apocalyptic parable more vividly realised than in this Lazarus perennially called forth from the sepulchre by the voice of this young girl. His mode of speech, always highly figurative, and often incomprehensible, kept the villagers from talking to him; but they greatly respected a mind so far removed from the vulgar routine; it commands the instinctive reverence of common folk.

Wilfrid found David in the outer room apparently asleep, close to the stove. Like a dog recognising a friend’s approach, the old man opened his eyes, saw the stranger, and did not stir.

‘Well, where is she?’ asked Wilfrid, sitting down by the old man.

David fluttered his fingers in the air to represent the flight of a bird.

‘She is not still in pain?’ asked Wilfrid.

‘None but those beings who are plighted to heaven can suffer without any diminution of their love; that is the seal of true faith,’ said the old man gravely, like an instrument responding to a chance touch.

‘Who tells you to say that?’

‘The spirit.’

‘What happened, after all, last evening? Did you force your way past the Vertumni on guard? Did you steal in between the Mammons?’

‘Yes,’ replied David, waking as if from a dream.

The mist before his eye cleared off under a flash that came from within, and which made it grow gradually as bright as an eagle’s, as intelligent as a poet’s.

‘What then did you see?’ asked Wilfrid, amazed at this sudden change.

‘I saw Species and Shapes, I heard the Spirit of All
Things; I saw the rebellion of the Wicked, I listened to the words of the Good. Seven devils appeared, seven archangels came down to them. The archangels stood afar, they were veiled, and looked on. The devils were close at hand, they glittered and moved. Mammon was there in a shell of pearl, in the guise of a beautiful naked woman; his body was as dazzling as the snow, no human form can be so perfect; and he said, “I am all pleasure, and thou shalt possess me!”—Lucifer, the Prince of Serpents, came in his royal attire; he was as a man, as beautiful as an angel, and he said, “The human race shall serve thee!”—The Queen of the Covetous, she who never restores that which she has taken—the Sea herself appeared in her mantle of green; she opened her bosom and showed her store of gems, she vomited treasures and offered them as a gift; she tossed up waves of sapphire and emerald; her creatures were disturbed, they came forth from their hiding-places and spoke; the fairest of the pearls spread butterflies’ wings, she glistened, and spoke in sea-melodies, saying, “We are both daughters of suffering, we are sisters; wait for me; we will fly together; I have only to be changed into a woman.” The bird that has the talons of an eagle and the legs of a lion, the head of a woman and a horse’s quarters—the Animal—crouched before her and licked her feet, and promised seven hundred years of plenty to this well-beloved daughter.

‘The most formidable of all, the Child, came to her very knee, weeping, and saying, “Can you forsake me, so feeble and helpless? Mother, stay with me!” He played with the others, he shed idleness in the air; heaven itself might have yielded to his lament. The Virgin of pure song brought music that debauches the soul. The Kings of the East passed by with their slaves, their armies, and their women; the Wounded clamoured for help, the Wretched held out their hands: “Do not leave us, do not leave us!” was their cry.
Seraphita

'I too cried, "Do not leave us; we will worship you—only stay!"

'Flowers burst from their seeds, and wrapped her in perfume, which said, "Stay!" The Giant Anakim came down from Jupiter, bringing Gold and his comrades, and all the Spirits of the astral worlds who had followed him, and they all said, "We will be thine for seven hundred years." At last Death got off his pale horse and said, "I will obey thee!" And they all fell on their faces at her feet; if you could but have seen them! They filled a vast plain, and all cried to her, "We have fed thee; thou art our child; do not forsake us!"

'Life came up from the red waters and said, "I will not desert thee!" Then, finding Seraphita speechless, she suddenly blazed like the sun, and exclaimed, "I am the Light!"—"The light is there!" replied Seraphita, pointing to clouds where the archangels were astir. But she was worn out; Desire had broken her on the rack; she could only cry aloud, "My God!"

'How many Angelic Spirits who have climbed the hill, and are on the point of reaching the summit, have stumbled on a stone that has made them fall and roll back into the depths!—All these fallen Spirits marvelled at her constancy; they stood there a motionless chorus, weeping, and saying, "Courage!" At last she had triumphed over Desire, unchained to rend her in every Shape and Species. She remained praying; and when she raised her eyes, she saw the feet of the angels flying back to heaven.'

'She saw the feet of the angels?' repeated Wilfrid.

'Yes,' said the old man.

'This was a dream that she told you?' asked Wilfrid.

'A dream as real as that you are alive,' replied David.

'I was there.'

The old servant's calm conviction struck Wilfrid, who went away, wondering whether these visions were at all
less extraordinary than those of which Swedenborg wrote, and of which he had read the evening before.

‘If spirits exist, they must surely act,’ said he to himself as he went into the manse, where he found the pastor alone.

‘My dear Pastor,’ said he, ‘Seraphita is human only in form, and her form is unaccountable. Do not regard me as mad or in love: conviction cannot be argued away. Convert my belief into a scientific hypothesis, and let us try to understand all this. To-morrow we will go to see her together.’

‘And then?’ said the minister.

‘If her eye knows no limitation of space, if her thought is the sight of the intellect, allowing her to apprehend the essence of things and to connect them with the general evolution of the universe; if, in a word, she knows and sees everything, let us get the Pythoness on to her tripod, and compel the eagle to spread its wings, by threats. Help me! I breathe a consuming fire; I must extinguish it, or be devoured by it. In short, I see my prey; I will have it.’

‘It will be a conquest difficult of achievement,’ said the minister, ‘for the poor girl is—’

‘Is?’—said Wilfrid.

‘Mad,’ said the pastor.

‘I will not dispute her madness,’ said Wilfrid, ‘so long as you do not dispute her superiority. Dear Pastor Becker, she has often put me to the blush by her learning. Has she travelled much?’

‘From her house to the fiord.’

‘She has never been away!’ cried Wilfrid. ‘Then she must have read a great deal?’

‘Not a page, not a jot. I am the only person in Jarvis who has any books. Swedenborg’s writings, the only works in the hamlet, are here; she has never borrowed a single volume.’

‘Have you ever tried to converse with her?’

‘Of what use would it be?’
‘No one has dwelt under her roof?’
‘She has no friends but you and Minna; no servant but old David.’
‘And she has never learned anything of Science or Art?’
‘From whom?’ said the pastor.
‘Then, when she discusses such matters very pertinently, as she has often done with me, what would you infer?’
‘That the girl may, perhaps, during all these years of silence, have acquired such faculties as were possessed by Apollonius of Tyana, and by certain so-called wizards, who were burned by the Inquisition, which rejected the idea of second sight.’
‘When she talks Arabic, what can you say?’
‘The history of medicine contains many accredited instances of women who spoke languages they did not understand.’
‘What can I do?’ said Wilfrid. ‘She knows things concerning my past life of which the secret lay in me.’
‘We will see if she can tell me any thoughts that I have never spoken to any one,’ said Pastor Becker.
Minna came into the room.
‘Well, my child, and how is your Spirit-friend?’
‘He is suffering, father,’ said she, bowing to Wilfrid.
‘The passions of humanity, tricked out in their false splendour, tortured him in the night, and spread incredible pomp before his eyes,—but you treat all these things as mere fables.’
‘Fables as delightful to him who reads them in his brain as those of the Arabian Nights are to ordinary minds,’ said her father, smiling.
‘Then, did not Satan,’ she retorted, ‘transport the Saviour to the summit of the Temple and show Him the kingdoms at His feet?’
‘The Evangelists,’ replied Becker, ‘did not so actually correct their text but that several versions exist.’
'You, then, believe in the reality of these apparitions?' Wilfrid asked of Minna.
'Who can doubt that hears him tell of them?'
'Him?—Who?' asked Wilfrid.
'He who dwells there,' said Minna, pointing to the castle.
'You speak of Seraphita?' said Wilfrid, surprised.
The girl hung her head, with a gentle but mischievous glance at him.
'Yes, you too take pleasure in confusing my mind.—Who is she? What is your idea of her?'
'What I feel is inexplicable,' said Minna, colouring.
'You are both mad!' said the pastor.
'Then we meet to-morrow,' said Wilfrid, as he left.

IV

THE CLOUDS OF THE SANCTUARY

There are spectacles to which all the material magnificence at man's command is made to contribute. Whole tribes of slaves or divers go forth to seek in the sands of the sea, in the bowels of the rocks, the pearls and diamonds that adorn the spectators. These treasures, handed down from heir to heir, have blazed on crowned heads, and might be the most veracious historians of humanity if they could but speak. Have they not seen the joys and woes of the greatest as well as of the humblest? They have been everywhere—worn with pride at high festivals; carried in despair to the money-lender; stolen amid blood and pillage; treasured in miracles of artistic workmanship contrived for their safe keeping. Excepting Cleopatra's pearl, not one has perished.
The great and the rich are assembled to see a king crowned—a monarch whose raiment is the work of
men's hands, but who, in all his glory, is arrayed in purple less exquisite than that of a humble flower. These festivities, blazing with light, bathed in music through which the words of men strive to be heard in thunder,—all these works of man can be crushed by a thought, a feeling. The mind of man can bring to his ken light more glorious, can make him hear more tuneful harmonies, show him among clouds the glittering constellations he may question; and the heart can do yet more! Man may stand face to face with a single being and find in a single word, a single look, a burthen so heavy to be borne, a light so intense, a sound so piercing, that he can but yield and kneel. The truest splendours are not in outward things, but in ourselves.

To a learned man, is not some secret of science a whole new world of wonders? But do the clarions of force, the gems of wealth, the music of triumph, the concourse of the crowd, do honour to his joy? No. He goes off to some remote nook, where a man, often pale and feeble, whispers a single word in his ear. That word, like a torch in an underground passage, lights up the whole of science.

Every human conception, arrayed in the most attractive forms that mystery can invent, once gathered round a blind man sitting in the mud by a roadside. The three worlds—the Natural, Spiritual, and Divine—were revealed to an unhappy Florentine exile; as he went he was escorted by the happy and by the suffering, by those who prayed and those who cursed, by angels and by the damned. When He who came from God, who knew and could do all things, appeared to three of His disciples, it was one evening at the common table of a poor little inn; there and then the Light broke forth, bursting material husks, and showing its spiritual power. They saw Him in His glory, and the earth clung to their feet no more than as the sandals they could slip off them.
The pastor, Wilfrid, and Minna were all three excited to alarm at going to the house of the extraordinary being they proposed to question. To each of them the Swedish castle was magnified into the scene of a stupendous spectacle, like those of which the composition and colour are so skilfully arranged by poets, where the actors, though imaginary to men, are real to those who are beginning to enter into the spiritual world. On the seats of that amphitheatrical the pastor beheld arrayed the dark legions of doubt, his gloomy ideas, his vicious syllogisms in argument; he called up the various philosophical and religious sects, ever contentious, and all embodied in the shape of a fleshless system, as lean as the figure of Time as imagined by man—the old mower who with one hand raises the scythe, and in the other carries a meagre world, the world of human life.

Wilfrid saw there his first illusions and his last hopes; he imagined human destiny incarnate there and all its struggles; religion and its triumphant hierarchies.

Minna vaguely found heaven there, seen through a vista; love held up a curtain embroidered with mystical figures, and the harmonious sounds that fell on her ears increased her curiosity. Hence this evening was to them what the supper at Emmaus was to the three travellers, what a vision was to Dante, what an inspiration was to Homer; to them, too, the three aspects of the world were to be revealed, veils rent, doubts dispelled, darkness lightened. Human nature in all its phases, and awaiting illumination, could find no better representatives than this young girl, this man, and these two elders, one of them learned enough to be sceptical, the other ignorant enough to believe. No scene could be simpler in appearance or more stupendous in fact.

On entering, shown in by old David, they found Seraphita standing by the table, on which were spread the various items constituting a Tea, a meal which takes
the place in the north of the pleasures of wine-drinking, reserved for southern lands. Nothing certainly betrayed in her—or in him—a wondrous being who had the power of appearing under two distinct forms, nothing that showed the various forces she could command. With a homely desire to make her three guests comfortable, Seraphita bid David to feed the stove with wood.

‘Good evening, neighbours,’ said she. ‘Dear Pastor Becker, you did well to come; you see me alive, perhaps, for the last time. This winter has killed me.—Be seated, pray,’ she added to Wilfrid.—‘And you, Minna, sit there,’ and she pointed to an armchair near the young man. ‘You have brought your work, I see. Did you find out the stitch. The pattern is very pretty. For whom is it to be? For your father or for this gentleman?’ and she turned to Wilfrid. ‘We must not allow him to leave without some remembrance of the damsels of Norway.’

‘Then you were in pain again yesterday?’ asked Wilfrid.

‘That is nothing,’ she replied. ‘Such pain makes me glad; it is indispensable to escape from life.’

‘Then you are not afraid of dying?’ said the minister, smiling, for he did not believe in her illness.

‘No, dear Pastor; there are two ways of dying—to some death means victory, to some it is defeat.’

‘And you think you have won?’ said Minna.

‘I do not know,’ said she. ‘Perhaps it is only a step more.’

The milky radiance of her brow seemed to fade, her eyes fell under her lids, which slowly closed. This simple circumstance distressed the three inquirers, who sat quite still. The pastor was the boldest.

‘My dear girl,’ said he, ‘you are candour itself; you are also divinely kind. I want more of you this evening than the dainties of your tea-table. If we may believe what some people say, you know some most wonderful
things; and if so, would it not be an act of charity to clear up some of our doubts?'

'Oh yes!' said Seraphita, with a smile. 'They say that I walk on the clouds; I am on familiar terms with the eddies in the fiord; the sea is a horse I have saddled and bridled; I know where the singing flower grows, where the talking light shines, where living colours blaze that scent the air; I have Solomon's ring; I am a fairy; I give my orders to the wind, and it obeys me like a submissive slave; I can see the treasures in the mine; I am the virgin whom pearls rush to meet, and---'

'And we walk unharmed on the Falberg,' Minna put in.

'What, you too?' replied the Being with a luminous glance at the girl, which quite upset her. 'If I had not the power of reading through your brows the wish that has brought you here, should I be what you think I am?' she went on, including them all in her captivating gaze, to David's great satisfaction, and he went off rubbing his hands.—— 'Yes,' she went on after a pause, 'you all came overflowing with childish curiosity. You, my dear Pastor, wondered whether it were possible that a girl of seventeen should know even one of the thousand secrets which learned men seek diligently with their noses to the ground instead of with their eyes raised to heaven! Now, if I were to show you how and where plant life and animal life mingle, you would begin to doubt your doubts.—— You plotted to cross-question me, confess?'

'Yes, beloved Seraphita,' said Wilfrid. 'But is not such a desire natural to man?'

'And do you want to worry this child?' she said, laying her hand on Minna's hair with a caressing gesture.

The girl looked up, and seemed to long to be merged in the Being before her.

'The word is given for all,' the mysterious Being
went on very gravely. 'Woe to him who should keep silence even in the midst of the desert, thinking that none would hear. Everything speaks, everything hears here below. The word moves worlds.—I hope, Pastor Becker, not to speak in vain. I know what difficulties trouble you most: would it not be a miracle if I could at once apprehend all the past experiences of your conscience? Well, that miracle will be accomplished.—Listen to me: you have never confessed your doubts in their full extent; I alone, immovable in my faith, can set them before you, and frighten you at your own image. You are on the darkest declivity of doubt. You do not believe in God, and everything on earth is of secondary importance to the man who attacks the first cause of everything.

'Let us set aside the discussions thrashed out without result by false philosophers. Generations of Spiritualists have made no less vain efforts to disprove the existence of matter than generations of Materialists have made to disprove the existence of the spirit. Why these contests? Does not man, as he is, afford undeniable proofs of both? Is he not an union of matter and spirit? Only a madman can refuse to find an atom of matter in the human frame; when it is decomposed, natural science finds no difference between its elements and those of other animals. The idea which is produced in man by the power of comparing several different objects, on the other hand, does not seem to come within the domain of matter. On this I give no opinion; we have to deal with your doubts, not with my convictions.

'But to you, as to most thoughtful men, the relations which you have the faculty of discerning between things, of which the real existence is made certain to you through your senses, do not, I suppose, seem material. The natural Universe, then, of things and beings meets in man with the supernatural Universe of likeness or difference which he can discern between the innumerable
forms in nature—relations so various that they seem to be infinite; for if, till the present day, no one has been able to enumerate the created things of this earth only, what man can ever enumerate their relations to each other? Is not the small fraction with which you are familiar, in regard to the grand total, as an unit to the infinite?

Hence here you find yourself already made aware of the existence of the infinite, and this necessarily leads you to conceive of a purely spiritual sphere. Hence, too, man is in himself sufficient evidence of these two modes of life: Matter and Spirit. In him ends a finite, visible universe; in him begins an infinite and invisible universe—two worlds that do not know each other. Have the pebbles of the fiord any cognisance of their relative shapes, 

or they conscious of the colours seen in them by the eye of man, do they hear the music of the ripples that dance over them? Let us then leap the gulf we cannot fathom, the unthinkable union of a material with a spiritual universe, the concept of a visible, ponderable, tangible creation, conterminous with an invisible, imponderable, intangible creation; absolutely dissimilar, separated by a void, united by indisputable points of contact, and meeting in a being who belongs to both! Let us, I say, mingle in one world these two worlds, which, in your philosophy, can never coalesce, and which, in fact, do coalesce.

However abstract man may call it, the relation which binds two things together must stamp its mark. Where? On what? We have not now to inquire to what degree of rarity matter may be reduced. If that were indeed the question, I do not see why He who has linked the stars together at immeasurable distances by physical laws, to veil His face withal, should not have created substances that could think, nor why you will not allow that He should have given thought a body.

To you, then, your invisible, moral, or mental universe,
and your visible, physical universe, constitute one and the same matter. We will not divide bodies from their properties, nor objects from their relations. Everything that exists, that weighs upon and overwhelms us from above and beneath us, before us or within us; all that our eyes or our minds apprehend, all that is named or nameless, must, to reduce the problem of Creation to the standard of your logic, be a finite mass of matter; if it were infinite, God could not be its master. Thus, according to you, dear Pastor, by whatever scheme you propose to introduce God, who is infinite, into this finite mass of matter, God could no longer exist with such attributes as are ascribed to Him by man. If we seek Him through facts, He is not; if we seek Him through reason, still He is not; both spiritually and materially God is impossible. Let us hearken to the word of human reason driven to its utmost consequences.

If we now conceive of God face to face with this stupendous whole, we find only two conditions of relationship possible: Either God and Matter were contemporaneous, or God was alone and pre-existent. If all the wisdom that has enlightened the human race from the first day of its existence could be collected in one vast brain, that monstrous brain could invent no third mode of being, short of denying both God and Matter. Human philosophers may pile up mountains of words and ideas, Religions may accumulate emblems and beliefs, revelations and mysteries, still we are forced on to this terrible dilemma, and must choose one of the two propositions it offers. However, you have not much choice, for each leads the human mind to scepticism.

The problem being thus stated, what signifies Spirit or Matter? What does it signify which way the worlds are moving if once the Being who guides them is proved to be absurd? Of what use is it to inquire whether man is advancing towards heaven or coming back from it, whether Creation is tending upwards towards the spirit,
or downwards towards matter, if the worlds we question can give no answer? Of what consequence are theogonies and their armies, theologies and their dogmas, when, whichever alternative man chooses in answer to the problem, his God is no more?

Let us examine the first: Suppose God and matter to have been co-existent from the beginning. Can He be God who suffers the action and co-existence of a substance that is not Himself? On this theory God is but a secondary agent constrained to organise matter. Who constrained Him? And as between that coarser other half and Him, who was to decide? Who paid the Great Workman for the six days’ labour attributed to Him? If there were, indeed, some coercing force which was neither God nor matter, if God were compelled to make the machinery of the universe, it would be no less absurd to call Him God than to call a slave set to turn a mill a Roman citizen. And, in fact, the difficulty is just as insoluble in the case of that Supreme Intelligence as in that of God Himself. It only carries the problem a step further back; and is not this like the Indian philosophers, who place the world on a tortoise, and the tortoise on an elephant, but cannot say on what their elephant’s feet rest? Can we conceive that this Supreme Will, evolved from the conflict of God with matter—this God greater than God—should have existed during eternity without Willing what He Willed, granting that eternity can be divided into two periods? Wherever God may be, if He knew not what His future Will would be, what becomes of His intuitive perceptions? And of these two eternities, which is the superior—uncreated eternity or created eternity?

If God from all eternity willed that the world should be what it is, this fresh view of necessity, which is in harmony no doubt with the notion of a Sovereign Intelligence, implies the co-eternity of matter. Whether matter be co-eternal by the Divine Will, which must
at all times be at one with itself, or whether it be independently co-eternal, since the power of God must be absolute, it perishes if He has not His free-will. He would always have found within Himself a supreme reason which would have ruled Him. Is God God if He cannot separate Himself from the works of His creation in subsequent as well as in anterior eternity?

'This aspect of the problem is then insoluble so far as cause is concerned. Let us examine it in its effects.

'If God the Creator, under compulsion to create the universe from all eternity, is inconceivable, He is no less so as perpetually one with His work. God, eternally constrained to exist in His creatures, is no less dishonoured than in His former position as a workman. Can you conceive of a God who can no more be independent of His work than dependent on it? Can He destroy it without treason to Himself? Consider and make your choice: Whether He should some day destroy it, or not destroy it; either alternative is equally fatal to attributes, without which He cannot subsist. Is the world a mere experiment, a perishable mould which must be destroyed? Then God must be inconsistent and impotent. Inconsistent—for ought He not to have known the issue before making the experiment, and why does He delay destroying that which is to be destroyed? Impotent—or how else could He have created an imperfect world?

'And if an imperfect creation belies the faculties that man ascribes to God, let us, on the other hand, suppose it to be perfect. This idea is in harmony with our conception of a God of supreme intelligence who could make no mistake; but, then, why any deterioration? Why Regeneration? Then a perfect world is necessarily indestructible, its forms must be imperishable; it can neither advance nor retrocede; it rolls on in an eternal orbit whence it can never deviate. Thus is God dependent on His work; thus is it co-eternal with Him, which brings us back to one of the propositions which
most audaciously attacks God. If the universe is imperfect, it allows of advance and progress; if perfect, it is stationary. If it is impossible to conceive of a progressive God, not knowing from all eternity what the result would be of His creation, can we then admit a stationary God? Would not that be the apotheosis of matter, the greatest possible negation? Under the first hypothesis, God deceases by want of power; under the second, He deceases by the force of inertia.

Hence, alike in the conception and the execution of creation, to every honest mind the notion of matter as contemporaneous with God is a denial of God.

Compelled to choose between these two aspects of the question, in order to govern the nations, many generations of great thinkers have chosen the second. This gave rise to the dogma of two moral elements, as conceived of by the Magians, which has spread in Europe under the image of Satan contending with the Father of all. But are not this dogmatic formula and the endless deifications that are derived from it crimes of high treason to the divine Majesty? By what other name can we call a belief that makes the personification of Evil the rival of God, for ever struggling in the throes of a supreme intellect without any hope of victory? The laws of statics show that two forces thus placed must neutralise each other.

Now, turn to the other side of the problem: God was pre-existent and alone.

We need not reproduce the former arguments, which are equally strong in relation to the division of eternity into two periods—uncreated and created. We will also set aside the question of the motion or the immobility of worlds, and restrict ourselves to the inherent difficulties of this second thesis.

If God pre-existed alone, the universe proceeded from Him; matter is the emanation of His essence. Then matter is not. Every form is but a veil hiding
the Divine Spirit. Then, the world is eternal; then, the world is God! But is not this formula even more fatal than the former one to the attributes assigned to God by human reason? Does matter, as emanating from God, and always one with Him, account for the existing conditions of matter? How are we to believe that the Almighty, supremely good in His nature and His acts, could beget things so unlike Himself that He is not in all things and everywhere the same? Were there in Him certain evil constituents which He rejected from Him?—A conjecture more terrible than offensive or ridiculous, inasmuch as it includes the two theorems which, in our former argument, we proved to be inadmissible. God must be One, and cannot divide Himself without infringing the most important of His attributes. Is it possible to conceive of a portion of God which is not God?

'This hypothesis seemed so impious to the Roman Church, that she made God's Omnipresence, even in the smallest fragments of the Eucharist, an article of Faith.

'How, then, are we to conceive of an Omnipotent Intelligence which yet cannot conquer? How unite it with Nature, unless by direct conquest? But Nature seeks and combines, reproduces, dies, and is born again; it is even more agitated in the creative effort than when all is in a state of fusion; it suffers and groans; it is ignorant, degenerate, does evil, makes mistakes, destroys itself, disappears, and begins again. How are we to justify the almost universal eclipse of the Divine element? Why is death? Why was the spirit of evil, the monarch of this earth, sent forth from a supremely good God—good alike in His essence and His faculties, who could have produced nothing that was not like Himself?

'And if, setting aside this relentless issue which leads us at once to the absurd, we go into details, what purpose can we ascribe to the world? If all is God, all is
at once effect and cause; or, more accurately, cause and effect do not exist. Like God, all is one; and you can discern no starting-point and no end. Can the real end be, possibly, a rotation of matter growing more and more rare? But whatever the end may be, is not the mechanism of such matter proceeding from God and returning to God, a mere child’s plaything? Why should He embody Himself so grossly? Under what form is God most completely God? Which wins the day, spirit or matter, when neither of those modes of being can be wrong? Who can possibly discern God in this perennial toil by which He divides Himself into two natures—one omniscient, the other knowing nothing? Can you conceive of God as playing at being man, laughing His own labours to scorn, dying on Friday to rise again on Sunday, and carrying on the farce from age to age while knowing the end from all eternity; and never telling Himself, the Creature, what He is doing as Creator?

"The God of the former hypothesis, null as He is by sheer inertia, seems more possible—if we had to choose between impossibilities—than that stupid mocking God who destroys Himself when two portions of humanity meet weapon in hand. Comical as this ultimate expression of the second aspect of the problem may be, it was that chosen by half the human race among nations that had created certain gay mythologies. These amorous nations were consistent; to them everything was a god, even fear and its cowardice, even crime and its bacchanals. If we accept Pantheism, the faith of some great human geniuses, who can tell where reason lies? Is it with the savage running free in the desert, clothed in his nakedness, lordly and always right in his actions whatever they may be, listening to the sun and talking to the sea? Is it with the civilised man, whose greatest pleasures are due to falsehoods, who hews and hammers Nature to make the gun he carries on his shoulder, who has applied his
intelligence to hasten the hour of his death, and create maladies that taint his pleasures? When the scourge of pestilence, or the ploughshare of war, or the genius of the desert had passed over a spot of earth, annihilating everything, which came off best—the Nubian savage or the patrician of Thebes?

'Your scepticism permeates from above downwards. Your doubts include everything, the end as well as the means. If the physical world seems inexplicable, the moral world proves even more against God. Where, then, is progress? If everything goes on improving, why do we die as children? Why do not nations, at any rate, perpetuate themselves? Is the world that proceeded from God, that is contained in God, stationary? Do we live but once? Or do we live for ever? If we live but once, coerced by the advance of the Great All, of which we have no knowledge given us, let us do what we will! If we are eternal, let everything pass! Can the creature be guilty because it exists when changes are going on? If it sins at the moment of some great transformation, shall it be punished for it after having been the victim? What becomes of divine goodness if it refuses to place us at once in the realms of happiness—if such there be? What becomes of God's foreknowledge if He does not know the results of the trials to which He subjects us? What is this alternative proposed to man by all his creeds, between stewing in an eternal cauldron and wandering in a white robe with a palm in his hand and a halo to crown him? Can this pagan invention be the supreme promise of God?

'And what magnanimous spirit but sees how unworthy of man and God alike is virtue out of self-interest, the eternity of joys offered by every creed to those who, during a few brief hours of existence, fulfil certain monstrous and often unnatural conditions? Is it not preposterous to endow man with vehement senses and then forbid his gratifying them?
Besides, to what end these trivial objections when good and evil alike are negativéd? Does evil exist? If matter in all its manifestations is evil, evil is God.

The faculty of reason, as well as the faculty of feeling, being bestowed on man for his use, nothing can be more pardonable than to seek a meaning in human suffering and to inquire into the future; if this rigid and rigorous logic leads us to such conclusions, what confusion is here! The world has then no stability; nothing moves on, and nothing stands still; everything changes, but nothing is destroyed; everything renews itself and reappears; for, if your mind cannot unanswerably prove an end, it is equally impossible to prove the annihilation of the smallest atom of matter: it may be transformed, but not destroyed. Though blind force may prove the atheist's position, intelligent force is inscrutable; for, if it proceeds from God, ought it to encounter any obstacles; ought it not to conquer them immediately?

Where is God? If the living are not aware of Him, will the dead find Him?

Crumble into dust, O idolatries and creeds! Fall, O too feeble keystones of the social arches, for ye have never retarded the destruction, the death, the oblivion, that have come upon all the nations of the past, however securely they were founded. Fall, O morality and justice! Our crimes are but relative, they are divine results of which the causes are unknown to us! Everything is God. Either we are God, or God is not! One of an age of which each year has left on your brow the cold touch of its scepticism—Old Man! this is the sum-total of your science and your long meditations!

Dear Pastor Becker, you have rested your head on the pillow of doubt, finding it the easiest solution, acting indeed like the majority of the human race. They say to themselves, "We will think no more of this question
if God will not vouchsafe us an algebraic demonstration for its solution, while He has given us so many that lead us safely up from the earth to the stars—

'Now, are not these your secret thoughts? Have I missed them? Have I not, on the contrary, precisely stated them?—Either the dogma of the two elementary principles, an antagonism in which God is destroyed by the very fact that He—who is Almighty—plays at a struggle; or the ridiculous Pantheism in which all things being God, God is no more—these two founts, whence flow the creeds to whose triumph the earth is devoted, are equally pernicious.

'There, between us, lies the two-edged axe with which you behead the white-haired Ancient of Days whom you enthrone on painted clouds!

'Now, give me the axe!'

The pastor and Wilfrid looked at the girl in a sort of dismay.

'Belief,' said Seraphita in her gentle voice—for the man had been speaking hitherto—'belief is a gift! Belief is feeling. To believe in God, you must feel God. This sense is a faculty slowly acquired by the human being, as those wonderful powers are acquired which you admire in great men—in warriors, artists, men of science—those who act, those who produce, those who know. Thought, a bundle of the relations which you discern between different things, is an intellectual language that may be learned, is it not? Belief, a bundle of heavenly things, is in the same way a language, but as far above thought as thought is above instinct. This language can be learned.

'The believer answers in a single cry, a single sign; faith places in his hand a flaming sword which cuts and throws light on everything. The seer does not come down again from heaven; he contemplates it and is silent. There is a being who both believes and sees, who has knowledge and power, who loves, prays, and
waits. That being is resigned, and aspires to the realm of light; he has neither the believer's lofty scorn, nor the Seer's dumbness; he both listens and replies. To him the doubt of the dark ages is not a lethal weapon, but a guiding clue; he accepts the battle in whatever guise; he can accommodate his tongue to every language; he is never wroth, he pities; he neither condemns nor kills, he redeems and comforts; he has not the harshness of an aggressor, but rather the mild fluidity of light which penetrates and warms and lights up every place. In his eyes scepticism is not impiety, is not blasphemy, is not a crime; it is a stage of transition whence a man must go forward towards the light, or back into the darkness.

'So now, dear Pastor, let us reason together. You do not believe in God. Why?—God, as you express it, is incomprehensible and inexplicable. I grant it. I will not retort that to comprehend God altogether is to be God. I will not tell you that you deny what you think inexplicable simply to give myself a right of affirming what seems to me believable. To you there is an evident fact dwelling within you. In you matter is conterminous with intelligence; and yet you think that human intelligence will end in darkness, in doubt, in nothingness? Even if God seems to you incomprehensible and inexplicable, confess at least that in all physical phenomena you recognise in Him a consistent and exquisite Craftsman.

'Then why should His logic end at man, as His most finished work? Though the question may not be convincing, it deserves some consideration at any rate. Though you deny God, to give a basis to your doubts, you happily can appreciate certain double-edged truths which demolish your arguments as effectually as your arguments demolish God.

'We both admit that matter and spirit are two separate creations, neither of which contains the other;
that the spiritual world consists of infinite relations to
which the finite material world gives rise; and that
whereas no one on earth has ever been able to identify
himself by a sheer effort of mind with the sum-total of
earthly creations, all the more certainly can he not rise
to an apprehension of the relations which the spirit
discerns between these creations. So I might end the
matter with one blow by denying you the faculty of
understanding God, just as you deny the pebbles by the
fiord the faculty of counting or of seeing themselves.
How do you know that they may not deny the existence
of man, though man uses them to build his house with?

‘There is one fact which overthrows you—Infinitude.
If you feel it within you, how is it that you do not
recognise the consequences? Can the finite fully
apprehend the infinite? If you cannot comprehend the
relations which, by your own admission, are infinite, how
can you comprehend the remote finality in which they are
summed up? Order, of which the manifestation is one
of your needs, being infinite, can your finite reason
comprehend it?

‘Nor need you inquire why man cannot comprehend
all he can conceive of, for he likewise can conceive of
much that he cannot comprehend. If I were to prove
to you that your mind is ignorant of everything that lies
within its grasp, would you grant me that it is impossible
for it to conceive of what lies beyond it? Should I not
be justified, then, in saying, “One of the alternatives
which bring God to nought at the bar of your judgment
must be true and the other false; Creation exists, you
feel the need for an end; must not that end be a noble
one? Now, if in man matter is conterminous with
intelligence, why can you not be satisfied to grant that
human intelligence ends where the light begins of those
superior spheres for which is reserved the intuition of
the God who, to you, is merely an insoluble problem?

‘The species lower than man have no comprehension
of the universe; you have. Why should there not be, above man again, species more intelligent than he? Before using his powers to take measure of God, would not man do well to know more about himself? Before defying the stars that give him light, before attacking transcendent truths, ought he not rather to verify the truths that immediately concern him?

‘But I should answer the negations of doubt by negation. Well, then, I ask you: Is there here on earth a single thing so self-evident that I am bound to believe in it? I will show you in a minute that you believe firmly in things that can act and yet are not beings, that can give birth to thought and yet are not spirits, in living abstractions which the understanding cannot grasp under any shape, which nowhere exist, but which you can everywhere find; which have no possible names—though you have given them names; which, like the God in human form whom you conceive of, perish before the inexplicable, the incomprehensible, and the absurd. And I will ask you: If you admit these things, why do you reserve your doubts for God?

‘You believe in Number as the foundation on which rests the edifice of what you call the exact sciences. Without number mathematics are impossible. Well, then, what impossible being, to whom life everlasting should be granted, could ever finish counting—and in what sufficiently concise language could he utter—the numbers contained in the infinite number of which the existence is demonstrated by your reason. Ask the greatest human genius, and suppose him to sit for a thousand years leaning on a table, his head in his hands, what would he answer?

‘You know neither where number begins, where it pauses, nor where it ends. Now you call it time, anon you call it space; by number only does anything exist; but for number all substance would be one and the same; it alone differentiates and modifies matter. Number is
to your mind what it is to matter, an intangible agent.
But will you then make a god of it? Is it a being?
Is it a breath of God sent forth to organise the material
universe, wherein nothing takes shape but as a result of
divisibility which is an effect of number? The most
minute as well as the most immense objects in creation
are distinguished from each other by quantity, quality,
dimension, and force,—are not these all conditions of
number? That number is infinite is a fact proved to your
intellect, but of which no material proof is obtainable. A
mathematician will tell you that infinity of number is
certain, but cannot be demonstrated. And, my dear
Pastor, believers will tell you that God is Number
endowed with motion, to be felt but not proved.
He, like the unit, is the origin of number though
having nothing in common with numbers. The
existence of Number depends on that of the unit, which
is not a number, but the parent of them all. And God,
dear Pastor Becker, is a stupendous Unit, having
nothing in common with His creations, but their Parent
nevertheless.

'You must grant me that you are equally ignorant as
to where number begins or ends, and as to where created
eternity begins or ends? Why, then, if you believe in
number, should you deny God? Does not creation
hold a place between the infinite of inorganic substances
and the infinite of the Divine spheres, as the unit
stands between the infinite of fractions—lately termed
decimals—and the infinite numbers you call whole
numbers? Men alone on earth comprehend number,
the first step to the forecourt leading to God, and even
there reason stumbles. What! you can neither
measure nor grasp the primary abstraction proposed to
you, and you want to apply your puny standard to the
ends of God's purpose? What if I should cast you into
the bottomless depths of Motion, the force which
organises number?'
'If I were to tell you that the universe is nothing but Number and Motion, we should already, you see, be speaking a different language. I understand both terms; you do not. What, then, if I should go on to say that motion and number are generated by the Word? This term, the Supreme Reason of seers and prophets, who of old heard the voice of God that overthrew St. Paul, is a laughing-stock to you—you men, though your own visible works—communities, monuments, actions, and passions—all are the outcome of your own feeble Word; and though without speech you would still be no higher than the Orang of the woods, the great ape that is so nearly akin to the Negro.

'Well, you believe firmly in number and motion, inexplicable and incomprehensible as force and result, though I might apply to their existence the same logical dilemma as just now relieved you of the necessity of acknowledging that of God. You, a powerful reasoner, will surely relieve me of the necessity for proving that the Infinite must be everywhere the same, and that it is inevitably one? God alone is the Infinite, for there obviously cannot be two Infinites. If, to use words in their human sense, anything proved to you here on earth strikes you as infinite, you may be sure you have in that a glimpse of one aspect of God.

'To proceed: you have found for yourselves a place in the Infinite of number; you have fitted it to your state by creating arithmetic—if you can be said to create anything—the basis on which everything is built up, even society. Arithmetic, or the use of number, has organised the moral world, just as number, the only thing in which your professing Atheists believe, organises physical creation. This science of numbers ought to be absolute, like everything that is intrinsically true; but it is, in fact, purely relative, it has no absolute existence. You can give no proof of its reality.

'To begin with, though this science is apt at summing
up organised substances, it is impotent as applied to organising forces, since these are infinite, whereas the former are finite. Man, whose intellect can conceive of the Infinite, cannot deal with it as a whole; if he could, he would be God. Hence your arithmetic, as applied to finite things and not to the Infinite, is true in relation to the details you apprehend, but false in relation to the whole which you cannot apprehend. Though nature does not vary in her organising forces and her elementary causes, which are infinite, she is never the same in her finite results. Hence in all nature you will find no two objects exactly alike.

'Thus, in the order of nature, two and two can never really make four, since the units would have to be exactly equal; and you know that it is impossible to find two leaves alike on one tree, or two specimens alike of the same species of tree. This axiom of arithmetic then, which is false as regards visible nature, is no less false in the invisible nature of your abstractions, where there is the same dissimilarity in your ideas which are derived from the objects of the visible world, only extended in their relations; in fact, differences are even more strongly marked there than elsewhere. Everything there being modified by the temperament, the strength, the manners, and the habits of individuals, who are never alike, the most trifling matters are representative of personal character.

'If man has ever succeeded in creating an unit, no doubt, by assigning equal weight and value to certain pieces of gold. Well, add a rich man's ducat to a poor man's, and tell yourself that to the public treasury these are equal quantities; but in the eyes of a thoughtful man, one, morally speaking, is unquestionably greater than the other; one represents a month's happiness, the other the most transient caprice. Two and two only make four in the sense of a false and monstrous abstraction.

'A fraction, again, has no existence in nature, since
what you call a part is a thing complete in itself; and does it not often happen—and have we not proof of the fact—that the hundredth part of some substance may be stronger than what you call the whole? And if a fraction has no existence in the natural world, far less does it exist in the moral world, where ideas and feelings may be as various as the species of the vegetable kingdom, but are always a whole. The theory of fractions, then, is another concession of the mind. Number, with its "infinitely small" and its "infinite total," is a power of which a small part only is known to you, while its extent eludes you. You have built a little cottage in the infinitude of number; you have adorned it with hieroglyphics very learnedly designed and painted; and you have said, "Everything is here!"

"From abstract number we will pass on to number as applied to solids. Your geometry states it as an axiom that a straight line is the shortest way from one point to another; and astronomy shows you that God has given motion only in curves. Here, then, in the same science, are two facts equally well proved—one by the evidence of your senses, aided by the telescope; the other by the testimony of your mind; but one contradicts the other. Man, who is liable to error, asserts one, and the Maker of the worlds—whom you have never found in error—contradicts it. Who can decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry?—between the theory of straight lines and the theory of curved lines? If, in His work, the mysterious Maker, who attains His ends with miraculous directness, only makes use of the straight line to divide it at a right angle and obtain a curve, man himself cannot rely on it: the bullet a man wishes to send in a straight line follows a curve, and when you want to hit a point in space with certainty you propel the ball on its cruel parabola. Not one of your learned men has arrived at the simple induction that the curved line is that of the material world, and
the straight line that of the spiritual world; that one is
the theory of finite creation, and the other the theory of
the infinite. Man alone—he alone here on earth
having any consciousness of the infinite—can know the
straight line; he alone, in a special organ, has the sense
of the vertical. May not the predilection for curved
lines in some men be an indication of the impurity of
their nature, still too closely allied to the material
substances which engender us? and may not the love
for straight lines, seen in lofty minds, be in them a pre-
sentiment of heaven? Between these two lines lies a
gulf as wide as between the Finite and the Infinite,
between Matter and Spirit, between Man and the Idea,
between Motion and the Thing moved, between the
Creature and God. Borrow the wings of Divine Love
and you may cross that gulf. Beyond it the revelation
of the Word begins!

‘The things you call material are nowhere devoid of
thickness; lines are the edges of solids having a power
of action which you ignore in your theorems, and that
makes them false in relation to bodies regarded as a
whole; hence the constant destruction of human works,
to which you have unwittingly given active properties.
Nature knows nothing but solid bodies; your science
deals only with combinations of surfaces. And so
nature constantly gives the lie to all your laws: can
you name one to which no fact makes an exception?
The laws of statics are contradicted by a thousand
incidents in physics; a fluid overthrows the most
stupendous mountains, and so proves that the heaviest
substances may be upheaved by imponderable agents.
Your laws of acoustics and optics are nullified by the
sounds you hear in your brain during sleep, and by the
light of an electric flash, of which the rays are often
overpowering. You do not know how light is brought to
your intelligence, any more than you know the simple and
natural process by which it is changed to ruby, sapphire,
opal, and emerald on the neck of an Indian bird, while it
lies dim and grey on the same bird under the misty sky
of Europe, nor why it beams perpetually white here in
the heart of the polar regions. You cannot tell whether
colour is a faculty with which bodies are endowed, or
an effect produced by the diffusion of light.
‘You believe the whole sea to be salt without having
ascertained that it is so in its deepest places.
‘You recognise the existence of various substances
which traverse what you call the Void: substances
intangible under any known form assumed by matter,
and which meet and combine with it in spite of every
obstacle. That being the case, you believe in the results
obtained by chemistry, though as yet it knows no method
of estimating the changes produced by the currents to
and fro of those substances as they pass through your
crystals and your instruments on the inappreciable waves
of heat or of light, conducted or repelled by the affinities
of metals or vitrified flint. You obtain no substances
but what are dead, out of which you have driven the
unknown force which resists decomposition in all earthly
things, the force of which attraction, undulation,
cohesion, and polarity are manifestations.
‘Life is the mind of body; bodies are but a mode of
detaining it, of delaying it in its transit; if bodies were
themselves living things, they would be a cause; they
would not die. When a man establishes the results of
the motion of which every form of creation has its share
in proportion to its power of absorbing it, you call him
a Learned Man, as though genius consisted in explaining
what exists. Genius should lift its eyes above effects.
All your learned men would laugh if you should say to
them, “There is a certain connecting relation between
two beings, such as that if one of them were here and
the other in Java, they might feel the same sensation
at the same instant, and be aware of the fact, and
question and answer each other without a mistake.” And
yet there are some mineral substances which exhibit sympathies as far reaching as that of which I speak. You believe in the power of electricity when it is fixed in the lodestone, but you deny it as emanating from the soul. According to you, the moon, whose influence over the tides seems to you proven, has none over the winds, over vegetation, or over men; it can move the sea and eat into glass, but it cannot affect the sick; it has undoubted effects on one-half of the human race; none on the other half. These are your most precious convictions.

"We may go further: You believe in physics; but your physics are based, like the Catholic religion, on an act of faith. Do they not recognise an external force apart from bodies to which it imparts movement? You see its effects, but what is it? Where is it? What is its essence, its life? Has it any limits?— And you deny God!"

"Thus most of your scientific axioms, though true in relation to man, are false in relation to the Whole. Science is one, and you have divided it. To know the true sense of the laws of phenomena, would it not be necessary to know the correlations existing between the phenomena and the laws of the whole? There is in all things an appearance, a presentment, which strikes your sense; behind this presentment there is a soul moving—the body, and the faculty. Where are the relations which hold things together studied or taught? Nowhere. Have you, then, no absolute finality? Your best ascertained theses rest on an analysis of the forms of matter, while the spirit is constantly neglected.

"There is a supreme science of which some men—too late—get a glimpse, though they dare not own it. These men perceive the necessity for considering all bodies, not merely from the point of view of their mathematical properties, but also from that of their whole relations and occult affinities."
The greatest of you all discerned, towards the end of his life, that all things were at the same time cause and effect reciprocally; that the visible worlds were co-ordinated to each other and captive to invisible spheres. He groaned over having tried to establish absolute principles. When counting his worlds, like grains of sand scattered throughout the ether, he explained their connection by the laws of planetary and molecular attraction. You hailed that man.—Well, and I tell you that he died in despair. Assuming that the centrifugal and centripetal forces, which he invented to account for the universe, were absolutely equal, the universe would stand still, and he insisted on motion, though in an undefined direction; but assuming the forces to be unequal, the worlds must at once fall into confusion. Thus his laws were not final; there was another problem still higher than that of attraction, on which his spurious glory was founded. The pull of the stars against each other, and the centripetal tendency of their individual motion, did not hinder him from seeking the branch from which the whole cluster was hanging. Unhappy man; the more he extended space, the heavier was his load. He told you that every part was in equilibrium; but whither was the whole bound?

He contemplated the space, infinite in the eyes of men, that is filled with the groups of worlds, of which a small number are registered by our telescopes, while its immensity is proved by the rapidity of light. This sublime contemplation gave him a conception of the infinitude of worlds, planted in space like flowers in a meadow, which are born like infants, grow like men, die like old men, which live by assimilating from their atmosphere the substances proper to nourish them, which have a centre and principle of life, which protect themselves from each other by an intervening space, which constitute a grand whole, that has its own life, its own destination.
At this prospect the man trembled. He knew that life is produced by the union of the Thing with its first Principle; that death, or inertia—or gravitation—is caused by a rupture between the Thing and the motion proper to it; and he thus foresaw the crash of worlds, in ruins if God should withhold His Word. Then he set to work to seek the traces of that Word in the Apocalypse. You all thought him mad. Know this: he strove to earn forgiveness for his genius.

Wilfrid, you came to request me to resolve equations, to fly on a rain-cloud, to plunge into the fiord and reappear as a swan. If science or miracle were the end of humanity, Moses would have left you a calculus of fluxions; Jesus Christ would have cleared up the dark places of science; His apostles would have told you whence come those immense trains of gas or of fused metals which rush revolving on a nucleus, solidifying as they seek a place in the ether, and are sometimes violently projected within range of a system where they are absorbed by a star, or crash into it by their shock, or dissolve it by the infusion of deadly vapours. St. Paul, instead of bidding you live in God, would have explained to you that nutrition is the secret bond among all creation, and the visible bond among all living animals. In our own day, the greatest miracle would be to square the circle, a problem which you pronounce impossible, but which has no doubt been solved in the progress of worlds by the intersection of some mathematical line, whose curves are apparent to the eye of spirits elevated to the highest spheres.

Believe me, miracles are within us and not without us. Thus have natural effects been wrought, which the nations deemed to be supernatural. Would not God have been unjust if He had vouchsafed to show His power to some generations, and had refused it to others? The Brazen Rod belongs to all. Neither Moses nor Jacob, neither Zoroaster nor Paul, nor
Pythagoras nor Swedenborg, neither the most obscure evangelists nor the most amazing of God’s prophets, have been superior to what you might become. Only, nations have their day of faith. If positive science were indeed the end of all human effort, how is it—confess now—that every social community, every great centre to which men gather, is invariably broken up by Providence? If civilisation were the final cause of the human species, could intelligence perish? Would it perennially continue to be a purely individual possession?

‘The greatness of all the nations that have ever been great has been founded on exceptions: when the exception ceased to be, the power was dead. Would not the Seers, the Prophets, the Evangelists, have laid their hand on science instead of relying on faith; would they not have hammered at your brains rather than have touched your hearts? They all came to drive the nations to God; they all proclaimed the way of life in the simple words which lead to the Heavenly Kingdom; and fired with love and faith, and inspired by the Word which hovers over the nations, compels them, vivifies them, and uplifts them, they never used it for any human end. Your great geniuses, poets, kings, and sages are swallowed up with their towns, and the desert has buried them under a shroud of sand; while the names of these good shepherds still are blessed and survive every catastrophe.

‘We can never agree on any point. Gulfs lie between us. You are on the side of darkness, I live in the true light.

‘Is this the word you desired of me? I utter it with joy; it may change you. Know, then, that there are sciences of Matter and sciences of the Spirit. Where you see bodies, I see forces tending towards each other by a creative impulse. To me the character of a body is the sign-manual of its first principles and the expres-
sion of its properties. These principles give rise to certain affinities which elude you, but which are connected with centres. The different species to which life is distributed are unfailing springs which communicate with each other. Each has its specific function.

'Man is at once cause and effect; he is nourished, but he nourishes in return. When you call God the Creator, you belittle Him. He did not, as you imagine, create plants, animals, and the stars; could He act by such various means? Must He not have proceeded by unity of purpose? He emitted principles which were compelled to develop in accordance with His general laws, and subject to the conditions of their environment?'

'In point of fact, all the affinities are bound together by immediate similarities; the life of worlds is attracted to centres by a greedy aspiration, just as you are all driven by hunger to seek nourishment. To give you an instance of affinities linked to similarities: the secondary law on which the creations of your mind rest—music, a celestial art—is the active evidence of this principle: is it not an assemblage of sounds harmonised by number? Is not sound a condition of the air under compression, dilatation, and repercussion? You know of what the air is composed? Azote, carbon, and oxygen. Since you can produce no sound in a vacuum, it is evident that music and the human voice are the result of organic chemical elements, acting in unison with the same substances prepared within you by your mind, and co-ordinated by means of light, the great foster-mother of this globe; for can you have cogitated on the quantities of nitre deposited by the snows, on the discharge of thunder, on plants which derive from the air the elements they contain, and have failed to conclude that it is the sun that fuses and diffuses the subtle essence which nourishes all things here below? Swedenborg truly said, "The earth is a man."

'All your sciences of to-day, which make you so
great in your own eyes, are a mere trifle compared with
the light that floods the Seer.

‘Cease, cease to question me; we speak a different
language. I have used yours for once, to throw a flash
of faith upon your souls, to cast a corner of my mantle
over you, and tempt you away to the glorious regions of
prayer. Is it God’s part to stoop to you? Is it not
yours rather to rise to Him? If human reason has so
soon exhausted the limits of its powers merely by laying
God out to prove His existence, without succeeding in
doing so, is it not evident that it must seek some other
way of knowing Him? That other way is in ourselves.
The Seer and the believer have within themselves eyes
more piercing than are those eyes which are bent on
things of earth, and they discern a dawn.

‘Understand this saying: Your most exact sciences,
your boldest speculations, your brightest flashes of light,
are but clouds. Above them all is the sanctuary whence
the true Light is shed.’

She sat down and was silent; and her calm features
betrayed not the least sign of the trepidation which
commonly disturbs an orator after his least inflamed
speech.

Wilfrid whispered into the pastor’s ear, leaning over
him to do so—

‘Who told her all this?’

‘I do not know,’ was the reply.

‘He was milder on the Falberg,’ Minna remarked.

Seraphita passed her hands over her eyes, and said with
a smile—

‘You are very pensive this evening, gentlemen. You
treat me and Minna like men to whom you would, talk
politics or discuss trade, while we are but girls to whom
you should tell fairy-tales while drinking tea, as is the
custom in our evenings in Norway.—Come, Pastor
Becker, tell me some Saga which I do not know. That
of Frithiof, in which you believe, and which you
promised to tell me, or the story of the peasant's son who has a ship that speaks and has a soul? I dream of the frigate *Ellida.* Is it not on that fairy vessel that girls should sail the seas?'

'Since we have come down to Jarvis again,' said Wilfrid, whose eyes were fixed on Seraphita as those of a robber hidden in the gloom are fixed on the spot where treasure lies, 'tell me why you do not marry?'

'You are all born widowers or widows,' replied she. 'My marriage was decided on at my birth; I am betrothed—'

'To whom?' they all asked in a breath.

'Allow me to keep my secret,' said she. 'I promise, if our father will grant it, to invite you to that mysterious wedding.'

'Is it to be soon?'

'I am waiting.'

A long silence ensued.

'The spring is come,' said Seraphita. 'The noise of waters and of breaking ice has begun; will you not come to hail the first springtime of the new century?'

She rose and, followed by Wilfrid, went to a window which David had thrown open. After the long stillness of winter, the vast waters were stirring beneath the ice, and sang through the fiord like music; for there are sounds which distance glorifies, and which reach the ear in waves that seem to bring refreshment and light.

'Cease, Wilfrid,' said she, 'cease to cherish evil thoughts whose triumph will be a torment to endure. Who could fail to read your wishes in the sparkle of your eyes? Be good; take a step in welldoing! Is it not a step beyond the mere love of men to sacrifice yourself entirely to the happiness of the one you love? Submit to me, and I will lead you into a path where you will attain to all the greatness you dream of, and where love will be really infinite.'

She left Wilfrid lost in thought.
‘Can this gentle creature really be the prophetess who but now flashed lightnings from her eyes, whose words thundered about the worlds, whose hand wielded the axe of Doubt in defiance of our sciences?’ said he to himself. ‘Have we been asleep for these few minutes?’

‘Minna,’ said Seraphitus, returning to the pastor’s daughter, ‘the eagles gather where the dead lie, the turtle-dove flies to the springs of living water under green and peaceful groves. The eagle soars to the skies, the dove descends from them. Venture no more into regions where you will find neither fountains nor shade. If this morning you could not look into the gulf without destruction, keep your powers for him who will love you. Go, poor child, I am betrothed, as you know.’

Minna rose and went with Seraphitus to the window, where Wilfrid still was standing. They could all three hear the Sieg leaping under the force of the upper waters, which were bringing down the trees that had been frozen into the ice. The fiord had found its voice again. Illusion was over. They wondered at Nature bursting her bonds, and answering in noble harmonies to the Spirit whose call had awakened her.

When the three guests had left this mysterious being, they were filled with an indefinable feeling which was not sleep, nor torpor, nor astonishment, but a mixture of all three, which was neither twilight nor daybreak, but which made them long for light. They were all very thoughtful.

‘I begin to think that she is a spirit veiled in human form,’ said the pastor.

Wilfrid, in his own room again, calmed and convinced, knew not how to contend with powers so divinely majestic.

Minna said to herself—

‘Why will he not allow me to love him?’
V

THE FAREWELL

There is in man a phenomenon which is the despair of those reflective minds who endeavour to find some meaning in the march of social vicissitudes, and to formulate some laws of progress for the movement of intellect. However serious a fact may be, or, if supernatural facts could exist, however magnificent a miracle could be, publicly performed, the lightning flash of the fact, the thunderbolt of the miracle would be lost in the moral ocean, and the surface, rippled for an instant by some slight ebullition, would at once resume the level of its ordinary swell.

Does the Voice, to be more surely heeded, pass through an animal's jaws? Does the Hand write in strange characters on the cornice of the hall where the Court is revelling? Does the Eye light up the King's slumbers? Does the Prophet read the dream? Does Death, when summoned, stand in the luminous space where a man's faculties revive? Does the Spirit crush matter at the foot of the mystical ladder of the seven spiritual worlds hung one above another in space, and seen by the floods of light that fall in cascades down the steps of the heavenly floor? Still, however deep the inner revelation, however distinct the outward sign, by the morrow Balaam doubts both his ass and himself; Belteshazzar and Pharaoh call in seers to explain the sign—Daniel or Moses.

The Spirit descends, snatches a man above the earth, opens the seas and shows him the bottom of them, calls up vanished generations, gives life to the dry bones thickly strewn in the great valley; the Apostle writes the Apocalypse; and twenty centuries later human science
confirms the Apostle and translates his figures of speech into axioms. What difference does it make? The mass of people live to-day as they lived yesterday, as they lived in the first Olympiad, as they lived the first day after creation, and on the eve of the great cataclysm. Doubt drowns everything in its waters. The same waves beat, with the selfsame ebb and flow, on the human granite that hems in the sea of intellect.

Man asks himself whether indeed he saw what he saw, whether he really heard the words that were spoken, whether the fact was a fact, and the idea really an idea; and then he goes on his way, he thinks of his business, he obeys the inevitable servitor of Death—Forgetfulness, who throws his black cloak over the old humanity of which the younger has no remembrance. Man never ceases to move, to go on, to grow as a vegetable grows, till the day when the axe falls. If this flood-like force, this mounting pressure of bitter waters, hinders all progress, it also, no doubt, is a warning of death. None but the loftier spirits open to faith can discern Jacob's mystical stair.

After listening to the reply in which Seraphita, being so urgently questioned, had unrolled the divine scroll, as an organ fills a church with its roar, and shows the power of the musical universe by flooding the most inaccessible vaults with its solemn notes, playing, like light, among the frail wreaths of the capitals, Wilfrid went home, appalled at having seen the world in ruins, and, above the ruins, a light unknown, shed by the hand of that young creature.

On the following day he was still thinking of it, but his terrors were allayed; he was not in ruins, nor even changed—his passions and ideas woke up fresh and vigorous.

He went to breakfast with the Minister, and found him lost in the study of Jean Wier's treatise, which he had been looking through that morning to be able to
reassure his visitor. With the childlike simplicity of a sage, the pastor had turned down the leaves at some pages where Jean Wier adduced authentic evidence demonstrating the possibility of such things as had happened the day before; for to the learned an idea is an event, whereas the greatest events are to them hardly an idea.

By the time these two philosophers had swallowed their fifth cup of tea, that mystical evening seemed quite natural. The heavenly truths were more or less substantial arguments, and open to discussion. Seraphita was a more or less eloquent girl; allowance must be made for her exquisite voice, her enchanting beauty, her fascinating manner, all the oratorical skill by which an actor can put a world of feelings and ideas into a sentence which in itself is often quite commonplace.

'Pooh!' said the good minister, with a little philosophical grimace, as he spread a slice of bread with salt butter, 'the answer to all these riddles is six feet beneath the mould!'

'At the same time,' said Wilfrid, sugaring his tea, 'I cannot understand how a girl of sixteen can know so many things; for she squeezed everything into her speech as if it were in a vice.'

'But only read the story of the Italian girl who, at twelve years old, could speak forty-two languages, ancient and modern,' said the pastor. 'And again, that of the monk who read thought by smell. These are in Jean Wier, and in a dozen other treatises which I will give you to read, a thousand proofs rather than one.'

'I daresay, my dear Pastor; but Seraphita remains to me a wife it would be divine joy to possess.'

'She is all intellect,' replied the minister dubiously.

Some days passed by, during which the snow in the valleys insensibly melted away; the greenery of the forests peeped through like a fresh growth; Norwegian nature made itself beautiful in anticipation of its brief
bridal day. All this time, though the milder tempera-
ture allowed of open-air exercise, Seraphita remained in
solitary seclusion. Thus Wilfrid's passion was enhanced
by the aggravating vicinity of the girl he loved, and
who refused to be seen. When the inscrutable being
admitted Minna, Minna could detect the symptoms of
an inward fever; Seraphita's voice was hollow, and her
complexion was wan; whereas hitherto its transparency
might have been compared by a poet to that of the
diamond, it now had the sheen of the topaz.
'Have you seen her?' asked Wilfrid, who had prowled
round the house, awaiting Minna's return.
'We shall lose him!' said the girl, her eyes filling with
tears.
'Do not try to fool me!' cried the stranger, con-
trolling the vehemence of tone that expressed his fury.
'You can only love Seraphita as one girl loves another,
not with such love as I feel for her. You cannot con-
ceive what peril you would be in if there were anything
to alarm my jealousy.—Why can I not go to see her?
Is it you who raise difficulties?'
'I cannot think,' said Minna, calm on the surface, but
quaking with mortal terror, 'what right you have to
sound the depths of my heart.—Yes, I love him,' she
went on, summoning the courage of conviction to confess
the faith of her soul. 'But my jealousy, though natural
to love, fears nobody here. Alas! What I am jealous
of is some unconfessed feeling in which he is absorbed.
Between him and me lies a space I can never abridge.
I want to know whether the stars love him more than
I, whether they or I would be the more eagerly devoted
to his happiness? Why, why, should I not be free to
declare my affection? In the presence of death we
may all confess our attachment—and Seraphitus is
dying.'
'Minna, indeed you are under a mistake; the siren
round whom my desires have so often hovered, who
allows me to admire her as she reclines on her couch, so graceful, fragile, and suffering, is not a man.'

'Nay,' replied Minna, in some agitation, 'he whose powerful hand guided me over the Falberg to the sæter under the shelter of the Ice-cap up there'—and she pointed to the peak—'is certainly not a mere, weak girl. If you had but heard her prophesy! Her poetry is the music of thought. No young girl could have had the solemn depth of voice which stirred my soul.'

'What certainty have you——?' Wilfrid began.

'None but that of my heart!' replied Minna in confusion, and hastily interrupting the speaker.

'Well, but I,' cried Wilfrid, with a terrible glance of murderous eagerness and desire, 'I, who know what the extent of her power is over me—I will prove your mistake.'

At this moment, when words were rushing to Wilfrid's tongue as vehemently as ideas in his head, he saw Seraphita come out of the Swedish Castle, followed by David. The sight of her soothed his effervescent state.

'Look,' said he; 'none but a woman can have that grace and languor.'

'He is ill; it is his last walk!' said Minna.

At a sign from his mistress, David left her, and she advanced towards Wilfrid and Minna.

'Let us go to the falls of the Sieg,' said the mysterious being; it was the wish of a sufferer which all hasten to accede to.

A thin, white haze hung over the heights and dales of the fiord, and the peaks, glittering like stars, pierced above it, giving it the effect of a milky way moving onwards. Through this earth-born vapour the sun was visible as a globe of red-hot iron. In spite of these last freaks of winter, gusts of mild air, bringing the scent of the birch-trees, already covered with their yellow flowers, and the rich perfume exhaled by the larches, whose silky
tufts were all displayed—breezes warm with the incense and the breathing of the earth testified to the exquisite springtime of Northern lands, the brief rapture of a most melancholy nature.

The wind was beginning to roll away the veil of mist that hardly hid the view of the gulf. The birds were singing.

Where the sun had not dried off the frost that trickled down the road in murmuring rills, the bark of the trees was pleasing to the eye by its fantastic appearance.

They all three went along the strand in silence. Wilfrid and Minna were lost in contemplation of the magical scene after their long endurance of the monotonous winter landscape. Their companion was pensive, and walked as though trying to distinguish one voice in the concert. They reached the rocks between which the Sieg tumbles, at the end of the long avenue of ancient fir-trees which the torrent had cut in meandering through the forest, a path covered in by a groined arch of boughs, meeting like those of a cathedral. From thence the whole of the fiord was seen, and the sea sparkled on the horizon like a steel blade. At this instant the clouds vanished, showing the blue sky. Down in the hollows and round the trees the air was full of floating sparkles, the diamond dust swept up by a light breeze, and dazzling gems of drops were hanging at the tip of the branches of each pyramid. The torrent was rolling below; a smoke came up from the surface, tinted in the sunshine with every hue of light; its beams, decomposed, displayed perfect rainbows of the seven colours, like the play of a thousand prisms meeting and crossing there. This wild shore was curtained with various kinds of lichen, a rich web, sheeny with moisture, like some gorgeous hanging of silk. Heath, already in blossom, crowned the rocks with flowers in skilful disorder. All this stirring foliage, tempted by the living
waters, hung their heads over it like hair; the larches
waved their lace-like arms, as if caressing the pines, that
stood rigid like careworn old men.

This luxuriant display was a contrast to the solemnity
of the antique colonnades of the forests, range upon range
on the hillsides, and to the broad sheet of the fiore in
which the torrent drowned its fury at the feet of the
three spectators. Beyond it all, the open sea closed in
this picture, traced by the greatest of poets—Chance—to
which we owe the medley beauty of creation when left,
as it would seem, to itself. Jarvis was a speck almost
lost in this landscape, in this immensity—sublime, as
everything is, which, having but a brief existence, offers
a transient image of perfection; for by a law, fatal only
to our sight, creations that appear perfect, the delight of
our heart and of our eyes, have but one spring to live
here.

At the top of that cliff these three beings might
easily fancy themselves alone in all the world.

‘How exquisite!’ exclaimed Wilfrid.

‘Nature sings its hymns,’ said Seraphita. ‘Is not this
music delicious? Confess now, Wilfrid, no woman you
ever knew could create for herself so magnificent a
retreat. Here I experience a feeling that the sight of
great cities rarely inspires, and which makes me long to
remain here, lying among these grasses of such rapid
growth. Then, with my eyes on the sky, my heart laid
bare, lost in the sense of immensity, I could let myself
listen to the sighs of the flower, which, scarcely released
from its primitive nature, would fain run about; and to
the cries of the eider, aggrieved at having only wings,
while I thought of the cravings of man, who has some-
thing of everything, and who also is for ever full of
desires!—But this, Wilfrid, is a woman’s poetic fancy!
You can find a voluptuous thought in that hazy expanse
of water; in those fantastic veils, behind which nature
plays like some coquettish bride; and in this atmosphere,
where she perfumes her green hair for her bridal. You would fain see the form of a naiad in that wreath of mist, and I, as you think, ought to hear a manly voice in the torrent."

'And is not love in it all, like a bee in a flower?' replied Wilfrid, who, seeing in her for the first time some trace of earthly feeling, thought it a favourable moment for the expression of his fervent affection.

'Always the same?' said Seraphita, laughing, Minna having left them; the girl was climbing a crag where she had seen some blue saxifrages.

'Always!' exclaimed Wilfrid. 'Listen,' he said, with an imperious glance that met a panoply of adamant, 'you know not who I am, nor what my power is, nor what I demand. Do not reject my last entreaty. Be mine, for the sake of the world within your heart! Be mine, that my conscience may be pure, that a heavenly voice may sound in my ears and inspire me aright in the undertaking I have vowed to carry out, impelled by my hatred of the nations, but to be achieved for their welfare if only you are with me. What nobler mission may a woman dream of?—I came to these lands meditating a great scheme.'

'And you are prepared to sacrifice it and its glories,' said she, 'to a very simple girl, whom you will love, and who will guide you into a peaceful path?'

'What do I care? I only want you! This is my secret,' he replied, going on with his speech. 'I have travelled all over the North, the great workshop where the new races are produced who overspread the earth like floods of humanity sent forth to renew worn-out civilisation. I wanted to have begun my work on one of these points, conquering there the ascendency that force and intellect can assert over a small race; to have trained it to battle, to have declared war, and have sent it raging like a conflagration to consume Europe, while shouting to these "Liberty!" to those "Plunder!" to some "Glory!"
to others"Pleasure!" I, standing meanwhile like the image
of Fate, pitiless and cruel, moving like the storm which
assimilates from the atmosphere the atoms of which the
lightning is compounded, and feeding on men like a
rapacious monster. I should then have conquered
Europe; she is now at a period when she looks for the
coming of the new Messiah, who is to devastate the
world and to re-form the nations. Europe can believe in
no one but Him who will trample her under foot.

'Some day historians and poets would have justified
my existence, have magnified me, have ascribed great
ideas to me—to me, to whom this huge pleaantry,
written in blood, is but revenge.

'But, dear Seraphita, what I have seen has disgusted
me with the North; force here is too blind, and I crave
for the Indies. A duel with a selfish, cowardly, and
mercenary government fascinates me more. Besides, it
is easier to arouse the imagination of the races that dwell
at the foot of Caucasus than to convince the minds of
men in these frozen lands. I am tempted to cross the
Russian steppes, to reach the frontiers of Asia, to cover
it as far as the Ganges with my victorious flood of
human beings, and then I shall overthrow the English
rule. Seven men, at different periods, have already
carried out such a scheme. I shall renew Art, as the
Saracens did when Mahomet cast them over Europe. I
will not be so sordid a king as those who now govern
the ancient provinces of the Roman Empire, quarrelling
with their subjects over custom-house dues. No,
nothing shall arrest the flash of my gaze or the storm of
my speech! My feet, like those of Genghis Khan,
shall cover a third of the globe; my hand shall grasp
Asia as did that of Aurung Zeeb.

'Be my partner; take your seat, fair and lovely
being, on a throne. I have never doubted my success,
but with you to dwell in my heart, I should be certain
of it.'
'I have reigned already,' said Seraphita.

The words were like the blow dealt by the axe of a skilful woodsman at the root of a sapling, felling it at once. Men alone can know what a storm a woman can rouse in a man's soul when he has been trying to impress her with his strength or his power, his intellect or his superiority, and the capricious fair nods her head and says, 'Oh, that is nothing!' or, with a bored smile, observes, 'I know all that,' when power is as nought to her.

'What!' cried Wilfrid in despair, 'the riches of Art, the wealth of the world, the splendour of a court——'

She checked him by a mere curl of her lips, and said—

'Beings more powerful than you are have offered me more.'

'Well, have you no soul, then, that you are not fascinated by the prospect of consoling a great man who will sacrifice everything to dwell with you in a little home by the side of a lake?'

'Why,' said she, 'I am loved with a boundless love.'

'By whom?' cried Wilfrid, going towards Seraphita with a frenzied gesture, as if to fling her into the foaming falls of the Sieg.

She looked at him; his arm dropped; and she pointed to Minna, who came running down, all rose and white, and as pretty as the flowers she carried in her hand.

'My child!' said Seraphitus, going forward to meet her.

Wilfrid stood on the edge of the cliff as motionless, a statue, lost in thought, longing to cast himself into the flow of the torrent, like one of the fallen trees that passed under his eyes and vanished in the abyss beneath.

'I gathered them for you,' said Minna, giving the nosegay to the being she adored. 'One of them—this one,' said she, picking out a particular blossom, 'is like the flower we gathered on the Falberg.'
Seraphitus looked at the blossom and then at Minna.

'Why do you question me thus? Do you doubt me?'

'No,' said the girl, 'my confidence in you is unbounded. While you are far more beautiful to me than this beautiful scenery, you also seem to me to be superior in intelligence to all the rest of humanity. When I have been with you, I seem to have communed with God. I only wish——'

'What?' asked Seraphitus, with a flashing look that revealed to the girl the vast distance that divided them.

'I wish I could suffer in your stead.'

'This is the most dangerous of Thy creatures,' thought Seraphitus. 'Is it a criminal thought, O God, to long to present her to Thee?—Have you forgotten, he said aloud, 'all I told you up there?' and he pointed upwards to the peak of the Ice-cap.

'Now he is terrible again!' thought Minna with a shudder.

The roar of the Sieg formed an accompaniment to the thoughts of these three beings, who stood together for a few minutes on a projecting slab of rock, parted, as they were, by immeasurable gulfs in the spiritual world.

'Teach me then, Seraphitus,' said Minna, in a voice as silvery as a pearl and as gentle as the movements of a sensitive plant. 'Teach me what I must do to avoid loving you? Who could fail to admire you? And love is the admiration that is never tired.'

'Poor child!' said Seraphitus, turning pale, 'only one Being can be loved thus.'

'Who is that?' asked Minna.

'You shall know!' was the reply in the weak voice of one who lies down to die.

'Help! He is dying!' cried Minna.

Wilfrid hastened forward, and seeing this being reclining gracefully on a block of gneiss over which time had thrown its carpet of velvet, its glistening lichens, and dusky mosses, lustrous in the sunshine,
"She is lovely!" he exclaimed.

"This is the last glance I may give to nature in travail," said Seraphita, collecting all her strength to rise. She went to the edge of the cliff, whence she could see the whole of the sublime landscape, but lately wrapped in its mantle of snow, now full of life, green and flowery.

"Farewell," said she, "oh, burning hot-bed of love! whence everything tends from the centre to the utmost circumference, while the extremities are gathered up, like a woman's hair, to be spun into the unknown plait by which thou art linked, in the invisible ether, to the Divine Idea!

"Behold him who is bending over the furrow, watered with his sweat, and pausing for an instant to look up to heaven; behold her who gathers the children in to feed them from her breast; him who knots the ropes in the fury of the tempest; her who sits in the niche of a rock awaiting her father; and, again, all those who hold out their hands for help after spending their life in thankless toil? Peace and courage to them all, and to all farewell!

"Do you hear the cry of the soldier who dies unknown, the wrath of the man who laments, disappointed, in the desert? Peace and courage to all, to all farewell! Farewell, you who die for the kings of the earth; but farewell, too, ye races without a native land, and farewell, lands without a people—seeking each other. Farewell, above all, to thee, sublime exile, who knowest not wherc to lay thy head! Farewell, dear innocents, dragged away by the hair of your head for having loved too well! Farewell, mothers, sitting by your dying sons! Farewell, holy, broken-hearted wives! Farewell, O ye who are poor, young, weak, and suffering, whose woes I have so often made my own! Farewell, all ye who gravitate in the sphere of instinct, suffering there for others!
‘Farewell, ye discoverers who seek the East through the thick darkness of abstractions as grand as first principles; and ye martyrs of thought, led by thought to the true light! Farewell, realms of inquiry, where I can hear the moans of insulted genius, the sigh of the sage to whom light comes—too late!

‘I perceive the angelic harmonies, the wafted fragrance, the incense from the heart exhaled by those who move on, praying, comforting, diffusing divine light and heavenly balm to sorrowing souls. Courage, Choir of Love! to whom the nations cry, “Comfort us! Protect us!” Courage, and farewell!

‘Farewell, rock of granite, thou shalt become a flower; farewell, flower, thou shalt be a dove; farewell, dove, thou shalt be a woman; farewell, woman, thou shalt be Suffering; farewell, man, thou shalt be Belief; farewell, you, who shall be all love and prayer!'

Exhausted by fatigue, this inexplicable being for the first time leaned on Wilfrid and Minna to support her back to her house. Wilfrid and Minna felt some mysterious contagion from her touch. They had gone but a few steps when they met David in tears.

‘She is going to die; why have you brought her here?’ he exclaimed from afar.

Seraphita was lifted up by the old man, who had recovered the strength of youth, and he flew with her to the door of the Swedish castle, like an eagle carrying some white lamb to his eyrie.

VI

THE ROAD TO HEAVEN

On the day after Seraphita had had this foretaste of her end, and had bidden farewell to the earth, as a prisoner looks at his cell before quitting it for ever, she was
suffering such pain as compelled her to remain in the absolute quietude of those who endure extreme anguish. Wilfrid and Minna went to see her, and found her lying on her couch of furs. Her soul, still shrouded in the flesh, shone through the veil, bleaching it, as it were, from day to day. The progress made by the spirit in undermining the last barrier which divided it from the infinite was called sickness; the hour of life was named death. David wept to see his mistress suffering, and refused to listen to her consolations; the old man was as unreasonable as a child. The pastor was urgent on Seraphita to take some remedies; but all was in vain.

One morning she asked for the two she had been so fond of, telling them that this was the last of her bad days. Wilfrid and Minna came in great alarm; they knew that they were about to lose her. Seraphita smiled at them, as those smile who are departing to a better world; her head drooped like a flower over-weighted with dew, which opens its cup for the last time and exhales its last fragrance to the air. She looked at them with sadness, of which they were the cause; she had ceased to think of herself, and they felt this without being able to express their grief, mingled as it was with gratitude.

Wilfrid remained standing, silent and motionless, lost in such contemplation as is suggested by things so vast that they make us understand, here on earth, the Supreme Immensity. Minna, emboldened by the weakness of this powerful being, or perhaps by her dread of losing her beloved for ever, bent down and murmured, ‘Seraphitus—let me follow you!’

‘Can I hinder you?’

‘But why do you not love me enough to remain here?’

‘I could not love anything here.’

‘What, then, do you love?’

‘Heaven.’
Are you worthy of heaven if you thus despise God's creatures here?

Minna, can we love two beings at the same time? Is the Best-beloved really the Best-beloved if He does not fill the whole heart? Ought He not to be the first and last and only One? Does not she who is all love quit the world for her Beloved? Her whole family becomes but a memory; she has but one relation—it is He! Her soul is no longer her own, but His! If she keeps anything within her that is not His, she does not love; no, she does not love! Is loving half-heartedly loving at all? The voice of the Beloved makes her all glad and flows through her veins like a purple tide, redder than the blood; His look is a light that flashes through her, she is fused with Him; where He is all is beautiful. He is warmth to her soul, He lights everything; near Him, is it ever cold or dark to her? He is never absent; He is always within us, we think in Him, with Him, for Him. That, Minna, is how I love Him.

Whom? said Minna, gripped by consuming jealousy.

God! replied Seraphitus, whose voice flashed upon their souls like a beacon light of freedom blazing from hill to hill—God, who never betrays us! God, who does not desert us, but constantly fulfils our desires, and who alone can perennially satisfy His creatures with infinite and unmixed joys! God, who is never weary, and who only has smiles! God, ever new, who pours His treasures into the soul, who purifies it without bitterness, who is all harmony, all flame! God, who enters into us to blossom there, who fulfils all our aspirations, who never calls us to account if we are His, but gives Himself wholly, ravishes us, and expands and multiplies us in Himself—God, in short!

Minna, I love you because you may be His! I love you because if you come to Him you will be mine.

Then lead me to Him, she, kneeling down.
Take me by the hand; I will leave you no more.
‘Lead us, Seraphita,’ cried Wilfrid vehemently, coming forward to kneel with Minna. ‘Yes, you have made me thirst for the Light and thirst for the Word; I thirst with the love you have implanted in my heart, I will cherish your soul in mine; impart your Will, and I will do whatsoever you bid me do. If I may not win you, I will treasure every feeling that you can infuse into me as part of you! If I cannot be united to you but by my strength alone, I will cling as flame clings to what it consumes.—Speak!’

‘Angel!’ cried the incomprehensible being, with a look that seemed to enfold them in an azure mantle. ‘Angel! heaven is thine inheritance!’

And a great silence fell after this cry, which rang in the souls of Wilfrid and Minna like the first chord of some celestial symphony.

‘If you desire to train your feet to walk in the way that leads to heaven, remember that the first steps are rough,’ said the suffering soul. ‘God must be sought for His own sake. In that sense He is a jealous God, He will have you altogether His; but when you have given yourself to Him, He never abandons you. I will leave you the keys of the kingdom where His light shines, where you will everywhere be in the bosom of the Father, in the heart of the Bridegroom. No sentinel guards the gates; you can enter from any side; His palace, His treasures, His sceptre, nothing is forbidden; He says to all, “Take them freely!” But you must will to go thither. You must start as for a journey, leave your home, give up your plans, bid farewell to your friends—father, mother, sister, even the infant brother that cries—an eternal farewell, for you will never return, any more than martyrs bound for the stake returned to their homes; you must, in short, strip yourself of the feelings and possessions to which men cling; otherwise, you will not be wholly given up to your enterprise.
'Do for God what you would have done for your ambitious schemes, what you do when you take up an art, what you did when you loved a creature more than Him, or when you were studying some secret of human knowledge. Is not God Knowledge itself, Love itself, the Fount of all poetry? Is not His treasure a thing to covet? His treasure is inexhaustible, His poetry is infinite, His love unchangeable, His knowledge infallible and full of mysteries. Cling to nothing, then; He will give you All! Yes, in His heart you will find possessions beyond all compare with those you leave on earth.

'What I tell you is the truth. You will have His power, you will be allowed to use it as you use anything that belongs to your lover or your mistress.

'Alas! most men doubt, lack faith, will, and perseverance. Though some set out on the road, they presently look back and return. Few are they who know how to choose between these two extremes—to go or to stay; heaven or the muck-heap. All hesitate. Weakness leads to wandering, passion to evil ways, vice as a habit clogs the feet, and man makes no progress towards a better state.

'Every being passes a preliminary life in the Sphere of Instinct, labouring with endless toil to amass costly treasures, only to recognise their futility at last. But how many times must we live through this first life before quitting it fit to begin another stage of trial in the Sphere of Abstractions, where the mind is exercised in false science, and the spirit is at last weary of human speech—for, matter being exhausted, the spirit prevails? How many forms must the being elect to heaven wear out, before he has learnt the preciousness of silence, and of the solitude whose star-strewn steppes are the floor of the spiritual world? It is after testing and trying the void that his eyes turn to the right path. Then there are other existences to be worn through or ever he may reach the road where the Light shines.
"Death marks a stage on this journey. After that, his experience is in a reversed order; it takes a whole life, perhaps, to acquire the virtues that are the antithesis of the errors in which he has previously lived.

"Thus, first we live the life of suffering, where torments make us thirst for love. Next comes the life of loving, where devotion to the creature teaches us devotion to the Creator; where the virtues of love, its thousand sacrifices, its angelic hope, its joys paid for by grief, its patience and resignation excite an appetite for things divine. After this comes the life during which we seek, in silence, the traces of the Word, and become humble and charitable. Then the life of high desire; finally, the life of prayer. There we find eternal sunshine; there are flowers, there is fruition!

"The qualities we acquire, and which slowly grow up in us, are the invisible bonds binding each of these existences to the next; the soul alone remembers them, since matter has no memory for spiritual things. The mind alone preserves a tradition of former states. This unbroken legacy of the past to the present, and of the present to the future, is the secret of human genius: some have the gift of form, some the gift of number, some the gift of harmony; these are all steps in the way to the Light. Yes, whoever possesses one of these gifts, touches the infinite at one spot.

"The Word, of which I have here uttered a few axioms, has been distributed over the earth, which has reduced it to powder, and infused it into its works, its doctrines, its poetry. If the tiniest speck of it shines on a work, you say, "This is great; this is true; this is sublime!" And that mere atom vibrates within you, giving you a foretaste of heaven. Thus, one has sickness, to divide him from the world; another has solitude, bringing him near to God; a third has poetry; in short, everything that throws you in on yourself, striking you and crushing you, is a ringing call from the Divine Sphere.
When a being has traced the first furrow straight, it is enough to make the others by; one single profound thought, a voice once heard, an acute pang, a single echo that finds the Word in you, changes your soul for ever. Every road leads to God; hence you have many chances of finding Him if you walk straight on. When the happy day dawns that finds you with your foot on the road, starting on your pilgrimage, the earth knows no more of you, it understands you no more, you are no longer in harmony with it, it rejects you.

Those who come to know these things, and who speak a few utterances of the true Word, find not where to lay their head; they are hunted like wild beasts, and often perish on the scaffold amid the rejoicing of the assembled populace; but angels open the gates of heaven to them. So your destination is a secret between you and God, as love is a secret between two hearts. You are as the hidden treasure over which men trample, greedy for gold, but not knowing that it is there.

Your life is one of incessant activity. Each act has a purpose that tends to God, just as when you love, your acts and thoughts are full of the creature you love; but love and its joys, love and its sensual pleasures, is but an imperfect image of the infinite love that unites you to the Celestial Bridegroom. Every earthly joy is succeeded by anguish and dissatisfaction; for love to bring no disgust in its train, death must quench it at the fiercest, or ever you see the ashes; but God transforms our miseries into raptures, joy is multiplied by itself, it constantly increases, and knows no bounds.

Thus, in the earthly life a transient love is ended by enduring tribulations; whereas, in the spiritual life, the tribulations of a day end in infinite joys. Your soul is for ever glad. You feel God close to you, in you; He gives a flavour of holiness to all things, He shines in your soul, He seals you with His sweetness, He weans you from the earth for your own sake, and makes you care
for it for His sake by suffering you to use His power. You do, in His name, the works He inspires you to do; you wipe away tears; you act for Him; you have nothing of your own; like Him, you love all creatures with inextinguishable love; you long to see them all marching towards Him, as a truly loving woman would fain see all the nations of the earth obedient to her Beloved.

‘The last life—that in which all previous lives are summed up—is the life of prayer; in it every power is strung to the highest pitch, and its merits will open the gates of heaven to the being made perfect. Who can make you understand the greatness, the majesty, the power of prayer? Oh that my voice may be as thunder in your hearts, and that it may change them! Be now, forthwith, what you will become after trials. There are certain privileged beings—prophets, seers, evangelists, martyrs, all who suffer for the Word or who have declared it—these souls cross the human spheres at a single bound, and rise at once to prayer. So, too, do those who are consumed by the flame of faith. Be ye then such a daring pair! God accepts such temerity; He loves those who take Him with violence, He never reject such as can force their way to Him. Understand this: Desire, the torrent of will, is so potent in a man, that a single jet forcibly emitted is enough to win anything, a single cry is often enough when uttered under the stress of faith. Be ye one of those beings, full of force, will, and love! Be victorious over the earth! Let the hunger and thirst for God possess you wholly; run to Him as the thirsting hart runs to the water-brook. Desire will give you wings; tears, the flowers of repentance, will fall like a heavenly baptism, whence your nature will come forth purified. From the bosom of these waters leap into prayer!

‘Silence and meditation are efficacious means of entering on this road; God always reveals Himself to the
solitary and contemplative man. By this method the necessary separation is effected between matter, which has so long held you shrouded in darkness, and the spirit, which is born in you and gives you light, and day will dawn in your soul. Your broken heart receives the light which floods it; you no longer feel convictions, but dazzling certainties. The poet has expression, the sage meditates, the righteous man acts; but he who is on the frontier of the divine worlds prays, and his prayer is expression, meditation, and action all in one! Yes, his prayer contains everything, includes everything; it completes your nature by showing you the Spirit and the Way.

'Prayer is the fair and radiant daughter of all the human virtues, the arch connecting heaven and earth, the sweet companion that is alike the lion and the dove; and prayer will give you the key of heaven. As pure and as bold as innocence, as strong as all things are that are entire and single, this fair and invincible queen rests on the material world; she has taken possession of it; for, like the sun, she casts about it a sphere of light. The universe belongs to him who will, who can, who knows how to pray; but he must will, he must be able, and he must know how—in one word, he must have power, faith, and wisdom. And, indeed, when prayer is the outcome of so many trials, it is the consummation of all truth, of all power, of all emotion. The offspring of the laborious, slow, and persistent development of every natural property, and alive by the divine insufflation of the Word, she has enchantments in her hand, she is the crown of worship—neither material worship, which has its symbols, nor spiritual worship, which has its formulas, but worship of the divine order.

'We do not then say prayers; prayer lights up within us, and is a faculty which acts of itself: it acquires the vital activity which lifts it above all forms; it links the soul to God, and you are joined to Him as the root of a
tree is joined to the earth; the elements of things flow in your veins, and you live the life of the worlds themselves." Prayer bestows external conviction by enabling you to penetrate the world of matter through a cohesion of all your faculties with elementary substances; it bestows internal conviction by evolving your very essence, and mingling it with that of the spiritual spheres.

"To pray thus you must attain to absolute freedom from the flesh; you must be refined in the furnace to the purity of a diamond; for that perfect communion can only be achieved by absolute quiescence, the stilling of every storm. Yes, prayer, literally an aspiration of the soul set wholly free from the body, bears up every power, applying them all to the constant and persistent union of the visible and the invisible. When you possess the gift of praying without weariness, with love, assurance, force, and intelligence, your spiritualised nature soon attains to power. It passes beyond everything, like the whirlwind or the thunder, and partakes of the nature of God. You acquire alacrity of spirit; in one instant you can be present in every region; you are borne, like the Word itself, from one end of the world to the other. There is a harmony—you join in it; there is a light—you see it; there is a melody—its counterpart is in you. In that frame you will feel your intellect expanding, growing, and its insight reaching to prodigious distances; in fact, to the spirit, time and space are not. Distance and duration are proportions proper to matter; and spirit and matter have nothing in common.

"Although these things proceed in silence and stillness, without disturbance or external motion, everything is action in prayer; but vital action, devoid of all substantiality, refined like the motion of worlds into a pure and invisible force. It comes down from above like light, and gives life to the souls that lie in its rays, as nature lies in those of the sun. It everywhere resusci-
states virtue, purifies and sanctifies action, peoples the solitude, and gives a foretaste of eternal bliss. When once you have known the ecstasy of the divine transport that comes of your internal struggles, there is no more to be said; when once you have grasped the sistrum on which to praise God, you will never lay it down. Hence the isolation in which angelic spirits dwell and their scorn of all that constitutes human joys.

'I say unto you, they are cut off from the number of those who must die; if they understand their speech, they no longer understand their ideas; they are amazed by their doings, by what is termed politics, by earthly laws and communities; to them there are no mysteries, nothing but truth. Those who have attained the degree at which their eyes can discern the gates of heaven, and who, without casting a single glance behind, without expressing a single regret, can look down upon the worlds and read their destinies,—those, I say, are silent, and wait and endure the last conflict; the last is the hardest, resignation is the supreme virtue. To dwell in exile and make no complaint, to have no care for things on earth and yet to smile, to belong to God and be left among men!

'Do you not plainly hear the voice that cries to you, "On! on!" Often in a celestial vision the angels descend and wrap you in song. Then you must see them soar back to the hive without a tear, without a murmur. To murmur would be to fail. Resignation is the fruit that ripens at the gate of heaven. How impressive and beautiful are the calm smile, the unruffled brow of the resigned creature! How radiant the light that adorns his face! Those who come within his range grow better; his look is penetrating and pathetic. He triumphs merely by his presence, more eloquent in his silence than the prophet in his speech. He stands alert like a faithful dog listening for his master.

Stronger than love, more eager than hope, greater than
Seraphita

faith, Resignation is the adorable maiden who, prone on
the earth, clings for an instant to the palm she has won by
leaving the print of her pure white feet; and when she is
no more, men come in crowds and say, “Behold!” God
preserves her there as an image, and at her feet creep all
the shapes and species of animal life seeking their way.
Now and again she shakes and sheds the light that
emanates from her hair, and we see; she speaks, and
we listen; and all say to one another, “A miracle!”

Often she triumphs in the name of God; men in
their terror deny her and put her to death; she lays
down her sword and smiles at the stake after saving the
nations!

How many pardoned angels have stepped from
martyrdom to heaven! Sinai and Golgotha are not
here nor there. The angel is crucified everywhere,
and in every sphere. Sighs go up to God from every
world. The earth on which we live is one ear of the
harvest; humanity is but a species in the vast field
where flowers are grown for heaven.

In short, God is everywhere the same, and it is easy
everywhere to go up to Him by prayer.

After these words, falling as from the lips of a second
Hagar in the desert, and stirring the souls they pierced
like the spears shot by the fiery word of Isaiah, the
Being was silent to collect some little remaining
strength. Neither Wilfrid nor Minna dared to speak.
Then on a sudden HE sat up to die.

Soul of the universe, oh God, whom I love for Thyself! Thou, Judge and Father, gauge a fervour that
knows no limit but Thine infinite goodness! Impart to
me Thine essence and Thy faculties, that I may be more
truly Thine! Take me, that I may no longer be my
own. If I am not duly purified, cast me back into the
furnace. If I am not finely moulded, let me be made
into some useful ploughshare or victorious sword.
Grant me some glorious martyrdom to proclaim Thy
word. Even if Thou reject me, I will bless Thy justice. If my exceeding love may win in a moment what hard and patient labour may not obtain, snatch me up in Thy chariot of fire! Whether Thou shalt grant me to triumph or to suffer again, blessed be Thou! But if I suffer for Thee, is not that a triumph? Take me—seize, snatch, drag me away! Or, if Thou wilt, reject me! Thou art He whom I worship, and who can do no wrong.—Ah!' he cried after a pause, 'the bonds are breaking. Pure spirits, holy throng, come forth from the depths, fly over the surface of the luminous flood! The hour has struck, come, gather round me. We will sing at the gates of the sanctuary, our chants shall disperse the last lingering clouds. We will unite to hail the morn of everlasting day. Behold the dawn of the true Light! Why cannot I take my friends with me?—Farewell, poor earth, farewell!'

VII

THE ASSUMPTION

This last hymn was not uttered in words, nor expressed by gestures, nor by any of the signs which serve men as a means of communicating their thoughts, but as the soul speaks to itself; for, at the moment when Seraphita was revealed in her true nature, her ideas were no longer enslaved to human language. The vehemence of her last prayer had broken the bonds. Like a white dove, the soul hovered for a moment above this body, of which the exhausted materials were about to dissever.

The aspiration of this soul to heaven was so infectious, that Wilfrid and Minna failed to discern death as they saw the radiant spark of life.

They had fallen on their knees when Seraphitus
had turned to the dawn, and they were inspired by his ecstasy.

The fear of the Lord, who creates man anew and purges him of his dross, consumed their hearts. Their eyes were closed to the things of the earth, and opened to the glories of heaven.

Though surprised by the trembling before God which overcame some of those seers known to men as prophets, they still trembled, like them, when they found themselves within the circle where the glory of the Spirit was shining.

Then the veil of the flesh, which had hitherto hidden him from them, insensibly faded away, revealing the divine substance. They were left in the twilight of the dawn, whose pale light prepared them to see the true light, and to hear the living word without dying of it.

In this condition they both began to understand the immeasurable distances that divide the things of earth from the things of heaven.

The life on whose brink they stood, trembling and dazzled in a close embrace, as two children take refuge side by side to gaze at a conflagration—that Life gave no hold to the senses. The Spirit was above them; it shed fragrance without odour, and melody without the help of sound; here, where they knelt, there were neither surfaces, nor angles, nor atmosphere. They dared no longer question him nor gaze on him, but remained under his shadow, as under the burning rays of the tropical sun we dare not raise our eyes for fear of being blinded.

They felt themselves near to him, though they could not tell by what means they thus found themselves, as in a dream, on the border line of the visible and the invisible, nor how they had ceased to see the visible and perceived the invisible.

They said to themselves, 'If he should touch us, we shall die!' But the Spirit was in the infinite, and they
did not know that in the infinite time and space are not, that they were divided from him by gulfs, though apparently so near. Their souls not being prepared to receive a complete knowledge of the faculties of that life, they only perceived it darkly, apprehending it according to their weakness.

Otherwise, when the Living Word rang forth, of which the distant sound fell on their ear, its meaning entering into their soul as life enters into a body, a single tone of that Word would have swept them away, as a whirl of fire seizes a straw.

Thus they beheld only what their nature, upheld by the power of the Spirit, allowed them to see; they heard only so much as they were able to hear.

Still, in spite of these mitigations, they shuddered as they heard the voice of the suffering soul, the hymn of the spirit awaiting life, and crying out for it. That cry froze the very marrow in their bones.

The Spirit knocked at the sacred gate.

'What wilt thou?' asked a choir, whose voice rang through all the worlds.

'To go to God.'

'Hast thou conquered?'

'I have conquered the flesh by abstinence; I have vanquished false speech by silence; I have vanquished false knowledge by humility; I have vanquished pride by charity; I have vanquished the earth by love; I have paid my tribute of suffering; I am purified by burning for the faith; I have striven for life by prayer; I wait adoring, and I am resigned.'

But no reply came.

'The Lord be praised!' said the Spirit, believing himself rejected. His tears flowed, and fell in dew on the kneeling witnesses, who shuddered at the judgments of God.

On a sudden, the trumpets sounded for the victory of the Angel in this last test; their music filled space, like
a sound met by an echo; it rang through it, making the universe tremble. Wilfrid and Minna felt the world shrink under their feet. They shivered, shaken by the terrors of apprehending the mystery that was to be accomplished.

There was, in fact, a vast stir, as though the eternal legions were forming to march, and gathering in spiral order. The worlds spun round, like clouds swept away by a mad whirlwind. It was all in a moment. The veils were rent; they saw far above them, as it were, a star immeasurably brighter than the brightest star in the skies; it fell from its place like a thunderbolt, still flashing like the lightning, paling in its flight all that they had ever hitherto thought to be light.

This was the messenger bearing the good tidings, and the plume in his helmet was a flame of life. He left behind him a wake, filled up at once by the waves of the luminous flood he passed through.

He bore a palm and a sword; with the palm he touched the Spirit, and it was transfigured; its white wings spread without a sound.

At the communication of the Light, which changed the Spirit into a seraph, the garb of heavenly armour that clothed its glorious form, shed such radiance that the two seers were blinded. And, like the three apostles to whose sight Jesus appeared, Wilfrid and Minna were conscious of the burthen of their bodies, which hindered them from complete and unclouded intuition of the Word and the True Life.

They saw the nakedness of their souls, and could measure their lack of brightness by comparison with the halo of the seraph, in which they stood as a shameful spot. They felt an ardent desire to rush back into the mire of the universe, to endure trial there, so as to be able some day to utter at the sacred gate the answer spoken by the glorified Spirit.

That seraph knelt down at the gate of the sanctuary,
which he could at last see face to face, and said, pointing to them—

‘Grant them to see more clearly. They will love the Lord, and proclaim His Word.’

In answer to this prayer, a veil fell. Whether the unknown power that laid a hand on the two seers did for a moment annihilate their physical bodies, or whether it released their spirit to soar free, they were aware of a separation in themselves of the pure from the impure.

Then the seraph’s tears rose round them in the form of a vapour which hid the lower worlds from their eyes, and wrapped them round and carried them away, and gave them oblivion of earthly meanings, and the power of understanding the sense of divine things. The True Light appeared; it shed light on all creation, which, to them, looked barren indeed when they saw the source whence the worlds, earthly, spiritual, and divine, derive motion.

Each world had a centre to which tended every atom of the sphere; these worlds were themselves each an atom tending to the centre of their species. Each species had its centre in the vast celestial region that is in communion with the inexhaustible and flaming motor power of all that exists. Thus, from the most vast to the smallest of the worlds, and from the smallest sphere to the minutest atom of the creation that constitutes it, each thing was an individual, and yet all was one.

What, then, was the purpose of the Being, immutable in Essence and Faculty, but able to communicate them without loss, able to manifest them as phenomena without separating them from Himself, and causing everything outside Himself to be a creation immutable in its essence and mutable in its form? The two guests bidden to this high festival could only see the order and arrangement of beings, and wonder at their immediate
ends. None but angels could go beyond that, and know the means and understand the purpose.

But that which those two chosen ones could contemplate, and of which they carried away the evidence to be a light to their souls for ever after, was the certainty of the action of worlds and beings, and a knowledge of the effort with which they all tend to a final result. They heard the various parts of the infinite forming a living melody; and at each beat, when the concord made itself felt as a deep expiration, the worlds, carried on by this unanimous motion, bowed to the Omnipotent One, who in His unapproachable centre made all things issue from Him and return to Him. This ceaseless alternation of voices and silence seemed to be the rhythm of the holy hymn that was echoed and sustained from age to age.

Wilfrid and Minna now understood some of the mysterious words of the being who on earth had appeared to them under the form which was intelligible to each—Seraphitus to one, Seraphita to the other—seeing that here all was homogeneous. Light gave birth to melody, and melody to light; colours were both light and melody; motion was number endowed by the Word; in short, everything was at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that, everything existing in everything else, extension knew no limits, and the angels could traverse it everywhere to the utmost depths of the infinite.

They saw then how puerile were the human sciences of which they had heard. Before them lay a view without any horizon, an abyss into which ardent craving invited them to plunge; but burthened with their hapless bodies, they had the desire without the power.

The seraph lightly spread his wings to take his flight, and did not look back at them—he had nothing now in common with the earth.

He sprang upwards; the vast span of his dazzling pinions covered the two seers like a beneficent shade, allowing them to raise their eyes and see him borne away
in his glory escorted by the rejoicing archangel. He mounted like a beaming sun rising from the bosom of the waters; but, more happy he than the day star, and destined to more glorious ends, he was not bound, like inferior creatures, to a circular orbit; he followed the direct line of the infinite, tending undeviatingly to the central one, to be lost there in life eternal, and to absorb into his faculties and into his essence the power of rejoicing through love and the gift of comprehending through wisdom.

The spectacle that was then suddenly unveiled to the eyes of the two seers overpowered them by its vastness, for they felt like atoms whose smallness was comparable only to the minutest fraction which infinite divisibility allows man to conceive of, brought face to face with the infinitely numerous which God alone can contemplate as He contemplates Himself.

What humiliation and what greatness in those two points, strength and love, which the seraph's first desire had placed as two links uniting the immensity of the inferior universe to the immensity of the superior universe! They understood the invisible bonds by which material worlds are attached to the spiritual worlds. As they recalled the stupendous efforts of the greatest human minds, they discerned the principle of melody as they heard the songs of heaven which gave them all the sensations of colour, perfume, and thought, and reminded them of the innumerable details of all the creations, as an earthly song can revive the slenderest memories of love.

Strung by the excessive exaltation of their faculties to a pitch for which there is no word in any language, for a moment they were suffered to glance into the divine sphere. There all was gladness. Myriads of angels winged their way with one consent and without confusion, all alike but all different, as simple as the wild rose, as vast as worlds.
Wilfrid and Minna did not see them come nor go; they suddenly pervaded the infinite with their presence, as stars appear in the unfathomable ether. The blaze of all their diadems flashed into light in space, as the heavenly fire is lighted when the day rises among mountains. Waves of light fell from their hair, and their movements gave rise to undulating throbs like the dancing waves of a phosphorescent sea.

The two seers could discern the seraph as a darker object amid deathless legions, whose wings were as the mighty plumage of a forest swept by the breeze. And then, as though all the arrows of a quiver were shot off at once, the spirits dispelled with a breath every vestige of his former shape; as the seraph mounted higher he was purified, and ere long he was no more than a filmy image of what they had seen when he was first transfigured—lines of fire with no shadow. Up and up, receiving a fresh gift at each circle, while the sign of his election was transmitted to the highest heaven, whither he mounted purer and purer.

None of the voices ceased; the hymn spread in all its modes—

‘Hail to him who rises to life! Come, flower of the worlds, diamond passed through the fire of affliction, pearl without spot, desire without flesh, new link between earth and heaven, be thou Light! Conquering spirit, queen of the world, fly to take thy crown; victorious over the earth, receive thy diadem! Be one of us!’

The angel’s virtues reappeared in all their beauty. His first longing for heaven was seen in the grace of tender infancy. His deeds adorned him with brightness like constellations; his acts of faith blazed like the hyacinth of the skies, the hue of the stars. Charitydecked him with oriental pearls, treasured tears. Divine love bowered him in roses, and his pious resignation by its whiteness divested him of every trace of earthliness.

Soon, to their eyes, he was no more than a speck of
flame, growing more and more intense, its motion lost in the melodious acclamations that hailed his arrival in heaven.

The celestial voices made the two exiles weep.

Suddenly the silence of death spread like a solemn veil from the highest to the lowest sphere, throwing Wilfrid and Minna into unutterable expectancy. At that instant the seraph was lost in the heart of the sanctuary, where he received the gift of eternal life.

Then they were aware of an impulse of intense adoration, which filled them with rapture mingled with awe. They felt that every being had fallen prostrate in the divine spheres, in the spiritual spheres, and in the worlds of darkness. The angels bent the knee to do honour to his glory, the spirits bent the knee to testify to their eagerness, and in the abyss all knelt, shuddering with awe.

A mighty shout of joy broke out, as a choked spring breaks forth again, tossing up its thousands of flower-like jets, mirroring the sun which turns the sparkling drops to diamond and pearl, at the instant when the seraph emerged, a blaze of light, crying:

‘Eternal! Eternal! Eternal!’

The worlds heard him and acknowledged him; he became one with them as God is, and took possession of the infinite.

The seven divine worlds were aroused by his voice and answered him.

At this instant there was a great rush, as if whole stars were purified and went up in dazzling glory to be eternal. Perhaps the seraph’s first duty was to call all creations filled with the Word to come to God.

But the hallelujah was already dying away in the ears of Wilfrid and Minna, like the last waves of dying music. The glories of heaven were already vanishing, like the hues of a setting sun amid curtains of purple and gold.
Death and impurity were repossessing themselves of their prey.

As they resumed the bondage of the flesh from which their spirit had for a moment been released by a sublime trance, the two mortals felt as on awaking in the morning from a night of splendid dreams, of which reminiscences float in the brain, though the senses have no knowledge of them, and human language would fail to express them. The blackness of the limbo into which they fell was the sphere where the sun of visible worlds shines.

'We must go down again,' said Wilfrid to Minna.

'We will do as he bids us,' replied she. 'Having seen the worlds moving on towards God, we know the right way.—Our starry diadems are above!'

They fell into the abyss, into the dust of the lower worlds, and suddenly saw the earth as it were a crypt, of which the prospect was made clear to them by the light they brought back in their souls, for it still wrapped them in a halo, and through it they still vaguely heard the vanishing harmonies of heaven. This was the spectacle which of old fell on the mind's eye of the prophets. Ministers of various religions, all calling themselves true, kings consecrated by force and fear, warriors and conquerors sharing the nations, learned men and rich lording it over a refractory and suffering populace whom they trampled under foot,—these were all attended by their followers and their women, all were clad in robes of gold, silver, and azure, covered with pearls and gems torn from the bowels of the earth or from the depths of the sea by the perennial toil of sweating and blaspheming humanity. But in the eyes of the exiles this wealth and splendour, harvested with blood, were but filthy rags.

'What do ye here in motionless ranks?' asked Wilfrid.
They made no answer.

'What do ye here in motionless ranks?'

But they made no answer.

Wilfrid laid his hands on them and shouted—

'What do ye here in motionless ranks?'

By a common impulse they all opened their robes and showed him their bodies, dried up, eaten by worms, corrupt, falling to dust, and consumed by horrible diseases. 'Ye lead the nations to death,' said Wilfrid; 'ye have defiled the earth, perverted the Word, prostituted justice. Ye have eaten the herb of the field, and now ye would kill the lambs! Do ye think that there is justification in showing your wounds? I shall warn those of my brethren who still can hear the Voice, that they may slake their thirst at the springs that you have hidden.'

'Let us save our strength for prayer,' said Minna. 'It is not your mission to be a prophet, nor a redeemer, nor an evangelist. We are as yet only on the margin of the lowest sphere; let us strive to cleave through space on the pinions of prayer.'

'You are my sole love!'

'You are my sole strength!'

'We have had a glimpse of the higher mysteries; we are, each to the other, the only creatures here below with whom joy and grief are conceivable. Come then, we will pray; we know the road, we will walk in it.'

'Give me your hand,' said the girl. 'If we always walk together, the path will seem less rough and not so long.'

'Only with you,' said the young man, 'could I traverse that vast desert without allowing myself to repine.'

'And we will go to heaven together!' said she.

The clouds fell, forming a dark canopy. Suddenly the lovers found themselves kneeling by a dead body,
which old David was protecting from prying curiosity, and insisted on burying with his own hands.

Outside, the first summer of the nineteenth century was in all its glory; the lovers fancied they could hear a voice in the sunbeams. They breathed heavenly perfume from the new-born flowers, and said as they took each other by the hand—

‘The vast ocean that gleams out there is an image of that we saw above!’

‘Whither are you going?’ asked Pastor Becker.

‘We mean to go to God,’ said they. ‘Come with us, father.’

Geneva and Paris,
December 1833—November 1835.
LOUIS LAMBERT

DEDICATION:

'Et nunc et semper dilectæ dicitum.'

LOUIS LAMBERT was born in 1797 at Montoire, a little town in the Vendômois, where his father owned a tannery of no great magnitude, and intended that his son should succeed him; but his precocious bent for study modified the paternal decision. For, indeed, the tanner and his wife adored Louis, their only child, and never contradicted him in anything.

At the age of five Louis had begun by reading the Old and New Testaments; and these two Books, including so many books, had sealed his fate. Could that childish imagination understand the mystical depths of the Scriptures? Could it so early follow the flight of the Holy Spirit across the worlds? Or was it merely attracted by the romantic touches which abound in those Oriental poems! Our narrative will answer these questions to some readers.

One thing resulted from this first reading of the Bible: Louis went all over Montoire begging for books, and he obtained them by those winning ways peculiar to children, which no one can resist. While devoting himself to these studies under no sort of guidance, he reached the age of ten.

At that period substitutes for the army were scarce; rich families secured them long beforehand to have them ready when the lots were drawn. The poor tanner's
modest fortune did not allow of their purchasing a substitute for their son, and they saw no means allowed by law for evading the conscription but that of making him a priest; so, in 1807, they sent him to his maternal uncle, the parish priest of Mer, another small town on the Loire, not far from Blois. This arrangement at once satisfied Louis’s passion for knowledge, and his parents’ wish not to expose him to the dreadful chances of war; and, indeed, his taste for study and precocious intelligence gave grounds for hoping that he might rise to high fortunes in the Church.

After remaining for about three years with his uncle, an old and not uncultured Oratorian, Louis left him early in 1811 to enter the College at Vendôme, where he was maintained at the cost of Madame de Staël.

Lambert owed the favour and patronage of this celebrated lady to chance, or shall we not say to Providence, who can smooth the path of forlorn genius. To us, indeed, who do not see below the surface of human things, such vicissitudes, of which we find many examples in the lives of great men, appear to be merely the result of physical phenomena; to most biographers the head of a man of genius rises above the herd as some noble plant in the fields attracts the eye of the botanist by its splendour. This comparison may well be applied to Louis Lambert’s adventure; he was accustomed to spend the time allowed him by his uncle for holidays at his father’s house; but instead of indulging, after the manner of schoolboys, in the sweets of the delightful far niens that tempts us at every age, he set out every morning with part of a loaf and his books, and went to read and meditate in the woods, to escape his mother’s remonstrances, for she believed such persistent study to be injurious. How admirable is a mother’s instinct! From that time reading was in Louis a sort of appetite which nothing could satisfy; he devoured books of every kind, feeding indiscriminately on religious works,
history, philosophy, and physics. He has told me that he found indescribable delight in reading dictionaries for lack of other books, and I readily believed him. What scholar has not many a time found pleasure in seeking the probable meaning of some unknown word? The analysis of a word, its physiognomy and history, would be to Lambert matter for long dreaming. But these were not the instinctive dreams by which a boy accustoms himself to the phenomena of life, steels himself to every moral or physical perception—an involuntary education which subsequently brings forth fruit both in the understanding and character of a man; no, Louis mastered the facts, and he accounted for them after seeking out both the principle and the end with the mother wit of a savage. Indeed, from the age of fourteen, by one of those startling freaks in which nature sometimes indulges, and which proved how anomalous was his temperament, he would utter quite simply ideas of which the depth was not revealed to me till a long time after.

‘Often,’ he has said to me when speaking of his studies, ‘often have I made the most delightful voyage, floating on a word down the abyss of the past, like an insect embarked on a blade of grass tossing on the ripples of a stream. Starting from Greece, I would get to Rome, and traverse the whole extent of modern ages. What a fine book might be written of the life and adventures of a word! It has, of course, received various stamps from the occasions on which it has served its purpose; it has conveyed different ideas in different places; but is it not still grander to think of it under the three aspects of soul, body, and motion? Merely to regard it in the abstract, apart from its functions, its effects, and its influence, is enough to cast one into an ocean of meditations? Are not most words coloured by the idea they represent? Then to whose genius are they due? If it takes great intelli-