

## CHAPTER V

1830-38

### RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES—VISITS TO ENGLAND

So passed quietly the smooth and peaceful years between 1828, when my mother died, and when I first awoke to memory, and the next great epoch in my life, which was the year 1836, when I had reached the age of thirteen. But before I enter on that year I must go back for awhile to describe one other element in the atmosphere which I breathed during my growing boyhood, which, like others I have named, seemed to have no effect upon me at the time, but which undoubtedly stored up in my mind some vague general impressions which were not without their own later influences.

We all know how the political agitations of the years from 1830 to 1832 awoke, by strangely circuitous avenues of thought, corresponding movements in the religious world. It is always said that the Whig measures of Church Reform—the suppression of some Irish bishoprics, and other proposals of the same kind, taken together with the language and arguments by which they were defended, were among the causes that set up the undulations which, gathering from more to more, culminated in the Oxford Movement. The truth, however, is that a time comes every now and then in human affairs when new thoughts and aspirations seem to be epidemic, and it is often difficult, sometimes impossible, to say what is the particular exciting cause.

The movement in Scotland took a very different direction. For a good many years there had been growing a steady reaction against a dull, unspiritual

teaching of Christianity which had taken possession of the pulpit. This reaction had been powerfully stimulated by the hold it secured over the masculine understanding and the fervent eloquence of Thomas Chalmers. His ministry in the great parish of the Tron Church in Glasgow was an epoch in the religious history of Scotland. His famous astronomical discourses, delivered on week-days in various churches in the city, drew every man who could afford for an hour to leave his counter or the Exchange. They were directed to defend the Christian faith from some of the most subtle objections which had been suggested by the noblest of the physical sciences, and they were in themselves a splendid poem, as well as the embodiment of a powerful argument. But the strong wine of Chalmers' new convictions was always poured into the old bottles of the standards of his Church. He never consciously departed from them. He treated them, indeed, with a robust understanding, and in regard to the tenet which in popular estimation is most characteristic of Calvin's theology — namely, predestination — Chalmers fought powerfully against necessitarian interpretations. He dwelt with delight on the language of St. Paul in St. Luke's account of the shipwreck on the coast of Malta — language in which he combined an apparently absolute prediction of safety for all the passengers and all the crew with an equally absolute declaration that these results must depend on a definite course of conduct. In this matter Chalmers did good service, although there was no special danger in respect to it as arising out of the formularies of his Church.

Chalmers as a philosopher was a disciple of the great New England theologian, Jonathan Edwards. But, with an inconsistency in abstract thought, he was a firm and enlightened preacher of that freedom which is inseparable from the responsibility of will. Some of his finest sermons were in vindication of this fundamental principle. And in this he did but follow faithfully the authoritative standards of his Church. The idea

common in England, that the Church of Scotland is more 'Calvinist' than itself on the doctrine of predestination, is nothing but a vulgar error. It is true that in the Westminster Confession there is a strong assertion of the pre-ordination of all events, but so also is there this assertion in the Articles of the Church of England (Art. XVII.); and in those Articles, moreover, it is not balanced or qualified, as it is in the Scottish Confession, by any equally clear assertion of the freedom of the will. On the contrary, the Article which deals expressly with free-will starts with a negation, not with an affirmation, and is little better than an express denial of that freedom, or, at all events, a most dubious assertion of it. Whereas, on the other hand, the corresponding Article in the Westminster Confession is an emphatic assertion of it, in language on which it would be difficult to improve (Chap. X.): 'God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.'

Chalmers vindicated this doctrine, and threw new light upon it, in all his teaching, whenever the question came naturally in the way. I do not know that he was peculiar in this, for I never heard a predestinarian sermon in my life from any pulpit in Scotland. But everything he touched, he touched with power to impress the truth on the minds of men. He was an eager student of political economy, and had a splendid triumph in dealing with the difficult subject of pauperism in one of the largest city parishes of Glasgow. When he undertook a campaign in England to defend the principle of Established Churches, his lectures and speeches drew all classes, from the highest to the lowest, both in London and in the provinces. It may be said with truth that they had a lasting effect on the public view upon that great and difficult question.

In Scotland children are taken to church at a very early age, and the more I think of my own early years, and the more I have observed the effect of as early years

on the recorded biographies of other men, the more I am convinced that mere children receive impressions from the atmosphere that surrounds them of which they are entirely unconscious at the time. I only remember some sermons of inordinate length, from which I have no recollection of having derived any ideas whatever. My father was no theologian, and inside the quiet home of Ardencaple I never heard a dispute or controversy of any kind on religious subjects.

How early it was that I first began even to think of any difficulties besetting the popular expositions of religion I cannot distinctly remember. But I am sure it was some time during the five years between 1831 and 1836. An anecdote has reached me of my very early childhood which indicates a somewhat precocious spirit of independence and of reasoning. The very rigid rules which came to prevail in Scotland as regards the observance of Sunday, as representing the Jewish Sabbath, have been usually ascribed to the influence of the Puritan history. There is, however, reason to believe that this idea is erroneous, and that the custom began in what are called Catholic times, through the instrumentality of St. Margaret of Norway, Queen of Scotland. However this may be, one of the things specially forbidden in Scotland on the Sunday was whistling, or even singing, except in church. It so happened that both my father and my mother were very fond of whistling tunes, and they used to perform duets together in a way which I have heard described as very peculiar and attractive. As a child I seem to have caught the habit, and on one occasion was rebuked by my nurse for whistling on a Sunday. 'Why not?' I am said to have replied; 'the birds whistle on Sunday.' This was undoubtedly a very early essay of what my friend Mr. Lecky would call the rationalistic spirit. But I do not think it represented at all the habitual attitude of my childish mind. I think I was disposed, on the contrary, to be submissive to legitimate authority, even when I doubted the reasonableness of its commands.

On the other hand, I have a consciousness in memory of a very early tendency to vague speculative thought—to a spirit of wonder and perplexity concerning both myself and the world around me. Some of the lines in Wordsworth's well-known 'Ode to Immortality,' from the recollections of early childhood, are no poetic dream, but a close counterpart of thoughts and suggestions which I dimly—and in some cases vividly—recollect :

' Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized.'

This is an exact description of at least occasional moods through which I passed. Some were more distinct than others. One I recollect as vividly as if it happened yesterday. It was on a glorious day in a fine spring well advanced. The crimson cases of the sycamore buds were falling through the air, pushed off by the unfolding flowers and leaves. The sunlight glowed through these with an intensely luminous green. The whole air was full of song, and even my friends the crows were flying with a peculiar flap of wing which was full of joy. I recollect looking up into the sky palpitating with light, when, as it seemed, a voice arose within me saying: 'What can people mean when they speak of death? There is no such thing as death. Death is an impossibility.'

I cannot pretend to reduce to any definite, perhaps to any logical, form the suggestion thus arising in my mind. I should say, as nearly as I can now trace my thought, that it was the imminence and universality of life which was thus borne in upon me—life so filling and so full that it was, and must be, a fountain inexhausted and for ever inexhaustible. The extinction of my own share in life—that life would go on, whether I was or was not there to see it, became an inconceivable idea. When, in long after-years, I read the beautiful little poem of Tennyson called 'Love and Death,' I recognised something of the thought of my boyish imagination, but with a difference. The

poem approaches the subject from one side, whilst the vision that had come to me approaches it from another. Tennyson sees Death in possession of 'the thymy plots of Paradise.' To me Life, not Death, was in possession. "Thou must be gone," said Life, "these walks are mine," would have been my version of the interview. But when I came to the later lines, I recognised the near relationship of thought between the fundamental conception of the poet and that which had been so suddenly and so strangely impressed on my mind when I cannot have been more than ten years old:

' Love wept and spread his sheeny vans for flight ;  
 Yet ere he parted said : " This hour is thine :  
 Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree  
 Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,  
 So in the light of great eternity  
 Life eminent creates the shade of death ;  
 The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,  
 But I shall reign for ever over all. "'

Whatever may be thought of my early imagination, it is certainly not what Wordsworth meant by a 'blank misgiving.' It added no new doubt to the burdens of life. Rather, on the contrary, it tended to lighten, if not to remove, the heaviest of all the misgivings which beset us—namely, this, that everything ends in death. Although in my mind at the time it was absolutely unconnected with any religious thought, I saw afterwards, and I see now, that it was at least in harmony with that idea of Christianity which regards as its great result that 'mortality might be swallowed up of life.'

I cannot say, however, that the range of my speculative faculties tended always in the same direction. They were always set agoing by suggestions from external Nature, never by the suggestions of books or of human conversation. It cannot have been more than a year or two after my vivid impression of the

eternity of life that another very different impression was made upon my mind by the starry vault of night. In the year 1832 my father was much interested in the predicted reappearance of the comet known in astronomy as Encke's comet, from that German observer having calculated its orbit in 1828. It came true to the anticipated time. It was indeed a far less striking and conspicuous object than several other comets which I have lived to see in later life. Still, it was very visible, and my father used to take us to the top of the highest tower of the castle to see it, and to talk of it to our tutor. The effect which the mysterious visitant, and the speculations which I heard about its nature, produced upon me I can only describe in those other words of Tennyson, of which I was then entirely ignorant :

' Pitiless, passionless eyes,  
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand  
His nothingness into man.'

I was oppressed by the immensities of Time and Space. They entered into my very soul as a serious trouble. I did not ask, as the Psalmist does, a question based on the accepted and undoubted fact that the Creator is ' mindful ' of man—a question pointing to his smallness, and dwelling with wonder and adoration on the place which nevertheless he has been allowed to occupy in the dealings of the Almighty with the universe.

The question which arose in my mind was founded on a real ' blank misgiving '—a doubt whether it could be true that a world, so infinitesimally small amidst countless millions of other worlds that it might be likened to a single grain of sand in the middle of the Sahara, could be the seat or theatre of such great transactions as those enrolled in the system of Christian belief. When I read, a little later, the astronomical discourses of Dr. Chalmers, I found that this phase of unbelief was one of those with which he dealt; and one of the arguments he used, drawn from the regions

of analogy, struck me much at the time, and has often recurred to me since. It was common, he pointed out, that in human history the fate of great empires has been decided on some field of battle infinitesimally small in geographical importance—on some little ridge of hills, or on the banks of some narrow stream, or on the shores of some little island. There was, in fact, no relation whatever between the bigness of such an area or such a spot and the greatness of the issues which might be decided on it. This, however, like every other true analogy, is only one particular application of a general law, which establishes an absolute irrelevancy and incommensurability between the dimensions of matter and the power of the spiritual agencies with which it may be externally associated. There is, however, nothing like the teaching effect of difficulties if they are sincerely dealt with. No man so appreciates any ray of light which can dispel them as he whom they have deeply exercised. I have since wondered how even at that time I failed to see that the physical littleness of man, and of his whole earthly habitation, cast a glorious light on the marvel of that intellect which could penetrate the depths of space 'and pour the light of demonstration over the most wondrous of Nature's mysteries.'

But thoughtful as I was in the sense of being mentally awake and highly receptive to many obscure suggestions, I was not so consecutively thoughtful as to rise to this conception, still less to pursue it to its many far-reaching applications. I fell back upon the idea—as true as it was important—that, after all I heard of astronomy, it left us in such profound ignorance on the nature of the heavenly bodies, that it was idle to found, upon our very meagre knowledge of them, an argument or conclusion adverse to any beliefs which had solid foundations in consciousness, or in observation of the condition and history of our own planet. Any clear light from these sources, even if it left much utterly unknown and unexplained, was a safer guide



than guesses or assumptions about the nebulous luminosities which were faintly visible in the depths of space, and of which absolutely nothing that was relevant could be known.

In this argument with myself, begun so early and often renewed in after-years, I was partly right and partly wrong. It was right to dismiss perplexities founded on assumptions which might be quite erroneous. It was wrong to conclude that further knowledge, to be relevant, must necessarily be unattainable. It would have helped me much at that time to know what I have now lived to see—namely, the birth of that science which one of its leading spirits has called the ‘new astronomy.’ I suppose that in its measure as a purely mental effort, Newton’s discovery of the law of gravitation still stands where it has ever stood, as the supreme achievement of the intellect of man. It may well be questioned, however, whether a still wider door and still longer vistas have not been opened out into the mysteries of knowledge by the discovery of the spectroscope, and by the significance of the ideas it has established. Equal to the discovery of gravitation in its bearing on our estimate of man, it is immensely superior to it in its bearing on our estimate of his earthly home. It was indeed a great triumph to be enabled to know the paths and the masses of many of the heavenly bodies. But it was a still greater and a more unexpected triumph to be enabled to know the physical constitution and the chemical composition of every visibly luminous body in the universe. It is part of this astonishing revelation that few, and probably none, of the elements of matter which exist everywhere in space are absent from this little world of ours—that it contains them all, and that it contains them, too, in forms of combination and under conditions of temperature which are absent elsewhere, but which alone have fitted it to be the abode of what we know as organic life.

But if the year 1835 was something of an epoch in my

life, with its comet and its first introduction to the confounding problems of astronomy, the following year, 1836, was an epoch much more practical and immediate. I have referred to the great effect of a mere change of place and scene on my life as a child, when I was removed to a farmhouse not three miles off from my early home ; and now I have to note a corresponding effect upon my life as a boy of thirteen, by my first introduction to a new country. Up to that date my life was almost as 'sessile' as that of a limpet.

On our occasional visits to Inveraray, my brother and I spent our whole time in learning to fish with fly, and in practising that art, in which we acquired very considerable proficiency. We could both cast a long line, and could make the fly alight with accuracy in whatever bit of stream or eddy was most likely to hold a trout. It is a taste which has remained with me through life, and in which I have spent many pleasant hours by stream and lake, and even sea; for there are a few spots in Scotland where salmon can be taken with fly in rapid tideways from off the shore. As regards our visits to Campbeltown, I have no recollection of interest except one, and that is seeing the militia practise ball-cartridge at a target inside of an open quarry. The range must have been not more than 80 yards. But with 'Brown Bess' and an unpractised corps the distance was quite sufficient to render bull's-eyes scarce. It is almost like going back to the days of bows and arrows to think of the change in firearms which has taken place in my own memory.

In 1836 my father determined on taking us all to England. The object in view was health. For a good many years both my brother and myself had been liable to sudden attacks of illness from some affection of the liver. In my case recoveries had been generally rapid and complete, but in my brother's case the attacks were observed to leave a gradually increasing debility, which caused anxiety to my father. According to

what seems to be a law of Nature, I have no recollection of the suffering, but I have a most vivid recollection of the joys of convalescence. Nor, as is usual with boys, did I at all notice my brother's declining strength.

The medical fame of Dr. Jephson at Leamington in Warwickshire was then at its height, and my father was advised to try for my brother and myself the waters of that place, and the system of its eminent physician. Of course we posted all the way—first to Manchester, where my father had friends of the name of Stirling, who were large mill-owners. My father's mechanical tastes were gratified by the ingenious machinery, in which many automatic improvements had then only lately been introduced. There I reheard and relearned the great lesson that automatic work is the very highest result of contriving mind and of directing will. I was delighted and impressed by the immense steam-engines which supplied the moving power to a thousand wheels and spindles; but I was not less fatigued and oppressed by the heat and smell of oil which pervaded the building. The fatigue and exhaustion which I felt from any but the very shortest stay in the mills were not forgotten by me when the Factory Acts became in later years the subject of agitation, and the recollection was one of the influences which made me a keen supporter of my friend Lord Shaftesbury, in his great efforts for the redemption of women and children from exhausting labour in the mills.

The waterless landscapes of England were an absolute novelty to me. All the hills I had ever seen had their feet in the waves, or else were within sight of the water. I soon learned, however, to admire the abundant trees, the comfortable farms, and the pleasant windings of the road among endless fields of luxuriant grass. A few incidents appealed to my own special pursuits, and one of these is connected with a very curious subject—namely, the varying range of some species of birds as to geographical distribution. I had often as a child admired the characteristic figure of the starling among

Bewick's famous woodcuts. But I had never seen the bird. It was unknown in Dumbartonshire when I was a boy, nor had I ever seen it in the adjoining county of Argyll. The first sight of a starling was therefore an event of great interest to me, and I remember to this day the exact place where it occurred. It was at North-allerton in Yorkshire, whilst my father's carriage was changing horses at the inn. There for the first time I saw a starling sitting on the roof of a house, and, of course, immediately recognised it. Yet this bird is now as common in the West of Scotland as it is in most parts of England. It began its invasion about thirty years ago. It breeds in hundreds both at Rosneath and at Inveraray, and its lively manners and rapid flight are a great addition to the interest of our woods and fields.

Another standing impression of our journey was one lost to the new generation. I refer to the inns at which we slept on our leisurely stages to the South. They seemed to me the perfection of cleanliness, comfort, and sometimes of picturesqueness. A chief delight of the old inns was their admirable posting arrangements—neatly dressed postilions, with good, strong, and fast horses, trotting at an exhilarating pace through a lovely country at the steady rate of from eight to ten miles an hour. No doubt this was a pleasure confined to the wealthier classes; but the stage-coaches were no bad substitute—at least, in summer—and the sounding bugle with the dashing four-in-hand rushing past along the winding roads and under the overhanging boughs of the 'greenwood tree' were among the delights of English life. Nor must I omit to mention one feature of English rural scenery which was entirely new to me—the long and capacious waggons drawn by two horses, sometimes by four, and driven by men in smock-frocks—the 'wain' of poets. Their curious long and narrow prototypes which are drawn by dove-gray oxen in Italy are not more new to the English traveller than these great English wains were then to me. I hope the iron horse

has not abolished them, like so many other things. I have not seen one for many years.

The Northern counties of England are not much unlike some of the Lowlands of Scotland. There are the same great stretches of bareness devoted to agriculture, with such wood as exists disposed in separate plantations and isolated patches, or in groups round the farmhouses. It was not until we entered the Midland counties that I first saw and appreciated the typical characteristics of English scenery. But there, as the road passed over some eminence, I saw what seemed a sea of foliage—a vast plain apparently covered with forest, with church spires and towers rising out of it, and marking by the perspective the distances of a wide horizon; the fine green in the foreground merging gradually and softly into more and more fading tints of blue, till the vast plain seemed to meet the sky. This sight gave me a new and vivid sense of admiration, which still makes me feel how true the poet's words are that 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' I was all the more struck by the effect when I found, as I did at Leamington, that it resulted from no forests, or even very large woods, which are comparatively few, but entirely from the universal margining of almost every separate field with timber trees in its hedgerows. This, again, was the indication of a land full of ancient homes, and immemorial settlement. From it primeval forests had so long disappeared that 'clearances' had been effaced. The whole surface was covered with the growths of unnumbered generations, each having ornamented its enclosures by planting in them oak and elm.

In no part of England is this lovely scenery more typically shown than in Warwickshire. I was never tired either of the general effect as seen from any rising ground, or of the detail as seen on the roads or along the many footpaths which crossed the fields. The magnificent oaks and elms were a perpetual delight.

But I must turn from the country to the place and

to the man who was at that time attracting half England to the woods and fields of Warwickshire. There is nothing more curious and pathetic in the history of human disease and suffering than the occasional and sudden rise of masters and of systems of treatment that attain a wide celebrity, and apparently a wide success, and then suddenly disappear for ever. It does not give one a high idea of medicine as a science. It looks like the temporary sway of fashion, largely founded on personal influence, not unmingled with delusion. And yet I am satisfied that there is an explanation which at least diminishes the many deceptive elements. It is no fancy that in the medical as well as in any other profession there are every now and then men with a wonderful power of diagnosis. Neither is it any delusion that such men are sometimes also remarkable personalities, who impress their patients with confidence and persuade them to obedience. Then, there is always some decided change in the routine of diet and of life—some relaxation from business, some rest of thought; whilst to all these powerful influences there is often added some mineral water which, simply as water, irrespective of its dissolved contents, may have a great effect upon the system.

All these influences were combined at Leamington under the famous Dr. Jephson in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. But he had better weapons in reserve on which his real success depended. He had a most gentle and charming voice when speaking seriously. There was as much benevolence as humour in his countenance, and, like most remarkable men, he had a beautiful and expressive smile. His patients all came to love him. I shall never forget—I still seem to hear them—the low, serious, and persuasive tones in which he addressed me after having heard all the particulars of my case, and after having examined me himself. The purport was to impress me with the idea that my frequent

illnesses were not to be trifled with, that they were serious and might be dangerous, but that with care I might live to be, if not a strong, at least a fairly healthy man.

My brother and I had brought our fly-rods with us from Scotland, under the delusion that we might find occasion for their use in Warwickshire. When we saw the river Leam we were terribly disappointed. But the feeling gave way to great interest in the new fish and the new methods of fishing which we saw for the first time in England. In the Highlands of Scotland there are no fish in the rivers except the Salmonidæ and a few eels. All the fish called coarse fish in England are absolutely wanting. Clear and rapid rivers have too little food and far too strong a current to hold such fish. They were, therefore, all quite new to me, and, however poor as objects of sport, they were certainly interesting as objects of natural history. Their beauty, too, is really very great. The red fins and the brilliant silvery scales of the bream, the dace, and the chub make very handsome fish. But the one I admired most of all was the bleak, that lovely little fresh-water herring which swims in small shoals near the surface of sluggish rivers, and is very active in picking up flies and other food floating upon it.

The great delight of our lives at Leamington was the magnificent deer-park of Stoneleigh Abbey, the family place of the Leighs of that ilk. The then Lord Leigh had been a friend of my father in his early life, and he most kindly allowed us to shoot rabbits in his park, and to fish in a tributary of the Avon which runs through it, and past the house. The deer-park and the home-park of Stoneleigh Abbey were my first introduction to the park scenery of England. It can hardly be said to exist in any other country in the world. It was, of course, absolutely new to me, and it made a deep and lasting impression. I have often since tried to analyze the cause of

this. I had not been unaccustomed to fine trees. The woods of Inveraray are full of them, especially of splendid specimens of beech and pine. But I do not recollect that in those early years of my life I had ever been struck by them. What was new in England was the wide expanse of ancient turf, varied by fern and by magnificent oak timber. The oak is indeed indigenous in Scotland. Many of our hills are well clothed with oak-coppice, and there are some fairly large standard trees. But oaks such as are common in English parks are unknown in Scotland. The tree needs for its perfection the rich, deep, loamy clays which are common in England; and, of course, very ancient planting is required. There can be no doubt that a great oak, which may be as old as the Conquest, is indeed the very 'monarch of the forest.' Its massive limbs and the character of their growth, as well as of the leaves, are all majestic and imposing. The specimens in Stoneleigh Park are among the finest I have ever seen, and they still dwell on the horizon of my memory as a splendour and a delight. The beautiful lines of Mrs. Hemans on the stately and the pleasant homes of England always recall the happy memories of Stoneleigh Abbey.

Turning now to a very different class of first impressions, it was at Leamington Parish Church that I first heard the English Prayer-Book service. In 1836, let me remind the reader, the famous Oxford Movement was in its full swing. The air was ringing with the cry of Puseyism. But the influence of the new school of thought was then merely confined to Oxford. It had not yet leavened or changed the ordinary conduct of public worship. Under these circumstances, I heard the service performed in a way that could not make on me any favourable impression. A droning clerk, whose pronunciation was guiltless of an *h*, repeated almost alone the responses; the reading of the whole service was such as to conceal as much as possible the beauty and power of the individual



prayers; and the repetitions of the Litany sounded to me very formal. In one country church near Leamington the choir was accompanied by flutes and fiddles. The change in all this in my time has been indeed enormous and in the main beneficent. But to me the new habit of intoning monotonously all prayers, as well as all Psalms, completely deprives them of expression, and is almost as mechanical as the droning of the old clerks. Good and expressive reading is above all things required to bring out the force and beauty of the Scriptures. And such reading—very rare, alas! in all the churches—is very often a sermon in itself.

Although I heard at that time more or less frequent reference in conversation to Puseyism, I never did hear any definite account of it, and I received nothing more than a vague impression that somehow it was a Romanizing movement. It so happened that there was then resident at Leamington the aged mother of Dr. Hook, the famous Vicar of Leeds, who was one of the leaders of the older school of Anglican High Churchism. With this old lady and her agreeable and excellent daughter we all became very intimate. But I do not recollect that we ever heard from them any expressions of sympathy with the new Oxford Movement. The creed of the older High Church School, if it was very narrow, was at least intelligible and robust. It always seemed to me a sort of glorified John Bullism. The successive and fitful changes effected in the Church during the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Elizabeth, and James, in so far exactly as these changes went, were considered, precisely where they stopped, and in their exact condition when they were arrested, to have culminated in the absolute perfection, not only of human, but of Divine wisdom. The result was the only true *via media*. All other churches in every part of Christendom were, by comparison, more or less false and wrong. This patriotic, not to say provincial creed, was so natural to an

insular school of thought that it never excited my surprise. I first began to encounter it in the Hooks. But although in later years it has become largely absorbed in, and amalgamated with, tendencies inherent in Newman's teaching, yet at that time it still stood apart, and their close kindred was unknown to me.

With the end of the summer of 1836 we all returned to Ardencaple, and resumed that strictly home and rural life which we had led from childhood. I came back with an entirely new stock of impressions of natural beauty; and the sense of difference enhanced greatly my appreciation of my native landscapes. I felt I admired them as I had never done before. In natural history, too, the seeing of even a few new species had been a great interest to me. Among fishes, the whole group belonging to the English rivers; among insects, the cockchafer; among flowers, the wild-convolvulus, which grew even on the roads in Warwickshire—were unknown in Scotland; among mammals, one bat was equally new to me, and greatly excited my curiosity—the *Vespertilio altivolans*. My father's conversation on flight had often referred to the only flying animal, besides birds, which is now existing in the world. He used to point out how exactly the same mechanical laws were utilized and obeyed in the structure of a bat's wing as in the wings of birds, notwithstanding the great difference in the organic materials employed. The bones in the wings of bats taper to the tips exactly like the feathers of the bird, and with exactly the same purpose to serve. The fluttering, almost butterfly, flight of the smaller bat does not remind us much of the bird's flight. But in the large high-flying bat, the *V. altivolans*, I saw the true likeness, and was much interested by its very different habits.

In the autumn and winter months following our return home, my father saw with increasing anxiety that my brother's health had gained nothing from

the treatment at Leamington. His strength seemed to decline, slowly indeed, but steadily. I did not observe it ; young people never do observe such changes or think of them. Wordsworth's lines in his poem of ' We are Seven ' apply to boyhood, and even to youth, as much as to mere childhood :

' A little child that lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death ?'

Even near the end I never realized that there was any danger. Then one day in April, 1837, I was out shooting with an air-gun, when a message was sent for me, and when I ran home I found my brother *in articulo mortis*, and in a moment he had quietly passed away.

My father was very much shocked and distressed by the death of his eldest son, and it was in connection with this event that a circumstance occurred which left on his mind, as it did on my own, a very deep impression. Immediately opposite the window of the room where my brother died, and where his body lay, there were two large ash-trees, the branches of which extended towards the castle, and approached the walls within some twenty or thirty feet. As these branches were also opposite the schoolroom, and my eye was accustomed to range among them constantly, I may almost say that every twig of them was familiar to me. On the day after my brother's death, when the morning came, and when I first looked out, I saw a white dove sitting on the end of a broken bough which was nearest to the window of the darkened chamber. The bird was sitting in a crouching attitude and quite motionless. It commanded my immediate attention and surprise, because not only had I never seen a pigeon sitting on that tree before, but I knew that, as a rule, tame domestic pigeons never do perch on trees, unless in places where the position of the dovecot leaves them no choice. The habit of

choosing buildings to perch upon, almost to the exclusion of trees, is due to the fact that all our domestic breeds of pigeons come from the rock pigeons, and not from any of the wild species which inhabit and breed in woods. So surprised was I that it was some time before I could satisfy myself that my eyes were not deceived. My astonishment, however, was much greater when, many hours later in the day, I went out with my father to take a walk, and in passing the ash-tree I saw the white pigeon still crouching on the bough. I was determined to verify the fact as well as I could; so, walking to a spot immediately below the bird, and quite near it, I took a pebble from the gravel and chucked it gently up towards the dove. She drew herself up as if in a momentary alarm, and then immediately resumed her vigil in the same attitude as before. The same thing was repeated during the whole of that day, and the whole of the next, after which the bird disappeared. If I had been surprised and struck by its appearance on the first morning, the impression made on me by its persistence on the next became one of a mysterious reverence. I had directed my father's attention to it on the first morning, and I could see, although he said little, that it had a comforting effect upon him. Like most men whose minds are much given to the pursuits of physical science, my father was quite destitute of what is ordinarily called superstition, and I never heard him refer to stories of apparitions or of Highland second-sight, except in the tone which is usual with scientific men. But, on the other hand, he was not one of those who assume that we know all the laws of the physical world, or still less of the spiritual world which is the dwelling-place of the mind of man. The means of our communication with that world are very various, and may well be as incapable of demonstration as so much else which belongs to our most certain knowledge in the moral and spiritual spheres of our daily life. That the dove

was a real bird, and not any subjective impression merely, I had taken care to prove, not only by closer sight, but it may almost be said by touch. I knew the absolutely unusual character of the bird's conduct, and its variance with the inherited habits of the species. I have ever since remembered it as a real response to that yearning for greater light which in the face of death and sorrow is often so distracting and oppressive. Those who think that the spirit of man can receive no intimations from the spiritual world, conveyed through the special use of means within what is called the ordinary course of Nature, may repudiate as impossible the interpretation which was forced upon me. But I have never seen any rational defence of the impossibility, or even the improbability, which is thus assumed. 'Show me a token for good'\* is one of the most natural of all prayers in seasons of distress; and possible responses to it can hardly be denied by any who believe in a living God.

My brother's death came with a terrible shock of surprise on me. In several ways it had a great effect. But it did not at all change the tenor of my life. It only turned into a new channel many tendencies of thought which had begun before. Although we two brothers had been brought up entirely together, with a difference of age between us of only two years—although, too, many of our outdoor pursuits and amusements had been always common—I am very conscious now, on looking back, how much in other ways I had always felt and thought alone. He was naturally more reserved and silent—perhaps with less imagination, but obviously very thoughtful and reflective. But he had none of my enthusiasms, and in our talk I kept these very much to myself. I was especially shy and reserved with him in respect of my very early tendency to write. A journal I kept of observa-

\* Ps. lxxxvi. 17.

tions on birds was always hidden away carefully in a locked drawer. Although, therefore, his life held no inner place in my own, his loss, on the other hand, had a powerful effect upon it. It was the first time, since a childhood too early to receive such impressions, that death came so very near me. How very near it seemed was due to the fact that I knew my own illnesses had been of the same character as his, and I conceived the idea that they would probably run the same course with me. The serious voice and words of Dr. Jephson had indeed been hopeful—almost confident—but only under a strict reserve as to conditions which were highly contingent. They could not reassure me completely, and although I was then rather gaining than losing in health, it was long before this impression was removed.

Under these circumstances, my early tendency to speculative thought took most naturally the direction which led to religion and theology. My mind was always inclined to question, and to take note of, rather than to harbour doubt. And thus began with me that habit of pondering the difficulties of Christian belief which has remained with me ever since. If I were to say that I was a born sceptic, I should certainly give a false impression. I had absolutely no aggressive spirit. But, on the other hand, the logical faculty was in me deeply seated. The observations and the reasoning which had grown out of my father's teaching and investigations had impressed upon me the rooted conviction of the intelligibility of Nature—not, of course, exhaustively, but in the sense of the human mind and reason being thoroughly responsive to the order of her facts and to the purposes of her methods. I was instinctively dissatisfied if an intelligibility similar in principle could not be traced in the doctrines of religion. They ought to be responsive to those moral elements in our spiritual constitution to which alone they are relevant or can be addressed. I do not, of course, mean that this abstract and philosophical

basis of my thoughts was reasoned out in any such form by me then, when I was only a boy of fourteen. But I do mean that, looking back now to the attitude and habit of my thoughts at that time, this is a true explanation of the course they took, and of the difficulties they encountered, not only then, but through a long course of years. It was not that I was disposed to rebel against legitimate authority. But it was that I needed evidence that any accepted authority should be indeed authoritative, should be recognisable as such by the natural light it shed. It troubled me deeply when ideas in themselves irrational, and still more when ideas repugnant to the moral sense, were insisted upon as articles of religious faith.

From this 'radiant point' of darkness the circumference of my doubts and questionings expanded in all directions, until from time to time during many years, in the secret council-chambers of my own spirit, I have had battles to fight for every truth which can be the basis either of knowledge or of faith. If in later life I have had any success in smoothing the path of others under similar trials, it has been mainly due to the discipline which began with me in 1837. No man who has not himself known doubt can know, as he ought, how to deal with it. No one else can know how and when it mounts most easily the steps of fallacy, and with what ease it may lead to a blank and universal scepticism. It has been an immense lesson to me to feel how near I once came at least to the understanding of this condition, and how near, too, in reaction and revolt I once came to the alternative of submission to a phantom of authority.

Although the treatment of Dr. Jephson had not prevailed to arrest the progress of disease in my brother's case, my father had not lost faith in it for me, over whom the complaint had not gained such hold. He therefore took me back to Leamington in 1837. In this second visit, of course, the first vivid impressions of novelty were impossible, and I recollect almost

nothing of it in detail, except my identification of the garden warbler—a bird I had not seen in Scotland—and a terrible attack of my old illness. The occasion of it shows what great mistakes may be made by great physicians when they do not know all relevant facts. Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey had again placed his shootings and his keeper at my disposal, and I was ambitious to try partridge-shooting for the first time on the 1st September. With some misgiving, I asked Dr. Jephson's leave, who offered no objection. The result was most disastrous. I toiled many hours on a hot day through bean-fields and stubbles, and became very tired, so that before I got home I felt I was in for an attack. Accordingly, it came on with a vengeance, and for some days nothing Dr. Jephson gave me could arrest it. My life was in great danger. At last one evening, from utter exhaustion, I fell asleep, and Dr. Jephson remained with me during the night, very uncertain whether I would ever awake. When I did, he saw that the crisis was past, and saying 'Thank God!' he went away to resume his very full and busy life. My convalescence was as rapid as it had always been, and I was soon as well as usual.

Our departure from Leamington in 1837 was followed by an episode in my life which can never be forgotten. A young Queen had then just ascended the throne. My father wished to see her, and to see his brother, who was then Lord Steward of the Household. A connection of his own, of whom he had been fond in his early life, had married an Irish peer, Lord Rossmore, and they lived in a villa called The Dell, which was actually built in contact with the wall of Windsor Great Park, where it crests the rising ground of Cooper's Hill. We were invited to be the guests of the Rossmores, and we posted all the way from Warwickshire to Windsor. If the ordinary sylvan scenery of England, as seen on the common posting-roads, or in deer-parks like Stoneleigh, had given me a new sense of beauty, the crown and glory of that scenery in Windsor Forest threw me



almost into an ecstasy of delight. The windows of the villa opened on a steep dell or hollow in the forest, bordered on each side by splendid oak and beech trees. The open dell was full of fern, and the deer, with twinkling ears and tossing antlers in alternate light and shadow, were constantly passing and repassing beneath us. The massive foliage of the tree-tops in the middle distance lay below the level of the eye, which was thus free to range over them to the distant horizon of a country steeped in the haze of a delicious blue; whilst across and above the whole stretched the vast walls and battlements and towers of Windsor Castle, with its magnificent medieval outline against the sky. It was to me a very dream of beauty, and I used to sit on the wall overlooking it, gazing with eyes never satisfied with seeing.

It was not many days after our arrival at The Dell that I had my first vision of her of whom every tongue was then talking—the young Princess who had just succeeded to the throne, and who excited an interest and an enthusiasm which has, without abatement, been since transformed into admiration, confidence, gratitude, and love. I had strolled by myself into the park one afternoon by the adjacent gate called the Bishop's Gate, and I was walking slowly along the drive which leads in the direction of Virginia Water. Suddenly I heard the distant clatter of horses' hoofs ahead of me, and the sound soon told me they were approaching. Presently I saw through the beautiful perspective of stems of oak a small cavalcade coming in my direction at a sharp trot, with two outriders in scarlet livery. Of course this could be no other than the young Queen, and I confess my heart beat quick when I saw that she would pass close to where I stood. She was riding with her Prime Minister by her side—Lord Melbourne—whose head and face were remarkable for a very noble type of beauty. I had to move off the road to get out of the way, and when I uncovered, as the Queen passed close to me, she returned my salutation with a most

gracious bow and smile. The beauty of that smile, the quickness of her eye, the refinement of her features, and the slenderness of her form, were the points which struck me most. How much they impressed me it would be difficult to express. But I may say that the pleasure the first sight of the Queen gave me is indissolubly associated with the many tokens of gracious kindness with which I have been honoured during a long life, and through many both political and personal relations. It is well, no doubt, since it has been so ordered, that we cannot foresee the future. But sometimes it must strike us how, if it had been foreseen, it would have come upon us with a great and a glad surprise. Such in my case would have been the knowledge that fifty-nine years after that meeting with the Queen in Windsor Park, I should be able to send to her on her birthday a slight tribute of loyalty and devotion, in which I should introduce in some detail the circumstances of that happy moment of my boyhood.

In the autumn of 1837 we returned to Ardencaple, and lived the same home-life as before during the rest of that year and the whole of 1838. Retired as that life was, it was not wholly without variety, since occasionally my father had guests of interest. It was one of these who gave to me in the autumn of 1837 a new sensation. None of my tutors had ever spent upon me one word of praise, and for the best of reasons—that, from their point of view, I never had deserved it. Neither in aptitude nor in application had I been proficient in the schoolroom. My thoughts had been habitually elsewhere, and such as they were I had kept them almost entirely to myself. One consequence was that I had very much accepted the tutorial valuation of my own abilities, and had a rather discouraging estimate of my powers. Although this is undoubtedly better than conceit, it is not altogether a wholesome condition of mind, and I felt all the better of an accidental stimulus. It came in the

visit to my father of a certain Sir James Stewart of Allanbank, and his wife, in the autumn of 1837. He was a Scottish Baronet of old family and estate, whilst his wife was a beautiful and accomplished woman of much younger years. An artist by nature, so far as genius and imagination were concerned, he used to make the most beautiful sketches of medieval cavalcades of armed knights, winding along mountain-paths or issuing from castellated gateways, with lances and pennons in the most picturesque perspective. The peculiarity of those drawings was that nothing was made out in any detail. A line here and a dot there, unconnected except by the bonds of imaginative suggestion, were all that could be seen on a too close inspection. But there was wonderful movement in the horses, wonderful dignity in the riders, and a general effect of the pride and pomp of chivalry, which made these slight sketches more effective than many finished pictures I have seen. He had a facile brush for all he attempted, seizing always with a true artistic eye the special character of every object he drew. Some birds—a dead heron especially—which he drew for me in chalks, were perfect of their kind.

Lady Stewart was well versed in Shakespeare, and an excellent actress. I still vividly recollect a scene in which she simulated madness, and with such force, that her husband could not stand it, and interrupted our entertainment by imploring her to stop. I enjoyed immensely the society of this remarkable couple, and it was with great surprise that I observed the interest they took in my eager conversations with them on a variety of subjects connected with Nature, and with the interpretations of it. It gave me a new pleasure at the time, and I remember it with pleasure still.