

My Fellow Laborer.

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

CHAPTER V.—(CONTINUED.)

"The work must take care of itself, Geoffrey. You must discover the Secret of Life yourself; or perhaps you had better put the whole thing in the fire and go back to practice. At any rate, it has served my turn, and I have done with it!"

"I don't understand you!" I answered, sinking into a chair. "Perhaps if you are not in too great a hurry you will explain a little."

"Of course I will, when I have poured out your tea. There now, listen, and I will give you a lesson in human nature, which, with all your brains, you very much want, Geoffrey. I have been in this house for fourteen years, and I will begin by telling you that from the day that I came in till to-day, when I go out, you have never understood me in the least. You have always looked upon me as a simple-minded woman of intellectual capacity, and with a genius for mathematics, and no aims beyond the discovery of scientific secrets. Now, I will tell you. When I first came to this house as a girl of fourteen, I fell in love with you. You need not look astonished—young girls sometimes do that sort of thing. You were good looking in those days, and very clever, as you are now; and then you were really and truly a gentleman, and one sees so few gentlemen—I always think they are the scariest people in the world!"

"Well, I nursed my secret passion and held it so tight that neither you nor your wife even guessed it. Even in those days I could form a clear opinion, and I saw that she would not live long, and that the time would come when I should step into her shoes. So I played upon her weak points, to strengthen my hold over her, and waited. In due course the time came. You were a long time before you proposed to me after her death and your head was so full of your work that I believe would have been longer had I not, by means that were imperceptible to you, kept continually turning your mind into that channel. Even then you did not love me as I wanted to be loved; but I knew that this would come after marriage. And then came the crash, and the sudden appearance of an obstacle against which no scheme of mine could prevail, overwhelmed and confused me, filling me with a sense of impotence that I have never experienced before or since. If you could know, Geoffrey, what a flood of unutterable contempt rushed into my mind, as I heard you mauling on about your scruples and posterity! It drowned my passion. I felt that it was well rid of a man who could in cold blood give me up to satisfy what he was pleased to call his conscience! But perhaps you will never quite know or understand how near I went to killing you that night!"

Here I started—the whole thing was like a nightmare. Fanny laughed.

"Don't be frightened," Fanny went on; "there's nothing more melodramatic to come. I am glad to say that prudential considerations prevailed! Well, after that fiasco, I reviewed the position and determined to stay on—partly from habit, partly on account of John—partly, indeed chiefly, because I was still foolish enough to believe in the Secret of Life business, and foresaw that when it did succeed my name would be made, and that I should then, backed as I am by my personal appearance and capacities, be able to marry whom I liked, or, if I preferred it, not to marry, but to follow any career in life that might recommend itself to me."

"At last, however, the end came. I lost all faith in our work, and saw that you and I had only been making fools of ourselves; and consequently I determined to sever a connection that could not bring me credit or profit, either now or in the future, and, being a woman, the only way that I could possibly sever it with advantage was by marriage. For a long time I could not fall in with anybody rich enough; when at last a happy accident brought the man within my reach—by the way, I had thought of him for several years—and, of course, I took my chance, and married him before anybody could interfere. What is more, I actually persuaded him to enter into an engagement to settle four thousand a year to my separate use; so you see I shall in reality be totally independent of the man!"

"And what do you mean to do with yourself now?" I asked, feebly.

"Do! I mean to baak in the sunshine and drink the wine of life—to know what pleasure and power mean, to live and become rich and great, and avenge myself upon everybody who has ever slighted or injured me! Oh, yes, I shall do it, too! I shall use even that miserable little Joseph, whom I just now had the pleasure of promising to love, honor and obey, as a means to advance myself. He is a poor creature, but sharp enough to be a member of Parliament, you know."

"That reminds me, he is waiting for me at his club; he was afraid to come back and face you, so I must be going. Well, good-bye, Geoffrey; I hope that you will think kindly of me sometimes, notwithstanding it all, and although I have for the first time in my life indulged in the luxury of telling you everything that is in my mind. Ah, you don't know what a luxury it is to be able to speak the truth just for once! Do you know now that I am going to leave you—it is very odd—but I almost feel as though I loved you again, as I used to do so many years ago! At least I am glad to have spent all this time with you, though I was often

dreary enough, because I know that I shall never meet a man like you again, and my mind leaves you hardened and braced and polished by contact with your bright intellect, and by the constant study and application you have insisted on till it has become a second nature to me. I shall miss you, Geoffrey, but not so much as you will miss me. You will be miserable without me, and no other woman can ever fill my place, because I do not believe that you can find any who is my equal in intellectual resource. You see what happens to people who indulge in scruples! Are you not sorry that you did not marry me now?"

"Fanny," I answered, solemnly, for by this time I comprehended the whole horror of the position, "I thank the Providence which preserved me from joining my life to that of a woman so wicked as yourself!"

"Really, Geoffrey, you are quite energetic! I suppose that you are piqued at my going. Well, I must be going, but before I go I will lay down a little axiom for your future guidance; I fear you will think it cynical, but the truth is often cynical. 'Never trust a woman again. Remember that she always has a motive. If she is under twenty-five, seek for it in her passions; after that in her self interest.'"

At this moment her face changed, and as it did I heard the tap! tap! of poor John's crutches as he came down the passage. The door opened and the boy entered—a feeble, undersized lad, with a pinched-up white face and a pair of beautiful blue eyes.

"Cousin Fanny," he said (the always called her cousin), as he entered, "where are you? I have been looking for you everywhere. Why have they been taking away your big box? You are not going away to stay without me, are you?"

"Your cousin is going away for good, John," I said; and next moment I regretted it, for it was dreadful to see the look of agony that came upon the poor lad's face. He loved Fanny with all the strength of his sensitive and exaggerated nature, and for years had scarcely been able to bear her absence, even for a day.

"Oh, no! no!" he screamed, hobbling up to her and catching hold of her dress in his hands. "Don't say you're going, cousin! You can't go and leave me behind."

"Geoffrey," she said in a choked voice, "let me take the boy with me. He is my weak point. I love him as though he were my own. Let me take him. He shall be looked after!"

"I had rather see him dead!" I answered, sternly, little guessing, how sworn I should be taken at my word. She stooped down and kissed the lad, and then turned and went swiftly—almost at a run. He seized his crutches and limped down the passage after her at an astonishing pace, calling her by name as he went, till presently one of the crutches slipped, and he fell helplessly upon the stone flooring, and lay there, still screaming to her through the hall door, which she slammed behind her. When I reached him he was in a fit!

The whole thing formed the most horrible, and in its way the most tragic scene that I ever saw; and I often dream of it even now. And here I may add that my poor boy never recovered from the shock. He lingered three months and then died in his sleep, apparently from pure inanition. Well, it was a merciful release from a life of almost constant pain!

That was the last time that I ever saw Fanny Denely, or rather Fanny Hide-Thompson.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN John had temporarily recovered under the treatment that I had applied, seeing that I could do nothing else for him, I gave him a sleeping draught, and as soon as it had taken effect, I went down stairs into the study in a very strange state of mind. I felt as though I had received some dreadful physical shock. I had believed in and trusted Fanny as I had trusted no other woman on earth, except my dear wife, and the lurid light in which she now suddenly revealed herself after these long years positively staggered and blinded me! And yet, after it all, I was astonished to find that I remained fond of the woman and missed her dreadfully. Indeed, it was a year or more before I got over the feeling, and then I only did it by the exercise of great self-control. I had grown to depend upon her so entirely that her help and society seemed a necessity to me, quite alone as I was in the world. Indeed, had it not been for my own rather well-developed pride, I do not think I should ever have got over it. But this came to the rescue. I could not bear to reflect that I was intellectual and socially bound to the chariot wheels of a woman who had for years been making a fool of me, and who was, after all, my inferior. And so by degrees I did get over it; but it has left its mark on me—yes, it has left its mark!

And then it was on that same disastrous morning that a wonder happened, so strangely and opportunely, that I have at times been almost inclined to attribute it to the direct interference of Providential Power. When I was worn out with thinking, I turned to my work, more from habit than anything else, I think, only to be once more overcome by the reflection that there too I was helpless. The work could not go on without the calculations, and who was to do them now that Fanny had deserted me? I could not, and it would be the task of years to teach anybody else, however clever, for the understanding of them had grown with the

experience. Besides, this I could never afford to pay a man of the necessary ability. It appeared, therefore, that there was an end of my search for the Secret of Life, to which I had devoted the best years of my precarious existence. It was all but labor lost, and would benefit neither myself nor mankind. This conviction rushed upon me as I stood there by the pile of papers, then for the first time I quite broke down under the accumulated weight of sorrows, and, putting my hands before my face, I sobbed like a child! The paroxysm passed, and with it passed, too, all my high ambitions. I must give it up, and go back a failure to what little practice I could get until such time as the end came.

CHAPTER VII.

AS I stooped to gather up the various papers, I noticed that on the table before me lay a great sheet of Fanny's calculations, which she had been employed upon the previous night. The top of the sheet was covered with two dense armies of figures and symbols, marching this way and that, but toward the bottom they thinned out wonderfully, till there remained two little lines only of those that had survived the crooked ways of mathematical war. Evidently she had laid down her pen (as she sometimes would) just before the termination of the problem, which I was aware she had been engaged on for several days. I knew but little of the higher mathematics, but I could see if the left-hand line were subtracted from the right, the difference would be the result sought for, provided the problem had been worked out without error. I took a pencil and did this idly enough. The first time I made a mistake, but even with the mistake the result was sufficiently startling to make me rub my eyes. I did it again, and then sank back into the chair behind me with a gasp, and trembling as though I had unwittingly raised a ghost!

And no wonder. For there before me was the Key to the great Secret for which we had been wearily seeking so many years! There was no mistake about it! I knew what it ought to be, and what conditions it must fulfill; and there it was, the last product of scores of sheets of abstruse calculations based upon laws that could not lie. There it was! She had stopped just short of it, and at length I had triumphed!—the fast obstacle to success, complete, absolute success, was gone! I had wrung the answer to the great question which torments the world from the stony heart of the almighty law that governs it!

"If she had known this, Fanny would not have gone!" I said aloud, and then, what between one thing and another, I fainted!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Sparrow's Ride in a Fly Wheel.

Birds have all sorts of queer adventures, but perhaps what was the oddest one of recent days is that which befell a sparrow at Anderson, Ind. It flew into a knife and bar manufactory, and getting too near a small wheel, was sucked in. The workmen noticed it go into the wheel, but knowing that the cylinder was revolving at a speed of 120 revolutions a minute, took it for granted that the bird was killed. When the factory shut down at noon the men were astonished to hear a gentle chirp from the wheel, and lo, there was the sparrow as well as ever. They found that the bird had clung to the strengthening rod of the wheel, and was in a semi-dazed condition. They picked him up and put him on a table, and thence, after collecting his wits, the little bird flew to freedom. The wheel in which the bird rode made 31,900 revolutions while it was upon it, and so the tiny feathered creature traveled seventy-three and eight-tenths miles in the embrace of a fly wheel.

A Queer-Looking Word.

Supposing that you had been born blind, and after living many years shut out from the beautiful things of the world, some skilled surgeon should give to you your sight, wouldn't you have some marvelous experiences? says the Chicago Record. An old man who had been born blind had his sight thus restored to him. At first he started violently and was afraid of the strange things around him, the hugeness of his room and its contents. One of the first things he saw at the window was a flock of sparrows. "What are they?" asked the physician.

"I think they are teacups," was the reply.

A watch was then shown to him and he knew what it was, probably because he heard it tick. Later, on seeing the flame of a lamp, he tried to pick it up, not having the slightest idea of its nature.

A Great Help.

Mrs. Poorman—It has been a hard winter, ma'am. My three grown girls have been very little help to me. The poor things are not strong enough to do the washing and they haven't clothes good enough to apply for any work. District Visitor—But, you say they have rich relatives; don't they look after them? Mrs. Poorman (sadly)—Only their morals, ma'am—only their morals.—Goshen Democrat.

Almost Unseen.

Yeast—We've got a new cook that's a wonder. Crimmonbeck—What's the matter with her? "She's been in the house three weeks and no one has heard her say what make wheel she rides."—Yonkers Statesman.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"NARROW ESCAPES" LAST SUNDAY'S SUBJECT.

From the Following Text, Job xiv, 20: "I Am Escaped With the Skin of My Teeth"—The Text as It May Be Applied to Our Lives in This Age of Progress.

JOB had it hard. What with boils, and bereavements, and bankruptcy, and a fool of a wife, he wished he was dead; and I do not blame him. His flesh was gone and his bones were dry. His teeth wasted away until nothing but the enamel seemed left. He cried out, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

There has been some difference of opinion about this passage. St. Jerome and Schultens, and Doctors Good and Poole and Barnes have all tried their forepaws on Job's teeth. You deny my interpretation, and say, "What did Job know about the enamel of the teeth?" He knew everything about it. Dental surgery is almost as old as the earth. The mummies of Egypt, thousands of years old, are found to-day with gold filling in their teeth. Ovid, and Horace, and Solomon, and Moses wrote about these important factors of the body. To other provoking complaints, Job, I think, has added an exasperating toothache, and putting his hand against the inflamed face, he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

A very narrow escape, you say, for Job's body and soul; but there are thousands of men who make just as narrow escape for their soul. There was a time when the partition between them and ruin was no thicker than a tooth's enamel; but, as Job finally escaped, so have they. Thank God! thank God!

Paul expresses the same idea by a different figure when he says that some people are "saved as by fire." A vessel at sea is in flames. You go to the stern of the vessel. The boats have shoved off. The flames advance; you can endure the heat no longer on your face. You slide down on the side of the vessel, and hold on with your fingers, until the forked tongue of the fire begins to lick the back of your hand, and you feel that you must fall, when one of the life-boats comes back, and the passengers say they think they have room for one more. The boat swings under you—you drop into it—you are saved. So some men are pursued by temptation until they are partially consumed, but after all get off—"saved as by fire."

But I like the figure of Job a little better than that of Paul, because the pulpit has not worn it out; and I want to show you if God will help, that some men make narrow escape for their souls, and are saved as "with the skin of their teeth."

It is as easy for some people to look to the Cross as for you to look to this pulpit. Mild, gentle, tractable, loving, you expect them to become Christians. You go over to the store and say, "Grandson joined the church yesterday." Your business comrades say, "That is just what might have been expected; he always was of that turn of mind." In youth, this person whom I describe was always good. He never broke things. He never laughed when it was improper to laugh. At seven, he could sit an hour in church, perfectly quiet, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, but straight into the eyes of the minister, as though he understood the whole discussion about the eternal decrees. He never upset things nor lost them. He floated into the kingdom of God so gradually that it is uncertain just when the matter was decided.

Here is another one, who started in life with an uncontrollable spirit. He kept the nursery in an uproar. His mother found him walking on the edge of the house-roof to see if he could balance himself. There was no horse that he dared not ride—no tree he could not climb. His boyhood was a long series of predicaments; his manhood was reckless; his mid-life very wayward. But now he is converted, and you go over to the store and say, "Arkwright joined the church yesterday." Your friends say, "It is not possible! You must be joking." You say, "No, I tell you the truth. He joined the church." Then they reply, "There is hope for any of us if old Arkwright has become a Christian!" In other words, we will admit that it is more difficult for some men to accept the Gospel than for others.

I may be preaching to some who have cut loose from churches, and Bibles, and Sundays, and who have no intention of becoming Christians themselves, and yet you may find yourself escaping, before you leave this house, as "with the skin of your teeth." I do not expect to waste this hour, I have seen boats go off from Cape May or Long Branch, and drop their nets, and after awhile come ashore, pulling in the nets without having caught a single fish. It was not a good day, or they had not the right kind of a net. But we expect no such excursion to-day. The water is full of fish, the wind is in the right direction, the Gospel net is strong. O those who did help Simon and Andrew to fish, show us how to cast the net on the right side of the ship.

Some of you, in coming to God, will have to run against skeptical notions. It is useless for people to say sharp and cutting things to those who reject the Christian religion. I cannot say exact things. By what process of temptation, or trial, or betrayal, you have

come to your present state, I know not. There are two gates to your nature: the gate of the head, and the gate of the heart. The gate of your head is locked with bolts and bars that an archangel could not break, but the gate of your heart swings easily on its hinges. If I assaulted your body with weapons, you would meet me with weapons, and it would be sword-stroke for sword-stroke, and wound for wound, and blood for blood; but if I come and knock at the door of your house, you open it, and give me the best seat in your parlor. If I should come to you now with an argument, you would answer me with an argument; if with sarcasm, you would answer me with sarcasm; blow for blow, stroke for stroke; but when I come and knock at the door of your heart, you open it and say, "Come in, my brother, and tell me all you know about Christ and heaven."

Listen to two or three questions: Are you as happy as you used to be when you believed in the truth of the Christian religion? Would you like to have your children travel on in the road in which you are now traveling? You had a relative who professed to be a Christian, and was thoroughly consistent, living and dying in the faith of the Gospel. Would you not like to live the same quiet life and die the same peaceful death? I hold in my hand a letter, sent me by one who has rejected the Christian religion. It says: "I am old enough to know that the joys and pleasures of life are evanescent, and to realize the fact that it must be comfortable in old age to believe in something relative to the future, and to have faith in some system that proposes to save. I am free to confess that I would be happier if I could exercise the simple and beautiful faith that is possessed by many whom I know. I am not willingly out of the church or out of the faith. My state of uncertainty is one of unrest. Sometimes I doubt my immortality, and look upon the death-bed and the closing scene, after which there is nothing. What shall I do that I have not done?" Ah! scepticism is a dark and doleful land. Let me say that this Bible is either true or false. If it be false, we are as well off as you; if it be true, then which of us is safer?

Let me also ask whether your trouble has not been that you confounded Christianity with the inconsistent character of some who profess it? You are a lawyer. In your profession there are mean and dishonest men. Is that anything against the law? You are a doctor. There are unskilled and contemptible men in your profession. Is that anything against medicine? You are a merchant. There are thieves and defrauders in your business. Is that anything against merchandise? Behold, then, the unfairness of charging upon Christianity the wickedness of its disciples. We admit some of the charges against those who profess religion. Some of the most gigantic swindles of the present day have been carried on by members of the church. There are men standing in the front rank in the churches who would not be trusted for five dollars without good collateral security. They leave their business dishonestly in the vestibule of the church as they go in and sit at the communion. Having concluded the sacrament, they get up, wipe the wine from their lips, go out, and take up their sins where they left off. To serve the devil is their regular work; to serve God a sort of play-spell. With a Sunday sponge they expect to wipe off from their business slate all the past week's inconsistencies. You have no more right to take such a man's life as a specimen of religion than you have to take the twisted iron and split timbers that lie on the beach at Conit Island as a specimen of an American ship. It is time that we draw a line between religion and the frailties of those who profess it.

Do you not feel that the Bible, take it all in all, is about the best book that the world has ever seen? Do you know any book that has as much in it? Do you not think, upon the whole, that its influence has been beneficent? I come to you with both hands extended towards you. In one hand I have the Bible, and in the other hand I have nothing. This Bible in one hand I will surrender forever just as soon as in my other hand you can put a book that is better.

I invite you back into the good old-fashioned religion of your fathers—to the God whom they worshipped, to the Bible they read, to the promises on which they leaned, to the cross on which they hung their eternal expectations. You have not been happy a day since you swung off; you will not be happy a minute until you swing back.

If, with all the influences favorable for a right life, men make so many mistakes, how much harder is it when, for instance, some appetite thrusts its iron grapple into the roots of the tongue, and pulls a man down with hands of destruction? If, under such circumstances, he break away, there will be no sport in the undertaking, no holiday enjoyment, but a struggle in which the wrestlers move from side to side, and bend, and twist, and watch for an opportunity to get in a heavier stroke until with one final effort, in which the muscles are distended, and the veins stand out, and the blood starts, the swarthy habit falls under the knee of the victor—escaped at last as "with the skin of his teeth."

The ship Emma, bound from Gloucester to Harwich, was sailing on, when the man on the look-out saw something that he pronounced a vessel bottom up. There was something on it that looked like a sea-gull, but was afterward found to be a waving handkerchief. In the small boat the crew pushed out to the

wreck, and found that it was a cap-sized vessel, and that three men had been digging their way out through the bottom of the ship. When the vessel capsized they had no means of escape. The captain took his penknife and dug away through the planks until his knife broke. Then an old nail was found, with which they attempted to scrape their way up out of the darkness, each one working until his hand was well-nigh paralyzed, and he sank back faint and sick. After long and tedious work, the light broke through the bottom of the ship. A handkerchief was hoisted. Help came. They were taken on board the vessel and saved. Did ever men come so near a watery grave without dropping into it? How narrowly they escaped—escaped only "with the skin of their teeth." There are men who have been capsized of evil passions, and capsized mid-ocean, and they are a thousand miles away from any shore of help. They have for years been trying to dig their way out. They have been digging away, and digging away, but they can never be delivered unless now they will hoist some signal of distress. However weak and feeble it may be, Christ will see it, and bear down upon the helpless craft, and take them on board; and it will be known on earth and in heaven how narrowly they escaped, "escaped as with the skin of their teeth."

There are others who in attempting to come to God, must run between a great many business perplexities. If a man go over to business at ten o'clock in the morning, and come away at three o'clock in the afternoon, he has some time for religion; but how shall you find time for religious contemplation when you are driven from sunrise to sunset, and have been for five years going behind in business, and are frequently dunned by creditors whom you cannot pay, and when from Monday morning until Saturday night, you are dodging bills that you cannot meet? You walk day by day in uncertainties that have kept your brain on fire for the past three years. Some with less business troubles than you have gone crazy. The clerk has heard a noise in the back counting-room, and gone in, and found the chief man of the firm a raving maniac; or the wife has heard the bang of a pistol in the back parlor, and gone in, stumbling over the dead body of her husband—a suicide. There are men pursued, harassed, trodden down, and scalped of business perplexities, and which way to turn next they do not know. Now God will not be hard on you. He knows what obstacles are in the way of your being a Christian, and your first effort in the right direction he will crown with success. Do not let Satan, with cotton bales, and kegs, and hogheads, and counters, and stocks of unsalable goods, block up your way to heaven. Gather up all your energies. Tighten the girdle about your loins. Take an agonizing look into the face of God, and then say, "Here goes one grand effort for life eternal," and then bound away for heaven, escaping "as with the skin of your teeth."

This world is a poor portion for your soul, oh, business man! An Eastern king had graven on his tomb two fingers, represented as sounding on each other with a snap, and under them the motto, "All is not worth that." Apollonius Colinus hanged himself because his steward informed him that he had only eighty thousand pounds sterling left. All of this world's riches make but a small inheritance for a soul. Robespierre attempted to win the applause of the world; but when he was dying, a woman came rushing through the crowd, crying to him, "Murderer of my hundred, descend to hell, covered with the curses of every mother in France!" Many who have expected the plaudits of the world have died under its Anathema Maranatha.

Oh, find your peace in God. Make one strong pull for heaven. No half-way work will do it. There sometimes comes a time on shipboard when everything must be sacrificed to save the passengers. The cargo is nothing, the rigging nothing. The captain puts the trumpet to his lip and shouts, "Cut away the mast." Some of you have been tossed and driven, and you have, in your efforts to keep the world well night lost your soul. Until you have decided this matter, let everything else go. Overboard with all those other anxieties and burdens. You will have to drop the sails of your pride, and cut away the mast. With one earnest cry for help, put your cause into the hand of him who helped Paul out of the breakers of Melita, and who, above the shrill blast of the wrathful tempest that ever blackened the sky or shook the ocean, can hear the faintest imploration for mercy.

I shall close this sermon feeling that some of you, who have considered your case as hopeless, will take heart again, and that with a blood-red earnestness, such as you have never experienced before, you will start for the good land of the Gospel—at last to "look back, saying, 'What a great risk I ran! Almost lost, but saved! Escaped by the skin of my teeth.'"

Practical Christianity.

Rev. J. H. Duncan of Watsons, Kan., dismissed his congregation Sunday and leading them to a wheat field, directed and worked with them in striking Farmer Rappley's wheat. When the minister, who had already commended the services, noticed a storm approaching, he slowly closed his open Bible and said, "Brethren, I believe in worshipping God, but a heavy rain is coming up and Neighbor Rappley's wheat is in danger we will close the service and help him stack it."

True Heroism.

A Waterville, N. Y., woman, carrying a baby in her arms, stepped upon the railroad track in front of an approaching train to rescue her pet dog. She and the child will die, but the commended pride of the household escaped without the loss of a single curl in its lovely casual appurage. The days of heroic deeds are not yet passed.