From Sin to Contrition

—OR—

Lucy Warringham's Sacrifice.

The Story of a Hasty Marriage and Its Tragic Sequel.

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CHAPTER XIII.

RALPH WARRINGHAM'S DECISION.

"The hour of decision has come!" Ralph said to himself, when he had received the news of his mother's death and the stipulations of her will.

But still he feared that decision.

Betrayed, tormented, humiliated, disgraced, as he felt himself to be by his wife, still his love for her was alive. But the decision meant that he should lose her forever.

His life itself would go with her, he thought.

He would not act hastily. Clear, undeniable proof he must have of her guilt. Then he would act.

What became of her he cared not. She might drag on her miserable, dishonored existence if she liked.

But her partner in guilt must die! And then—then——

He dared not think out the idea that suggested itself.

Yes, he would think it out. Should he heap the disgace of cowardice upon the other dishonors with which he had been covered?

After he had killed Count von Hohenfels he would die himself!

What availed life for one like him—one who had thrown away all he had—position, fortune, family, the love of a mother—for what he imagined the picture of a deity, only to discover at last that his idol, instead of soaring in Olympus, was wallowing in the mire.

What could he do but die?

Then he considered whether he should tell his wife of the will at once, or whether he should wait until the last fateful interview.

Here was another wound that added torment to his lacerated heart.

He was not without guilt himself. He also had lied to her, although it would have been a small matter to one who really loved him.

But she loved him not. Should he allow her to stand before him with a reproach on her lip, a reproach to which he could make no answer?

No, he would give her no advantage over him. Before she could utter a word of reproach he would crush her with the proof of her treachery.

Toward discovering such proof he bent all the energies of his will and every resorce of his ingenuity. He even stooped to spying upon the secret acts of his suspected wife. He would watch her from behind a tuft of shrubbery, when she was walking or sitting in the garden. He even bribed waiters and chambermaids to report to him what his wife was doing in his absence, and especially whether she saw the Count.

At times he became conscious how mean and despicable a part he was acting. Then he would laugh hoarsely and mutter to himself:

"What matters it! One who has bedded himself in the mire must not expect to rise with spotless linen!"

Poor Ralph!

The thundercloud on the horizon darkened, but still the storm would not burst forth.

Notwithstanding her all-consuming passion Lucy still preserved prudence enough not to commit too flagrant an indiscretion. She had not yet seen her lover alone a single time, and consequently Ralph's endeavors to find the proof of her infidelity were idle. Besides, Count von Hohenfels was, if not a cold, at all events a cautious lover, and not very anxious to come into direct collision with the offended husband. In truth, the whole affair had hardly touched his heart, but was merely a bold and frivolous game.

Ralph might, indeed, have made an end of all flirtation between his wife and Hohenfels by simply leaving the place. The Count would hardly have followed them.

But he would not think of such a thing. Could a mere separation from the object of her criminal love restore her again to her former place in his heart? Could such a separation give him back his peace of mind?

Never! Angels, once fallen, forever belong to the abyss. Love, once driven out, will never return into the desolate heart.

The cloud hung on the horizon. The hour would come when the tempest would break loose, with dire destruction in its train.

It was a mere accident that led Mrs. Warringham and the young diplomatist into a situation which the impassioned woman longed for, yet dreaded.

It was in the last days of September. Many of the summer residents in the little city of Eisenach had already left for home. Many others were still lingering, for the days were warm and mellow.

Dr. Warringham and his wife saw very little of each other now. In fact, they never met except at the table. Then they treated each other with a studied, cold politeness that did not fail to attract the attention of the host of gossips whose stamping ground every watering place is.

The gossips knew a very interesting story of the Doctor, his wife and the Count.

The beautiful American lady, it was said, had been forced by a cruel parent to marry the Doctor, who was fabulously rich. But her heart belonged to the young German diplomat, whose acquaintance she had made in the palace of the President of the United States.

Everybody pitied the cruel fate of the beautiful young lady, and pronounced her husband a monster.

The gossips knew it all. Ah, yes! The world always does.

Ralph had made a number of acquaintances among the gentlemen, both of the summer colony and the town. With these he rode on horseback, undertook extended pedestrian excursions into the mountains, and did whatever else he could to get rid of his thoughts. He even gambled, which he had never done before. But rarely he participated in the amusements arranged by the summer residents. Of late he spent a great deal of his time watching his wife. But often, also, he would ramble for long hours in the woods, alone with his thoughts, or climb the hill from which the ancient castle of Wartburg overlooks the country, to muse in the halls of that venerable pile.

There is perhaps no other monument of the middle ages left to us around which cluster so many associations of romance, poetry, legend and history as Wartburg Castle, the ancient seat of the Thuringian Landgraves. In the thirteenth century this was the center of German knightly poetry, when at the court of Landgrave Hermann gathered all the greatest of the minnesingers—Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walther von der Vogelweide, and hundreds of less note, while the names of many others are forgotten with their songs. Here, in the large hall where now a painting by one of Germany's greatest modern artists commemorates the event, was waged the famous "War of the Singers," where Heinrich von Ofterdingen—surnamed the Tannhauser—was vanquished by Eschenbach's greater art, and only saved his forfeited head by the intercession of a beautiful woman. Here St. Elizabeth dwelled by the side of her husband, Landgrave Ludwig, the crusader; and here, in later times, Martin Luther translated the Bible.

Ralph liked to muse in these venerable halls, so full of architectural beauty and so interesting in historic reminiscences. He had gained the confidence of the attendants, who let him wander at random through that part of the castle which is ordinarily shown to tourists. There he spent many a long hour, and, among the emotions awakened by such surroundings, sometimes almost forgot his own troubles.

It was the fashion among the summer guests at Eisenach to pay a visit to the castle at least once a week. Mrs. Warringham also obeyed this fashion. One day she complained at the haste with which visitors were driven through the halls by the attendants who would not allow them to inspect at leisure whatever might attract their attention.

Now, Count Hohenfels happened to be a relative of the "commander" of the castle, an aged, invalid officer, who had been given this sinecure in lieu of a pension. He offered to obtain permission from that gentleman to remain in the castle as long as they liked, without interference from the guides. Mrs. Warringham and another lady gladly accepted.

The Count easily got the desired permission, and on the following day the visit was to be made. But it so happened that at the appointed time the other lady felt indisposed.

Thus for the first time Count von Hohenfels and Mrs. Warringham found themselves alone together. They found themselves alone in the wide, mysterious halls of the ancient castle, in an atmosphere of romance, amid reminiscences of love and passion, before the great picture of the "Singers' War."

Lucy's bosom heaved as she stood before the painting, with her arm in his. Her heart beat violently.

He felt her arm tremble in his. His hand found hers, and she did not withdraw it. So they stood, looking at the life-sized, many-colored figures on Schwind's great fresco, which covers the larger part of the long side of the hall.

He began to explain it, for he was thoroughly familiar with these legends.

"Do you know the story of Tannhauser? Of course you do; you have seen Wagner's opera."

"It is a story of love and passion," she replied. "I have heard it, but let me hear it again from you."

He told how the knight found his way into the Hoersel mountain, where Lady Venus held court in splendor and beauty. There he lived among the joys of love for many years, but at last his conscience bade him seek absolution from the Pope. He took leave from Lady Venus and traveled to Rome as a pilgrim. But the Holy Father would not grant him absolution, and said not until the dry staff he held in his hand would sprout anew could his sins be forgiven. Then Tannhauser went back into the mountain, where he was received with open arms by the Lady Venus. But the day after the Pope's dry staff had put forth new leaves. Then messengers were sent all over the world to find Tannhauser, but he had gone back to the Queen of Love.

When he had finished his story the Count thought he heard a noise behind him, in the raised lobby where once the beautiful landgrafin had sat on her throne and Tannhauser knelt before her, after his defeat, just as it was depicted in the painting. He turned around, but could see nothing.

"It is a beautiful story," Mrs. Warringham said, softly, and he felt her arm press against his. "It teaches that love is the greatest power in the world, and they who sin from love will always be forgiven."

She seated herself in one of the ancient carved chairs just at the foot of the lobby. The Count stood beside her, one foot on the steps

The supreme moment had come.

She looked up into his eyes. How charming she was! Never was woman so beautiful before! Was she Lady Venus? Was he Tannhauser?

"Then let my love be forgiven, also!" he cried, as he threw his arms around her. His lips pressed on hers in a moment of all-forgetting bliss.

There was a noise behind them. The lovers started and turned.

At the top of the steps leading to the lobby stood Dr. Warringham.

CHAPTER XIV.

BALANCING THE ACCOUNTS.

"Beg your pardon for interrupting you!"

The words were spoken with cutting irony, but it was clear how little the speaker really felt the cold indifference that finds its expression in sarcasm. As he stood at the head of the broad marble steps, between the two heavy romanesque pillars, with arms folded over his breast, motionless, his eyes flashed a fearful, burning fire. It required a tremendous effort of his will power to restrain himself from leaping upon the man below with the fury of the tiger who throws himself upon his prey, and to engage in a deadly grapple, man against man, breast to breast.

The Count had instinctively stepped between the lady and her husband, so that the latter could not see her. He looked up in the threatening face of his adversary, waiting for him to speak.

The words came at last from Ralph's quivering lips:

"Will you have the goodness to retire, sir? I would speak to that lady. You shall hear from me presently."

Count von Hohenfels turned toward Mrs. Warringham. "It is for the lady to decide what I shall do!" he said.

"Go, for my sake, go!" cried Mrs. Warringham. She had risen from her chair and involuntarily recoiled a few steps from the fierce glare of her husband's eyes. She now stood near the center of the vast hall.

"Go, Max! My love will always be with you!" she cried again.

"Do you fear for your sweetheart, madam? I will not harm him now."

Ralph still stood in the same attitude, motionless, his arms folded on his breast, as he spoke these words.

The Count feigned not to hear his rival's taunts. He walked across the floor toward Mrs. Warringham.

"I obey your wishes," he replied. "We shall meet again."

Then he gallantly kissed her hand, bowed courteously to the Doctor, and disappeared.

Having gone so far in this affair, the young nobleman was resolved to persist in it and not show the white feather, come what might

With an effort almost superhuman, Ralph still refrained from a violent outbreak when he saw the Count act so defiantly. A tremor of rage shook his frame, but he retained the mastery of his passion.

The Count was gone. Husband and wife stood before each other.

Ralph came down from the lobby and walked toward the door. His steps resounded strangely in the vast space of the hall, where all else was silent.

"Let us go home, madam," he said. "We must strike the balance of our accounts to-day."

He opened the heavy oaken door and held it open for her to pass. His glaring eyes seemed to pierce through her. A moment she hesitated.

"Why do you not go? Are you afraid?" he asked, sneeringly.

She was afraid. His outward calmness, which she knew was only the cloak of suppressed rage, terrified her more than the wildest exhibition of wrath could have done. But in response to his sneer she passed out of the door with a defiant look at him.

He followed behind her. Soon they found themselves in the wide courtyard of the castle. Silently they passed through the great gate, over the drawbridge, and walked down the road toward their hotel. He did not offer her his arm. Without speaking a word they walked on.

Within twenty minutes they had reached the hotel. Ralph opened the door to his room, and, with a silent motion, invited her to enter.

She sat down in an arm-chair. He stood at the window, whence he could scan her features.

"You believe me to be wealthy, do you not, madam?" he asked, after a pause of some moments.

She was surprised at this question. She had feared a very different beginning of the interview.

"I have reason to believe so," she answered.

"You had reason, but let me inform you that you were mistaken."

He stepped to the table and wrote something on a slip of paper, which he handed to her.

"This is the greater part of my earthly possessions," he said. "You may keep it."

Mrs. Warringham threw a glance at the paper he held before her. It was a check for a thousand dollars. She did not receive it, and he laid it on the table beside her.

"When I married you," she replied, "I was told that you were in the possession of a large fortune."

She was puzzled by her husband's behavior. Could it be possible that he should simulate poverty in order to get rid of her the cheaper?

"My mother had a large fortune. She has died and disinherited me, because I married you," Ralph continued.

"You never told me about these circumstances."

"Dare you reproach me with it?" he asked fiercely. Here was the weak spot in his armor, and he was naturally irritable on that point.

"I do not," Lucy replied.

"You had better not!" he exclaimed. His rage, so long suppressed, now burst its bounds. "Woman, you have betrayed me from the very first moment of our acquaintance! You entered our union with a lie on your lips and treason in your heart! You are an actress, indeed! A glorious part you have acted, and I was fool enough to be duped!"

His frame shook with violent excitement. Lucy sat silent and pale, oppressed with the consciousness of her guilt.

"Ah, Lucy," Ralph continued, in a softer voice, "why did you betray me? I loved you so deeply! For you I gave up fortune and family, and yet you have betrayed me!"

Lucy was still silent. Ralph turned his face away, and when he looked at her again his expression was stern and determined.

"We must make an end of it," he said. "There can be nothing in common between us after what has happened. As I said, I am a poor man. Take this check. It is all I can give you."

He paused, but added, after a few moments, bitterly:

"I suppose you will not suffer want. You have found one who will take care of you."

Lucy made no reply. What could she answer him? Was not all he had said true?

"That is all that need be said," Ralph continued, after a pause. "I hope we may never meet again. Live happy, if you can."

With these words he strode out of the door.

Lucy sat for a long time in that same chair, silent, motionless, tearless.

The first part of the terrible task Ralph had imposed upon himself was done. Now for the second.

The Doctor almost felt a fierce pleasure at the thought of being revenged on the destroyer of his happiness. He was determined that the Count should not escape alive. He rejoiced at the thought that he was an experienced pistol-shot.

Among the gentlemen of the city whose acquaintance Dr. Warringham had made was a young physician, with whom he had become quite intimate. This gentleman, whose name was Dr. Braunfeld, he asked to act as his second.

He told him his story, although it cost him considerable pain to do so. Dr. Braunfeld agreed with him that a duel was inevitable, and declared his readiness to render his friend the required services.

"But, remember," Ralph admonished him, "it is to be a serious affair. Either of us must not survive."

"Have you any particular wishes in regard to the arrangements" Dr. Braunfeld asked him. No, he had none; he would leave everything to the discretion of his friend.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

TABERNACLE PULPIT.

DR. TALMAGE PREACHES A SERMON ON MENDING NETS.

Christians Should Look to It That Their Nets for Souls Are Kept in Good Order—Some Hints That Will Be of Value.

Dr. Talmage's text was Matthew iv. 21; "James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship which Zebedee their father, mending their nets."

"I go a-fishing," cried Simon Peter to his comrades, and the most of the apostles had hands hard from fishing tackle. The fisheries of the world have always attracted attention. In the Third century the queen of Egypt had for pin money four hundred and seventy thousand dollars, received from the fisheries of Lake Moeris. And if the time should ever come when the immensity of the world's population could not be fed by the vegetables and meats of the land, the sea has an amount of animal life that would feed all the populations of the earth, and fatten them with a food that by its phosphorus would make a generation brainy and intellectual beyond anything that the world has ever imagined. My text takes us among the Galilean fishermen. One day Walter Scott, while hunting in an old drawer, found among some old fishing tackle the manuscript of his immortal book "Waverly," which he had put away there as of no worth, and who knows but that to-day we may find some unknown wealth of thought while looking at the fishing tackle in the text?

It is not a good day for fishing, and three men are in the boat repairing the broken fishing nets. If you are fishing with a hook and line and the fish will not bite it is a good time to put the angler's apparatus into better condition. Perhaps the last fish you hauled in was so large that something snapped. Or if you were fishing with a net there was a mighty floundering of the scales, or an exposed nail on the side of the boat which broke some of the threads and let part or all of the captives of the deep escape into their natural element. And hardly anything is more provoking than to nearly land a score or a hundred of trophies from the deep and when you are in the full glee of hauling in the spotted treasures through some imperfection of the net they splash back into the wave.

That is too much of a trial of patience for most fishermen to endure, and many a man ordinarily correct of speech in such circumstances comes to an intensity of utterance unjustifiable. Therefore no good fisherman considers the time wasted that is spent in mending his net. Now the Bible again and again represents Christian workers as fishers of men, and we are all sweeping through the sea of humanity some kind of a net. Indeed, there have been enough nets out and enough fishermen busy to have landed the whole human race in the Kingdom of God long before this. What is the matter? The Gospel is all right, and it has been a good time for catching souls for thousands of years. Why, then, the failures? The trouble is with the nets, and most of them need to be mended. I propose to show you what is the matter with the most of the nets and how to mend them. In the text old Zebedee and his two boys, James and John, were doing a good thing when they sat in the boat mending their nets.

The trouble with many of our nets is that the meshes are too large. If a fish can get his gills and half his body through the network, he tears and rends and works his way out and leaves the place through which he squirmed a tangle of broken threads. The Bible weaves faith and works tight together, the law and the Gospel, righteousness and forgiveness. Some of the nets have meshes so wide that the sinner floats in and out and is not at any moment caught for the heavenly landing. In our desire to make everything so easy, we relax, we loosen, we widen. We let men after they are once in the Gospel net escape into the world and go into indulgences and swim all around Galilee, from north side to south side and from east side to west side, expecting that they will come back again. We ought to make it easy for them to get into the Kingdom of God, and, and as far as we can, make it impossible for them to get out.

The poor advice nowadays to many is: "Go and do just as you did before you were captured for God and Heaven. The net was not intended to be any restraint or any hindrance. What you did before you were a Christian, do now. Go to all styles of amusement, read all the styles of books, engage in all the styles of behavior as before you were converted." And so through these meshes of permission and laxity they wriggle out through this opening and that opening, tearing the net as they go, and soon all the souls that we expected to land in Heaven before we know it are back in the deep sea of the world. Oh, when we go a-gospel fishing let us make it as easy as possible for souls to get in, and as hard as possible to get out.

Is the Bible language an unmeaning verbage when it talks about self-denial and keeping the body under, and about walking the narrow way and entering the strait gate, and about carrying the cross? Is there to be no way of telling whether a man is a Christian except by his taking the communion chalice on sacramental day? May a man be as reckless about his thoughts, his words, about his temper, about his amusements, about his dealings after conversion as before conversion. One-half the Gospel nets with which we have been scooping the sea have had such wide meshes that they have been all torn to pieces by the rushing out into the world of those whom a tighter net would have kept in. The only use of a net is to keep the fish from going back to where they were before and taking them where they could not have been taken by any other means. Alas, that the words of Christ are so little heeded when he said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." The church is fast becoming as bad as the world, and when it gets as bad as the world it will be worse than the world by so much as it will add hypocrisy of a most appalling kind to its other defects.

Furthermore, many of our nets are torn to pieces by being entangled with other nets. It is a sad sight to see fisherman fighting about sea room and pulling in opposite directions, each to get his net, both nets damaged by the struggle and losing all the fish. In a city like this of more than eight hundred thousand, there are at least five hundred thousand not in Sabbath schools or churches. And in this land where there are more than sixty-four million people, there is at least thirty million not in the Sabbath schools and churches. And in this world of more than fourteen hundred million people, there are at least eight hundred million not in schools and churches. In such an Atlantic ocean of opportunity there is room for all the nets and all the boats and all the fishermen and for millions more.

Now I have noticed a man cannot fish and fight at the same time. He either neglects his net or his musket. It is amazing how much time some of the fishermen have to look after other fishermen. It is more than I can do to take care of my own net. You see the wind is just right, and it is such a good time for fishing, and the fish are coming in so rapidly that I have to keep my eye and hand busy. There are about 200,000,000 souls wanting to get into the Kingdom of God, and it will require all the nets and all the boats and all the fishermen of Christendom to safely land them.

At East Hampton, Long Island, where I summer, out on the bluffs some morning we see the flags up, and that is the signal for launching out into the deep. For a mile the water is tinged with that peculiar color that indicates whole schools of piscatorial revelry, and the beach swarms with men with their coats off and their sea caps on, and those of us who do not go out on the wave stand on the beach ready to rejoice when the boots come back, and in our excitement we rush into the water with our shoes on to help get the boats up the beach, and we lay hold the lines and pull till we are red in the face, and as the living things of the deep come tumbling in on the sand I cry out, "Captain, how many?" And he answers, "About 50,000." And we shout to the late comers, "Hurrah, 50,000." We must have an enthusiasm something like that if we are ever to take the human race for God and Heaven. Aye, we ought to have that enthusiasm of the beach multiplied a hundred fold and by so much as an immortal soul is worth more than a bluefish.

Oh, brethren of ministry! Let us spend our time in fishing instead of fighting. But if I angrily jerk my net across your net, and you jerk your net angrily across mine, we will soon have two broken nets and no fish.

Do you know that the world's heart is bursting with trouble, and if you could make that world believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is a soothing omnipotence, the whole world would surrender to-morrow, yea, would surrender this hour? The day before James A. Garfield was inaugurated as President I was in the cars going from Richmond to Washington. A gentleman seated next to me in the cars knew me, and we were soon in familiar conversation. It was just after a bereavement and I was speaking to him from an over-burdened heart about the sorrow I was suffering.

Looking at his cheerful face, I said: "I guess you have escaped all trouble. I should judge from your countenance that you have come through free from all misfortune." Then he looked at me with a look I shall never forget and whispered in my ear: "Sir, you know nothing about trouble. My wife has been in an insane asylum for fifteen years." And then he turned and looked out of the window and into the night with a silence I was too overpowered to break. That was another illustration of the fact that no one escapes trouble. Why, that man seated next to you in church has on his soul a weight compared with which a mountain is a feather. That woman seated next to you in church has a grief the recital of which would make your body, mind, and soul shudder.

When you are mending your net for this wide, deep sea of humanity, take out that wire thread of criticism and that horse-hair thread of harshness, and put in a soft silken thread of Christian sympathy. Yea, when you are mending your nets tear out those old threads of gruffness and weave in a few threads of politeness and geniality. In the house of God let all the Christian faces beam with a look that means welcome. Say "good morning" to the stranger as he enters your pew, and at the close shake hands with him and say, "How did you like the music?" Why, you would be to that man a panel of the door of Heaven; you would be to him a note of the doxology that seraphs sing when a new soul enters. That man is a thousand miles from home, and he has just heard by telegraph that his child is sick with scarlet fever, and his boy at college has got into disgrace, and he has had business troubles and is so homesick he can hardly keep from crying. Just one word of brotherly kindness from you would lift him in a small heaven.

I have in other days entered a pew in church, and the woman at the other end of the pew looked at me as much as to say: "How dare you? This is my pew, and I pay the rent for it!" Well, I crouched in the corner and made myself as small as possible, and felt as though I had been stealing something. So there are people who have a sharp edge to their religion, and they act as though they thought most people had been elected to be damned and they were glad of it. Oh, let us brighten up our manner and appear in utmost gentlemanliness or ladyhood.

The object in fly fishing is to throw the fly far out, and then let it drop gently down and keep it gently rising and falling with the waters, and not plunge it like a man-of-war's anchor; and abruptness and harshness of manner must be avoided in our attempt at usefulness. I know a man in New York who is more sunshiny and genial when he has dyspepsia than when he is not suffering from that depressing trouble. I have found out his secret. When he starts out in the morning with such depression he asks for special grace to keep from snapping up anybody that day, and puts forth additional determination to be kindly and genial, and by the help of God he accomplishes it. Many of our nets need to be mended in these respects, the black threads and the rough threads taken out, and the bright threads and the golden threads of Christian geniality woven in.

Oh, this important work of mending our nets! If we could get our nets right we would accomplish more in soul saving in the next year than we have in the last twenty years. But where shall we get them mended? Just where old Zebedee and his two boys mended their nets—where you are.

"James, why don't you put your oar in Lake Galilee, or hoist your sail and land at Capernaum or Tiberias or Gadara, and seated on the bank mend your net? John, why don't you go ashore and mend your net?" No, they sat on the guards of the boat, or at the prow of the boat, or in the stern of the boat, and they took up the thread and needle, and the ropes and the wooden blocks, and went to work, sewing, sewing, tying, tying, weaving, weaving, pounding, pounding, until, the net mended, they push it off into the sea and drop paddle and hoist sail, and the cut-water went through amid the shoals of fish, some of the descendants of which we had for breakfast one morning while we were encamped on the beach of beautiful Galilee. James and John had no time to go ashore. They were not fishing for fun as you and I do in summer time. It was their livelihood and that of their families. They mended their nets where they were, in the ship.

"Oh," says some one, "I mean to get my net mended, and I will go down to the public library, and I will see what the scientists say about evolution and about 'the survival of the fittest,' and I will read up what the theologians say about 'advanced thought.' I will leave the ship awhile, and I will go ashore and stay there till my net is mended." Do that, my brother, and you will have no net left. Instead of their helping you mend your net, they will steal the pieces that remain. Better stay in the Gospel boat, where you have all the means for mending your net. What are they, do you ask? I answer all you need you have where you are, namely, a Bible and a place to pray. The more you study evolution, and adopt what is called advanced thought, the bigger fool you will be. Stay in the ship and mind your net. That is where James the son of Zebedee and John his brother staid. That is where all who get their nets mended stay.

I notice that all who leave the Gospel boat and go ashore to mend their nets stay there. Or, if they try again to fish, they do not catch anything. Get out of the Gospel boat and go up into the world to get your net mended, and you will live to see the day when you will feel like the man who, having forsaken Christianity, sighed. "I would give a thousand pounds to feel as I did in 1820." The time will come when you will be willing to give a thousand pounds to feel as you did in 1891. These men who have given up their old religion cannot help you a bit. It is my opinion that the most of these ministers who gave up the old religion are in search of notoriety. They do not succeed in attracting much attention. They are tired of obscurity. They must do something to attract attention, so they sit down on the beach and go to tearing to pieces the fishing nets instead of mending them. The staid old denominations to which they belong do not pay them enough attention, so they attract attention by striking their grandmother. They do not get enough attention by standing in the pulpits, so they go to work and break the church windows.

These dear brethren of all denominations, afflicted with theological fidgets, had better go to mending nets instead of breaking them. Before they break up the old religion and try to foist on us a new religion let them go through some great sacrifice for God that will prove them worthy for such a work, taking the advice of Talleyrand to a man who wanted to upset the religion of Jesus Christ and start a new one, when he said, "Go and be crucified and then raise yourself from the grave the third day!" Those who propose to mend their nets by secular skeptical books are just like a man who has just one week for fishing, and six of the days he spends in reading Isaak Walton's "Complete Angler," and Wheatley's "Rod and Line," and Scott's "Fishing in Northern Waters," and Pullman's "Vade Mecum of Fly Fishing for Trout," and then on Saturday morning, his last day out, goes to the river to ply his art, but that day the fish will not bite, and late on Saturday night he goes home with empty basket and a disappointed heart.

Meanwhile a man who never saw a big library in all his life has that week caught with an old fishing tackle enough to supply his own table and the table of all his neighbors, and enough to salt down in barrels for the long winter that will soon come in.

In the time of great disturbance in Naples in 1649 Massaniello, a barefooted fishing boy, dropped his fishing rod, and by strange magnetism took command of that city of 600,000 souls. He took off his fishing jacket and put on a robe of gold in the presence of howling mobs. He put his hand on his lip as a signal, and they were silent. He waved his hand away from him, and they retired to their homes. Armies passed in review before him. He became the nation's idol. The rapid rise and complete supremacy of that young fisherman, Massaniello, has no parrallel in history. But something equal to that and better than that is an everyday occurrence in heaven.

God takes some of those, who in this world were fishers of men, and who toiled very humbly, but because of the way they mended their nets and employed their nets after they were mended, and suddenly hoists them and rotes them and makes them rulers over many cities, and he marches armies of saved ones before them in review. Massaniellos unhonored on earth, but radiated in Heaven. The fisher boy of Naples soon lost his power, but those people of God who kept their nets mended and rightly swung them shall never lose their exalted place, but shall reign forever and ever and ever. Keep that reward in sight.

But do not spend your time fishing with hook and line. Why did not James the son of Zebedee sit on the wharf at Cana, his feet hanging over the lake and with a long pole and a worm on the hook dipped into the wave, wait for some mullet to swim up and be caught? Why did not Zebedee spend his afternoon trying to catch one eel? No, that work was too slow. These men were not mending a hook and line, they were mending their nets. So let the church of God not be content with having here one soul and next month another soul brought into the kingdom. Sweep all the seas with nets—scoop nets, seine nets, drag nets, all encompassing nets—and take the treasurers in by hundreds and thousands and millions, and nations be born in a day, and the hemispheres quake with the tread of a ransoming God. Do you know what will be the two most tremendous hours in our heavenly existence? Among the quadrillions of ages which shall roll on, what two occasions will be to us the greatest?

The day of our arrival there will be to us one of the two greatest. The second greatest, I think, will be the day when we shall have put in parallel lines before us what Christ did for us and what we did for Christ—the one so great, the other so little. That will be the only embarrassment in Heaven. My Lord and my God! What will we do and what will we say when on one side are placed the Saviour's great sacrifices for us and our small sacrifices for Him—His exile, His humiliation, His agonies on one hand, and our poor weak, insufficient sacrifices on the other? To make the contrast less overwhelming, let us quickly mend our nets, and like the Galilean fishermen may we be divinely helped to cast them on the right side of the ship.