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This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

About a hundred and fifty years before the time of the editor, the lands of Dalcastle in Scotland belonged to the Colwan family. The family had held them for a very long time, and people in that part of the country still remembered many dark stories about them. In the year 1687, George Colwan became laird of Dalcastle and Balgrennan. He was said to be a rich man, though no one seemed fully sure how rich he really was. What everyone knew was that strange and terrible events were later tied to his house, and that old people in several counties still spoke of them as if they had happened only yesterday.

George Colwan married late in life. His bride was the only daughter and heir of Baillie Orde of Glasgow, and she was young, beautiful, proud, and deeply serious about religion. On that point the husband and wife were as different as two people could be. The laird was cheerful, careless, and easy in his ways. His lady, who soon liked to be called Lady Dalcastle, followed a severe form of religious belief and listened closely to one hard and fiery preacher above all others. She looked on the world with fear and judgment, while her husband laughed, drank, danced, and believed that a man could live in peace with both Heaven and earth without much trouble.

Their wedding feast showed this difference at once. The hall at Dalcastle was full of meat, drink, music, laughter, and country dancing. George clapped his hands, shouted to the players, laughed at the turn of a tune, and kissed every girl whose face pleased him. “Come,” he cried to the young men, “take the same freedom with my bride, and we shall all be even.” But the bride did not dance even once. She sat still and shining at the head of the hall, speaking softly only to the minister who had married them and had come home with her. When he called her Mrs. Colwan, she turned her face away. When he called her Lady Dalcastle, she seemed better pleased, for that name did not join her so directly with the

husband she already seemed to dislike in her heart.

At last the minister took his leave. “Do not forget me in this heathen house,” she said to him, with tears in her eyes. “Come often, and help me keep my soul among such dangers.” The minister blessed her and answered with great solemnity that he would come when duty allowed. When the feast was still noisy below, George slipped away from his guests and went to the room where his bride had already retired. He found her seated with the Bible open before her. He bent toward her with the warm, careless kindness of a happy bridegroom, but she drew back at once. “The broad road is easy,” she said coldly, “and many old sinners walk upon it with laughter.” George stared at her, half drunk and wholly puzzled, then sat on the bed and pulled off his shoes. “Broad or narrow,” he said, “the road leads to bed tonight.”

She answered in a serious voice, “Mr. Colwan, surely you will not go to bed on such a night without first praying for yourself and me.” He lifted his red face and looked at her as if she had lost her wits. “Prayers?” he cried. “Good Lord, woman, is this a night for prayers?” She then began to speak to him of duty, Scripture, the state of the soul, family worship, and the danger of a godless house. George tried, for a little while, to reason with her. “My dear,” he said, “there is a time for religion and a time for rest. If we drag holy things into every hour, we will turn them into a farce.” But she would not yield an inch. Text followed text, sermon followed sermon, and at last George threw himself into bed. “Then you may carry that work for us both tonight,” he said.

Lady Dalcastle knelt down and began to pray aloud with all her strength, clearly hoping to move him. For a moment there was silence. Then George, overcome with drink and weariness, began to snore so loudly that her prayer was broken again and again by the sound. She tried to continue, but every deep blast from the bed seemed louder than the last. At length she stopped, rose from her knees in shame and grief, and sat by the fire with the Bible on her lap until morning. George slept on, dreaming of dancing, leaping, music, and delight. When he woke at last, he called out cheerfully, “Rabina, where are you? What has become of you?” There was no answer. He jumped up, searched the room, then

the house, opening windows and doors as he went, until he found her in bed with her cousin, the bridesmaid. “You sly little devil,” he said. “You have played me a clever trick. Come away now.” She drew herself up and answered, “I hate both your principles and your person. I will never place myself under the will of a heathen man of Belial.” George only laughed, wrapped her in a blanket, and carried her back in spite of all her protests.

Things were no better the next day. Before long the lady fled from Dalcastle and went back to her father’s house in Glasgow. Baillie Orde heard her complaints and found little in them that surprised or convinced him. Still, he chose to punish someone for the insult done to his daughter, and since he could not easily strike the laird, he laid hands on his own child. “Dalcastle has wronged my daughter,” he said. “Then I shall pay him back through his wife.” She cried, prayed, and asked what he meant, but he answered only with blows that were more noisy than cruel. He locked her in an upper room, fed her on bread and water, and said again and again that this would teach the Laird of Dalcastle how to behave to one of his family. In that room Lady Dalcastle had much time to read, pray, and think, but none to argue with, and argument had become as necessary to her as bread.

So, after some time, when George finally came for her, matters were easily settled on the outside. She had no wish to remain under her father’s hard hand, and she returned with her husband to Dalcastle. But peace did not follow them home. Day after day she pressed him in the same direction. “You must pray with the household,” she said. “I will not,” he answered. “You must sing psalms morning and evening.” “I will not sing.” “You must speak of holy things.” “Then I would rather be silent.” She contradicted nearly everything he said, not because the matter itself was important, but because contradiction gave her a road into argument, and argument gave her hope that she might change him.

George bore this longer than many men would have done. He tried laughter, patience, delay, and silence. But she kept on, and the great point between them soon became absolute predestination, which she held as firmly as life itself. When George dared to question that doctrine, she looked on him as lost. “You are a limb of Antichrist,” she told him. “No truly renewed soul can live in fellowship with

you.” George, who had lived most of his life in easy temper, was at last worn out by these endless attacks. He mocked the fine and narrow divisions of her doctrine, and that only deepened her hatred. Before six months had passed, they agreed on a complete separation inside the same old house.

The upper floor was given to Lady Dalcastle. She had her own entrance, her own stair, her own garden, and walks that never crossed her husband’s. George kept his own company below, while she received only those of her own strict kind above. Yet even after all this, her eye still turned downward toward his life. She soon began to ask questions about a woman who often came to see him, a cheerful and respectable lady named Miss Logan. She set her servant Martha to watch and report. Then letters were sent to Glasgow, and at last the Reverend Mr. Wringhim himself came to Dalcastle to strengthen the lady in her cause. Thus the house was fully divided, not only in rooms and stairs, but in spirit, judgment, and war. The marriage had begun with music and feast, but in less than half a year it had become a house with two doors, two lives, and two enemies under one roof.

Part 2

Life in the divided house soon became colder and stranger than before. Lady Dalcastle, shut away in her upper rooms, watched everything below with jealous and painful attention. One day she said to her servant, “Who is that large cheerful woman who comes so often to see the laird, and always alone?” Martha answered, “How can I know, mem? We are strangers in this house as much as guests.” But the lady was not satisfied. “Find out,” she said. “Watch her well. She lifts her eyes toward these windows when she comes and when she goes. I do not trust such a woman.”

That evening Martha returned with news. The visitor was Miss Logan, an old friend of the laird, a respectable woman of good family, though her people had lost much in the troubles of the time. Lady Dalcastle listened in silence, then said, “Very well. Watch her again. Watch what she does, how long she stays, and how she leaves the house.” Martha obeyed, and what she reported only fed her

mistress's anger. From that day prayers were said morning and evening against the woman below, and bitter tears were shed in the rooms above. Letter after letter was sent away, and at last the Reverend Mr. Wringhim came in person to help the suffering lady.

He and Lady Dalcastle shut themselves up together and talked for long hours about religion. They argued over narrow points of doctrine with such heat and seriousness that each seemed to forget the common world. Yet in the middle of one of these fierce discussions, the lady suddenly broke off and said, "But what is to be done about this open sin under my very nose?" The minister fell silent for a moment and stroked his beard. "You speak of your husband and Miss Logan?" he said. "I do," she answered. "Such conduct is a scandal to this house." Mr. Wringhim replied in a grave and gentle tone, "Their sin belongs to them, not to the justified. Still, if you wish it, I shall go to him and humble him."

Lady Dalcastle brightened at once. "Yes," she said, "go to that blind and unhappy man and open his eyes." Mr. Wringhim rose in great zeal. "I will go to him now," he declared. "I will break down the strong places of sin and lay them low." Soon after, he forced his way into the laird's rooms below. George was sitting quietly beside Miss Logan, and the two were looking at a book together when the minister entered without waiting for leave. "What do you want, sir?" George said sharply. "I come with a matter of the highest importance," said Wringhim, drawing himself up before the fire. "I ask you before Heaven, have you kept the vows that were laid upon you?"

George answered with anger, though still with more self-command than many men would have shown. "And has the partner you bound to me kept hers?" he said. "You should know that better than anyone." The minister then turned his attack on both George and Miss Logan. He spoke with hard, burning words, accusing them of sin and shame, and calling on them to stand and hear their rebuke. George's face grew red, but he did not rise. Instead he answered with a force that surprised even himself. "You are a maker of strife," he said. "You break homes, stir up quarrels, and split religion into dust. Go in peace, and trouble honest people no more."

Wringhim did not flinch. He poured out even fiercer words than before, words so strong that Miss Logan could no longer bear to stay and quietly left the room. George still held his place, though anger and shame burned in him by turns. When the minister had finished, he swept from the room in triumph and hurried upstairs to tell Lady Dalcastle that he had conquered her enemies. She praised him warmly and believed for a little while that he had done great good. But her joy did not last long. Within five weeks, Miss Logan came to live openly at Dalcastle as the laird's housekeeper, sat at his table, and carried the keys of the house like a mistress in all but name.

This drove Lady Dalcastle almost to despair. She could not endure her husband, yet she could not bear that any other woman should live near him in comfort and favor. She tried every means to separate them, but George only laughed. In the middle of all this unhappiness, however, the lady gave birth to a fine boy. George accepted the child gladly as his son and heir, gave him his own name, and had him cared for in the house. He even told the nurse, "Take the child to his mother if she wishes to see him." But strangely, she never once asked to see the boy from the day he was born.

A year later she had another son. In the eyes of the law, George was the father of this child as well, yet he refused to welcome him as he had welcomed the first. He would support the child, because he could not avoid that duty, but he would not take part in the feast or in the baptism. So the little boy remained for more than a year without that public blessing, until Mr. Wringhim himself at last stood as sponsor and gave the child his own name, Robert Wringhim. Thus the two brothers entered the world already divided. One was George Colwan, openly owned by the laird. The other was Robert Wringhim, marked from the start by suspicion, doctrine, and separation.

The elder boy grew up with his father. He was sent partly to school and partly taught at home, and he became a cheerful, generous, open-hearted youth. He was not the best scholar, but he was kind, handsome, active, and well liked. Robert was brought up elsewhere, under the care of Mr. Wringhim, with money sent each year by the laird. In that hard school he learned not gentleness but severity. He

was taught to pray many times each day, to think always of the elect and the lost, and to speak of those outside his narrow faith as people already doomed.

In that house he heard only evil about his father and brother. He was told that the old laird was a wicked sinner and that the elder son sprang from a corrupt root. So he learned to hate both of them before he truly knew them. He prayed against them daily, asking that the father might be cut off in his sin and that the son might be taken from the earth, though perhaps forgiven because he knew no better. Robert was a sharp and able boy. He learned grammar, writing, and numbers very quickly, and he wrote essays on disputed religious points that won praise from his guardians. But there was something hard, proud, and fierce in him that made other boys draw away.

George, meanwhile, grew into a very different young man. He was less learned, but stronger in body, easier in manner, and far more pleasant to meet. Miss Logan loved him as if he were her own child, and the laird often said that the two brothers should be kept apart as much as possible. For many years that wish was granted. At last Lady Dalcastle was removed from the house to Glasgow, and George was kept away from the company of her second son. The laird had seen enough of the spirit that ruled them both, and he feared it more than open violence. In time he gave himself more and more to the king’s party, while Mr. Wringhim threw his whole strength into the opposite cause. And so, as the boys grew toward manhood, the house of Dalcastle stood ready for the next stage of its misery, with one brother formed by warmth and the other by hate.

Part 3

When the two young men were nearly grown, chance at last brought them together in Edinburgh. The old laird had gone there for Parliament, and young George went with him. Mr. Wringhim was there too, moving among the men of his own party, speaking loudly, arguing fiercely, and making himself useful to those who wanted noise as much as reason. Robert was with him. So, in that crowded and excited city, where men already hated one another for politics and

religion, the two brothers first met face to face.

George was playing tennis when Robert first saw him. The young laird was strong, handsome, and full of life, and he played with such skill that the people round the court praised him at every turn. When Robert learned who he was, he came close and stood beside him, watching every movement. Now and then he threw in a sharp word of mockery, but George paid little attention at first. He only saw a dark young man in black clothes, with a stern face and a troubling eye, who kept coming in his way. Yet from that first day Robert began to follow him everywhere, so closely and so steadily that George soon felt both anger and unease.

On the next day, and the next again, Robert was always there. He stood near the court, near the street, near any place where George went for sport or company. George began to think, “What does this strange fellow want of me?” But Robert gave no plain answer. He simply stayed near, watched him with deep hatred, and made cold, cutting remarks whenever he found a chance. George disliked him at once, but he still thought him only some rude young student who wanted attention.

At last there came a game played for a dinner and wine at the Black Bull tavern. George, eager for the honor of his side, was already serious about the match when Robert again placed himself too near the flying ball. “Sir,” George said, trying first to keep calm, “stand a little farther off.” Robert bit his lip and answered, “Is there any law that can force me?” George’s face flushed, but he still held himself in. “If there is no law,” he said, “there are men enough here to make you keep your distance. Be careful.” Robert only moved closer, fixed his heavy eyes on him, and stood there as if he meant to stay forever.

The game then became half contest and half torment. When one player cried, “That was a fine blow, George!” Robert caught the words and repeated them again and again in a mocking voice, twisting them with scraps of religious language until even the onlookers laughed. The players, however, were furious. At last George, running backward for the ball, struck hard against Robert and fell over his legs. As George rose, Robert kicked violently at him, and the blow might have done great harm if it had landed full. George, driven beyond patience, struck him across the face with his racket, and blood ran at once from Robert’s nose and

mouth.

One of the men there then said, “Do you know whom you have struck? That gentleman is your brother, Mr. Robert Wringhim Colwan.” Robert answered before George could speak. “Not Colwan,” he said. “I give up that name.” George, still hot with anger, replied too harshly and was sorry for it almost at once. Robert, however, would accept neither apology nor peace. When George came to him later by the fountain and said, “Robert, I was wrong. Give me your hand, and let this end,” Robert lifted his foot and kicked the offered hand away. “That suits such a hand better than mine,” he said, and sneered at the whole company.

From that moment the matter grew worse. Robert, covered with blood and making no attempt to clean himself, went with the young men all the way to the Black Bull. A crowd of boys and idle people gathered round them, laughing, shouting, and pointing at the sight. Robert even tried to force his way into the inn and dine with the party. When the landlord’s men pushed him back, he began at once to stir up the people outside. He lied, begged, shouted, and worked on the crowd so fiercely that the landlord at last sent secretly for officers, and Robert was taken away to the guard-house.

That should have ended the business, but it did not. Word was sent to the Reverend Mr. Wringhim, who was dining with leading men of his own party. He read Robert’s note aloud and added such comments of his own that the whole matter grew larger and darker in every mouth. Soon the listeners were crying out against the cruelty done to an innocent young man, and their anger mixed at once with party hatred. Before long a voice outside the house cried, “A plot! A plot! Treason! Down with the bloody men at the Black Bull!” In that crowded city the cry ran quickly from street to street, and the mob gathered again as if a spark had fallen in dry straw.

Stones struck the windows first. Then the company inside, believing themselves attacked by political enemies, seized whatever weapons they could find. Some drew swords, while others caught up pokers, spits, shovels, and tongs from kitchen and hall. With shouts and wild anger they rushed out into the street and broke the first line of the crowd. But a city mob does not vanish for long. It

fell back only to return from every alley and passage, and soon the street before the Black Bull was full of blows, cries, and confusion. Men who had gone out laughing at dinner now fought for their lives in the dark, and the whole town was thrown into alarm. Thus the first open meeting of the brothers ended, not in reconciliation, but in blood, riot, and a hatred that all Edinburgh could now see.

Part 4

The fight in the street ended only when soldiers and town officers forced the two sides apart. By that time the whole city was in alarm, and many believed that a great political rising had begun. When the prisoners were examined, the matter slowly changed its shape. It appeared, in the end, that a few young gentlemen, most of them not even enemies of the party they had attacked, had somehow helped to beat and scatter a large part of the population of Edinburgh. Many went home laughing when the truth came out, but the Reverend Mr. Wringhim did not laugh at all.

He did all he could to darken the matter and turn public anger against young George Colwan. He spoke of him as a violent man, led on by a bad father, eager to shame his mother and destroy his brother. His bitter and forceful speech worked strongly on many hearers. Soon the streets were full of cold looks, whispers, and signs of hatred whenever George appeared. “What have I done to all these people?” George asked one day. Adam Gordon answered honestly, “It is not what they know. It is what they have been made to believe.”

The next day George tried to go back to ordinary life, but ordinary life was gone. When he went to play again, Robert appeared beside him as before, standing always at his right hand, silent, dark, and watchful. If George entered a church, a playhouse, a hall, or even a public walk, Robert was there within minutes, though George could not guess how he had learned his plans. He did not always speak, but his eyes did more than words could do. More than one person, seeing those fierce fixed looks pass from Robert to George, felt a sudden chill and turned uneasy without knowing why.

George was soon driven almost out of society by this strange pursuit. “He follows me like a spirit,” he said to Gordon. “If I choose a place by chance, he is there. If I change my mind at the last minute, he is there again.” Gordon tried to calm him and said there must be some natural way by which Robert learned his movements. George wanted to believe that, yet his fear kept growing. At last he even thought, in a generous moment, that perhaps Robert wanted peace and did not know how to ask for it, and he resolved that he would speak kindly the next time they met.

For a short while Robert vanished, and George began to breathe again. One early morning he rose and went out alone toward Arthur’s Seat to enjoy the fresh air before the city was awake. There, among rock, cloud, and mist, he was again struck with terror, for in that strange light he thought he saw a fearful shape and then found Robert close upon him. A struggle followed, blood was shed, and by evening George himself was in prison, charged with attacking his own brother and meaning to kill him. Old Dalcastle was now frightened at last. “They mean to ruin you and put that black villain in your place,” he said.

The case at first looked dangerous for George, because everyone remembered the earlier blows at tennis and the growing hatred between the brothers. Yet when the matter came before a higher court, several things changed. The judges heard of Robert’s constant dogging of George’s steps, and the guards at Queensberry House told how Robert had gone out before George that morning and then hurried after him. George spoke plainly and said, “My brother has followed me for weeks in a way no man can bear. If he was behind me on the hill, I believe he meant me harm, not I him.” During the hearing Robert himself was found trying to slip out of court, and that did him no good. In the end George was acquitted with honor, while Robert was bound over to keep the peace.

That victory filled George and his friends with relief and joy. It was agreed that he and Adam Gordon would still make their planned journey north, though the best season had been lost. Before leaving, George invited his companions to dine once more at the Black Bull, and the whole company met in high spirits. George was brighter and more cheerful than ever, speaking, laughing, singing,

and drinking with the easy grace that had always made him beloved. Late in the evening someone proposed that they should go on together to another house for the rest of the night, and the company, hot with wine and careless happiness, agreed at once.

They had not been there long before George had a sudden quarrel with a young gentleman named Drummond. No one afterward could clearly explain how it began. A word was taken badly, sharp answers followed, and Drummond left the house in anger, hinting that they should settle the matter elsewhere. The others thought little of it, for men in drink often threatened more than they meant. Soon after, a low knock came at the door, and a woman said that a young gentleman outside wished to speak with George for a moment. “That will be Drummond,” George said. One friend called after him, “Do not quarrel.” Another cried, “Bring him in with you.” But George stepped out alone, the door was shut again, and the company went back to their talk.

In the morning all Edinburgh was ringing with the news that a young gentleman had been found slain near the North Loch, at the foot of the very close where George had spent the night. His friends hurried to the guard-house and found that the dead man was George Colwan himself. The old laird was broken at once by the sight. He wept over the body, kissed his son’s cold brow and lips, cried for vengeance, and said he should have died instead. Because Drummond had quarreled with George and vanished after the deed, suspicion settled heavily on him. He was hidden by friends, declared guilty when he did not appear, and driven from his country; yet even in the middle of his grief the old laird shook his head and said, “It is all a mistake. The truth is not out yet, but God will bring it out in His own time.”

Part 5

The old laird did not live long after his son’s death. Grief, fear, and the dark suspicions that had grown in him wore him down day by day. He spoke little, but when he did speak, he often returned to the same point. “Drummond did not do

it," he would say. "There is another hand in this, and God will show it." Miss Logan remained faithful to the house and to the memory of young George, and because she had loved him like a mother, she could not rest while the truth was still hidden.

Some time later a woman named Mrs. Calvert came secretly to Mrs. Logan with a parcel of goods and a strange story. She had fallen into misery, had lived among bad people, and had suffered for keeping faith with men who had none with her. Yet she now said plainly, "Mr. Drummond did not kill your young master. I know it, and I can tell you why." Mrs. Logan caught her hands and answered, "Then speak. Do not spare me. I would rather hear the worst truth than live one more day in doubt." Mrs. Calvert then began to tell of the night of the murder, of the drunken company, the dark street, the secret meeting, and the figure she had seen strike George from behind while another man engaged him in front.

Mrs. Logan listened with horror, and the more she heard, the more she believed that her old fears had been right. Mrs. Calvert said that she had seen the killer clearly enough to know him again if ever he crossed her sight. She also said that another witness, a poor prisoner who had seen the same event, would likely say the same if asked. "It was not Drummond," she repeated. "He has suffered for another man's crime." Mrs. Logan answered, "Then we must not sit and weep. We must go on, and we must know all."

The two women therefore set out together toward Dalcastle, dressed as country women and riding quietly through the countryside. Mrs. Logan had not told her companion how near they were to the end of the journey, for she wanted her judgment to be fresh and unprepared. When they stopped at an inn near the estate and sat by the window, Mrs. Logan said, "We may rest here for a day." Mrs. Calvert, who had been looking out into the road, suddenly turned and cried, "Rest? There is no need to go farther. The very man is here now." Below the window Robert Wringhim passed arm in arm with another young man, and the second man looked up, bit his lip, winked, and nodded in a secret, playful way.

At that sight Mrs. Logan gave a cry and fell senseless to the floor. When she came to herself later, she was shaking so badly that she could hardly speak. At last

she said, “That young man with him—did you see his face?” Mrs. Calvert answered, “I did, and I have seen it before.” Mrs. Logan pressed her hands together and whispered, “So have I. It was like George. It was like my dear young master come back from the grave.” The next morning the two women spoke more calmly, and Mrs. Calvert swore again that Robert was the man who had struck the deadly blow.

They did not wait long before acting. Soon afterward they met Robert on a lonely path, without his companion, and faced him boldly. Mrs. Logan said, “Now, Laird of Dalcastle, what have you to say for yourself? You have earned this hour.” Mrs. Calvert added, “I saw you kill your brother when his back was turned.” Robert foamed with rage and cried, “You lie! I did not touch my brother’s life.” Then, in his fury and terror, he called aloud, “Gil-Martin! Gil-Martin! Where are you now?” But no one came. The women bound his hands and feet, mocked his cowardice, and left him lying in the path, saying that the law of his country would soon overtake him.

They then went straight to the proper authorities and gave their full evidence. Lord Craigie listened carefully, and when all was heard, it was judged best to seize Robert Wringhim Colwan and bring him to trial. A man in prison who had seen the murder was sent secretly to view Robert, and his report only deepened the suspicion. Officers were sent out at once to Dalcastle, and they were told Robert was at home. Guards were set, rooms were searched, floors were lifted, closets were broken open, and every hiding place was tried. But Robert was gone. His mother too had vanished, and no one could say with certainty whether she was alive or dead.

So the matter ended, for the time, in deeper mystery than before. Drummond lived and died abroad, and the man most strongly suspected of the murder disappeared so completely that he seemed to have been swallowed by the earth. History, law, and common report carried the story no farther with any firmness. Yet the strange business did not end there, for papers were afterward found that claimed to be written by Robert himself. Since those papers may explain what no public record could fully explain, I now leave the outer tale for a time and turn to

the private memoirs and confessions of that unhappy sinner.

Part 6

I will now speak in my own person, and set down the truth as it was known to me. My life has been full of change, struggle, anger, joy, sorrow, and revenge. I have suffered for what I believed to be the true gospel, and I have struck at those whom I believed to be its enemies. Therefore I will write plainly, so that wicked men may know what has been done in the strength of faith and the promise of grace. Let them tremble if they will. I write not to please them, but to bear witness.

I came into the world as one set apart from the first. My mother was a woman of burning zeal, famous among the strictest of the faithful, and she had suffered much in hard times before she was given in marriage. Yet she was joined, for the trial of her spirit, to a man whom I was taught to regard as stained through and through with sin. From my earliest years I heard my father spoken of as one outside the favor of Heaven. I heard the same of my elder brother, though he was praised by others for beauty, ease, and kindness. So I grew up not as a son in one united house, but as a child cut off from those who should have been nearest to me.

My education was placed in the hands of the Reverend Mr. Wringhim, a man of learning, zeal, and high assurance. Under him I was taught the doctrines of election, reprobation, the corruption of man, and the sure safety of the chosen. I was made to pray morning and evening, and many times on the Sabbath. I was taught that prayers for the wicked were of no use, and that the enemies of the Lord were already marked for destruction. When I asked about my father and brother, I was answered in the same grave way each time. “They are not of us,” my mother would say. “Pray for the triumph of truth, not for the pride of the unconverted.”

I was a quick learner, and my teachers praised both my memory and my skill in argument. I loved sharp distinctions in doctrine and soon took pleasure in disputed points that few men care to touch. My brother, I was often told, had little taste for such holy labour and cared more for sport, dress, strength, and the

company of easy people. “Let him have his poor earthly gifts,” Mr. Wringhim once said to me. “You have better ones, if you are faithful.” Those words sank deep into me. From that time I looked on my brother with contempt as one of the children of this world, while I myself hoped to be numbered among those chosen before the foundation of the earth.

Yet I must confess that for a long time my soul had not full peace. I believed the doctrine, but I feared my own heart. I knew that none could save himself by effort, tears, or good works, and still I trembled lest I should prove, in the end, to be one cast away. There were hours when I lay awake at night and asked myself, “Am I truly chosen, or do I only wish to think so?” At such times my mother would find me pale and troubled and say, “Do not look to yourself. Look to the decree.” Mr. Wringhim would speak still more strongly. “The chosen are known by their hatred of the world and by their zeal for the truth. Search your spirit on that ground.”

In this state I came to youth, proud in doctrine yet never quite at rest. I had my own ideas of what I should be if Heaven confirmed my election. I did not long to become merely a preacher speaking soft words from a pulpit. My heart, though I scarcely knew it fully then, inclined more to action, to judgment, and to the striking down of open enemies. I saw little hope in trying to turn hardened sinners from their path, for if God had not chosen them, then no man’s voice could do so. Sometimes, when such thoughts rose too strongly, I checked myself and prayed. Yet they returned again and again, as if something in my nature answered to them.

It was at this time that a most singular change came over my life. One day I fell into company with a young stranger, unlike any man I had ever known. He was handsome, bold, clear in speech, easy in manner, and so deep in the points of our strict belief that he seemed to carry them farther than even my reverend guardian had done. He listened when I spoke, agreed with me when I reasoned, and seemed to understand my inmost thoughts before I had fully uttered them. “You and I,” he said, “see farther than common men.” I felt at once drawn toward him with a force I could not explain.

We talked long and with great freedom, and the whole tenor of his speech

raised me above myself. He spoke of the chosen not as weak sinners saved with difficulty, but as men set apart for high purposes, men before whom the enemies of truth should fall. “Why should the saints fear the world?” he said. “It is the world that should fear the saints.” I asked him who he was and how he had reached such depth of understanding, but he turned the question aside with a smile. “Call me your friend,” he answered. “That is enough for now.” When I returned home that evening, my mother started at the change in my face, and even Mr. Wringhim looked at me with alarm.

“What has befallen you, boy?” he asked, taking me by the arm and searching my face. My mother cried, “Our dear child is altered. Speak to him, sir, and learn what spirit has touched him.” He questioned me closely. “Have you met with an accident? Have you seen anything beyond nature? Has the Enemy been busy with you?” I answered, “No accident has touched me, and no evil has overcome me. I have spoken only with one stranger, whom I took for an angel of light.” My mother said at once, “That is one of Satan’s oldest disguises.” But Mr. Wringhim stopped her and asked, “Did this stranger hold the same principles in which I have taught you?” When I said that he did, and in their fullest strength, my guardian lifted his eyes and declared that Heaven itself had revealed my calling.

He fell to prayer at once, and the next day was kept in our house as a day of thanksgiving. I was blessed, dedicated, and solemnly given over to the service of God. I still remember the fervor of my reverend father’s words as he laid his hands upon my head. “I give him wholly to Thee,” he said. “Make him a weapon in Thy hand, sharp and strong against Thy enemies.” Those words went through my whole being like fire. From that hour I no longer thought of myself merely as one who might speak for the gospel. I believed myself appointed to act for it, to stand against its enemies, and, if need be, to cut them off from the face of the earth.

Part 7

From that day my strange new friend and I were seldom apart. We walked together in the fields, in the streets, and on the edges of the city, and no subject

came amiss between us. He had a way of speaking that at once lifted my spirit and subdued it. When I pressed him to tell me who he was, he smiled and answered only, “Why should you trouble yourself with that? I am one who has chosen you above others.” I said, “But I would know the rank and name of so great a friend.” He replied, “Drop that matter. It is a secret, and I tell it to no man.”

The more he hid himself, the greater he became in my imagination. He spoke sometimes in a half-playful way of servants, subjects, wide lands, and distant powers, as if all these were at his command and yet beneath his notice. “I have left more behind me than you can number,” he said once, “only to follow a certain whim and live here for a season.” I looked at him in wonder and answered, “Then you are surely no common man.” He laughed and said, “No, Robert, I am not common.” From such hints I persuaded myself that he was some great prince travelling in secret, and I even formed the bold thought that he might be the Czar Peter himself, moving through Europe in disguise.

This belief worked mightily on me. I began to think that he had chosen me for some high employment, and that the truths I had learned in private were now to be used before the world. He encouraged that hope without plainly naming it. “It is more honorable,” he said, “to put down the wicked with strength than to waste breath trying to mend them.” I answered, “Then do you hold that open sinners should be struck down?” He looked full at me and said, “When Heaven has marked them, who is man that he should spare?” Such words did not shock me as they might once have done. Instead they seemed to fit certain fierce thoughts that had long moved secretly in my breast.

What astonished me still more was the strange power that seemed to live in him. One day, as we walked, we were joined by Mr. Blanchard, a minister much praised as a good and sober man, though I then thought him of a cold and moral kind. The three of us sat together in the fields and spoke at some length. My companion regarded Mr. Blanchard with a fixed and searching eye that made me uneasy, though I could not have said why. More than once, while he was thus looking at him, I thought his very face changed and grew so like Mr. Blanchard’s that I could hardly tell the one from the other. I rubbed my eyes and looked again,

but the likeness passed so quickly that I did not know whether I had truly seen it or only imagined it.

When we parted, Mr. Blanchard turned back with me for a little way and questioned me about my friend. “Who is that man?” he asked. “He is a stranger here,” I said, “but a person of uncommon greatness and clear light in divine matters.” Mr. Blanchard stopped and answered in a low serious voice, “I never saw anyone I disliked so much at first sight. Believe me, if he is a stranger, he has not come for good.” I replied warmly, “You do not understand him. His mind rises above other men’s, and his views of religion are deep and exact.” Mr. Blanchard then said, “It is because of those powers that I fear him. There is greatness in him, but there is also terror.”

I was troubled by that warning, yet only for a moment. When I repeated Mr. Blanchard’s words to my companion, he smiled with calm scorn. “That man fears me because he feels me stronger than himself,” he said. “These smooth teachers always hate the man who carries truth to its end.” I answered, “He said that we take some doctrines to a dangerous extreme.” At that my friend drew himself up and said, “Dangerous to whom? To the elect, or to their enemies?” I could make no reply, and he continued in a lower voice, “Robert, half-truth is the refuge of cowards. You were not made for that.”

From then on he began to lead me farther than any teacher had ever led me before. We spoke less of ordinary duties and more of spiritual rights, less of patience and more of power. He taught me that the chosen of God were not weak creatures creeping through the world in fear, but kings and judges in secret, armed with inward freedom and beyond the laws that bind common men. “The world belongs not to the loose multitude,” he said, “but to those who know the decree.” I answered, “Then the saints may act where others must hold back?” He leaned near me and said, “They may act where Heaven commands, and the command is often written in the heart before it is heard by the ear.”

These teachings filled me with fierce joy, though now and then a shadow crossed my soul. There were times when I asked him, “Can a chosen man never mistake his own desire for the will of God?” He always had an answer ready.

“Would God have given you hatred of evil,” he said, “if He meant you only to stand and watch it?” At other times he praised me till my whole spirit burned within me. “You are not one made to follow at a distance,” he told me. “You are fitted for hard things and high things.” So I yielded myself more and more to his guidance, trusted his words above those of other men, and waited in an eager and dangerous hope for the work he seemed always preparing before me.

Part 8

Mr. Blanchard’s warning did not leave me as quickly as I pretended. For a little time I carried his words in my mind and turned them over in secret. “There is greatness in him, but there is terror too,” the old minister had said, and I could not wholly forget it. Yet whenever I met my companion again, my doubts grew weaker. His speech was so bold, his judgment so swift, and his knowledge of my own hidden thoughts so exact, that I always ended by feeling ashamed of my fears.

One day, however, he saw more in my face than I meant to show. “You have been listening to that moral preacher,” he said. “His milk-and-water faith has troubled you.” I answered, “He spoke against us both, and said we carry true doctrines to a dangerous end.” My companion laughed lightly. “Dangerous to whom?” he asked. “To the enemies of truth, yes. To the chosen, never.” Then, after walking some distance in silence, he added in a lower voice, “Robert, the time for words is nearly over. Men like Blanchard do more harm by one smooth sermon than open scoffers do in a year.”

I looked at him and said, “What then should be done?” He stopped and faced me. “Done?” he repeated. “He must be stopped. He is to preach in Paisley on Sunday on some great occasion, and that must not be. We shall find him walking alone in Finnieston Dell while he prepares his discourse. Let us go and cut him off.” I was struck silent for a moment. At last I said, “Your judgment is high and bold, but the laws of this land do not speak so.” He answered at once, “I am answerable to the laws of God and justice. As for the laws of men, I despise them.”

Though I had often spoken fiercely in theory, my heart still drew back from

blood. I knew well enough that I had sometimes wished the wicked swept from the earth, but wishing was not doing. “Can such a deed be right?” I asked myself. “Can a man truly serve Heaven with a pistol in his hand?” Yet my companion pressed me without rest. He praised my calling, spoke of my future fame, and told me that cowardice often hides under the name of caution. At last, worn down by his urging and already half drunk with my own pride, I yielded.

Even then I said, “I have no weapon, and I do not know where one is to be found.” He looked at me with a dark smile. “The God you serve will provide one,” he said, “if you are worthy of the trust.” At that very moment a strange dimness seemed to pass before my eyes, as if a cloud or veil had fallen close around us. I lifted my hand toward it in wonder. “What do you grasp at?” he asked sharply. I could not answer him properly, for in that dim light I thought I saw bright golden weapons descending toward me from above, all with their points turned my way.

I sank to my knees and was about to stretch out my hand, but he caught me and drew me away. “Come,” he said in a joyful voice, “you are dreaming, and yet your dream is true in its meaning. Stir up the full strength of your mind. He whom you serve will stand at your right hand and your left.” That vision, and those words, drove me almost beyond myself. When I reached home, my mother and Mr. Wringhim both saw that I was strangely changed. I joined in the prayers of the house, prayed alone afterward, and believed that Heaven had truly marked me for some dreadful service.

Early the next morning I ran to meet my companion, for by then I could not bear to be long out of his sight. He seemed delighted with the eagerness he found in me. After speaking many proud and stirring words, he drew out two pistols of bright gold and held them before me. “See,” he said, “what your Master has sent.” I cried out at once, for I believed them to be the very same weapons I had seen let down through the cloudy veil. “Then this is the Lord’s will,” I said, and took one eagerly into my hand.

We loaded them together and went to the place he had chosen, a spot behind thorn and bramble near the path where Mr. Blanchard was expected to walk. My companion’s skill in such things seemed beyond belief. We had hardly taken our

places before the old minister came slowly along the path, just as he had foretold. We knelt there with one knee to the ground, each pistol pointed through the bush. As Mr. Blanchard drew nearer, pausing now and then to look quietly at the sky and fields, I felt my spirit sink within me.

I shall never forget the sight of him. He looked like a man entirely alone with God, one who had no thought of danger and no fear of any human enemy. When he came exactly opposite us, Gil-Martin gave a short cry and fired. Mr. Blanchard turned toward the sound without even starting. “Now,” whispered my companion. I tried to obey, but my hand refused, and I thought I heard a sweet voice behind me saying, “Beware.”

“Coward, we are ruined!” cried my companion, for his own shot had failed. Mr. Blanchard came one step nearer and would have seen us plainly in another moment. There was no more time to think, no more room for delay. In terror, confusion, and blind obedience, I fired. The shot struck him. He stumbled aside, then fell upon his back, raised himself a little, and in a weak broken voice said, “Alas, whom have I offended, that men should be driven to such an act? Come forth, that I may forgive you before I die, or curse you in the name of the Lord.” Soon after that, with a prayer for forgiveness on his lips, he died.

I sat as still as stone, but Gil-Martin seemed filled with wild joy. “Rise,” he said. “You have done well at last. This is only the first of many such acts.” We did not go near the body. Hearing other men hurrying toward the place, Gil-Martin took both pistols and walked forward boldly as if to meet them, while he ordered me to save myself. I ran another way and from a distance saw him pass near the men with such ease that they hardly knew what to make of him. Only when they found the dead minister in his blood did they turn and chase him, and by then he was gone.

There was great alarm in Glasgow that day. Search was made everywhere for the killer, but neither my companion nor I was suspected. Instead, another poor man was seized, a young preacher who had bought firearms and been out that morning. The most terrible part was that two of the men who had met Gil-Martin swore that this innocent preacher was the very man they had seen with pistols in

his hands. I heard the whole trial, and so did Gil-Martin. When I said, “This is dreadful injustice,” he only seemed more pleased. “He is the more dangerous of the two,” he answered, meaning, as I understood him, that the innocent man was a worse enemy to our design than old Blanchard himself.

From that time the city and country were in agitation, and men of different parties turned the murder to their own use. I cared little for their politics, but one thing became clear to us both. The strict preachers stood on one side, and the men of mere good conduct and moral religion stood on the other. So it was resolved between us that some of the chief men of that unsound and worldly company should be struck down one after another when the chance offered. The first blood had been shed, and though I still felt horror, I had crossed the line that cannot be uncrossed.

Part 9

After the death of Mr. Blanchard I was not left in peace, nor did the act give me that clear and joyful certainty which I had expected. When Gil-Martin was near me, my spirit rose, my courage grew hard, and I believed that I had been made an instrument for some high and holy end. But when he left me, a different feeling came. I then remembered the dying words of the old minister, the broken prayer on his lips, and the strange sweetness of the voice that had whispered to me to beware. In such hours I was forced to ask myself whether I had indeed obeyed Heaven, or whether I had only obeyed a stronger will than my own.

Yet even in those dark hours I could not free myself from my companion. It was as if we had been bound together by some unseen tie. When I was alone, I breathed more freely, and my steps grew lighter. But whenever he drew near, a pain went through my heart, and I moved as if under a weight too heavy to cast off. I still believed him some mighty stranger from a distant land, a man raised above common laws, and one who had chosen me for great service, but I also believed by then that some power beyond nature lived in him, though I could not tell from what source it came.

My thoughts, therefore, became a confusion of zeal and misery. I looked back on what I had done with fear, and forward on what I might yet be called to do with disgust and dread. I no longer found comfort in my old hopes of greatness. Even property, favor, and all outward advantage lost their taste. What I desired most was not glory, nor even safety, but rest, and a deep forgetting of all that lay behind and before me.

In this state I met Gil-Martin again one morning, and he came to me in great haste and eager joy. “Your brother is abroad,” he said. “A few minutes ago I saw him going toward the mountain. The hill is wrapped in cloud, and there never was such a chance for divine justice. You can trace him by the dew, and you will find him alone on some high edge of rock. Go now, and strike.” I answered, “I have no weapon.” He put a small dagger into my hand and said, “This will serve. I shall be with you, or near you. Go first, and lose no time.”

I ran out as he commanded, and, in my eagerness, even asked some of the guards if my brother had passed that way. When they said he had, I believed Gil-Martin’s knowledge more wonderful than ever and pressed on toward the hill. But because he was no longer close beside me, my resolution soon began to fail. By the time I reached St. Anthony’s Well, I felt again those sinful doubts that always came over me when I was left to myself. I sat down on a stone and asked in bitterness whether the chosen could ever mistake their own violent desires for the will of God.

As I sat there in fear and confusion, a white mist gathered round me, and in the midst of it I saw a lady in white coming swiftly toward me. Her face was severe, and her look struck me with terror before she spoke. She passed close by and said, “Wretched man, how dare you lift your eyes to Heaven with such thoughts in your heart? Flee home and save your soul, or farewell forever.” Then she glided away among the rocks and vanished. I believed for a moment that one of the good spirits had been sent to warn me, and I rose at once with the thought of turning back.

I had scarcely taken a few steps when Gil-Martin came hurrying down the ridge in anger. “What delays you now?” he cried. “The chance is passing. I have

traced the sinner to his hiding place in the cloud, where he sits on the edge of a precipice. Will you lose such an hour?" His force of will bore me down once more. I followed him upward through the mist until he left me and I went on alone. Then, before I could clearly settle whether I meant to strike or to speak, my brother himself suddenly came upon me.

He seized me roughly, for I had cried out in fear when he approached, and in his hot temper he thought I meant some mischief. He stopped my mouth with one hand, shook me, and said, "What do you mean by howling murder on this lonely hill? Tell me at once, or I will throw you over the rock." I fell into such terror that I begged for my life like a coward. "I will never trouble you again," I cried. "Spare me, dear brother. I never meant you harm." He held me hard and answered, "Then swear before God that you will never follow me again with those dreadful looks of yours, and never come near me unless I call for you."

I swore it eagerly, for I believed in that moment that he truly meant to kill me if I refused. But he asked still more. "Who told you that I was here?" he said. I answered, "A friend." He pressed me at once. "What friend? Was he here with you? Where is he now?" To all this I could only answer weakly that he had been near but that I could not tell where he was gone. George looked at me with anger and scorn and said, "Then confess it was the devil who sent you here, for no other being could have known that I came out alone."

Even then I could not let go my dark pride. I said, "You know little of him, or of the powers that may belong to higher minds. I came for your good." George's anger then softened in a way I did not expect. "Well," he said, "I will try to believe that. I am quick in temper, and perhaps I have judged you too harshly. But I swear before God that I never wished evil to you, any more than to my own life or my father's." At those words something in me should have broken and yielded, but it did not. When he held out peace and said, "Let us part as brothers and remain friends," I felt only a bitter rising in my heart.

"Would that be right?" I answered. "Would that be for the glory of God?" He stared at me and said, "What can be more right? It is the plain command of the Gospel. Come, Robert, say that we are reconciled." Then I gave him the worst

answer that ever passed my lips. “Yes,” I said, “according to the flesh, our reconciliation is as complete as that between the lark and the adder, and no more.” I left him there and strode away in rage, though he had offered what I had never truly deserved. Thus I lost perhaps the last quiet road that was ever to open before me, and from that day the darkness in my mind grew deeper than before.

Part 10

After I left my brother on the hill, my mind was torn in a manner that I cannot well describe. I had refused peace when it was openly offered, and yet I did not feel either victory or joy. My heart was angry, my pride was satisfied, but my spirit was sick. I wished never to see George again, and yet I could not free my thoughts from him. Worst of all, I feared the judgment of my companion more than I feared that of God or man.

When I next met Gil-Martin, he read all this in my face at once. “You have failed again,” he said. “You were tried and found weak.” I answered, “I was not called to strike him then.” He laughed at me with great contempt and said, “Do not deceive yourself. Your brother will never stand at peace with you, nor you with him.” I then said, “He offered reconciliation.” At that my companion’s eye flashed, and he replied, “And you did well to reject it. Peace with such men is war against Heaven.”

He then spoke of George with growing bitterness, as of one not merely worldly, but dangerous to the cause of truth. I cannot now repeat all his words, but they fell upon me with dreadful force. He said my brother had escaped once and would not escape often. He said also that many things were now moving together in the city, and that the sins of men would help to punish one another. “You need not strike every blow with your own hand,” he told me. “There are hours when the wicked open the door for justice themselves.”

In the meantime, I afterward learned, George went home from the hill full of confusion and horror. He told his father what had happened, but the old man answered only with anger and rough laughter. He called me a half-devil and said

that children born in sin were fit company for evil spirits. George found more comfort in Adam Gordon, who tried hard to persuade him that there was nothing beyond nature in all he had seen. Yet George himself remained persuaded that some dark being haunted him in my likeness, or perhaps haunted me and him alike.

From that time his trouble grew daily. The people already hated him because my guardian and others had raised a cry against him, and now he dared not move freely through the streets. Worse than the crowd, as he thought, was the continual nearness of my presence. Wherever he went, there I was reported to be, always at the same side, always with those fixed looks that he could not endure. Whether I was truly there at every such time, or whether some other power did in part usurp my appearance, I will not here decide; but certain it is that the persecution became intolerable to him.

Matters then came to a public hearing, and I was bound over to keep the peace, while George was acquitted with honour. That day was one of great exultation to him and his friends, and they made high plans for sport and travel. On the evening before his departure, he gathered a company at the Black Bull, where they feasted, drank, sang, and rejoiced late into the night. The bottle passed too freely, and at last, in an evil hour, the whole company removed to another house, where wine, pride, and folly soon did their usual work. There a quarrel arose between George and a young gentleman named Drummond, sudden in its rise and little understood by any who saw it.

Drummond left the house in anger, and all the company supposed that the matter would either pass away or be settled later between the two. But not long after, a knock came at the door, and George was told that someone outside wished to speak with him for a moment. He went out at once, and never returned alive. I was not then in the room, nor among his companions; but I was near enough to the end of that dreadful matter to know that what followed was no common meeting, and no fair encounter between two angry young men.

Gil-Martin was with me, and his spirit was raised to a fearful height. He seemed to know, without being told, every movement of the unhappy party. “Now,” he said, “the hour is come. Watch, and do not fail me.” I was so confounded by

wine, rage, and his influence that I followed where he led and hardly knew what I did. There was a narrow place, a dark street, hasty steps, low words, the flash of steel, and then confusion beyond all order. One man was engaged in front, another came on from behind, and my brother fell.

I will not deny that I was present, nor that my hand was near that work, but all clear memory of the exact turns of it has never remained with me from that hour to this. At one instant I thought Gil-Martin stood beside me in his own form. At another I believed he had taken on the very likeness of George, so that I seemed to behold my brother fighting, falling, and pursuing himself all in one dreadful maze. There was one slight wound and then another more deadly, both given from behind, and after that my brother sank. Even when the deed was done, I felt less like a doer of it than like one swept away in a stream too strong for resistance.

We fled at once from the place, and by a strange and terrible chance the blame fell on Drummond. Gil-Martin seemed delighted beyond measure at this turn and treated the whole affair as a piece of rare skill and good fortune. I, on the other hand, was left in a state nearer to madness than triumph. The death of Mr. Blanchard had shaken me, but this blow struck far deeper, for here the blood was not that of a stranger and opponent, but of my own mother's son. Yet even then my companion would not allow me the poor comfort of grief. "You speak as men speak," he said. "I tell you, Robert, this was necessity, judgment, and victory."

Part 11

After my brother's death, the burden of outward greatness fell upon me, but it brought neither honor nor peace. My father did not long survive that blow. Grief and fear broke his strength, and when he died I became laird of Dalcastle and master of all that had once seemed so desirable. Yet I took little joy in house, land, and name. I had thought, in my blindness, that such power might enlarge my usefulness, but I found that an estate may lie broad before a man while his soul remains shut up in a narrow prison.

During that time my life passed in a manner which I can scarcely set in order,

even now. There were days that seemed full of action, noise, and company, and yet afterward I could give no clear account of them. Servants looked strangely at me. People whom I met in the road or market sometimes greeted me with a freedom that amazed and offended me. Worse still, there began to rise dark whispers of conduct and excess of which I knew nothing in my own conscience, and these reports so troubled me that I often asked whether disease had fallen upon my mind.

My greatest misery, however, was still Gil-Martin. His presence had grown more hateful to me than anything on earth. I no longer saw in him only greatness, force, and terrible wisdom. I saw also mockery, cruel delight, and a power that rejoiced in my inward pain. At last, unable to bear more, I spoke plainly to him. “Great prince,” I said, “leave me to my own poor way. You have done much for me, and I am unworthy of it, but you have not made me either better or happier. Go back to your own dominions, and let me seek Heaven in the path of common men.”

He heard me out, but his answer struck me like a sentence of death. “Sooner shall the mother leave the child at her breast,” he said, “sooner shall the shadow leave the substance, than I shall leave you. Our beings are mixed together. I will not depart this country until I carry you with me in triumph.” I cannot describe the horror these words caused in me. I felt as if some lasting doom had been spoken over me, and that from then on I was no longer master even of my own thoughts. He saw my anguish and enjoyed it. That was the bitterest part of all.

Troubled for some answer, I asked him where he had been during the time he had seemed absent from me. He replied in a strange tone of affection, half tender and half mocking. “Your crimes and extravagances forced me from your side for a season,” he said, “but I am drawn back to you again.” I stared at him in wonder and answered, “What crimes do you speak of? I know none.” He looked at me calmly and said, “You have gone on like one in a delirium. You are accused of having made away with your mother in secret, and also of the death of a beautiful young lady whose love you had won.”

At these words I cried out in horror, for nothing could have struck me with

greater force. “It is false,” I said. “It is monstrous and intolerable falsehood. I never laid hand on any woman to take away her life, and I have avoided their company from my youth. I know nothing of my mother’s end, and nothing whatever of the death of any young lady.” He answered, “I hope it may be so. Yet the proofs are said to be strong, and an inquiry is already in motion. If you are not certain of both your innocence and your power to prove it, it would be safer to withdraw yourself and let the matter pass without you.”

This advice I rejected at once, for guiltless fear often appears more shameful than danger itself. “Never shall it be said that I fled from trial,” I answered. “That would stain me more deeply than slander can. I have shed the blood of sinners, but in these two matters I am wholly innocent. I will show myself openly in every place and face every judge that calls me.” Gil-Martin then gave me one of those dreadful answers which always left me colder than before. “Bold words will do little,” he said. “To me they mean nothing, for I know that you did both deeds with your own hands.”

I was so confounded that for a moment I could scarcely speak. At last I said, “If this is true, then I must have two souls, one doing in my body what the other knows nothing of.” He seemed pleased with that answer and took it up at once. “That may indeed be true in effect,” he said. “We are all made up of more than one nature, and I myself have suffered in that way.” He then spoke of a change within his own being, of some former greatness now turned to misery, and of a strange new spirit that directed all his powers. I listened with dread, but no comfort came of it. From that hour the thought fixed itself in me like a nail driven into wood, that some other will might be using my frame at seasons unknown to me, while I remained answerable before God and man for all that was done.

Part 12

Gil-Martin listened to my words about the two souls without any surprise. Instead he answered me with a dark calmness that was harder to bear than anger. He said that such division in one person was no impossible thing, and that he

himself had suffered by a change of spirit and nature. Then he began to speak in a high and dreadful strain of some former greatness from which he had fallen, of power still remaining to him, and of wide dominions that would one day be shown to me. “I will place you at my right hand,” he said, “and let you see the greatness of my kingdom and the joy of my true followers.” These promises, which once would have filled me with pride, now gave me only fear.

I tried to turn the talk back to the charges laid against me, but he seemed to enjoy my distress too much to leave it there. Soon after this I was forced into a meeting that struck me with greater astonishment than all that had gone before. A woman of violent manner came before me and accused me openly of ruining her daughter. I answered her with full truth that I had never, to my knowledge, even seen either of her daughters, far less spoken with one in secret. “You are mad, good woman,” I said. “I have not been in this place even one month.” She threw up her hands and cried, “One month? You false saint, you have been here four months and seven days, and the whole country knows what use you have made of the time.”

I turned at once to Gil-Martin, expecting him to laugh at the foolish charge and put the woman to shame. Instead he shook his head gravely. “You are wrong, my dear friend,” he said. “It is indeed the very time she names. I know also that you have often gone to her house and had private dealings with one of the young women.” I stood speechless for a moment and then cried out that he was mocking me. “You may as well try to reason me out of my own life,” I said, “as make me believe that I have been here four months, or that I have done the things this woman says.” But neither of them gave way, and the widow pressed me with such heat and certainty that I began to feel as if the ground under me were giving way.

She went on to say that if I did not marry her daughter, she would bring me to trial and to the gallows if she could. “Marry your daughter?” I answered. “On the word of a Christian, I know nothing of her.” But the woman only called me deceiver, hypocrite, and destroyer. What frightened me most was not her rage, but the fact that every word she spoke seemed supported by times, visits, and small outward details, as if a second life of mine had indeed been lived beyond my

knowledge. When at last she left me, still threatening vengeance, I was left in a state close to despair.

From that hour my misery increased daily. I felt myself surrounded on every side by charges that I could neither understand nor answer. Men spoke to me of bargains, letters, promises, visits, insults, and evil acts of which I knew nothing at all. My lawyer came with endless papers and complaints and talked till my head burned. Wherever I turned, some fresh trouble met me. One hour I was told of deceit, another of cruelty, another of debt, another of scandal against women, and all with such confidence that simple denial seemed to make me only more guilty in the eyes of those around me.

I then lived like a man in the den of wild beasts, without the comfort that the prophet had. At times I gave myself to prayer with all my strength, hoping that Heaven would clear my spirit and show me where truth ended and madness began. At other times I was left so low and so empty that I fell into follies which I afterward viewed with shame, though even in these I always thought I could trace the first lead back to Gil-Martin. He would draw me toward wrong, leave me there alone, and come again the next day to reprove me gently. Then he would heal every wound with the same poison, telling me that as one justified and chosen I could not fall in any final sense, and that such slips would never be laid to my charge. That teaching had once pleased me. Now it sickened me, but still I was weak enough to listen.

So great became the noise around my name that I often shut myself up for days together and would see no one. In those times only one servant came freely near me, a blunt honest fellow named Samuel Scrape. He came from a place called Penpunt, and because I laughed once at the name and called him by it, he grew proud of the title and answered best when I used it. He was no deep thinker in religion, but he was plain, steady, and free of all cunning. Because I had almost no one else to speak with, I sometimes made him sit with me and tell me what people were saying.

These talks troubled me nearly as much as the widow’s charge had done. “Penpunt,” I said one day, “you tell me that I hired you myself, that I agreed on

your wages, and that I have paid you from week to week. How can that be true, when I never hired you and have only given you money within this last month?" He stared at me in his simple way and answered, "Master, you may as well say water is not water. I know the day I came, and I know the hand that paid me." I tried to reason with him and even joked bitterly that Cameronian honesty seemed to allow a man to take two payments for one service. But he only replied that in such matters he would rather hurt a friend's purse than his good name, and that I had better pay him again than keep saying before witnesses that plain truth was a lie.

His answers, rough as they were, struck harder than wiser arguments might have done. I could see that he believed every word he said. There was no trick in him, no wish to frighten me, and no pleasure in my pain. When I pressed him further about where he had come from, how long he had served, and what sort of master I had been, he gave me many small details, all simple, all clear, and all impossible for me to answer. Thus even in the room where I hoped for some rest, I found only a new witness against the steadiness of my own mind. I began then to feel that I could no longer remain where every face, every voice, and every hour seemed ready to prove that another Robert had been walking the earth in my shape.

Part 13

After these strange talks with Samuel Scrape, I was more miserable than ever. I had hoped, at least, to learn that my fearful companion was gone for good, and for one moment that hope did rise in me when Scrape said the mysterious stranger had gone away with another man and had not returned. But that small comfort died at once when I asked after my mother. Scrape looked at me with such horror and doubt that my blood ran cold before he spoke. At last he said, "God knows where her soul is, and if you do not know where her body is, I think no living man does."

I stared at him in rage and terror and demanded a clear answer. He would

give none, but said that dreadful stories were abroad and that the matter would be tried before the circuit judges. Then, almost against his will, he let one further word slip from him, and that word struck me harder than all the rest. “The body of your own mother, sir,” he said in a tone of grief and fear. At that I lost all command of myself and strode wildly round the room, while Scrape watched me as though he saw guilt written on my face. We were both in that state of confusion when a knock came to the door, and every nerve in me seemed to stop at once.

Samuel opened the door trembling, and Gil-Martin entered. He had never before come into my chamber, and I felt then as if some doom had followed him over the threshold. Samuel slipped out by his side like a man escaping from a fire, and left us together. My dreadful companion looked hurried and deeply moved, though even then there was something in his eye that seemed to mock at mortal fear. “I come to save your life,” he said, “and there is not a minute to lose. A mob is coming this way with two dead bodies, and officers from Edinburgh are already surrounding the house to seize you.”

I answered him bitterly, “And who has brought me to this?” But he cut me short at once. “There is no time for reproach,” he said. “I pledged that your life should be safe from the hand of man, and I am here to keep that pledge, even if I lose my own.” Then he spoke in a rapid and commanding way that left me no room for thought. He ordered me to exchange clothes with him, put on his green coat, belt, and strange head-dress, and pass out at once among the guards, who, he said, would not dare lay hands on one who wore that garb. I obeyed him like a man in a dream, and before I knew what I did, his dress was on me and mine on him.

He then drew his hand three times over my face in a manner I did not understand, and pushed me toward the door. I went through hall and passage, through guards and armed men, while they all stepped back and raised their caps as I passed. One officer alone addressed me and asked if I had seen the man they wanted. I knew not what answer to give and so spoke the first words that came. “He is safe enough,” I said, and the officer smiled as if that were answer enough. Thus I went free through the very midst of those sent to take me.

I had not gone far when I heard a great noise from the east and turned toward it. There I met a furious crowd carrying two dead bodies on boards covered with white sheets. I did not dare stop and look too closely, yet I knew in my heart that one of them must be my mother, and the other perhaps that unhappy young woman of whom the widow had spoken. The men were full of rage, and as I moved among them in disguise I heard them load my name with every curse they knew. To my shame I must confess that, mixed with my terror, I felt a strange dark pride in hearing myself called a monster, a devil, and a thing made only for hatred.

I soon left that dreadful company and fled through the country as best I could. By one means or another I came at last, in disguise, to the house of a weaver named John Dods. He and his wife received me for the night, though neither with full trust. I prayed with the family, and the wife was pleased by the sound of my devotions, but the weaver was not won. He argued even over the meaning of my prayer and at last shut me up to sleep among looms, wheels, and webs in the work-house, locking the door upon me. As I lay there, I heard husband and wife whispering fiercely together, the one saying that I was the murderer they sought, the other insisting that such a thing could not be.

In spite of fear and weariness, I fell asleep and had dreams too dreadful to repeat. When I woke at dawn, hot, thirsty, and half sick with terror, I reached for the disguise in which I had entered the house. To my astonishment, the green coat and strange turban were gone. My own black coat and cocked hat lay there in their place, and the money I had hidden in the lining was untouched. I thought myself mad and stumbled about among the looms in such confusion that I became entangled in the threads and could not free myself without tearing the whole web.

I then cried out for help, and the weaver came with anger enough for ten men. He took my struggle among the threads for some devilish trick and fell upon me with blows and curses. “Come out, you foul spirit,” he shouted. “I have woven a net at last to catch the Devil himself.” His wife ran in and tried to calm him, begging him not to murder a guest in his own house, but he still swore that my coming and the change of clothes proved I was no human being. At last they slackened the web and let me out, but not before I had taken more than one hard

stroke and strained my ankle so badly that I could hardly stand.

When I asked how my own clothes had been brought back into the locked room, the weaver crossed himself and swore he had never touched them and had never seen the stranger's clothes since the night before. His face showed such fear that I could not doubt he believed what he said. By then I was bruised, shaken, and almost beside myself. I dressed again in my black clothes, though I knew they made me easier to recognize, and left that house hardly knowing where I went. Thus I wandered on, wounded in body, broken in spirit, hated by all men, and pursued not only by the law and the crowd, but by that darker enemy from whom no road, no disguise, and no locked door could keep me safe.

Part 14

On leaving that house, I turned toward the north-west, because the wildest hills lay there, and I thought a man might lose both his enemies and himself among such wastes. As I crossed the heights above Hawick, I changed clothes with a poor shepherd whom I found singing alone on a hillside. He was glad enough to take my better clothes, and I was glad enough to put on his rough dress, believing myself at last hidden from every eye. In that plain shape I was welcomed into cottages and farmhouses where, in my own habit, I might have been watched with suspicion. For a little while I even tasted something like safety.

I soon entered service with a good and religious farmer, who, seeing that I was not fit to herd sheep, set me over cattle instead. The house had long been said to be troubled at times by a ghost, and for that reason the strange noises that followed me did not at first bring full blame on my head. Night after night they rose outside the walls, dreadful sounds that I knew too well, though they did not cross the threshold. The servants, however, were terrified, and before long they began to whisper that I myself was the cause, and that I was haunted by the spirits of those whom I had slain. My master remained kind, but kindness in one man could not shelter me from fear in twenty others.

At last they told me that I must no longer sleep in the house, but be put out

at night by myself in an outer building, so that the family might see whether peace would return when I was removed. I refused, for I knew too well what waited for me in lonely places. On this my master's brother struck me and kicked me with his foot, and I had not even the strength left to defend myself. "I am the child of misery and despair," I wrote then, and I spoke no more than the truth. I wished for the grave every hour of the day, yet still shrank from opening it with my own hand.

In that state Gil-Martin found me again and pressed me with all his power toward self-destruction. I argued with him as well as I could, saying that the deed was sinful and fearful, and that no doctrine of grace could make it right. He took my own old principles and turned them against me. "If the elect cannot finally fall," he said, "then why should you fear to end a life that has become only torment? The act is that of a hero, not of a coward." I answered that I was content to remain a coward if only I might be left for a little while to the judgment of God and not driven on by him.

Then he said one thing more that went through me like ice. "If you will not pity yourself, pity me," he said. "Look at me, and see to what I am reduced." Against my will I turned my eyes on him and caught only half a look, but that half look was enough. I saw such ruin, horror, and blasted misery in that face that my whole being seemed to wither at once. I rose with a groan and crept away from him, not daring once to look behind me, and before night I reached a lonely cottage on the Border, where a poor widower gave me a bed of rushes by his fire.

There, for a few days, I found a kind of shelter. Strange sounds still moved in the dark, but they kept their distance, and I began to believe that some higher protection rested over that place. I spent my hours in prayer and in writing out my journal, intending, if I lived, to join these pages to the printed account I already carried. On the third day the hind brought me news from Redesdale that a stranger gentleman was searching eagerly for me, or for one of my appearance, and from the description I knew too well who it was. So I left that refuge and wrote, before going, that perhaps it was the last sentence I should ever set down. Weeks later, on the open moor at Ault-Righ, I added one line more and then bade farewell to all beneath the sun.

Part 15

There the memoir breaks off. If the unhappy man wrote more, it has never reached my hands. But the sequel, preserved by tradition and by a strange later discovery, is so singular that no common invention could well have framed it. In the year 1823 there was published an authentic letter telling of an old suicide's grave on a wild height called Cowan's-Croft, where the lands of three proprietors met. The tradition said that a dark and thoughtful young stranger had long ago served a Mr. Anderson in that district, and that one day, after pressing Anderson's young son to stay with him, he had declared that if the boy went home he would cut his own throat before he came back. Before evening he was found hanging in a frightful posture beside a hayrick, and the next morning he was buried on the lonely height with his plaid, his bonnet, the rope about his neck, and all that was on him.

The same letter reported that, more than a hundred years later, two young men out casting peats opened that grave out of curiosity. They found not bare bones, but a body in such preservation that the tale sounded at first like a fable. The blanket, the plaid, and the rope were there; the body rose partly up when they pulled at it; the features were still plain; the hair remained on the head; and pieces of the clothes were cut away and sent about as curiosities. It was added that the corpse had been exposed again after this first opening, and that any further disturbance would likely destroy what wonder had preserved so long. This account, though extraordinary, bore such marks of truth that I resolved to investigate it for myself.

Accordingly I went into the country with several companions, met Mr. Hogg at a sheep fair, and after some difficulty found guides willing to take us to the place. We came at last to the grave on the wild hill and saw at once that one side had indeed been lately opened and closed again. Fragments lay near it already, among them pieces of old clothes, some teeth, and part of a pocket-book. We set to work with spades and cleared the whole covering away. In the part previously

disturbed, many bones came up loose among rags, moss, and wet matter, and the skull, when found, was damaged; but from the scalp the hair still held firm.

In the side that had not been opened before, everything was in far better order. The lower garments still kept their shape; the stockings and garters were as neatly placed as if newly fastened; and the shoes, though open in the seams, were fresh in the leather and even in the wooden heels. The clothes were of a very old and strong make, unlike those of our own time, and there were signs that the man had worked in a byre shortly before death. From these remains we recovered such fragments as could be preserved, and among the old articles and papers connected with the body there came to light the document which I have now laid before the reader. Thus the confession of Robert Wringhim Colwan, if such indeed was the writer’s true name, passed from the grave into my hands.

What judgment ought finally to be formed, I do not pretend fully to settle. That the memoir shows a mind diseased, proud, violent, and carried away by religious madness, no sober reader can deny. Yet when I compare its statements with the older narrative, the testimonies, the traditions, and the circumstances of the grave, I find agreement where I expected confusion, and reality where I expected mere frenzy. Whether Gil-Martin was only the shape taken by a ruined conscience, or something darker still, I leave to those who are more certain in such matters than I am. I have told the story from the first household divisions at Dalcastle to the lonely grave on the hill, and there I leave this unhappy sinner to the mercy of that Judge before whom all disguises, arguments, and delusions must at last fall away.