

LIFE'S CHANCE

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Life's Chance by G. H. S. Walpole

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LIFE'S CHANCE

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TRANSFER FROM C. O. MAY 1931

To
My Wife



PREFACE

MANY years ago a Tract was put into my hands asking the plain question whether those who felt no need of the Sacrifice of Christ had ever faced their failure to fulfil the paramount obligation of the first and great commandment to love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength. I was obliged to confess that I had not given it any serious consideration, as love to an Invisible Person had always seemed to me vague and remote. The love of my neighbour I could understand, the love of God was difficult. And yet there it stood with the great authority of Christ impressed upon it as not only the great duty, but the first.

My attention being drawn to it, I looked for books to help me. The only English one I could find was an Essay by Bishop Moberly, written when he was Head Master of Winchester on the Commandments of the first table of the Decalogue. It is written with all the care and devotion that so great a scholar and so holy a man possessed and bears traces of that anxious period that followed the publication of Newman's *Development* during which it was written. It greatly interested me and stimulated further thought on the subject. In it the Bishop confessed that whilst to love God with all the heart was the soundest of all principles, it was a very difficult one to obey. "The heights of sacred feeling are not reached at a bound. We cannot love because we will, and when we will. . . . Any person who has attended to his own heart or who has had the opportunity of observing the hearts

of others, must be well aware how delicate and how difficult is the express culture of feeling. It is seen to sicken and decay at once where the attempt is made to stimulate it directly. What seems to grow under direct efforts of cultivation is almost certain to be counterfeit. It is as if you should try to educate a rose to smell sweet by a cultivation directly addressed to its scent, as by watering it with rose water, or filling the air in which it grew with odours instead of encouraging its own natural processes of growth, giving it its own proper soil, and using the knife freely and wisely." I have quoted this much because the Bishop there exactly expressed my own difficulty. Here was the great obligation, obviously one of feeling though springing out of will, intellect and strength. Yet feeling is the one thing out of our control.

But though feeling cannot be created at will, it quickly arises under certain conditions and circumstances. Men enter a building calm and collected and come out of it moved and excited; they watch a play or listen to a concert and are stirred to the very depths. Nay, a touching story, well told, will often lead the hard business man secretly to wipe his eyes. So, too, love quickly responds to love. Even a child's love will change a hard man's heart. If all this be true, it necessarily follows that the realization of God's love must move man's love. If I know God loves me, I must love in return. Could I be sure of this, could I without conceit or impertinence take it for granted? That was the question I asked, very simple and elementary, but widely ignored. It was in my endeavour to answer this question that the whole subject of Love in relation to God and Life broadened out before me.

The result lies in the pages that follow. An attempt to put in a popular way some account of the greatest romance the world has ever known, how "Love might be, hath been