

STRONG HEARTS

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Strong hearts by George W. Cable

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GEORGE W. CABLE

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*Wm
Clyde*

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By George W. Cable

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Charles Scribner's Sons
New York 1899

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* In magazine form "The Solitary" appeared under the title of "Gregory's Island."

The Solitary

The Solitary

I

“THE dream of Pharaoh is one. The seven kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. . . . And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established.” . . .

In other words: Behind three or four subtitles and changes of time, scene, characters, this tale of strong hearts is one. And for that the tale is tripled or quadrupled unto you three or four times (the number will depend); it is because in each of its three or four aspects—or separate stories, if you insist—it sets forth, in heroic natures and poetic fates, a principle which seems to me so universal that I think Joseph would say of it also, as he said to the sovereign of Egypt, “The thing is established of God.”

Strong Hearts

I know no better way to state this principle, being a man, not of letters, but of commerce (and finance), than to say—what I fear I never should have learned had I not known the men and women I here tell of—that religion without poetry is as dead a thing as poetry without religion. In our practical use of them, I mean; their infusion into all our doing and being. As dry as a mummy, great Joseph would say.

Shall I be more explicit? Taking that great factor of life which men, with countless lights, shades, narrownesses and breadths of meaning, call Religion, and taking it in the largest sense we can give it; in like manner taking Poetry in the largest sense possible; this cluster of tales is one, because from each of its parts, with no argument but the souls and fates they tell of, it illustrates the indivisible twinship of Poetry and Religion; a oneness of office and of culmination, which, as they reach their highest plane, merges them into identity. Is that any clearer? You see I am no scientist or philosopher, and I do not

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stand at any dizzy height, even in my regular business of banking and insurance, except now and then when my colleagues of the clearing-house or board want something drawn up—"Whereas, the inscrutable wisdom of Providence has taken from among us"—something like that.

I tell the stories as I saw them occur. I tell them for your entertainment; the truth they taught me you may do what you please with. It was exemplified in some of these men and women by their failure to incarnate it. Others, through the stained glass of their imperfect humanity, showed it forth alive and alight in their own souls and bodies. One there was who never dreamed he was a bright example of anything, in a world which, you shall find him saying, God—or somebody—whoever is responsible for civilization—had made only too good and complex and big for him. We may hold that to make life a perfect, triumphant poem we must keep in beautiful, untyrannous subordination every impulse of mere self-provision, whether earthly or heavenly, while at the same time we give life