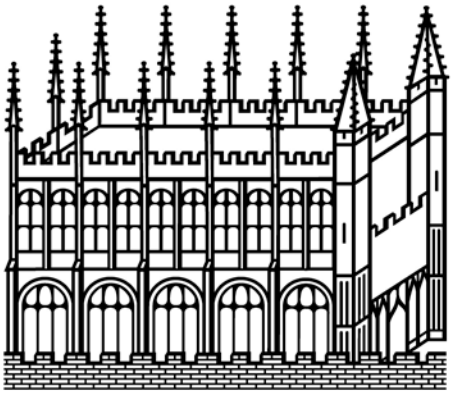

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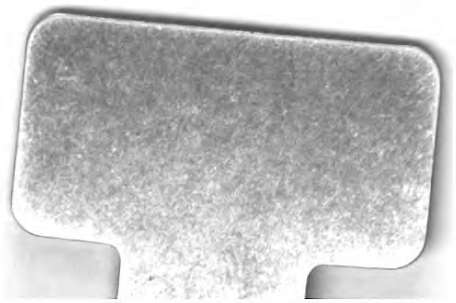

POLLY.

VOL. II.

POLLY.

A VILLAGE PORTRAIT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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POLLY.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAJOR'S VISIT.

MR. CHURCHILL was holding many spectral dinner parties in his little room, and entertained the major a prodigious number of times. "I like you," he heard him say; "and I know the bishop likes you, and will like you every day more and more. Why not think of something in the military way?—we could work *that* for you. There's Macpherson, the chaplain, getting old, and this district is a deuced good thing."

On the next morning Mr. Churchill actually wrote over, as he had proposed, beginning with a masterly flourish,—"My Dear Sir. If your military duties do not too seriously trench on your valuable time, kindly do me a favour. You will find us a little in the rough. We can at least guarantee a hot mutton chop, which I believe epicures hold to be an excellent thing. We have often talked since you left over your little sketch of the good bishop, who, I see, is to preach in London on the 20th for the South African Orphans."

This had been despatched under a faint protest from Polly.

"How can we do it, dearest? We have nothing fit or decent to put him down to"—which her father, always enthusiastic in his plans, hastily overruled, and in a torrent of words bore down all difficulties. He then went "on business" down town as it were, *i.e.* to post his letter, and study addresses, parishes, &c. in the "Clerical

Guide," of which there was a copy down at the village reading-room. No one ever looked into that but himself, by whom indeed it had been ordered at the charges of the society. Polly had to rush away to quell an *émeute* which had broken out suddenly above stairs, and found that the rioters had thrown up barricades.

Bridget, her faithful serjeant, and a strong hard-working muscular creature, faithful and versatile in all shapes of labour, came rushing up, and drove back the crowd without anger or reproach. It was as much in her daily course of life as making the beds or "washing up the things." One young gentleman incorrigible, well known to the police, a frequent ringleader, had to be dealt with a little severely on moral grounds, and for the discipline of the house. He was accordingly led away howling to a private place—even the gentle Polly reluctantly approving of this severity, and there punished according to

the form and in the place provided by the old immemorial statute.

Polly was busy below with her daily repairs, and to her comes in Bridget, bony, and a little flushed after the exertion, but with a troubled air. There was great confidence between mistress and maid, who was indeed more a friend, and had been a promoted nurse. She came to her with a "Oh, Miss, there's such a business about Charley!"

Charley was the Carabineer soldier-cousin to Bridget. As she entered with all sympathy into Polly's little troubles, and was called into council, so Polly now lifted her head, and with sympathizing eyes commiserated Charley's fate.

His little "outing" had been discovered; he had been brought up before authority; and the poor lad, being flesh and blood, had forgotten himself, and answered without respect to the despot who ruled the regiment.

"Oh, Miss, he'll be broke!" went on the

maid, in despair at the disgrace and punishment impending over this favourite warrior. His fate was indeed a matter of concern to a few of the village maidens; and in that dull settlement the event had made some stir.

"See, Miss," she went on, "here is his letter, poor soul."

Polly was troubled, and entered into the case with all her heart.

"It is very sad, Bridget," she said; "and I recollect his figure now."

"The finest got-up man in the troop," said Bridget, enthusiastically. "Oh, Miss, you can speak to the major; he will do it for you."

"The major?" said Polly, opening her eyes in unfeigned astonishment; "why, is he in *his* regiment?"

"To be sure," said Bridget; "that's the reason. I know he would do it for you, though he is a bully, and a cruel one."

"But it would be very odd my ask-

ing—and—he would refuse, Bridget; he would."

"Well, it is mortifying to be refused," Bridget said, not unadroitly.

"Indeed it is not that," said Polly; "and if he *does* come again, I would show you, by speaking to him about it; but it would be no use."

"No, Miss, speaking wouldn't; a line—a bit of writing. Oh, think of the poor, handsome fellow disgraced, and maybe fifty lashes; for the major, they do say, is all for the cat——"

This appeal had effect, and the same post that took away the reverend invitation, took away also a little letter from Polly. The major received both the following morning. That evening, when the clergyman had gone down town on business—that is, to consult the London Directory, &c., and Polly was, as usual, "on her beat," and the lock-up was pretty full, as usual, Bridget came, in a fever of

excitement, with news that the major was below.

"And oh, *now*, Miss, wont you speak *hard ?*"

Polly was greatly agitated, and visibly fluttered—not for the reasons that Bridget suspected, but from wonder and surprise at this prompt visit. He came in rather stern.

"So you have taken up a new *rôle*, Miss Churchill," he said, "interfering with the course of military justice? I assure you I do not recollect such a thing——"

"Oh," said Polly, naturally, "I did not know that; I did not, indeed; and I am very sorry."

"I have, besides, always made a stern, inflexible rule never to listen to *any* intercessors. It does no good; they have never had the slightest effect on me. Is not this, too, what you have heard of me ?"

He waited with some curiosity for her answer.

Polly lifted her large eyes, and answered him truthfully,

"Yes, they said something like it."

"Yes," said he, a little vindictively, "and a great deal more, which you are too polite to repeat. I don't care what they say. It almost tempts one to give them something startling to talk of. Why can I not punish the blackguards of my regiment without being blackened in this way, over here at an obscure village?"

He spoke all this very fiercely and angrily. Polly looked up, and answered him, gently, yet firmly.

"Well, perhaps I should not have done it. I don't see so *much* harm in it, after all; but it was only a letter—a girl's letter—and you have refused; that's all."

"No, that's *not* all; and I have not refused."

Polly looked again, full of wonder.

"How you stare at me!—the great savage bear. Shall I tell you what I did? I got

your 'girl's letter' this morning. Well, it was a very bad case. The fellow is a thorough scoundrel—a regular gallows-bird—though he imposes on the women about here. *They*, of course, think every soldier's blackguardism splendid and effective; though with ladies, it seems, officers are not so indulgently thought of. However, I have done what I could for him, and let him off with a sound reprimand."

Smiles came into Polly's face—smiles of deep gratitude.

"How good you are to me! How shall I thank you? And I confess *now* I did do you injustice; but I shall never judge by appearances again."

"That is to be the reward, it seems," he said, sarcastically. "*That* quite overpowers me."

"May I," said Polly, with a trustful beseeching look customary with her, "may I run and tell Bridget?"

"Certainly. Who is the lady?"

"Bridget, our maid, his relation; she is so deeply interested. Here, Bridget, come in here."

"Oh, don't—don't," the major said, sourly. "Please, no fuss; I must request and beg——"

Disappointed, Polly looked at him. Bridget came in hastily.

"Oh, nothing—that is——"

"Oh, let us make no secret of it now," he said. "It was merely that that relation of yours, who is in my regiment, has been got off. He had better take care again, though, I'd advise you, if you want to see much of him."

The tone of this speech was very rude and hostile; and Bridget, answering him, said eagerly—

"Then he was unjustly and most cruelly treated. He had done nothing. God help the poor soldiers!"

"Bridget," said Polly, in horror, "why don't you thank Major Grainger?"

"I want no thanks," he said, hastily; "we are accustomed to this sort of return. Pray let the business rest; we have something else to speak of." (From that hour his eye rested with a cold hostility on the maid of that house.)

"Your father asked me to dine to-day. Curiously enough there are some hills about here which I want to explore. I am a great walker—a solitary walker; so it falls out very conveniently. So if you can give me something after my walk—— You see what is in store for you."

With this the major rose up, took his hat, and went away.

CHAPTER II.

THE DINNER.

THERE was now a serious duty cast upon our Polly—the preparation of the little dinner. It was not so much in the catering; for their credit, though a little sickly, was still on a tolerably sound basis, the clergyman of the place always having a certain influence. Besides, there was a dreamy indistinct impression abroad of the reverend gentleman having high influences, and that something splendid was always on the point of being done for him. Indeed, Polly's goodwill and unselfish eagerness for her family would have trampled over greater difficulties, had there been such, and secured credit by her persevering little

way and winning manner. Bridget, nurse, cook, majordomo, and butler too, had been brought over, though by no means favouring the new guest.

"A dry, freezing, cold-blooded, poor-hearted creature," she described him. "Wait until they should hear Charley's version of the story!"

Presently comes in the clergyman "from down town," greatly excited by the news which had somehow transpired to him. He was scarcely pleased with all she had done, and found fault with certain arrangements. This excitement presently got the better of his feelings.

"Now try and make everything agreeable to him," he said; "this is the first step on the ladder." (Of course on his ladder, which was the only ladder in the world he dreamed of.) "A man like that can do what he likes with the bishop. Lucky, my dear, you have a father who knows the world a little! Now get out your best, and

make the finest show you can; and for God's sake try and keep those brats quiet, or they will destroy all!" A request easily made: yet how, with Polly "making a fine show" in the parlour, and Bridget inflaming her face over the kitchen fire,—how was it, in reason, to be done? Yet Polly answered, with the confidence of filial devotion—

"Yes, papa; don't be afraid."

"Yes, you say that, you know," replied her father; "but take care that you do it."

Later on he was sitting in the parlour dressed and waiting, when the major returned from his walk. The cordiality with which the clergyman welcomed him (he was in his "best frock," brushed carefully by Polly, and a tie quite clean, but tied clumsily), was a sort of rude heartiness and obsequiousness mixed—a manner kept for a possible patron.

"So friendly, my dear major! What I like in soldiers is plain yes and no. 'Come

to me such a day,' and you say 'I will,' or 'I wont'—one thing or the other. Polly, touch the bell, dear; we are quite ready for dinner."

It was a very appetizing little meal—a little soup, a small haddock, a roast fowl and sausages, a bottle of champagne and another of claret.

"I am ashamed to put you down to this prison diet. But what can you do? As for getting a decent thing in this hole, as I may call it——"

The major was looking at him with cold contempt. "I never contradict a host; I suppose it would not be polite. Miss Churchill, how do you get on in this 'hole,' as we must call it?"

"Oh, I like it," said Polly, naturally. "Papa does not; he has seen so much of the world."

"That would be a reason *for* liking it. The cure of souls here can't be very laborious."

"Ah! that's it, Major Churchill," said his

reverence, plaintively. "There is no field for labour; nothing expansive. The mind all expends itself here; it runs to waste. You will understand the feeling, major; kept at home here, when you see others sent abroad to earn glory and promotion also. It makes a man chafe."

"I do *not* understand the feeling. As you put it to me so directly, I don't know of any glory to be got in the way you mention, and promotion comes nearly as fast at home. I don't relish being sent to India next month to fight wretched blacks."

"*What!* India! Next month! Oh! no!" said Mr. Churchill, with a genuine start of horror.

The other laughed. "How the news affects you! Really such sympathy is most welcome; my own sister took it much easier. How do *you* feel, Miss Polly?"

"Oh, I am very sorry," said Polly, "especially as there is war going on. But I hope you will return safe."

"But—it can't be true; there's no mistake, is there? It's so unfortunate."

"Mistake?" repeated the major—"how strange! Why should there be? I suppose I ought to know something certain about it. Do you know it is very odd, Mr. Churchill, the way this news seems to affect you. Cheer up, sir; time will heal your sorrow. See how Miss Polly bears the shock."

A little confused, the reverend host tried to laugh; but a gloom set in for the rest of the dinner—attended, too, with a certain pettishness; for he was not nearly so well-trained a worldling as he boasted himself. Often such vaunting professions have lost the embarked capital of years, by a careless moment's prodigality. The major rose in spirits as he said this; spoke to Polly nearly altogether without interruption from the host; and became softer and more genial in his manner as he did so.

When she was gone, he drew his chair over to the fire, and fixing his cold eye on

the clergyman, said quietly, "You know, the bishop is not obliged to go away."

The clergyman looked up a little confused. "The bishop?" he repeated.

"Yes; my relation the holy man, Talboys. Listen to me a moment, and let us talk a little business. You say you are a man of the world. I haven't confidence enough to say so much of myself, though I should like to. The fact is, we are ordered to India; the dreadful news I have just broken to you. Now I am going to speak with an engaging plainness—to come at once to the point—at once. I had a reason in dining with you to-day; for I loathe dining early; I dislike fowl and fish, and sausages make me ill. I say this in the way of business—not to hurt your feelings; but to show you that I must have had an object. The fact is, I like Miss Polly. She is charming. And if I thought she liked me, or could be brought to like me——"

Mr. Churchill gave a genuine start.

"Pray listen. I have been thinking seriously that it would be really for the advantage of our Church that you should be advanced, and have an opportunity of satisfying your eagerness for a larger area of souls. I don't see why this couldn't be done."

"My dear sir," said the clergyman, seizing both his hands, "you are too good!"

"Too religious, you mean," said the major. "Why should not I contribute my little mite to the good work? We soldiers can be pious, after all, in our own way."

Mr. Churchill, whether actually believing in, or merely accepting this apostolic devotion, again broke out into warmth.

"You do my family great honour, Major Grainger; and I shall take care, sir, you shall find us sensible of it. I accept your cordial and most flattering proposal in the spirit in which it is made. I can assure you——"

The major interrupted him impatiently.

"Oh, of course; I know that. But about your daughter—what do you say? I suppose she is a sensible girl—at least I take her for one."

The clergyman answered with a sort of enthusiastic scorn:

"My dear sir! such an idea!—she refuse!"

"I didn't say that," said the officer, coldly. "She must be consulted in the matter; and you, as her father, ought to know her feelings. That there is no one else in the way—you can give that information?"

"Not at all," said the other, with the same exuberance—"nothing of the kind! Such an idea! Polly, indeed!"

The officer rose, impatiently.

"It is impossible, I see, to get you to understand. Never mind, then. Now, supposing that all arranged, then comes the question of means."

The clergyman's face sank. "Oh, as for that, Major Grainger, I am very sorry.

You know, girls now-a-days never—at least scarcely ever—but I assure you, later, when they do something for me—we shall try and make out——"

"I am speaking of *my* fortune," said the other, seeming to enjoy the series of mis-apprehensions into which the other was falling. "It is as well at this stage of the matter to anticipate all reasonable difficulties. It is only fair to mention that I am what is called well off."

"My dear major——"

"Pray allow me to finish. Then for you yourself. As you wish for a larger sphere of missionary duty, I will speak to the bishop. Mind I don't say he will do anything for me."

"Oh, he will, I am sure! Such a good man——"

"Perhaps so. I did ask once before, and he certainly wrote me a civil note, and—I think, as we don't join the ladies, they might join us now?"

"To be sure, to be sure," said the clergyman uneasily, "by all means. You were speaking of the bishop. He wrote to you, you said, the kindest note. Just like what I should fancy of him."

"Exactly. Dear me, how late! Tell Miss Polly——"

"But about this letter," said the clergyman fretfully. "Did he refuse?"

The major smiled. "You don't want to see my letter, do you? Well, he did *not* refuse."

Polly came down. She had done wonders above. The junior rioters were all happily got to bed, and without disturbance. Bridget, now relieved of her duties below, was in charge of the others. They were snug for the night; as a sailor would get his ship and ropes snug for the night, and have them off his mind. She came down, in her placid good humour, wishing to have a "chat" with the major, who was a man of the world—and perhaps with a

little crafty purpose of strengthening the good opinion she knew she had made. She owed him a little gratitude also for his compliance with her wishes.

"Your papa and I," he said, "have been settling all sorts of important matters in your absence. One about the Bishop, Talboys—with whom we are to make him very intimate—a most apostolic man."

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Polly naturally. "Papa is so anxious to know him."

The major smiled at her *naïveté*.

"I'll get him to dine on Monday or Tuesday. Would that be a good way to improve the intimacy? I find his company very heavy, and have not the least taste for episcopal society. Of course *they* would have a good deal to say to each other."

"Oh, how kind of you!" said Polly. "You must go, papa, it will just suit."

"Then that's settled," said the officer.

"I must go now. Miss Polly, your father is coming on—is sure to rise; and has taken the first step on the ladder,—has he not? We must all join and hoist him up. Wont we?"

Polly laughed. "Yes, Major Grainger. We won't find him heavy either, unless it is we that keep him down."

"Exactly," said the major, with meaning: "so a great deal depends on you. You must give him your hand—you will understand all that by-and-bye. It is much to have something depending on any one else. I never had. From *that* high, I had to depend all on myself; and I have been in the army twenty-four years, from sixteen to near forty. I started with a pittance; and I owe nothing—promotion—money—favour—to any man!—but everything to myself. What do you say to that, Mr. Churchill; not your doctrine?"

Polly looked up; she had been listening with interest. "That is a little mistake;

papa owes everything to his own exertions; indeed he does."

The major smiled grimly. "Everything?" he repeated, looking round.

"What nonsense you talk, child!" said the clergyman, colouring. "I have plenty of friends, who have been most kind, and pushed me forward in every way."

"So I can see," said the major. "But I suppose Miss Polly meant her 'nonsensical' speech for the best. She, I suppose, does not know the world. Well, I started with the determination not to let any one push me forward——"

"My God!" said the clergyman.

"At least, Miss Polly, I began as a youth, very shy, with good-will towards every man, thinking the world was beautiful, and all that. The first instance of its beauty was being robbed by a guardian, then by a friend to whom I had lent hundreds or given hundreds. When, hunted and harassed by duns and diffi-

culties, I came to him, he put me off, and finally refused. That cured me. There were one or two other matters. So, for over twenty years I have been a soldier, and nothing but a soldier, all pipeclay and discipline. I was determined, as I was treated so I would treat others—to be cold, hard, cruel even. And I have found it answer very well. I got all my money back; my promotion I got myself, and it never cost me a shilling; they had to promote me, for I was the best man."

"I am sure, yes," said Mr. Churchill, eagerly, for a long time left out of the conversation; "the best, certainly, that I know."

"How, pray?" said the other, turning on him. "What can you know? Oh, I see—a compliment. Well, Miss Churchill, what do you think of all that?"

Polly, really interested, looked up, and answered earnestly, "I can understand it perfectly. But still, you will forgive me

saying so, it is not a happy state, nor a right one. It must have been mistake on all sides."

"You think so?" he answered. "Then perhaps you are right. I daresay you are. But what would you have a man do, so late?"

"Change!" said Polly, enthusiastically. "Late?—nothing is too late in life. I am sure if you tried the world with a little kindness, you would get a little in return. I would be less of a soldier," and Polly stopped in some confusion, "—and more of a rational being."

"Complimentary, I must say!"

Mr. Churchill, again left out of the conversation, protested, "What, Polly? You are talking of what you don't understand. Don't mind her, Major Grainger."

"'Talking of what you don't understand,'" repeated the major, looking at him; "please don't interrupt us. Very well, Miss Polly. I shall think over what you have said.

Perhaps I have made some such resolution already, and am going to change, and turn over a new leaf. You will help me, with your good wishes and prayers, for I feel I am a strange being. Good-bye. I must be going now—go back to my rude barrack-room, to my friends, that is, my books; they are the best, having no humours, and showing no ingratitude, though you break their very backs."

Mr. Churchill remained a few moments in a sort of rumination of delight after he had gone. He sat complacently before his fire. "Now, my good child," he said, "what do you say to your father?—what do you say to knowing something of the world? Do I know how to play him? I picked him out at once—I had an instinct that day he was the very man. I tell you what, that man can do what he likes with that bishop; and if he chooses to say, 'Make Churchill archdeacon,' the other 'll have to do it. Of course we must begin with something

smaller. Get me my 'Clerical Guide,' and let us see what the man *has* to give."

"Indeed, papa," said Polly, fetching the volume, "you are very clever—I admire you for it."

Mr. Churchill looked at her triumphantly. Such natures concession or homage or praises only inflame. "Oh, that's all very well *now*," he said; "we must always have an argument. Now don't interrupt me; I have letters to write."

And Polly, now full of her own folly and uselessness, as compared with the stupendous genius of her father, went away softly to her room.

CHAPTER III.

THE MESS DINNER.

BUT the excitement in the house knew no bounds when in a day or two arrived a letter by the morning mail,—almost lost in a crowd of bills, circulars, and replies from deans, chaplains, &c.—from the Carabineer barracks. It was from the major, and addressed to Polly; and said that, as many of their officers were gone away on leave to the races, he had asked his relative the bishop to "a quiet little dinner." "And," wrote the major, "as I know Mr. Churchill is consumed with a strong and most natural desire to meet that saintly man, Dr. Talboys, my relative, he will have an opportunity of doing so, if he will do me the honour of

dining with me to-morrow. And how pleasant it would be if one was able to have the company of Miss Polly Churchill also. (Polly noticed that the major took a sort of pleasure in sounding the chimes on her name, and brought it in wherever he could.) But our delightful mess regulations, founded on the army rules and orders at Otaheite and the Sandwich Isles, prevent this. I have to go now and hear the day charges, in a very bad humour, which I suppose the prisoners will get the benefit of."

Mr. Churchill had of course opened and read this down long before Polly even heard. Indeed, it was only by the thought of Bridget, who used to look at the directions of the letters as she took them at the door, that her young mistress knew that any had come for her. But Polly, with that surprising sweetness which was her nature and *herself*, had grown to accept this as almost the regular order of nature, and that the accident of a letter being addressed to her

was a mere form of society. Of course there might be answers; so at times she came to look among the loose papers, pick up any that might be for her, and thus save her father the trouble of answering them.

Mr. Churchill on this occasion a little resented this invitation not being addressed to him. He was not in the least "put out" with the major, but, as usual, laid the fault to his daughter's account. "Always pushing herself forward," he thought, "always coming in my way and throwing me back!" But still the prospect of meeting the bishop soon filled his soul to the exclusion of any such petty feeling. It was years since he had met a bishop at dinner —long, long ago, before he had settled down in "that hole" at Cumberley. He sat long in his study, composing the picture. He saw himself (he had fortunately passed through the mess-room, so he had the background well present to him) in that pleasant scene—placed himself now at the top,

next the bishop—now opposite—a little round table—the officers being away—and the most agreeable unconventional flow of soul. He should take care that the major should give his lordship a short sketch or so of what the clerical guest was. The rest he would undertake himself. But what was his brief? Mr. Churchill could smile contemptuously at the imaginary and ignorant questioner standing before him in his study, and he could lift up the lid of his desk and draw out the week's issue of the *Cumberley Mercury*—which contained the full report of his lordship's speech at the meeting; passages of which had been diligently scored up and down. One passage indeed had a line drawn all round it, so :—

> "Charities of this description are much to be encouraged: and the quality of mercy should not be strained, but keep dropping away like the gentle dew."

A passage which the *Cumberley Mercury*

said should be written in letters of gold on the waistcoat of every Christian man. "Our soldiers," the bishop had said, in another place, "give us their wounds and privations —nay, their lives; and shall we not give a few doits in return?" (This appeal, some listeners remarked, was delivered with a half mournful, half smiling expostulation.) "Let us each—one and all" (woon an all, was the bishop's favourite pronunciation)— "give up some little luxury—our cigars, our racers, our betting—and the thing will come *very* light."

Mr. Churchill refreshed his memory as he went along in the train with these choice passages, and arrived at the barracks about half-an-hour before the dinner hour.

He heard voices; the bishop was already arrived. This made him uncomfortable. The major was there.

"Oh, how do you do?" he said. "You are in good time. Let me introduce the Rev. Mr. Churchill, from Cumberley."

"Ah, Cumberley" said the bishop; "nice spot—in Dr. Brindley's patrimony, I think. Good fishing, I am told, there."

Mr. Churchill abased himself as low as the code of western society allowed. The absurd conventions of European salutation would be a little shocked by the lifting of a buckled shoe, and planting it on one's head: otherwise——. Still he could be eagerly reverential, and say:

"No, my lord, we have not the benefit of your lordship's supervision at Cumberley. Most heartily do I wish we had."

"Then I do not, my dear sir. I have quite enough to do without having my diocese enlarged; the work is enough for two. And tell me now, Grainger, how is dear Mary getting on with her husband? Will she get him office, do you think?"

"I don't know, indeed," said the major, bluntly, "and don't want to know any of their doings. They are good enough to write to me about every six months, tell-

ing me that there is a new child, or that an old one is sick, or some such interesting news; and I acknowledge the letters, and tell them we have flogged Maddox, or given Jones the cells and bread-and-something—that will be as interesting to them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the bishop, with a low, quiet laugh. "You have a way of your own, I see, Grainger."

"Perhaps I have," said the major. "I am sorry you can't stay with us to-day."

Mr. Churchill gave a start, almost of agony, the most natural and genuine thing he had done for a long time.

"His lordship not staying to dinner! Oh, surely——"

"I knew you'd be disappointed," said Major Grainger.

"Why, you know, I should have liked it. But young Ffolliott, a very charming young son of Sir Thomas—you know them, Grainger?"

"I don't, indeed," said the major, calmly.

"I thought you did; no matter. You see, he turned up unexpectedly. And how do you get on down there, Mr. Churchill? I am sure a pleasant, peaceful retreat. Ah, dear me!"

Mr. Churchill was a little embarrassed as to the choice of a fitting answer.

"I get away sometimes, my lord; on rare occasions. The other day I had a little holiday, and went to that soldiers' meeting. Oh, my lord, those golden words are still ringing in my ear: 'Let us each, one and all, give up our racers our betting and our cigars.' Ah, that was the way to put it; it went home to them. Another, Major Grainger, knowing less of the human heart, would have——"

"Oh, I know, I know," said the bishop, rising up promptly, and laying hold of a noble "shovel," to which Mr. Churchill's adoring eyes had often wandered—*he* would not have seized it so. "It is very easy to take hold of one's words. But I was per-

fectly correct. Those are the luxuries that should be given up. But there are really no bounds to the profane licentiousness of the press."

Major Grainger laughed, not at the bishop, but the almost wild bewilderment of his guest, who looked from one to the other in a sort of terrified amazement. He hadn't taken hold of the bishop's words : how had *he* been licentious?

"Good morning, sir," said the bishop, shortly. "God bless you, Grainger. Don't come down, now."

When Grainger returned he laughed again.

"You made a little mistake there," he said.

"Mistake!" said the clergyman. "Did I? I meant nothing—indeed, no. Shall I run after him and explain?"

"He's half-way to the station now. Pity you don't look into the papers now and then. The *Chronicle* of this place—or some

such paper—has been pitching into that very passage of his speech; saying how easy it was for bishops to preach giving charity from savings out of cigars, which they don't smoke, and racers, which they don't keep."

"Oh, how shocking—how infamous!" said the clergyman, thinking of the paper.

"'Pon my word, I think they were quite right. Will you excuse me while I get into my shell jacket? The others will drop in presently."

The clergyman was left alone, much "put out," but not at all with himself. "Always the way"—this was the train of thought in his mind—"she never thinks of anything. I must do everything myself. Another girl with brains would have seen to that, and got all the newspapers, and the right ones. But of course I must do everything myself." Then his mind wandered away to the bishop. He was a man of the world. How well he knew about Cumberley and the fishing! Young Ffolliott from the Univer-

sity was of course a fisherman, or rowed, or did something. How long Polly would be before she thought of that! He would write when he got home: "My Lord, your lordship's young friend, whom your lordship mentioned," &c. Then in the body of the letter he could go off on this topic: "No one knows better than I do the character of the venal hirelings who infest our press," &c. In fact it was better it had fallen out so; and by the time he had concluded his letter and signed himself in imagination "your Lordship's profound admirer and faithful servant," he was in good humour again. There was a picture over the chimney-piece which attracted him, a very gentle-looking young girl, with a soft and spiritual face, and an air of resignation and suffering. He was no connoisseur of such things; and indeed had no appreciation of such delicate shades of thought. The idea in his mind was, what a foolish choice! *He* would have had a good photograph of a

bishop, large size, with a "shovel," on a little round table, and a signature,

"Yours sincerely,

"W. R. GRAVESEND."

Now came in two or three of the officers ready for dinner, and then the major himself and two more: "Pollock, our senior captain, Rev. Mr. Churchill; Webster," &c.

Mr. Churchill bowed shortly to all these gentlemen. He held them but poorly, for it must not be supposed that his was at all an obsequious nature. Save in that one direction, he gave himself no trouble, and, in truth, rather threw away opportunities.

The usual mess dinner set in. Major Grainger presided. "Colonel's away," he said, "gone on leave. Rather good the bishop and the cigars, eh?"

"How's that?" said Pollock, shortly.

"Mr. Churchill will tell you, and it's not a bad story either, I can tell you. I suspect the best part of the whole is that the bishop

thinks you meant to give him a sly hit all the time."

"Tell us what it is," said Pollock.

Mr. Churchill coloured. "I think," he said, "in a mixed company——"

"Quite right," said the major gravely. "I stand reproved."

"A glass of champagne with you, Mr. Churchill," said Captain Pollock, who was a bluff, round-faced officer of the common cavalry type. "I know a little about the bishops, and hear enough, God knows, when I have to put in my week with the dean."

"Ah, yes, my friend," said another officer, with a sort of confidential enjoyment, "enough about that."

The word seemed to soothe Mr. Churchill like a charm.

"Is your uncle Dean Pollock, of the South Missions?" he said, with great interest.

"No, not he; or he may be, for all I know; he's Dean of Peckham."

Mr. Churchill's face fell. He knew nothing of Peckham.

"Oh, indeed! Peckham, to be sure; and you stop with him? Dear me."

"You may say that!" said the captain. "It has to be done for family reasons. Not a bad fellow; good wine enough; but the prayers—oh, my! Not that I object to that in reason, you know."

"I say, Bob," a yellow-haired cornet said, still in the low tone of confidence so common among officers, "it don't improve you, though. You come back an awful sinner."

"Well, but I say in reason, you know. It's not meant to be pushed more; and at half-past seven, sharp—that would do you good, my boy."

Captain Pollock had now quite forgotten his guest, and had got into that friendly and secret confidence with his fellows which is rather a failing of his profession.

"I say, that morning when I came in late—"

("Ah! you don't forget that." "Serve you right, my lad." "That touched you up." These were the half-masonic, half-enjoying encouragements that greeted the captain.)

"Well, I did feel awkward: and so would any of you, when a man looks up from his book, and puts his glass to his eye, and looks at you hard until you stumble into your seat, and with all the maids tittering."

("Ah, my friend, more of that would do you good!" "Six times in the week! You want it well!" These were fresh expressions of approval, and which seemed to gratify the captain, who was a "good" and good-humoured fellow, and much liked. Such are usually shown in this way how popular they are.)

In the meantime they had travelled a long way for Mr. Churchill, who was looking from one to the other "quite outside the joke."

Grainger saw it. He was a little outside also.

"This must be all very interesting to a stranger, eh?" he said, sourly. "Let us get up some stable talk, now, as a change. Let Buxton there talk of his last fence and cropper, and all that."

"Well, I am sure it's as sensible as the things some fellows like to talk of," said Buxton, giving a cutting retort.

"Or, I say, Grainger!" said Pollock, colouring, "tell us about the fellow you gave the cells to; that will be interesting!"

"I never talk shop," said Grainger, coolly. "I think it a bad compliment to a guest. Have some more champagne, Mr. Churchill? Have you met our chaplain,—Macpherson,—chaplain to the garrison?"

"No," said Mr. Churchill; "not had that pleasure."

"You ought to know him; you'd like him,—a good, hard-working man," &c.

But Mr. Churchill was a little *distrait.*

The clang of "the Dean of Peckham" was still in his ear.

"I suppose he is likely to be a bishop one day?" said the clergyman, blandly.

"Who?" the captain asked.

"The dean; your relation."

"God bless you, no!" said the captain, laughing as if it was a capital joke.

"Make him a bishop? I say, Bob, when he has the silk apron, only think of that——!"

Bob said that would be a rare notion; and some one else laughed, and said, "There'll be a chance for you, Pollock, my boy!" all which were obscure and unintelligible allusions, and distressed Mr. Churchill, who got no explanation of the just cause or impediment why the dean should not be made a bishop.

By and bye they moved into the antechamber. There they had coffee. Mr. Churchill, now in great and placid goodhumour, stood, with his coffee-cup in his

hand, and one foot on the fender, and looked up at the picture.

"I see," he said, with a sort of knowing air, "this is—come now—eh?"

Pollock struck in hastily, "Yes, well painted. There is a book of photographs over there; every one of us, and our horses too."

Mr. Churchill had still his eyes on the picture, turning his spoon slowly.

"I can guess, I think—eh! Captain Pollock? the bishop has either a daughter or niece, eh? Very suspicious, I think."

Pollock touched his arm and frowned.

Grainger struck in impatiently, "It's a relation of mine, who is dead now," and then walked away noisily to the window.

Mr. Churchill had address enough not to appear discomfited, but continued staring at the picture, and stirring his spoon in the same mechanical way. He then shook his head, and made that peculiar "tsz, tsz, tsz!"—the accredited sound of

vexation, or disappointment, or deep sympathy.

From an irreverent source over on the sofa came that short nasal spasm which comes from suppressed laughter, and where the yellow-haired cornet was struggling with merriment; but he did not notice it.

("I never saw such a cool old duffer," said the youth afterwards talking over the scene. "The way he rolled his eyes, and shook his head, as if he had known the girl!")

Grainger came up to him abruptly.

"It seems inhospitable, but I must tell you, if you are going back by the night train, there isn't much time."

All now rose, and Mr. Churchill reluctantly bade his adieus. The major went down with him into the court-yard. It was a fine moonlight. He said, irresolutely:

"If you wish, I can speak to the bishop, and explain that little mistake. He is a man of the world, you know."

"To be sure, to be sure; I saw that; but I think *I'd* better manage it."

(He said this with an inexpressibly knowing air.)

"Oh, just as you like; just as you please! By the way, when will you come over again? You might bring Miss Polly some morning. She would like to hear our band. She said something like it."

"Oh, dear no!" said the clergyman. "She never thinks of such a thing. A mere hermit, sir; never asks to go beyond the little gate. She has plenty to do there."

"But you can't tell exactly," said the major, coldly. "Just ask her, and give her the message, please."

"Oh, certainly—certainly. I'll make it a point; but it will be no use."

"But it may be. We might fix a day for a lunch. There, you had better make haste. By the way, that picture over the chimney piece—you were looking—"

"I was so sorry; now really, you know, I didn't—"

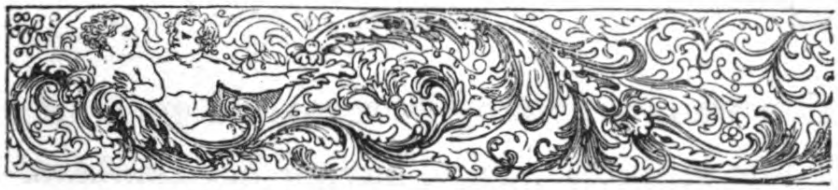
"Just let me finish. I say, you did not notice any sort of a likeness?"

"A likeness?" said the clergyman rapidly, and desperately scouring his memory for all the possible persons who might be connected with Grainger. "To whom?"

"To any one?" said he, impatiently.

Could it be the bishop?—yet he was afraid to hazard it.

"Oh, you did not, that's evident. It's no matter. Good night; don't let me keep you."



CHAPTER IV.

THE MAJOR'S QUARTERS.

GLORIOUS days succeeded, full of hope and fairy-like dreams. A letter, according to the pattern arranged, was sent to the bishop, which was duly acknowledged in a very short note, flourished by the clergyman to his daughter as a triumph of his diplomacy. He did not know that the major had seen his relative in the meantime.

But there were some curious matters going on at Cumberley. The gossips had noticed that on one day the works had been stopped altogether abruptly, and had been resumed almost as abruptly about the noon of the next. There were whisperings among the overseers, and the last reliable informa-

tion was that young Burgess had gone off at a few minutes' notice, having been suddenly telegraphed for. The Grundys sent abroad a hundred solutions, not one of which approached the truth. So sudden had been his departure, that even Polly had not heard it, and he had not time to come and tell her.

On that very day both had set out for Irnston. The major had written in a sort of peremptory way to Mr. Churchill, in a tone, too, which he could not mistake—not unlike the plain requirements of a writ—ordering him to ask Miss Polly to come some morning and lunch. Still he understood, as he thought, the *arrière pensée* of all this. The officer could not be always pressing *him* to come; there would be something too remarkable: and supposing that the bishop came, it was not unlikely to be a delicate way of handing the bishop, as it were, bodily over to him, and avoiding the *gêne* of the host having to sit by unengaged. As for Polly, she was greatly

pleased at this new expedition, and not a little grateful to the major for his homage and gallantry; for it must not be taken that she was one of the helpless Griseldas who think a trained indifference to amusement to be a part of their virtue, and who affect a kind of ignorance at any of the usual homage from the other sex. Polly was shrewd enough, and was not at all displeased —as what lady ever is?—at exciting admiration, or even love. So she went up and dressed herself in her prettiest and tiniest bonnet and best finery, to do credit and honour to the day.

When they got to the barracks, the major was there. He received them with a grim gladness. He looked downwards on Polly, and seemed to address her always, and wait for her answers, as though she was a pretty and piquant child.

"It is very good of you to come in this way. We have nothing to show you—no lions—nothing—nothing."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Churchill, "after one of the most agreeable evenings I ever spent—"

"Ah, that's another view altogether."

Mr. Churchill was thinking of the bishop.

He not a lion!

"Come in here," said the major, opening a door, "this is the riding-school."

And Polly peeped timorously into a great gloomy barn, where a young fellow, on a great strong horse, was plunging round, being chased up and down to a torrent of "Can-tarr," "Keep well back in sad'll;" and a perfect series of such barks.

The major's eyes flashed as he looked on, and he strode up to the riding-master. "That's the fellow I saw last week, and he hasn't made the least advance. He does it on purpose, I think."

The horse was stopped, the rider was called over, and the major spoke in a low and angry tone to him, and then came back to her.

Polly saw lowering glances and contemptuous looks following him, which alarmed her.

"I'll break them in," said the major, returning to her. "I give them no more than I have received myself."

"Quite right," said Mr. Churchill, "an excellent maxim. You are a man of the world I see, Major Grainger."

The major seemed to care very little for this adhesion. He was watching Polly, who made no remark. "That's our strong watch-house," he said, as they passed another door. "I take care to keep it well filled. I find it is the only plan. Don't you think so?"

Polly looked up at him, with the most natural confidence in the world. "I do not believe it, since you ask me," she said; "not since your goodness to that soldier the other day."

"Oh, as for that," he said, hastily, "I had particular reasons—whims guide us in most things."

Polly's face became grave and even sad. "Oh! if that were the case—" she said, and stopped.

"Well?" he said, with great interest.

Polly coloured.

"What would happen?" he asked, with greater interest.

Mr. Churchill must have been the dullest and most selfish of men not to have a glimpse of how the major felt towards Polly, and was listening with a little wonder.

They were now at the major's rooms. Polly was delighted with the furniture and the quantity of little machinery and devices, which give an officer's room the air of a "tidy" old curiosity shop. Even the row of sticks, hung on straps on the wall, was new to her. There was a little piquant lunch laid out—but alas! no bishop.

Polly had walked up to the chimney-piece and noticed the picture. The major was watching her. She was immensely in-

terested and even touched by its expression, and was just saying, "Who is this—," when she checked herself; her eyes were cast down on the ground, and the colour came into her cheeks. The infinite tact of woman had served her, even though a little late; and she saw that it was a matter that might be painful to ask about.

But the major said, "What were you going to ask about, Miss Polly?"

Polly did not answer, and looked at him in greater confusion.

Her father interposed hastily; he thought the major was displeased: "Such foolish questions as you put, Polly!" he said,—"asking a gentleman about such private matters. Really, you are too curious."

"Upon my word that is as good a thing as I have heard some time," said the major, scornfully. "Some one else put the same question the other night, as well as I recollect." Then turning to Polly, he said, "Some other time I will tell you about it,

not now; only answer me this, has any likeness in it struck you?"

Polly concentrated all her attention on it, and smoothing her hair reflectively, hesitated a little before answering; "You will laugh at me," she said, smiling, "if I tell you what I think. But really the colour of the hair, and the general look, and shape of the face—"

"And the eyes?" he said.

"I cannot say about that," said Polly gravely.

"I see we both mean the same person," he said. "Never mind, another time."

All this "intrigued" Mr. Churchill, restlessly trying to be "taken in" in some way to their understanding.

They then sat down to lunch. No bishop. The major was more gracious than he had ever been before. Polly, undoing her bonnet-strings, gave way to confidence, and spoke out her thoughts with a charming *naïvété* and naturalness. Suddenly a knock came to

the door. The major rose up impatiently, with a "They always come worrying here!" and went to the door. Mr. Churchill looked uneasily after, and peered hard to see out. There might be some shape of bishop on the landing.

Major Grainger was a long time away. He came back at last very hastily. "I am sorry," he said, "to have to go. But with me everything falls out awkwardly. There is some news come in of importance, and the general of the district has telegraphed for me. The colonel is away, so I must go at once. Good-bye, Miss Polly. You must give us another day; and if you cannot," he added, turning to Mr. Churchill, "I shall write to you. However the business turns out," he said to Polly, with meaning, "I shall write to you—to-night." Then he went away, and they returned home.

CHAPTER V.

HARRY'S SENTENCE.

THAT night father and daughter were sitting together, the clergyman busy as usual, and Polly wondering a little that she had not seen her friend, when he entered a little suddenly.

Mr. Churchill looked displeased. He had latterly felt a great change within him towards this young man, which he owned he could not account for, and one of the Grundys of the parish asking him on the mysterious stoppage of the works, he said, in a very meaning half-pathetic way, "Do you know he is not exactly—er—what I thought him," and looked displeased. As he later remarked, he did not relish "that

come-here, come-go style of thing" in another man's house. Breaking in on a family after their meals without invitation was rather too free and easy. "Well," he said, drily, "what's the news now ?"

His real pain, distress, and embarrassment were evident to Polly. "Dear Harry," she said anxiously, "something has happened, I know."

Mr. Churchill looked up from his Clerical Guide. Even the wisest are stirred by curiosity. "Speak out," he said. "What's wrong now?"

The young man was very pale. "Oh, sir," he said, "and Miss Churchill, misfortunes have come upon us. I have just heard from home. My poor father."

Polly's eyes swam with sympathy. "Not ill; not dying, Harry!" she said. "Sit down; you are not well. You know that you have friends here, and how we feel for you."

"No, thank God," said he, but that may come, and is sure to come after. It is what he thinks worse than the loss of life."

"For God's sake come to the point," said Mr. Churchill testily, and turning down a page in his 'Clerical Guide.' "Of course we feel for you."

"No, it is his affairs,—what I have been dreading so long. He is ruined, utterly ruined. He will not have a shilling after all his hard weary life,—and labouring, as I know, worse than the commonest navvy he employed."

There was a silence for a moment. The sweet comforting voice of Polly struck in with consolation. "It will not be so bad as you think. Cheer up, Harry, and have hope. There will be something saved—there always is—and he can start again. They always magnify things at first."

Her father turned on her testily. "Don't talk such folly, child. How can you tell? I am sure we are as sorry as any one. But it is the old story. I have been prepared for it this many a day. I have said so a hundred times. It all falls into the regular

way of trade. If you go into these enormous undertakings, you must run the risk of failing in this enormous way. Contractors always fail in the end; and we are very sorry, sorry as any one, but we can't help the matter. And now, Burgess, what do you propose about yourself? I suppose there is some plan. Eh?"

The young man looked at them both, and began to plead, rather than speak, very earnestly.

"That is what I came to speak about, sir. I have to go away to-night."

"To-night!" said Polly.

"Yes; and I have only a few minutes left. I was here before; but that—you were gone to that man."

"Major Grainger of the Carabineers," said Mr. Churchill, with dignity.

"I could not bear to come in. I am going away, and shall not be able to return for a long—long time. I know not what is to become of me. Some friends have spoken

of an engineer's place on some railway—out in the Colonies, or in India. It does not make much matter where, so that there is work to be done—night or day—and money to be made; it is all I care for."

"Quite right, and very proper," said the clergyman. "We wish you every success in whatever direction you go."

"Now," said the young man, desperately, "I come to what I wished to speak of. You can assist me, sir, in the only thing that will sustain me in all that is to be before me."

"How?" said Mr. Churchill, gravely. "This comes on me with surprise. Surely you know how we are now; that I have not been at all treated in the way my services have merited. Though, of course, by-and-by, something may turn up. But—"

"It's not *that*, papa," said Polly. "Indeed he does not mean that."

"Then, what the deuce—" began the clergyman, turning on him.

"You must have seen, sir, long before

this," he went on hurriedly, "what has been going on here. I should have spoken before, but foolishly put it off until this fatal business. Although I have had the one hope before my eyes, she—your daughter—has long before this understood me; and I, if it is not too much presumption to say so, seem to have understood her. And if you approve, and hold out even a chance, I should be content to wait years of struggle and suffering."

He saw the confounded look, astonishment, anger, coldness, and impatience rising into the clergyman's face.

"Then you need do nothing of the kind, sir," said the latter, with great heat. "Upon my word, a pretty proposal! And this is what you come to speak about! Do you take me for a common fool, sir? I saw nothing of the kind going on under my eyes, sir, as you say; and I think it was unwarrantable, and a great liberty, your carrying on such a business."

"Oh, papa," said Polly, imploringly, and softly, "only think of what has happened, and don't speak harshly to him."

"But I will. I say it was a liberty, and a very great piece of deception in you, ma'am. But I don't want to discuss the matter, or look at it at all in any way. It's quite too absurd; and, really, for a person in your condition, ushering it all in with the piece of good news you just mentioned, is almost ludicrous. I simplify the matter at once. I assume you are hardly serious, and decline the whole thing as not to be thought of, and never was to be thought of. I must say it is a very poor return altogether for the friendly treatment you have received in our house—very."

Polly again interposed.

"He meant for the best, papa; I know he did. He had no intention of offending you."

"I should hope not," said the clergyman, sarcastically; "that would be a strange way of recommending himself."

"But," said the young man, warmly, "in a matter like this, which affects all her future happiness, you will surely leave something to her decision? This is too sacred a matter to be dealt with in this sort of fashion. Forgive me, sir, if I speak freely; but—"

"I do not forgive you, sir; and I think you quite forget yourself. Do you come to lecture me about sacred matters, me, a clergyman of the Church of England? I must beg all this will stop at once. She knows her duty to me thoroughly. I don't mean her to be disposed of in this way. I have quite other views for her. Not to be thought of for a moment, sir. And now," added the reverend genlteman, looking at his watch, "if you are going by to-night's train,—I am sorry, of course, to part with you in this way—"

The young man drew himself up, quite overcome with grief and surprise.

"Just one word more, sir," he said: "If I should return—if wealth and fortune—"

"Now, my good friend, dismiss it altogether. I may as well tell you the plain naked truth; I have another arrangement, in fact, the matter is all but settled. So you see," added he, resuming the 'Clerical Guide,' "in *any* case the thing couldn't be dreamed of. You have our best wishes, of course, and all that. Good-bye. Very sorry, indeed."

Without a word more the young man bowed and went out. Polly, looking after him, went out also.

The reverend gentleman was left to his 'Guide,' saying aloud—

"What work it is! A bankrupt contractor!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAJOR'S SENTENCE.

SOON Polly returned—not weeping or agitated—but with a sad and deeply sympathizing face.

"Look here," said her father suddenly, "I am glad this has all happened, as I was going to tell you something. Proposing to wait here for him all the best years of your life, while he is scraping some money together! No! The major has behaved in a very handsome way,—the bishop, and all; and he really quite likes you, and proposes to marry you. There is news for you! We settled it all off like men of business, in a quarter of an hour."

Polly indeed started at this news.

"Oh, papa," she said, excited, "you can

hardly ask me to do that! You know I would do anything for you and for *them*," she motioned; "but this is *such* a step."

The clergyman turned round in his chair full on her. "What is this?" he said. "What d'ye mean? Are you going on with folly too? D'ye mean to tell me that you have been plotting with that pauper who went out now? If you have been getting up any sickly romance of that sort, I vow to heaven—"

Polly answered, gently:

"I did, and do, like poor Harry more than any one; but, of course, I should not think of him after what you said to-night."

"A fine sacrifice you can make, Miss!" said he. "Your father prevents you making a fool of yourself."

"But then, papa, to marry him,—a man that I have seen twice, and that I could never like,—that is so different. Don't ask me; do not, dearest papa. I will stay with you and *them* for all my life, and try and be

as useful as I can; but it is too hasty—too sacred a thing."

"Sacred! Oh, he has been teaching you all that, has he? You can teach your father, a licensed clergyman of England, what is sacred —eh? 'Pon my word, fine nice times we live in! But see here, my good Miss! I am not going to be entertained with any more of this folly. You must just do it, and make up your mind. I have settled it with the gentleman, and don't want any more talking about it. I am your father—and your guardian in law—and you not of age. You must try and learn to be a little unselfish; and, if it is a little sacrifice, it's no more than thousands of children do every day —and little enough you can do for your unfortunate packhorse, slaving himself all his life to keep a roof over your head—you, and all the set up stairs; working, working, from morn till night. And now this little chance, when I may get something that will get me my poor glass of wine (which I want, God

knows), you, of course, get up your love-sick folly, as if you were some chit at school, instead of a grown-up woman that should have sense. No; but it's always this way! no co-operation, no co-operation; and you'd have me just beginning again, and slaving for the whole set, dragging on on this work-house pittance, provided *you* have your bit of milk-and-water romance! It's always been the way—always."

Polly had been listening to this rambling tirade, with eyes gradually opening. Without intending it, he had for once been diplomatic and blundered on to the most suitable motives that could sway her mind. There was one always irresistible, and which he unconsciously set out with great force and in strong light,—the picture of himself toiling miserably—the over-burdened father of a family struggling to support his little family above, and receiving no aid. The very piteousness of this picture, her own crying *selfishness* and want of sacrifice, came before

Polly. It struck a pang to her gentle breast, as it had done many times before. She saw her dear darling father worn,—which he was not,—going "down town" wearily on his hopeless errands, writing, writing, to this holy man and that, and all for *her*. In her eyes he was at that moment, by a sort of filial delusion, a kind of sweet and amiable Vicar of Wakefield. She could not hesitate, as indeed she had never hesitated, when such a picture was before her; and, with tears in her eyes, she became submissive to her dear parent.

That good man got into famous spirits in a moment. "My dear girl, it will be new life for us all. I shall make Major Grainger get me to be the old bishop's chaplain—a thing that's never been enough worked as yet. The chaplain ought to be more powerful than the bishop himself. He really disposes of his patronage. There was that man in Ireland used to get all his chaplains to be bishops, one after the

other. Good gracious me," he added, reflectively, as if dazzled with his prospects, "it is wonderful! But there is more jobbing done over there." This he said very wistfully. "A chaplaincy will do very well to begin with, until something *fat* falls in. He can always have his pick, and stop it *in transitu.* Now, my good child, you see what it is to have a clever, pushing father. There is no doing anything without it. Some people would be content to "hole" on here all their days, like rabbits in a burrow. You see what I have made of it. I have always tried to work for my children. There you are, established *splendidly,* I may say, while indirectly I have taken some little care of myself."

Polly listened to all this self-laudation with a sad face, that was bent down over her work, and saying occasionally, "Yes, papa; yes, papa." About an hour went by. Suddenly they heard a step on the little short gravel walk, and the wooden gate

flapped to noisily. A visitor. It was nine o'clock. They heard a gruff man's voice in the hall, and Bridget came in, full of flutter and alarm, to say there was "a soldier man" in the hall with a letter, and he wanted a receipt and an answer. There was actually such a tall warrior blocking up the little narrow entrance, almost brushing both sides with his uniform. He certainly would have found it hard to pass the clock. He seemed a gigantic Noah's Ark man, from the smallness of his jacket and the length of his figure. The letter he brought was from Major Grainger, and addressed to Polly. Her father, as a matter of course, took it as being addressed to him, and opened and read it to *himself* first. Then, as a sort of *arrière pensée*, read her snatches of it, with many a "Dear me!"

It ran:—

"IRNSTON BARRACKS.

"MY DEAR MISS POLLY,—I find that very great news has come in of new disturbances

in India, and something like a rising among the blacks. Troops are to go out at once, and I have to set off for London this very night. The regiment is to leave in a few days at furthest, but I shall not be able to return.

"You have heard by this time of the formal proposal I made to your father. As he assures me that your consent is certain, it would seem unnecessary at such a moment to trouble you. Your father affects to settle all concerns of the household. I take, therefore, his assurance. I suppose he knows, or is assumed to know, what is best for his children's interest.

"You will say that this is a strange way to go about this matter. So it is. And I am a strange being, I know. Will you forgive my being brief and coming to the point, by telling you that from the first time I saw you I felt that *you* were the one who were to influence, if any one was to do so, my life. I felt that *you*, if you would care to take the trouble, might be the means of changing

me from—ah, well—what I am, to one who might be taught to do good,—to live happily, with heart sympathies and affections, and die happily at the end. For even the short time I have known you I have felt this influence.

"May I say too that I have an instinct that this step will be best for your interest, as I believe for mine. You are very young, and in so important a thing, wiser heads such as perhaps you consider your father, may advantageously decide for you; at all events you love him. It was never intended that you were to spend your whole life as a sort of upper nurse—a higher and broader path is opening for you. This, I say again, will seem a strange way of writing on such a matter; but your father has already so simplified the business, it will be much shorter to deal with it in this way. Time—and a soldier's time—will not allow of the usual formulas and more delicate approaches.

"Simply, then, I ask for an answer by the

bearer to this question: First,—Do you accept the proposal I made? Second,—Would you be willing to wait for two or three years, when I shall be free and done with the army for ever in one shape or another—above ground or under-ground?

"Believe me,

Dear Miss Polly,

Yours truly,

"ROBERT GRAINGER."

"I don't understand all this," said the clergyman testily. "Going away—that's quite another thing. What does the man mean? and the bishop—oh!"

He had turned over the page; there was a postscript. It ran:

"I am now going to write a letter to the bishop about your father. He will be giving an episcopal dinner, such as the Apostles used to give, in a few days, and he shall ask your father. In due time I shall press his claims on him; but that will be a good beginning—"

The reverend gentleman was only half satisfied with this arrangement. Still, after dinner, when the episcopal wine had annealed as it were, the human heart, there was no knowing what might be done. He would get next him. Besides, if the major did not work zealously, according to his engagement, *his* contract need not be fulfilled.

"To be sure. Now get your pen and write. Tell him, all that will suit excellently; something in that way, you know."

"What! I must write now?" said Polly with a start, and a woeful face. "Oh! so sudden!"

"Of course, unless you want me to give bed and board to that fellow in the hall."

She had soon written her answer, and was putting it up, when her father called out:

"Come! Show it to me, miss."

He read it.

"What is all this?" he said, angrily. "'My duty to tell you—affections have been

—but I shall try—' Rubbish! You're a fool, child; sit down and write it over again. Go now. Wasting my paper; nice work it is."

Polly answered with excitement:

"I can't, papa—indeed I can't. I *must* tell the truth in such a matter as this."

"What d'ye mean?" said the clergyman rising up excitedly. "Are *you* going to beard me in this way?"

"No, no, no, papa," said Polly, more excited still. "I would do anything for you, and I show it; for I make this dreadful sacrifice for you and for *them;* but I *must* have my way in this. It is only right and proper he should know all this—know what is the truth—that it is a mere matter of bargain and sale. And I hope it will be for the best," faltered she, "and I do it with all my heart for you and them."

Much taken aback by this burst—for, as he often said, he hated a scene and fuss of any kind—the reverend gentleman could

only half grumble that he wanted nothing done for *him*—that nothing ever *had* been done for him—and that it was her own concern, and that he washed his hands of it. (How many times did he go through this figurative ablution, which indeed amounted to the direct contrary, being a signal that he did *not* wash his hands of the particular matter.)

"Yes, papa, I shall go through with it. You may depend on me; but I *must* send this as it is. He will like me the better for it. Here," she went on folding it hurriedly, "Bridget, give this to the soldier."

Her father still grumbled, "Oh, of course; you have your own way. Lecture your father; see how it will end. Nice daughter you are, and I have to find wits for you all."

The soldier went his way, bearing the letter; and within an hour the major received it. Thus on that night was this odd proposal of marriage made and accepted. Upstairs among the little crowded

population, Polly lay awake, miserable and tossing; and at last, towards morning, fell wearily into a doze. Her father sat long below at the fire, before retiring to his snug room to the right, where he alone was entitled to a fire; and in a sort of dreamy abstraction made endless pictures. Grouping himself and the bishop in a ceaseless variety of attitudes, he heard the bishop's voice, sweet and melodious:

"My dear Churchill, old Benbow is failing fast. We shall certainly take care of you."

Then his eye settled abstractedly on his own hat, the brim of which gradually widened into the noble and flowing sinuosity of the *true* and only brim. Sweet wishing cap! Had he found a stray one, lost or forgotten, he would have taken it home reverently, and put it under glass, like Napoleon's at the Louvre. He went to rest that night convinced of his own masterly diplomacy. His sleep and dreams were

delightful. Above, Polly scarcely slept; she had the image of her poor ruined lover before her—the honest, open Harry—with this blow now to put to the others. Yet she could not dream but that it would be otherwise. Her father's sentence was a judge's, final, irrevocable.

But, it will be said, she could not be very deeply engaged in the matter, as she made so poor a struggle, and accepted the whole so complacently. But our heroine was young, full of life, and thought, and hope; and her faithful subjection to her father had given her a wonderful self-command and training. And again; what is so far off as two or three years may become three or four. Such a "long day" removes all the bitterness. On reflection, therefore, the matter will seem reasonable enough. To say nothing of the fact that Major Grainger was not *odious* or "*loathsome*" to her; and she had a sort of compassion for him, with a feeling too that he would never return.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BISHOP.

IN due course the gallant Carabineers were put on board some very mean transports, huddled up with their horses—as the custom is—and sailed away to India in the hired troopship the *Pegasus*, hastily taken up with many others. For there was, indeed, a crisis, and no time to lose. A tremendous Sikh rebellion had broken out. Europeans were being massacred, and the empire was in danger. The gallant 14th Carabineers, who had plenty of gold embroidered names upon their flag, had not been abroad for many years, and were the very first regiment to be hurried away. Some five hundred "sabres," as they were

fond of describing themselves; so many "officers and men;" so many "women and ladies"—(the reader will note the logical nicety of War Office English)—were all crammed into those "tubs," and for weeks were miserable. Some of these honest fellows, going to certain death by sun-stroke, fever, or Indian musket or scymitar, had their sleep even served out to them like their biscuit and junk; for they were so straitened for room below that the "ration" of sleep could only be taken in alternate spells, about a third of the number having to doze or walk about on the deck every second night. As for the two or three poor faithful women who went out in squalor, what business had they literally in that galley? Their suffering, and discomfort, and misery it would be hard to describe. But it has been the custom—and has always obtained—and so it will in all probability be to the end of time and of English war offices.

The horses, poor animals, were henceforth to endure life in a sort of frame, all under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Rignold, C.B., and Major Grainger. The *Pegasus* sailed away, and was not heard of for months.

At Cumberley quite a new life had set in for the family. The Reverend Mr. Churchill had lost not an hour in forwarding his friend's letter to the excellent Bishop Talboys, accompanied as of course by one of his own, beginning:

"My Lord Bishop,

"Before my friend, and your lordship's relation, Major Grainger, embarked on board the *Pegasus*, hired transport, he promised to procure for me the honour of your lordship's knowledge, and, may I add, friendship. Indeed, since the day when I was fortunate enough to hear a few words from those eloquent lips, I have absolutely longed to know more of one whom common rumour," &c. &c.

Bishop Talboys read this document with surprise and pettishness.

"How they do plague me!" he said to his chaplain. "Who is the fellow? Oh, I recollect."

"I shall write to him in the usual form," said the chaplain, about to endorse it on the back.

"No, no," said the bishop; "that will never do. I must be civil to him. That Grainger is so ill-regulated, really he knows no bounds in his behaviour. No, no! I suppose you may as well ask him here to dine to-morrow. We have that dean coming."

His lordship was at a hotel in the manufacturing town.

"Really, the way I am harassed and put out by these canvassers. Have you written to Sir John?"

"Yes, my lord."

When Mr. Churchill received his letter he tossed it carelessly over to the sad-faced Polly.

"There, young woman, read that! When will you come to know the world like that? This is looking like business at last."

And Polly and Bridget were kept hard at work all that day, getting ready articles for the clergyman's toilette.

"Silk button-over waistcoat!" said he, testily. "When will the girl get sense? Don't you know the man's Low—low as his hat? Do you want to ruin me? My goodness, how I have to think, think, think, of everything."

In good time the clergyman set out by train, with a sort of rude evangelical air about him, which he knew would harmonize with the feelings of his host. He talked all the way to the "distinguished prelate." He had looked out in his old Peerage, and found that before this high elevation, and as simple curate, he had written a thick pamphlet, called "Livings and Laymen." But that was five-and-thirty years ago. There

was no time to write to town; and even if there was, pamphlets wither in a week, and fall away like the leaves of a faded rose. Still he made many speculative compliments in the railway carriage, on the probable success of this production: "Your lordship is of course acquainted with Lord Buryshaft, that remarkable layman; a man that has had incomparable influence. There, my lord, we can have no objection to the junction of 'Livings and Laymen.'"

At the hotel was a pleasant little dinner arranged. Sir John had arrived. A dean was present, also a young man, son to some dignitary, and the Rev. Mr. Chewton, chaplain, and ecclesiastical breakwater and fender, as it were. Whenever the great episcopal paddle-boxes came drifting slowly up against some awkward granite corner, which might chafe or scrape them, Mr. Chewton insinuated himself quietly between, and "eased off" the great mass.

The bishop looked at the clergyman sus-

piciously, and even nervously, as the latter bore down upon him, with his hand half out, and a kind of bent reverential gait, as though he was going to prostrate himself. The baronet and the other guests looked on with a curious air. Mr. Churchill was beginning:

"My lord, I am so penetrated with your lordship's goodness. Our friend, Major Grainger—"

"Yes, yes," said the bishop; "to be sure—that is—"

The fender was softly swung over, between.

"You came over from Cumberley," said Mr. Chewton, "by rail, of course? Good sound hard work, I am sure."

But the clergyman's eye was still devouring the bishop.

"His lordship knows," he said, "what that means; no one better—no one has so much right to—"

"Oh, you belong to Cumberley?" struck in Sir John. "Very poor land about there."

"Yes, yes, sir; you are quite right," said Mr. Churchill, plaintively, "poor in every way. One ceaseless struggle from morning until night. But we live, all of us, somehow—*just* live."

Dinner was announced. Mr. Churchill made a struggle to get next the bishop; but by the dexterity of Mr. Chewton was prevented. He, however, managed to command him, as it were, advantageously from the other side of the table. The bishop and baronet talked fluently together. As each spoke, the eyes of the clergyman opposite rested on them, and his glance moved from one to the other with a sort of smile of surprise and pleasure. The baronet beginning—"Do you know, a most curious thing, I"—Mr. Churchill was all astonishment, in anticipation. Then the bishop, in a placid, level, plaintive way, saying he "thought we were hurrying to some sort of *cataclasm* or other, which would eventually be a benefit for our dear old England"—

Mr. Churchill's features betokened the most poignant sympathy and apprehension. He was preparing, at the first full stop, to concur hastily—to add something to the effect that he had never so much as thought of that before; but that now, as the bishop demonstrated it, it was only too plain—when the fender was adroitly lowered and the great ship eased away from him. But Mr. Churchill held the chaplain very cheap and poorly. For the moment he had addressed the bishop very deferentially and discriminatingly—"As to a crisis, my lord, which is so present to your lordship's clear gaze, we have one comfort in the presence and assistance of men like the Earl of Buryshaft and others."

The bishop gave a little start, and said hastily, "Oh, no doubt, no doubt. He is said to be a very good man."

The chaplain struck in again. "And now who is your leading man at Cumberley?" Mr. Churchill turned and fixed a

vacant eye on him. He was rather resenting these interruptions. The vacancy gave place to a twinkle of pleasure as he bent forward and girded himself up for what he had intended. "And as to the noble lord's influence in matters of patronage, we must say it is as happy a junction of 'Livings and Laymen' as took place in a certain quarter many years ago." Strange to say, the bishop coloured up and contracted his brow. His only answer was a sort of grunt, and a "Sir John—a glass of wine—here, waiter," —this very testily—"champagne to Sir John." No one but the chaplain understood the compliment; but they saw plainly how ill it had been received. Mr. Chewton again "fending off," said, "And how do you get on with your churchwardens?" Mr. Churchill, much confused, and sensible of a blunder somewhere, cast down his eyes.

Both allusions had been most unfortunate. The Reverend Mr. Talboys might have been a bishop certainly seven or eight

years before the date of his promotion. But Lord Mountsheltie, his patron, had told him plainly that he could have got it for him but for "Buryshaft, who wanted it for one of his own Methodist fellows." He had to wait, therefore, and on the last occasion the same unhappy influence was again brought to bear, but without success this time. He could, therefore, be hardly expected to join with enthusiasm in praises of such a person.

Mr. Churchill was yet more unfortunate in his allusion to the pamphlet. Why, every one knew, or *did* know five-and-thirty years ago, that "Livings and Laymen" had been *suppressed*, as it were; that it contained bitter strictures on the way patrons treated their clerical clients; and that when Lord Mountsheltie "took him up" and began to use his interest for him, the reverend gentleman took pains to secure the bulk of the impression (the trouble being no more than a journey to the publishers'),

and also to get back from his friends any stray copies that were not in the shape of *allumettes*, &c.

It took Mr. Churchill some time to gather force for a new effort, for he had counted much on the success of his compliment; and the last shape in which he had determined to put it seemed almost elegant. He tried again with Major Grainger.

"He's going to India," said the bishop.

"I heard that yesterday. He has great gifts," said Mr. Churchill, with an enthusiastic pathos.

"No doubt, no doubt," said the bishop blandly. "He will have a fine field for them out there. But he will have to—to soothe 'em. Roughness or *brusquerie* will only alienate. He has of course all my wishes and prayers. Sir John, help yourself. What did you do with that tenant of yours?"

After dinner, when they had risen and were taking coffee, Mr. Chewton at once took

possession of Mr. Churchill, and entirely fended him off from the bishop, who was bestowed with Sir John in easy chairs, and, lying back luxuriously with their knees crossed, and coffee-cups high in the air, murmured softly and confidentially together.

The clergyman looked over wistfully at them, and tried at times to edge away from the chaplain, who, however, laid his finger on his chest, and said plainly,

"No! no! the bishop has a great deal to say to his Sir John." Presently it was time to go. "Permit me, my lord," said he, "to express my humble satisfaction in having spent one of the most delightful—"

"Oh, dear, no! no!" said the bishop, yawning and rubbing his face over as he yawned. "Chewton, see about Sir John's cab. Hope Mr.—er—Mr. Churchill, you will get home safe. Good night; good night, sir."

Mr. Churchill lingered; this parting seemed such sweet sorrow. He almost wished

that the custom of Catholic countries obtained here, of bending and kissing the episcopal ring, or sinking down and asking the parting benediction. But there was no ring to salute, and the prelate, a little "full" and sleepy now would have been roused into wakefulness by so unusual a compliment. Mr. Churchill had at last to part.

"A most forward, intrusive fellow," said the bishop, dropping languidly on the sofa. Then rousing up as his last guest departed, "Good night; God bless you."

Mr. Churchill went home only half pleased. But before he reached his house he had many more interviews with the bishop, and had paid that prelate some very elegant though forced compliments, with a success that quite put him into spirits again. He had at least that day "laid a foundation." That happy phrase quite restored him. "Laid a foundation." To

be sure. He would come and come again. He heard himself saying to the bishop, the holy man growing old in years, and resting feebly on his arm, "You want, my lord, nothing but soft kind voices about you. Nothing rude, nothing rough, should come near you, my lord."

"Yes, Churchill," the bishop would reply. "I think sometimes people may have quite a different impression of me to what I really am. Chewton, I believe, does want softness and manner. If I could only get rid of him," and the bishop would sigh as he thought of his iron thraldom. Between the next two stations the deliverance of the good prelate had been effected. The chaplain's craft and influence had been met and overthrown by a craft and influence as great.

The reverend gentleman returned in high elation, and finding Polly waiting up with something hot and comfortable, he expanded over this treatment, and gave her a grand and

glowing narrative of his day's success; in which too he so mixed up the interview he had in the railway carriage, his future walks with the bishop on his arm, &c., that he unconsciously represented matters in a far more advanced stage than they really were. Over his tumbler, it is to be suspected more to recreate himself with the prospect than to entertain Polly, he painted in the chaplain in the most odious colours, a prey to all the meanest vices. "But," said he, "I think I have put a spoke in his wheel. I think I have opened his lordship's eyes. He sees the thraldom under which he is groaning. The fellow is tottering at this moment."

"The chaplain, papa?" asked Polly.

"Of course; who else? I told the bishop he was too kind-hearted a man, too gentle himself to have such natures about him, and he agreed with me. Infernal stuck-up puppy!" added Mr. Churchill, getting into a fury as he thought of the

"fending off" to which he had been subjected. "I'll settle his hash, if he had all the mole-eyed old bishops in the world at his back."

CHAPTER VIII.

"LIVINGS AND LAYMEN."

ON the next morning the clergyman came down quite cheerful and full of eagerness. He was always ready to recommence. He was soon at his desk, busy with his despatches. His first letter was to a London "old bookseller," who lived near the Museum, with an order to procure for him, without delay and at any reasonable cost, a copy of a pamphlet published many years ago, by the present Bishop of Dunmore, Doctor Talboys. It was called "Livings and Laymen."

The next step was a letter of acknowledgment to the bishop, "for the delightful evening I was privileged to spend in your

lordship's society. As I remarked at dinner, no one knows so gracefully as your lordship how to combine 'Livings and Laymen' —meaning, as I do, *our* cloth by the former. Your lordship will forgive me this allusion, for I fancied I saw last night that your lordship's modesty shrank from the publicity. May I look forward at some future time, not far off I trust, to a renewal of the pleasure I enjoyed last night in your lordship's society?—some morning, if I might call in, and be privileged to have your society unconstrained by the presence of a third person. Forgive this presumption. But your lordship has a reputation for powers of society, and must, I fear, pay the penalty. Your chaplain, the Reverend Mr. Chewton, I am sure is right in his kind efforts to prevent your being too much wearied by your guests. Let me, in conclusion, my lord," &c. He read this over several times with great satisfaction, and was much pleased at his artful stroke at the

Reverend Mr. Chewton. It would set the bishop wondering: "Too much wearied by my guests? Why should I be wearied by men of sense and knowledge of the world? Why should Chewton stand between me and them? What is he at?" This would be the train of thought in the bishop's mind. "What was Chewton at? Had he designs of his own?" perhaps to have the air of influence over the bishop, as though he were old and stupid. Old men resent nothing so much as that, and old bishops above all. From the receipt of that artful insinuation, it was plain to any observer of human nature that Chewton would totter.

Polly entered now, on some little errand. Her father was looking complacently at his letter, and her face seeming almost to reproach him, he thought, "Well, Chewton brought it on himself; it's his doing." And then, with a kind of good-humoured kindness, put it into her hand to read. "That's going to the bishop, Polly."

Polly admired everything he did, and read it with silent appreciation. Only, uneasiness came into her face when she reached the allusion to the chaplain. "What does that mean, papa? What did he do to you?"

Her father twitched it from her impatiently. "What did he do to me? Nothing, of course. Don't you see the point—the irony?"

Polly's face assumed a grieved and puzzled look. "Since you ask me, papa dearest, I do not. He wouldn't be offended, would he?"

"Go away, go away!" said the clergyman, in a rage. "You have no sense or tact, no more than one of the common clodhopper girls out of that field. Go away, and don't worry me."

Polly withdrew in sad distress. She would have given worlds to understand. Some malignant spirit did whisper for a second to him that it might offend; but his pride

thrust the fellow away, and turned the feeling into a sort of spite against Polly. "The girl's a mere fool," he said, "and always will be one."

A week went by, and an answer came down from the "old bookseller," near the Museum. The pamphlet was a very old one. It was very scarce, having been, he believed, bought up. But he knew of a copy through his agents, and the price would be thirty shillings — a large sum, but it had to be regularly hunted for.

Polly was treasurer, paymaster of the forces, &c., and her father called her in.

"Thirty shillings for that, Polly," he said. "What would become of you all without me, I'd like to know?"

Polly felt a little faint at this demand. "Thirty shillings, papa?" she faltered.

"Yes, and very cheap the book is, I can tell you. It's worth untold gold to me."

"Thirty shillings for a book, papa!" she said. "Oh, and you know I was keeping

it all up for your new frock-coat for Sundays. And dearest, you know you want it so badly."

"There's more of her folly! You children can only think of the present—a Sunday coat, indeed! Why, that little book will get me the value of a hundred coats, or a thousand coats."

"A hundred coats, papa?"

"Yes. But I might be preaching to the moon. You'll never get sense or knowledge of the world—never. And d'ye mean to tell me," he said, turning on her with quite a new tone, "that we are in this squalid state, that shillings must be saved up to buy me a coat? I suppose you are not in earnest; or is this the fine management that has been carrying on in my house—eh?"

Polly, in terror, deprecated this rude handling of her little managing arts; her struggle to keep things together. "No, no, dearest," she said, "not that—there is

plenty, of course,—for the coat and all—only it seems so much for a book."

"Oh, of course, everything laid out for me is a tax. But it is time I looked into my own affairs. There, just go out and get me a post-office order for thirty shillings, payable to that fellow. There, and be quick."

Polly tripped away with a sad heart; for she dreaded any investigation into their little money expenses: not for her sake, but for his. For about once a-year a stern fit of auditing would come on him, attended with a relapse into dreadful despondency, consequent on a more serious disappointment and rebuff than usual. On these occasions he would call for her account and pass books; and sit with his hand to his head, drawing up long tables of accounts and figures, and examining the trembling Polly as if she were a defaulting clerk; and bursting out now and again with a—"You've ruined me among the whole pack

of you! What! Cox's bill never paid? God help us!"

"Indeed, dearest, you know you said he might be put off a little longer, and the money given to Wells."

"Oh, yes. My doing, of course. I've ruined you—is that it?"

"No, no! indeed, papa."

Those unhappy nights were like nightmares for Polly, and fearful this might give rise to such another, she got her bonnet and went off to the post. Poor gentle little accountant!—never was to be known the extent of her struggles "to make both ends meet"—the paring, the squeezing, the stretching; and it must be added, that all that was pared, squeezed, and stretched belonged nearly wholly to herself.

In due course came down the pamphlet, "LIVINGS AND LAYMEN: a Question for the Age;" and with the motto, "*Quousque tandem.*" It was only twenty pages long, and was in a "scathing" style. It had been

written under rather curious circumstances; though the Reverend Mr. Churchill, leaning back in his chair, and turning over the cover tenderly, as though it was a spectral apron, gathered nothing beyond the mere structure of the sentences.

About its date, the well-known Tory nobleman, Lord Bultyre, had married a sister of a no less violent Whig prelate; in fact, the well-known Bishop Stilton, sometimes irreverently called "Cheesy Dick." Mr. Talboys had been in high favour with Dr. Stilton, and until this fatal alliance was considered to be marked out for nothing short of an archdeacon. Within a year no less than three good livings fell vacant, and were found to be all given to Tory nominees of the Tory Lord Bultyre. On the lapse of the first, an excuse was made to the Rev. Mr. Talboys, who was much hurt; on the second, an open breach was with difficulty averted; on the third, the famous "Livings and Laymen"

came out, anonymously of course; but its authorship was well known. It travelled through the diocese like the fiery cross. It contained two biting etchings of the bishop and the Tory lord. The beginning was often talked of among the country clergy, for its nervous power. "I will take a man, just as the abandoned Sterne took a captive, and I will put him in a palace." Every one knew that this referred to Thorpe-hill, the episcopal palace. "I will clothe him in purple and fine linen—not in sackcloth, or plain fisherman's dress, as the early apostles appeared," &c. The portrait of Lord Bultyre was no less happy. Every one knew who Lord Cowweary was, almost a synonym for Bultyre. There was "capital satire" all through it, especially in the recommendation of an equitable arrangement of patronage for the future, viz., that all Tories should present Tories, and all Whigs should present Tories. But soon after came the embarrassment. The venerable

father in God, Bishop Stilton, in course of time died—(the irreverent would say, "so cheesy Dick is dead!")—but Lord Bultyre lived on, increasing in fame and influence; and, being full of honours and gout, was ordered off to Vichy, where by an almost Providence, as it seemed to the favoured party, he fell in with Mr. Talboys, then travelling as tutor to a young baronet under age. The nobleman and the clergyman met on a bench under trees, just after taking their waters; and so an intimacy began, which lasted then for the two months during which he kept the young baronet on at Vichy. That Christmas Mr. Talboys was at Bultyre, and in the July following was promoted to the valuable living of Crumpley. Many, on this appointment, recollected the pamphlet "Livings and Laymen," now many, many years old, for the express purpose of sending it to the patron; but its author had wisely and well secured the whole impression within a year

of publication. Some of the old country papers were then consulted for a review, and the portrait of Lord Bultyre was copied, sent in MS., but never read by that nobleman. Was it wonderful that in due course Dr. Talboys, whose principles had shrunk up slowly from full-blown Whig into decent Liberal-Conservative, and from that into pure Toryism, should by-and-by be talked of for a bishopric?—and having been baulked, as mentioned, by the Bury-shaft influence, at last received the mitre through the good offices of his patron. Now this is indeed the whole story of "Livings and Laymen," which many an old country squire and clergyman could tell us.

But our Rev. Mr. Churchill—*he* knew nothing of it. He was leaning back in his chair reading it—not understanding it, but admiring the "fine English, and caustic satire." He had a pencil, and marked as he went along short terse sentences that could be easily carried in the memory.

One of these was stinging: "One of his (Lord Cowweary's) ancestors I suspect to have been among the 'laymen' who were whipped from the trafficking in the Temple a good many hundred years ago." He put two marks against that. After he had read it through, he was thinking of sitting down to write at once to the bishop:—"My Lord,—Rarely have I enjoyed a greater feast than I have done within the past hour reading 'Livings and Laymen.'" But another and finer idea occurred to him—he thought of Bumford of the *Cumberley Post*—a little district weekly paper, which got two sides of general news (a London letter, &c.) from town every Saturday.

Bumford was the editor, and allowed influential persons—the doctor, clergyman, &c.—free access to his columns. He would review the pamphlet in the *Post*, and send it to the bishop: "My Lord,—I have taken a liberty—a great liberty, I fear; but a style really gone out, and that recalls the caus-

ticity and vigour of 'Junius,' should not be willingly let die." The review was headed, "A Rare Book," and began colloquially: "Turning over the stores of a little bookseller in the Strand, he came out of his little dark back shop with a dusty little pamphlet in his hand. Our eyes twinkled." He then gave specimens, especially the portrait of Lord Cowweary, and it concluded with a question: "Who does our readers suppose to be the author of a satire in style and causticity second only to 'Junius?' They will never guess. But have they never noted the same nervous characteristics, tempered by a mild religious fervour, in certain Charges that have of late been issued? Have they never fancied that the gentlest and most amiable of prelates could, if he so pleased, touch his pen with hallowed fire? This famous satire is said to be from the pen of the amiable and gifted T—lb—ys, whose modesty alone makes him wish to have the authorship unknown; and we hope

sincerely his lordship will gratify the world by an early reprint of this marvellous piece of composition."

When the proof arrived of the review there was great delight in the house. Polly was allowed to hear it read, and the tears glistened in her eyes as she saw this the first serious effort of her dear father in print. It seemed inspired language. She could have kissed it.

"Dearest!" she said, "it's so like the regular thing—what we read in the regular papers. Oh! it's charming, dear." But this compliment only half pleased her father.

"Every journal is a regular paper, isn't it? Do take care how you speak, and mind your English." He seemed to himself to have a right to speak with authority now.

Polly took the long slip again into her hands. She was flying away with it upstairs to read it out to Bridget and the children, but was checked with much impatience by her father.

"What folly you go on with! *Don't* take it away. Here, give it back to me; it will get all torn."

"I must read it again, though," said Polly. "And oh, how the bishop will be pleased!"

"Yes, I think so, or he ought to be," said her father, complacently. "The art of it is, it's not laid on too thick. You or any one else would plaster him, and make him disgusted. Now run away; I must write and enclose it to him."

We may conceive what a letter that was—modest, yet elated, and concluding despondingly: "And yet, alas! my lord, I feel my humble pen has not done half justice enough to the incomparable 'Livings and Laymen.'"

CHAPTER IX.

REPULSE.

THE bishop was just before breakfast, and had come in from his morning stroll on the beach, when he found this letter on the table.

"What on earth is this, Chewton?" he said, as the long slip dropped down like a snake.

The first thing that caught his eye were the capitals, "LIVINGS AND LAYMEN," and he almost gave a cry: for over thirty years might surely have consigned that "one mistake of my life"—so he called it—"to oblivion."

"Some ruffian," he gasped, "has raked up that old book! They want to get up

something between me and Bultyre, for fear he would do anything for my son. Cumberley Post! Why, that's that infernal persecuting fellow, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes," said the chaplain, calmly; "here's a letter of his with it. He's done it—he's raked it up!"

"O—h!" groaned the bishop; "what an idiot! He has laid himself out to harass and persecute me into my grave. I declare, Chewton, I could just sit down and cry over this;—to think, at my time of life, and my grey hairs!"

His lordship was a little querulous, and really near crying, as he said.

"Here's his letter," said the chaplain. "'Wrote to London,' he says; 'spared neither time nor gold, to hunt it up.'"

"*My* goodness!" groaned the bishop.

"Character of Lord Cow—Cow—something."

"Cowweary," said the bishop, faintly.

"'Worthy of Junius. I do think one of

his ancestors must have been whipped from the Temple some hundreds of years ago.'"

"O—h!" groaned the bishop again. "They'll say that's all profane. They're sure to give it that turn."

"'It is sure,'" continued the chaplain, "'to be reprinted.'"

"Reprinted!" half-shrieked the bishop, starting up, and walking about—"what are we to do, Chewton? Find out something. Stop him, or he'll ruin me."

"Oh, he must be stopped," said the chaplain, coolly; "a most dangerous person. Leave him to me, my lord; I'll know how to deal with him. He shall give us no trouble, depend on it. With persons like this we can always deal plainly."

"To think," said the bishop, "when I come down here for my health—to be kept quiet, as the doctor said; nothing to be on my mind—to be persecuted in this way!"

"It is dreadful," said the chaplain. "But leave it all to me; I'll start after breakfast."

The Rev. Mr. Churchill was not very long after his breakfast, and was sitting with his slippers on, in very fair good humour and cheerfulness. Polly was near him, busy with a small frock, on this morning.

"The bishop will be reading that now," he said, looking at the fire with a half-smile, as though he saw the prelate there, reading among the coals. "Yes, he must have had it long ago."

"How pleased he will be!" said Polly, looking up. "I would give any money to be looking in at them as they read it."

"He must say it was flattering. All his lickspittles and parasites, and that scheming chaplain of his—they never thought of that, I'll swear."

"No, no, deary; and it was so delicate—getting hold of what had been so long forgotten. Oh, he *couldn't* be offended."

There was an awkwardness in this well-intended speech. It jarred on the nice sensibilities of her father.

"You have always such odd things in your head. Who talks of being offended? Halloa! — what on earth! — who's this now?" and he went over to a sort of "look-out," made behind the curtains.

The flapping-to of the little wooden gate always gave warning note of a visitor, who, however, invariably fixed a pleasant gaze on the little casement as he walked up steadily, and "raked" the little chamber thoroughly. No fiction of "being not at home" answered in the village.

Mr. Churchill's sight was not now of the best.

"Seems like a clergyman," he said, doubtfully.

"Not the bishop, dearest?" said Polly, innocently.

Bridget, with some agitation, showed in the new comer. With a start of surprise, Mr. Churchill rushed to meet him, seized both hands, and wrung them warmly.

"My dear Mr. Chewton, this is a surprise! I am so glad! Sit down; let me take your hat."

He never thought of introducing Polly.

The chaplain had a close, guarded and cold manner, and declined to let his hat be taken.

"No, no," he said, "I am only going to stay a few minutes. I wished to see you."

"And the dear bishop," said the clergyman, enthusiastically, "he is well? Tell me about him. You must sit down."

"I have come, at his request, to speak to you very seriously. It seems you have sent him this thing," he added, pulling out the slip of proof. "It is a most unfortunate thing altogether. I can't tell you how annoyed the bishop was."

The clergyman could not answer from surprise and horror. He gasped at his visitor, and could not speak.

"Oh, it is really a persecution," went on

the other. "I assure you, you are worrying his life, and now this is raked up. Oh, it must be stopped, that's the long and short of it; and I must really request that no more letters be sent of the kind—you—er—understand. The bishop wishes no compliments or things of this kind; and—his patronage is all forestalled."

Oh, for Polly's poor wistful face as she listened to this dreadful and unexpected language!—so unjust, so malignant! Now she believed thoroughly every word that was thrown out against this plotting and malignant chaplain.

"Oh, sir," she struck in eagerly with her gentle voice, "there must be a mistake. Papa has done nothing to Dr. Talboys. I know he meant all in the kindest intention; and indeed if you only *read* it—just read it, sir."

"Oh, I have enough to read, ma'am," said the chaplain, coldly, "and I have no doubt about his intention. But the thing

must end, and mustn't go on—that's all I have to say."

A flush came to Polly's face. Her father had now recovered himself. He was red and pale by turns. How Polly's heart bled for his humiliation! The proof so contemptuously returned had fluttered down on the ground between them.

"Then I tell you what, sir," he said, "I don't follow this at all; and I don't believe a word of it, sir. I know how his lordship feels, and who is between me and him; and whose object it is to be between me and him. I understand, sir," continued the clergyman, standing up, and speaking with trembling voice,—"I know the arts that have been used to keep me from the bishop."

The other stood up with unfeigned astonishment in his face.

"What on earth do you mean, sir?"

"No matter," said the other: "but they shall not succeed, I can tell you. His eyes are a little opened to the thraldom under

which he groans—and they shall be farther opened if it rests with me."

Mr. Chewton turned pale. Every chaplain who is liked by his bishop has an instinct that something of the sort is being said about him. He *had* influence.

"I despise such insinuations," he said. "I treat them with contempt. The bishop has too much confidence in me to be affected by them. You are welcome to do your best. I have merely come here on the mission with which he charged me, not to get into any personal discussion with you; and I tell you plainly that for the future the bishop must be protected from intrusion and persecution either by visits or begging letters."

A hot flush came to Polly's cheeks.

"Oh, sir," she said with indignation, "how can you speak so to my father? He does not send such letters. It was Major Grainger that introduced him, as one gentleman would another; and we are sure the

bishop never authorized such language to be used to *him*."

"He did not," said Mr. Churchill, "and I will *see* that—"

"My conduct," said the chaplain, still sore on the charge that had been made, "is above all suspicion. I invite enquiry—I court it. Such a charge has never been made before. But I defy my slanderers. I do not choose to wait now. Good morning, Miss—er— Churchill."

When he was gone Polly flew to her father and put her arms round him.

"Don't mind him, papa dearest."

The clergyman set himself free impatiently, though he was not thinking of her.

"Yes, I'll expose him. Now I have no restraint. A mean artful intriguer! If I live for anything, it will be for that. I shall go straight to the bishop, and have a private interview. The man shall be exposed in his true colours. It's only common duty and common charity. Why," he added,

with infinite disgust, and taking up the critique of "Livings and Laymen," "why, it's a falsehood on the face of it! Why, I should like to know, should he be offended at this? It would please the Archbishop of Canterbury himself. The fellow has suppressed it. Offended, indeed! You said that," he added, turning on her, darkly. "What do you go on starting such things for? —such follies? No wonder the fellow picked it up. No, just go away now. I'm nicely persecuted among you all. Go now, quick; I have plenty to do and think of."

Polly stole away.

He had plenty to do and think of. First, a letter to the bishop, calm and remonstrative, but wholly exculpating him: "My Lord,— It is my duty to lay before you a plain narrative of facts, which I trust will reach you directly, and not filtered through any medium." A trusty hand—a little ingenuity —could easily arrange that this "personal explanation" should travel direct, and escape

the lynx eye of that unprincipled man. He could go over himself, after a decent interval, and watch his opportunity. The bishop walked a good deal on the sands, recruiting his health by the invigorating sea breezes. The chaplain could not be "always glued to his side." A fine fresh day. "My Lord," he said, "the surprise —the joy, I may say, of this meeting overturns me. Could I have the privilege of a few moments' uninterrupted conversation with your lordship?"

The mild eyes of the prelate beamed on him gratefully, as he stopped in his walk.

"Certainly, Mr. Churchill," he said, "why not? Let us walk, though; I am not quite so strong as I was, so give me your arm. What is this great business, now? Out with it, and if we can manage it—"

"This is only what I might have expected from your lordship's known benevolence and generous character. It was about that little humble critique which I ventured to

pen on one of the most remarkable productions of the century, second only to 'Junius' in force and causticity — 'Livings and Laymen.'"

"Oh, that," would say the bishop, good-humouredly, "that little early thing! Why, I thought all the world had forgotten it. But when am I to see this critique?—a hostile one, of course, eh?"

He had sly humour, this bishop.

"I thought so," said Mr. Churchill, calmly; "I knew your lordship had never seen it, nor my letter. Both were, no doubt, intercepted; by whom, it is not for me to say."

"Intercepted?" said the bishop, colouring. "Who would dare?—no—no; I am not come to *that* yet. What d'ye mean, Churchill? Speak out, man."

"Then may I speak freely, my lord, openly and candidly, and all in your lordship's interest, as I am a living man?"

Then the revelation would follow, received

by the bishop in the kindest manner—oh, so paternal and gentle!—grieved more than angry at being so imposed on. The thing is, of course, too serious to be settled at once. They must plan together.

Alas! that all this delightful interview should have taken place in the little mean study of Cumberley Vicarage! But it answered very well, and when Polly came down with commiserating face, and entered shyly, she found her father in really cheerful spirits.

CHAPTER X.

THE RETURN.

CUMBERLEY village church rose, short, low, and stout, on a bank beside the road, a little outside the town, but nearer than the clergyman's house. It was of the "good old pattern," the "good old stock"—so do they speak of admired old gentlemen—and had a short, sturdy tower like a box; and, like the old gentlemen, wore a thick, warm, oddly-cut surtout of ivy. Among this ivy the old window shone and glistened like enamel; and round in the long grass the gravestones were stuck in at all sorts of angles, and in the wildest mortuary disorder. The sound of the old bell, still strong and mellow, but a little hoarse and

mellow, came through the sloping stone shelves in the tower, and called the congregation to prayer, and the Reverend Mr. Churchill to his desk, every Sunday. He had a thorough contempt for it, calling it an "old rat hole," not fit for a Christian clergyman to put on his gown in; and he longed to see it pulled down and "a decent," staring, pearl-white, theatrical, gothic building put up in its place, by the liberality of the congregation.

Every Sunday he went through his duty to the rather scanty worshippers, who seemed to look out of deep oaken boxes, as though they were watching him from rifle pits. The congregation had been very respectable until the "irregular" Mr. Bush arrived, and "tampered" with Mr. Churchill's following, "pulling up wheat and tares," &c. Beyond this protest, the reverend incumbent made no exertion, coming down every Sunday morning, reading his service and giving them a short, dry,

chippy sermon, in which conventional exhortations to piety were given with a manner almost contemptuous. A far more persuasive sermon was the sight of Polly herself, seated in the deep cavernous pew at the head of her little family, with her face and lustrous eyes turned tenderly to her father, drinking in that apostle's holy words and doctrine, as though he were some being inspired of God, which indeed he was not; for he did not even assume the conventional air of earnestness and piety. That soft face, with all its tender colouring, had now, perhaps, grown a little finer and sharper, had a wistful and restless air; for after all, though she could sacrifice her own heart and feelings again and again for that one dear object, it was not be done without wear and tear and sore struggle.

Word had now come that the Squire might be expected home at any moment; and Polly's letter both from him and from her friend had brought joyful news of the

complete restoration of the young man. The greedy enemy had done mischief, had devoured something, but had been forced to relax his hold, and driven off. Still he remained at a little distance, watching with eager eyes; and on the first opening—a draught, coming from a ball, or wet stocking—he was ready to spring. Everybody was elaborately thankful, and congratulated each other, as it were: "Such a blessing!" "Such a Providence!"—though, indeed, they were but thinking of him as a sort of lay-figure standing for the glorious image, Heir Apparent; and therefore most dear and precious to the public. This was the conventional idea; but down at Cumberley every one was indeed glad to hear it, and much interested in the Squire, whose goodness and heartiness made him popular with every one. They were all coming back; the house was being "done up," and the housekeeper, consulted obsequiously on the matter, announced publicly

that Monday was the day of the return. Every one was looking forward to grand festivals; there were people coming back with the Squire on a visit, and Cumberley would have a gala time of it. The young man was quite strong again. He was indeed uninteresting enough, having no "conversation," and but little gifts: still to have an heir saved was much.

From the housekeeper too had also been learned a bit of information which did not give so much satisfaction, that little Madame French, the charming and coquettish Miss Fanny, was not coming back with them, having been put to a school in France to acquire the graces of that elegant nation. This was a trouble for Polly, who was thinking of her brother Tommy, who she fancied had lost much of that roughness and uncouthness which had so stood in his light before. And in truth he was improved, mainly through her gentle training and all but whispered correction, though

his father had long since "given him up" as hopeless, and bade him never come into his sight at all. Given him up! This was one of the fictions in which the reverend gentleman lived, for he had never taken him in hand or devoted the smallest share of pains or trouble to him. "Send him to school?" he would say. "It is easy to talk. Would you say Eton or Harrow? How am I to do these things? That's all very fine, giving advice!"

It was on the Sunday morning before the Squire's return, long after the "Livings and Laymen" business, that when Mr. Churchill stepped up in his little pulpit and looked round as he gave his dry "hem," he was confounded to see the old Godfrey pew, the front one on the left, quite full. There was the Squire—he saw this over the leaves of his sermon—his son, a delicate-looking young man, the Squire's wife and daughter, a thin lady, and another gentleman new to Mr. Churchill, with a bright, keen,

challenging eye, which seemed to say profanely to the clergyman, "Now, is there any meaning in what you are saying?" He had a pale and high nose, small black whiskers, and sat well back with his arms folded, as though, it seemed to the clergyman, he were on the Ministerial benches. All these symptoms completely upset the clergyman. There was a party, it was plain, at the Hall. The wife and daughter and delicate son had returned suddenly from abroad, and here was a guest of distinction staying with them who had his eye on him. Had the clergyman been in ordinary communication with his parishioners their gossip would have reached him as a matter of course, and he might have learned all that was going to take place at the Godfrey's. The worst was, he had come with a "poor rubbishy" sermon, meagre, full of platitudes, the first he had snatched out of a drawer, where he kept a bundle in stock. Still he tried to make up by the delivery, and stole glances at the

new gentleman with the folded arms, but who seemed to him incredulous, and challenging every statement, as though it was that of a Member on the opposite benches. It was the most unfortunate, stupid thing that could be conceived—such a stupid composition, suited for a religious *canaille*, brotherly love, avoiding tittle tattle, scandal, &c.—nothing grand, no ingenious refinements: and he had actually a sermon suited for London men, with a Parliamentary tone, in which there was a "fine passage," likening the two powers of sin and grace to the Opposition and Ministry, very delicately done, and carried out minutely even to the "independent members" who joined one side and then the other, with an allusion to who was the "leader of the Opposition." It was cruel, and he felt he made a very bad exhibition, though he knew as he came down whose fault it was, and who he would call to an early account. "She might have put me up

to that. Only thinks of herself." When he came out at the back of the church he saw a group standing round Polly, who was all glowing with colour and confusion at such notice. The Godfrey ladies had known her and had been her friend for years before. Miss Godfrey had been a sort of companion. Then came the illness of the young man, a threatening of consumption, which in the case of an heir is enough to break up any establishment. They went abroad to Malaga and Madeira, and remained away some years, playing hide-and-seek with winters and east winds. The Squire could not remain behind. He had to give up his "huntin'" and his estate and his country life, which was indeed a cruel sacrifice. But here they were all met again, the young man of age, and tolerably restored.

Olivia Godfrey was a generous, eager young lady, and delighted to see her old acquaintance. Polly, indeed, touched

the sympathies of every one who even saw her.

"You must come up and see us, and stay with us a few days. You must promise. We are having a few friends to celebrate Arthur's coming of age."

The Squire came in, heartily:

"To be sure she will! Why not? We'll take her out of that little box, and give her a run in the gardens, and a dance at night, too."

Polly hung down her head. She was confused at this kindness.

"Oh," said she, earnestly, "you are so good and kind! But I am afraid papa, and——"

And she looked down a little helplessly at the two children who, awe-struck, were clinging to her dress behind.

"Oh, the nursery!" said Mr. Godfrey. "Very good indeed! They can get on very well for a day or so. Ah, here's his reverence."

His reverence was coming towards them, bowing and smiling. This was indeed a

gala morning. Such a thing did not happen for years.

The Squire, who, it has been mentioned, never relished the parson or his company, and scarcely took any notice of him, gave him a gruff "good morning" and "How d'ye do, Churchill?"

Ladies—women—have more reverence for the cloth, whatever its quality, and greeted him with smiles and welcome. He had edged himself in front of Polly.

"I am so glad to see all the party assembled again at our little church. It was a moment of unmixed happiness for me when I looked down and saw the old pew full——"

The parliamentary gentleman was still in front, looking at him with the bright challenging air.

"Oh, Mr. Churchill!" said Mrs. Godfrey, with the start that often precedes ladies' introductions, "you must let me: Mr. Henry Parker, Mr. Churchill!"

Was that all?—a mere Henry Parker to cause him any discomfort! He was not a little disgusted, for he had counted on a baronet in office, at least.

"And," said Mrs. Godfrey, looking round, "let me also: Mrs. Surtees, Mr. Churchill, our clergyman."

The lady, with her eyes fixed on the clergyman's face, bowed with smiling reverence. The party then moved away out of the churchyard, the two girls by themselves.

"I am so glad to see you again," said Miss Godfrey, warmly. "Do you remember what friends we used to be? We must be so again; and you must promise to come—we have fixed Tuesday—and no excuse. We are going to have a little amusement for dear Arthur, now that he has been made a man, as papa says. We have a few people staying, and you will be amused; to say nothing of some dinnering and dancing, as papa says. Now, you are to come."

Polly looked irresolute; but pleasure was

in her eyes. She could enjoy herself, with all her sense of duty.

"Oh, I should so like it! But, you don't know, I have so much to do—"

"Those children? What nonsense! They can spare you a few days. Surely that woman you used to have"—

"Well, yes," said Polly, that difficulty seeming to be removed, but still irresolute, "perhaps so; but dear papa, he can do nothing without me. I could not leave him an hour."

"Well, he wont mind; so mind it's settled now and finally arranged, no going back. Oh, I have so much to ask you and talk over!—all about the marriage and your major."

Polly coloured.

"Oh, yes," she said, "that is to be."

"But then," the other interrupted, "it's so mysterious; for there was another, wasn't there—at least so they told me—who was not a major?"

"Oh," said Polly, looking round hurriedly, "it is a long story, and some day I will tell it all to you."

Then Miss Godfrey saw in the nervous voice and forced smile the whole history of that little trouble. She pressed her friend's hand, and said kindly:

"I didn't mean; indeed I did not; and I see you are the same as you always were."

The rest of the party had come up with them. They were, indeed, walking towards the Godfrey gate. They must come in and have some lunch. As they went up the avenue, the clergyman talking to the two ladies, Mrs. Godfrey and Mrs. Surtees,—he had seen through that poor pretender, Mr. Parker, from the first, and took not the least notice of him,—Miss Godfrey said joyfully to them,

"She has promised to come, papa. She has got over her scruples. She will come on Tuesday."

"Quite right," said the Squire. "Good girl."

Mr. Churchill stopped in some fluent description as he heard this. He was not at all pleased. There was no reference to him. It seemed like asking a servant out of his house, this asking Polly. He looked from one to the other. Squire Godfrey saw his mortification, and enjoyed it.

"We'll take care of her, never fear, and send her back t'ye safe. You can take care of the children a bit."

Mrs. Surtees, who had still her eyes fixed on the clergyman, said softly,

"Perhaps Mr. Churchill cannot well spare his daughter." Every one seemed distressed at the difficulty, but no one would propose the solution, which was indeed obvious.

It was a long time since the clergyman had been inside that house. The Squire had always treated him with studied neglect.

"That fellow has not two ounces of blood in him," he would say. "I have no notion of putting my good wine into such a vessel

as that." And thus, though civil, he never paid him any civility.

They had lunch in the parlour; it was a fine old place, with oak, pictures, old timber, &c. It was pleasant to the clergyman's eye, and there was an air of state very refreshing after the cribbing and cabining of his own little residence. He found himself thawing insensibly, and his limited powers of speech expanding into fluency. The two ladies listened to him with reverence, particularly Mrs. Surtees. As for the gentleman with a parliamentary manner, who used to take an amused look over at him, he could hardly conceal his contempt for him. He even "put him down," setting him right on some matter.

"I thought it was quite the other way," said Mr. Henry Parker, modestly; "but you may know better."

"I happen to be perfectly well informed on that subject," said the clergyman, with a pitying smile.

"I say, Parker," struck in the Squire cheerfully, "bishop's to be here on Thursday, and stay a few days, too. Not our fellow, you know—but t'other."

Mr. Churchill, bending over and waving a bit of bread, was descanting on some matter to the two ladies when he caught this talismanic word. He was saying, "I at once called upon him, and was shown upstairs, &c.—What bishop? Not Brindley?"

"God bless you, no; wouldn't let that fellow inside my door. No, a man worth two of him—Talboys."

"Talboys!" said Mr. Churchill, almost overwhelmed.

Mr. Parker, having now got rid of his challenging look, was listening with infinite interest to Polly's most natural and artless talk about all that interested her, the children, the parish, &c. She saw they wished to hear this, and gratified them. She even spoke of Major Grainger, quite calmly and firmly; but her eye wandered over rest-

lessly to her father, and a sort of twitch came to her cheek as she heard the allusion to the bishop. She knew what was passing in his mind. But there was yet another trial in store for him.

"I say, Parker, did ye get your dispatch-box down by post, as usual, this morning?"

"Oh, yes," said the gentleman, "but haven't opened it yet. Every packhorse even is entitled to his Sunday's rest. The chief 's on the ground, you know."

Mr. Churchill was up in a room at the Palace. "He asked me to sit down in the politest and kindest way;—" when he caught these words—"Dispatch-box," "chief," his eye wandered away from the two ladies, and he left himself standing there in the drawing-room of the Palace. He searched the white face of Mr. Parker with an inquiry, as who should say, "Something has been suppressed from me—eh?"

They rose from lunch. Polly was taken

by her friend out into the garden. There the whole history of the major and the engineer was told--told without affectation—listened to with sympathy. Such a story must always find eager listeners. Polly made no boast of sacrifice. Another thing, indeed, was on her mind, and an opening soon came.

"We have been away so long," said Miss Godfrey, "I want to know you better now, and make up for lost time. Recollect, now, I cannot see too much of you; and indeed it is a charity to me in this wilderness. Cannot you come to-morrow instead of on Tuesday? Your father will not mind."

Polly looked at her with clear, open eye; then, with a sort of blunt simplicity, said:

"Now, would you tell me this?—why Mr. Godfrey has not asked him?"

The other was embarrassed, and looked away.

"Well, of course he should be, dear Polly. But the truth is—and you wont be

angry with me—I don't think he likes him much."

"And why?" asked Polly, with deep earnestness, and stopping short in her walk. "He don't know him well—his goodness, his cleverness, and powers; no one has an idea of that, for he is lost here and has no opportunity, while others inferior are pushed forward. Oh, I am so distressed for him, and he feels it so! And do you think, now, would there be any difficulty in letting him come instead of me? It would be such an object to him to meet this bishop. He is sure to make an impression on him; and you are so kind, I know you will forgive my speaking in this odd way, and making so extraordinary a request."

The other looked at her almost with wonder, and with love.

"Leave it all to me," she said. "Then we'll manage it."

They returned to the drawing-room. Mr. Churchill was rueful and silent at the result

of the morning. He had had no opportunity of repairing his mistake in reference to Mr. Parker, the gentlemen having left the room, though he might have found willing and appreciative listeners in the two ladies. Father and daughter both went away, without any invitation being given to the former.

Almost in the avenue he began:

"Such work it is! Always putting yourself forward—never thinking of any one but yourself. Of course it is very fine for you to go gabble, gabble with that girl, and amuse yourself about the garden; while the poor working pack-horse" (he took this phrase from Mr. Parker) "has to slave at home, and find money for your finery. I declare I have no notion of letting you go. The thing of all others that would have suited me, meeting the bishop! Oh, it's intolerable!"

"But, dearest," said Polly, "I think—I am sure it is in train to be managed. I spoke to—"

"You did? 'Pon my word, this is nice! You are beginning to patronize your father. Pleasant thing, at my age, to have invitations begged for me by my own daughter. And so you mean to say you asked them?"

"No, no, dear; that is, I am sure she herself—"

"Oh, I daresay it was too much trouble. Of course every one thinks of themselves. You couldn't throw in a hint, even—no. Who's that fellow, Parker? Did you find out that much?"

Polly answered in a low, timorous voice:

"He's Under Secretary for the Colonies, papa—the Right Hon. Henry Parker—and in Parliament."

"Oh, better and better; nothing could be nicer. 'Pon my word, we have made a pleasant thing of it. And now, would you be good enough—if not too much trouble—to tell me what you did say to that girl?"

With much confusion, Polly had to tell

what she had proposed to Miss Godfrey. He then suddenly changed the topic.

"And that woman who was with them?"

"Yes, papa," said Polly eagerly, giving him all the information that would please him. "They told me that was a Mrs. Surtees, a rich widow, with a jointure, who has come to stop with them. And now, dearest, don't think of that, for I am sure and have a presentiment we shall both be there; and the bishop does not come until Thursday."

They were now at their green gate. Mr. Churchill entered first, as he always did, and in rather better humour; he merely grumbled a little, then went into his study and held important conversations with the Right Hon. Henry Parker and Mrs. Surtees. He had noticed her listening to that poor sermon; if she had only heard some of his more ambitious and showy efforts! It was most unlucky: and the blunder, too, about Parker. But he was a man of the world. "My dear sir, I suppose you see more human

nature in a day than I do in a month." "Churchill, send me the claret." "Yes, Squire. As I was saying, I noticed you in my church the first thing, and I thought, 'that must be a House of Commons man —something in the look, the reflective attitude, the way you seemed to grapple with every statement I made, as much as to say, Have you chapter and verse for that? I assure you I felt quite timorous. By the way, that was one of my common run of sermons, kept for the rustics. I shall have something better on Sunday next." He afterwards received many airy compliments from Mrs. Surtees, as he held his coffee-cup on his knee, having come up from dinner. Altogether that Sunday was a remarkable day, and Polly was delighted to see that his hopes were rising as the day wore on.

Oh, what joy for her as she saw a servant open the little green gate and hand in a note, in which the Squire hoped that Mr.

Churchill would come to them on Wednesday night and stop a few days, to meet Dr. Talboys! But they hoped to see his daughter to-morrow, Monday, instead of on Tuesday.

"I told you;" he said, placidly, "you see there's no use in that pushing, and putting in, and begging. The thing always comes of itself, if we only take it quietly. Of course every one thinks themselves wiser than I am. However, let them go on in their own course, and see how it will end."

Polly welcomed much more of this objurgation with pleasure, she was so relieved the letter had come; and she slept pleasantly that night.

CHAPTER XI.

CINDERELLA AT THE PALACE.

ON the next day Polly went over, not without reluctance,—for would not the care of the children—the police, as it were, of the house, be all cast upon others? But she had the idea that greater advantages would on the whole result from her going than from her staying. Her father was aggrieved on taking leave of her.

"Now, I hope," he said, "you will not be so wholly engrossed by your amusements as to quite lose your wits. Just keep your eyes open, and try and make friends for those who have to earn the daily bread for you by the sweat of their brow. Now—now—there—that will do."

This was a protest against Polly's fervent embraces and even tears.

It was all new to her, and very delightful—above that temporary freedom from her daily round of drudgery—and the change to ease and quiet, and the kindliest and most encouraging faces, and the charming gardens, and the luxurious house. It was paradise. Again she seemed like Cinderella, and felt a sort of awe; only there were no cruel sisters exactly. How good and gracious the world seems under such conditions!—"everybody so kind,"—after all, too often based on a mere selfish sympathy in a face or figure that pleases. She was almost bewildered.

At dinner was a large party—one or two more young ladies and a gentleman or two. Polly was neat and elegant in her dress always. She had kept clear of the fatal dowdyism often taken for innocent simplicity. There was a new staff of servants, and the plate out. All this was in honour

of the son Arthur, who had been so restored —a silent, rather long, and unhealthy youth —who had been spoiled by what the Squire called "coddling and women." "All I mean, if I had my way, I'd have set him on the back of a hunter, and galloped him out of it in a season." Of age as he was, his mother kept her eye upon him and watched while he ate as though he were a schoolboy. When all the lamps were lit, and playing on the flowers down the table— what with the choice wines and the choice meats, and the number of servants, it seemed again to Polly as if she was indeed Cinderella and this was the Prince's palace. Only, then her heart smote her as she thought of one who was not privileged to be there, and was sitting alone in their little cottage. And she grew melancholy for a few moments. The Right Honourable Henry Parker was beside her, a very rising young statesman, with much good sense, and some heart—having not yet seen

that official forms and endless reels of red tape were real statesmanship. This stage, of course, might come on later. From the day before, he had been greatly attracted by what he called "the pictures" of Polly and her father, and he read off the characters of both perfectly. Indeed, Polly's face told the whole. The day before, he had said at dinner to the ladies, "I can tell you the whole story of that young girl and her father:" and so he did, to the amazement of the Squire, who set it down to magic or collusion. Miss Godfrey spoke enthusiastically of her. "I am quite sorry to have lost so much of her. But we must make up for it all and see a great deal of her now, and comfort her; for she has had a deal of weary trouble in her life." Then she told the story of her mother and the tenderness of her daughter for that lost parent, and of the latter for him. Mrs. Surtees alone listened without joining in the praise, and owned that, after

all, "she never liked those quiet suffering things."

"I was telling your history yesterday evening," said the secretary to her. "I guessed it all. I even made out the shape of your house, though I have never seen it. They were talking a good deal of you: you seem a great favourite."

Polly received this news with modest joy.

"Indeed, she has the best of hearts and is too kind to me. Formerly, we were such friends, then there was some little coldness between my father and the Squire; and then they went away, and we wrote regularly for a time, but I must say," said Polly, with a charming confidence of manner that delighted the official, "I had so many things to think of and to do, that really, Mr. Parker," here Polly put on a wistful and grieved look, "I grew to neglect it; and so it dropped altogether—collapsed, as one might say."

There is nothing so pleasant as to have an ingenuous and natural soul pouring out to *you* all its little secrets, thinking, perhaps, that you appreciate.

Mr. Parker asked:

"And this coldness; whose fault was it, Miss Polly? Not your father's?"

"Oh, I am afraid," said she, with an artless artfulness, "that it was that the Squire did not understand him. I believe, indeed, that I am the only one that does. You must know him so long."

Mr. Parker smiled at this *naïveté*.

"I daresay a clergyman unconsciously makes many enemies for himself. Will you think me inquisitive if I ask how did he contrive to offend the bishop? It is for his interest I do."

"Well," said Polly, wisely and confidentially, "it was a complicated matter, and I could not say how it began."

"Perhaps the bishop did not understand him either?"

For a moment a wounded and suspicious look came to her face.

"I *don't* mean that," he said hastily. "I make foolish speeches sometimes—I do, indeed."

"Not in the House?" said Polly, slyly.

The legislator laughed.

"But I *do* want to know about the bishop."

"Well, I can tell you," said Polly, resuming her old confidential manner, "I am afraid there were some unkind people who turned the bishop against him. Papa thinks a chaplain; but he may be mistaken. But it has often struck me as being the only way it could be accounted for. There could be no reason why he should, as well as any other person; and he having set his heart on it so."

"It might be so," said the young Secretary, gravely. "But is he in his diocese?"

"Well, no—o," she said, doubtfully—the admission was wrung from her.

"Ah, that's rather against it, you see. We can't expect them to do much for us, with all their own hungry cormorants to be satisfied. In self-defence they must refuse."

"No?" said Polly, looking at him with grief. "You think so?"

"Clearly. Fancy a man applying to me to pass over the men in my own office! I couldn't bring myself to do it. But bishops may be different."

"I never thought of all that," continued Polly. "I am afraid he must have thought strangely of us. Still, no. Why should he have answered us so bluntly?"

"Us!" repeated the Secretary. "Oh, I see. Now let us see. Could we lay our heads together and knock out some plan? I ought to be good for something—for that much."

"Oh, yes," said Polly, her face beginning to glow again with excitement; "indeed, yes."

"The bishop is to be here himself, as you know. Suppose you attack him boldly?"

Polly shook her head. "He would not like that. I doubt if he would like to meet us. For I am sure he is under the idea he has been worried. No, no; it would not do for *me*."

"Then who should—if not your father?"

"No; I'll tell you," said Polly, putting her face close to him. "I was thinking last night about the bishop coming, and I would manage just to have it explained that my dear father meant him no disrespect; in fact, his offence was writing a very clever review of an old work of the bishop's; and if I were to get Miss Godfrey or Mrs. Godfrey just to tell him after tea some night—"

"The worst choice in the world," said the Secretary, coolly. "That *would* settle it. He wouldn't mind them."

"Then what are we to do?" said Polly, despairingly.

"Just think," said the other, with a

smile; "turn it over. Is there any one else? Look up and down the table."

Polly did as she was desired—travelled up and down, and then—at last—looked at him.

"Oh," she said, suddenly, "But I could not ask you."

"Why not?" he said; "'the honourable member will state his reasons.'"

"Oh, it would be too kind—too much of you."

"I know the bishop, or rather he knows me. A good many sons—you understand—a great strain on the episcopal purse. I am told he is very anxious to know me better. There can be no harm trying. Leave it to me, and I'll explain that no harm was meant. I wish people would offend me by writing flattering notices of my books. I wrote a pamphlet when I left college, which they literally sliced up. No—we'll lay that foundation; clear away misconceptions; and then, if we made a good impression, there's no knowing what might come next."

Oh, the joy, the delight and happiness as she listened to this kind offer!

"And he will do what I want," said the Secretary. "I have reason to suspect he will. Now tell me all about yourself. I am a miserable jaded town man, and it will be refreshing to hear about the country life. What do you do at home now, and how do you keep those little troublesomes in order?"

Here was an invitation and a pleasant subject. Polly talked on on a pleasant topic with delight and that earnestness which made her so charming to all who listened. She told him their whole life, giving him the details of their little Meissonnier interior. The Secretary was greatly entertained; he had a pure interest in her. Not that we may credit him with any feeling verging on *tendresse*, for at home he had Mrs. Parker and his two children, for whom he worked hard.

They were now in the drawing-room.

The gentlemen were below. Polly often dreamed of these nights—the soft lights, the luxurious happy air, the beautiful dresses. So is the gentle rustic mind often affected. Then came up the gentlemen. Then came music. Polly had what might be called a "nice" gift of music. She could play and sing. She could not go clattering and galloping up and down the piano like a stray horse on a muddy road, splashing mud and stones, or notes, right and left. But at home she often communed with a long-backed, thin and wiry-legged instrument, and found pleasure in its tinkling tones. However, it disturbed dear papa, so she could only indulge in snatches. Here she was pressed to sing, and with very little pressing and some shyness went over to the piano; for she was not one of the perfect creatures, so above all the weakness and forms, as to rise all at once with a blunt compliance, on the very first invitation.

Ciel! what a piano! an organ rather,

from the noble Erard. How grand, how majestic, how solemn even! She had awe and respect for the massive thing, as we must all have when we think of the fine work, the long labour, and the heavy cost. It thrilled her as she heard its organ-like tones, and put her fingers on it reverently. The publicity of her situation, the dazzle, the newness of the scene, gave an excitement to her bright eyes, and a fresh colour to her cheeks. We should have heard her singing, and singing in a modest sweet voice:

JENNY'S SOLDIER.

I.

Sitting at her cottage door,
  Jenny waits, and Jenny sings;
Counts the hours o'er and o'er,
  Praying that the ship had wings.
Wearily time glides away;
  Patient sits she at her door;
But her soldier, night or day,
  Never, never saw she more.

II.

So the tedious years speed by—
  Years of waiting, years of pain;
But her never weary eye
  Looks for post and post again.

Day by day, time flits away,
Patient sits she at her door;
But her soldier, night or day,
Never, never saw she more.

When she had done, there was a murmur of pleasure. They all came about her. The only one in that house who seemed not to "take to her" was Mrs. Surtees, and that lady seemed to be surprised and even amused at her rustic enthusiasm. Polly's history had been already fully told to that lady, with her love for the young mother who died so early, and her consequent devotion to her father.

At last the delightful night ended, and from that dream Polly passed to others. She never had been so happy as when she went to bed, for there had been some good work done for the dear father that evening: otherwise I daresay she would have felt scruples about her pleasure.

CHAPTER XII.

CONFIDENCE.

THE following morning was no less delightful; it had charms of its own for Polly—the walk in the garden, and the gay company at breakfast. The post had come in, and the large dispatch-box had arrived for the Secretary. Plans were talked of for the day—riding and driving, and what not. It was after breakfast that the Secretary went over to Polly in the deep window, and took a letter out of his pocket.

"This was on my dressing-table this morning," he said, smiling. "Can you guess whose is the writing?"

Polly looked, and started a little. Something like uneasiness came into her face.

"Don't be afraid," said he, kindly, "all this business is to be a secret between you and me. I haven't quite finished it; but I see it is complimentary. I had no idea I was such a great man; but I tell you plainly, I shall not be offended if he reviews *me*."

Polly, with a little misgiving, read the letter; it was very characteristic, and in the old strain:—

"DEAR SIR—When I had the honour of being introduced to you yesterday, I did not for the moment think that I was in the presence of the distinguished statesman who has earned for himself a name that will be known so long as England is at the head of colonial dependencies. I little knew, sir, I say, that I was in the presence of one who had raised himself to be famous in the councils of our nation. In *our* profession, I grieve to say, there is

not the same opening for abilities more splendid. I suppose your valuable time is greatly engrossed; otherwise, it would be a great honour if you could look in on me at my little cabin here. You have your dispatches to write, and your letters to answer. Perhaps you may be engaged on a work as brilliant as a former one, and will again astonish the world with another 'Thoughts on Colonial Government.' It was easy for any one reading the exhaustive arguments, the lucid style, the clear marshalling of facts of that wonderful pamphlet, to prognosticate the future eminence of its author. I look forward with infinite pleasure to our meeting again on Thursday; and believe me," &c.

"How on earth," said Mr. Parker, "did your father get hold of my pamphlet? It has been forgotten years ago; and to tell you the truth, did not make quite the noise your father says.

Do you think he has a copy? If so, I should be very glad to have it; for the booksellers can't get me one."

"I don't think he has," said Polly, thinking; "no, I am sure not; and I know nearly all his books. Unless, indeed, in our little lumber closet—"

The Secretary burst out laughing.

"Upon my word, Miss Polly, a nice place to keep me in!"

Polly crimsoned, and hung down her head. She had been thinking how they had found "Talboys on Election" in that place. She firmly believed that her father was as "well up" in the "Thoughts on Colonial Government" as he had been in the "Livings and Laymen." Invaluable "Parliamentary Companion," of which she did not know the value, and quite as useful in its way as the "Clerical Guide!" Here was the entry—PARKER, HENRY FITZWILLIAM ADDINGTON, M.P. for Dubbley, &c., educated at Harrow and Oxford, &c.,

a Privy Councillor; is author of a pamphlet entitled "Thoughts on Colonial Government." Brooks's, Bayswater Villa, and Parkston, Norfolk."

"And you can't go and see him?" said Polly, anxiously.

"Well, I am afraid not," said the Secretary, looking at his watch. "I have to run up to town. But I shall be down to-morrow. If I have business there, I have business here which I am bound to, you may depend on that."

Accordingly, he went away with a great apparatus of dispatch-boxes. Then followed another charming day of riding, walking, and what not.

In those gardens the two girls had their confidences, and showed each other their hearts. Miss Godfrey had that absorbed interest in Polly's arrangements for her future life which every proper young lady may justifiably have who herself is secure of advancement. Polly told all to her friend.

"It is wonderful," said the latter, "wonderful! and I cannot tell you how I admire you. I couldn't do it, I say frankly."

Polly was distressed at these compliments.

"I have never thought of it," she said; "and it is nothing—oh, nothing in the world!"

"And have you *never* heard from him since—not even a line?"

"Never," said Polly, sadly. "I am afraid he was deeply offended; and, indeed, I treated him cruelly and unkindly, and deserved all that he could do. He was so good and kind, and really loved me so."

"And *you*, Polly—yourself?"

"Well," she answered, with a little hesitation, "I did like him, and was very happy when he was with me. What could I do—what would you do? What would you have me do? My dear father miserable, anxious—slaving for us from morning till night—with all the care and anxiety of

bringing us up—and then, when it was in our power to help him—I couldn't bring myself to be so selfish; and though it caused me deep pain"—she stopped. Miss Godfrey saw the tears in her eyes. "Oh, it was very cruel to *him*. But put yourself in my place, what *could* I do? Would it not be the height of selfishness in *me?*—and, as papa said, who knows so much, men do not feel these things scarcely at all. With them they are mere fancies, he says. And so when I thought that, and that I would be the only one to have to bear a little suffering—it did not make so much matter."

"You are a surprising and a dear girl," said her friend, kissing her, "and I must suppose it is all right. Whatever *you* do is right. And this major—do you hear much from him?"

"Regularly. He is very kind and thoughtful. And for one of his nature, which was a little cold and soured, I think

I see that he has grown softer and more gentle—and I think he does indeed like me, and he has promised to use all his interest for papa, and to do everything in his power to advance him. And he is a man of honour and a man of his word; and I am sure I shall come at last to love him sincerely. And I shall be very glad, however it turns out, if papa gets his wishes. Should I not, dear? As he says, 'all that romance does very well for rich young girls who can afford it.'"

They were silent for a few moments.

"And what is this 'souring' and roughness? How did he get that?"

"Oh! there is a little history, he says, which he has often hinted at, and said he would one day tell me about; something in his family, which had completely changed his character. He seems to think that since he knew me he is changing back again. If I thought that, or could do any good in my small way, why I suppose I ought

to be reconciled to everything, and I am sure I shall be. We have not heard for some time. In his last he said they might have some fighting before long. But I am sure we shall in a day or two."

So that pleasant morning went by, and the two girls interchanged every thought they had. And that day went by, and that evening, when they had a drive, and Polly the first time for many years drove in her carriage. She enjoyed everything. The little gloom into which their morning's conference had thrown her had passed. Then there was the dinner—not quite so pleasant as that of the day before: for she missed her friend, the kind Secretary, at that time sitting with Mrs. Parker, at his dinner, and giving her a sketch of "a charming young creature I met at that place, quite refreshing for her nature and simplicity." She missed this friend; and even now, though she thought it must be imagination, and uncharitable imagination, fancied she perceived a sort of

"dry" and hostile manner in Mrs. Surtees towards her. That lady was almost spiteful, and often showed a kind of quiet and amused surprise at her *naïve* remarks, which she said were "highly pastoral and refreshing." This lady's behaviour very much chilled and abashed our heroine, particularly as, having but a small knowledge of the human heart, she could find no reason for it. In due course Polly went to the piano, and "The Soldier," already a favourite with the Squire, was called for. He always liked anything in the shape of a simple story. And thus another pleasant day closed for Polly.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BISHOP.

AT last, on the next day, arrived his lordship the bishop, who entered the porch with an air of gentle infirmity, and, as Mr. Parker remarked, a kind of "*molliter ossa quiescant*" manner. He had a genteely venerable air about him, a kind of gentle languor, that seemed to say plaintively, as indeed he had been heard afar off in his own cathedral, "From all inconvenience, worry, fuss, and bore, let me be de-liver-ed!" A very amiable dignitary, and "a man of the world," his admirers said.

The Squire received him heartily. "Glad to see you, my lord," he said. "Come in

and rest yourself. Have a glass of wine. Very good of you to come to me in this way."

"Not at all, not all," said the bishop sweetly. "So this is Godfrey Hall! Curious now!—never been here before!"

At dinner time there was a larger party, and yet more dazzling to our Polly. Mr. Parker had come down, and had greeted Polly as though they had been separated a long time. "Now we have got our bishop safe. You may leave it all to me. Where is his lordship?" he asked of the Squire.

"Tired after his journey. He has been a little overworked with the diocese, and been picking up a little at the seaside. Ah! here he is."

And here he was, all fresh and glowing, after a short sleep, and ready for dinner. He glistened all over with new bishop's black, that shone like satin. He glided in calmly, with a sort of peering and expostulating manner and generous welcome to all.

"You know Parker, here?" said the Squire. "To be sure. He has a seat on the box of the State coach. Only for him, we'd have been off the road and in the ditch long ago."

"Only on the back seat, I am sorry to say," said the official, smiling. "His lordship may recollect his meeting me at Garretstown—Lord Mountattic's."

"To be sure," said the bishop, bending forward in a perfect arch. "Of course I recollect Mr. Parker. And how do you do, sir? Ah, Garretstown,—pleasant house! Poor Spooner was there then, the life and soul of us all! You remember his joking young Garrett? Dear me!"

"They have gone abroad," Mr. Parker said.

"So they have. It seemed to me even then, do you know," said the bishop, plaintively, "they were—er—putting it on —er—too much, running it a little fine. I always wondered how Mountattic did it.

Of course it was a thing one could hardly give advice on. To be sure I remember Mr. Parker. We had many a talk on the law and constitution. And I think—I think," the bishop added, playfully threatening, "he promised me to bring in a little Bill about Suffragans—eh?—come, now?"

The bishop, as was his habit, looked round with enquiry at every one, and noticed Polly, of whom he asked the Squire in a whisper: he thought she might be an honourable, or some one of consideration—"so elegant in person" was she. He gave a sort of start, and frowned. "Churchill—Churchill?" he repeated, and looked round uneasily, as though he expected to see some one else of the name in the room. He was going to ask a question of his host in a distrustful "put out" manner, when dinner was announced, and his attention turned away.

They went down in the usual procession. All the way down the bishop's voice was

heard chirruping to his lady. Polly looked at him from afar off with a flutter and reveence. Her lot was cast with her friend, Mr. Parker. He had tried to make what he called "a cutting-out expedition" round the table, and get close to the bishop, or even opposite; but every one's place was found for him or her by a little card.

"Never fear," said he to Polly. "After the ladies are gone, the bishop will want to talk about the Mountattics. That is the kindly moment for confidences."

That was another glimpse of fairyland for Polly. The dinner was a "state" one to-day, with the long table, glittering with plate and flowers and bathed in a soft light, the line of genial and animated faces, the gaudy dresses of the ladies, and the family ancestors looking down. At times she grew pensive, and her thoughts wandered away to her father, who was not sharing in these delights, but was solitary over his mutton chop. But her eye grew bright as she

thought what business in his interest would be done that night, and how he himself would be there on the next day.

"Watch the bishop," said Mr. Parker, smiling; "how fluent he is. How he talks in a smooth continuous stream right and left and across the table."

The bishop was indeed a picture of animation, bowing and talking, as Mr. Parker described, to the right and to the left, pouring out a stream of soft talk, and every now and again looking half over his shoulder at the presented dish or offered wine. No man "eat a heartier dinner," said his friends, and few so hearty. That enjoyment was now whetted by the sea breezes of Sheltie-super-Mare.

When the ladies had gone up, the bishop looked round the table wistful and smiling.

"Come down here, Mr. Parker, into Mrs. Surtees' place next me. I want to talk to you about Mountattic. Pleasant time, wasn't it?" he added, arranging his cluster

of glasses comfortably. "As pleasant, I vow, as ever I spent. Nice house, and really nice people. You recollect that Sir Charles and his stories? But there was folly, great folly, it struck me. Very sad, very sad. I think *she* had a great deal to do with it—a foolish woman, and too fond of show, and all that. And how sly you were at that time! You didn't tell *me* that office was coming—a-ah—for shame!"

Mr. Parker was very pleasant also on all this rallying.

"And how do you like it now? Hard work, I am sure; dreadful *here?*"—and the bishop touched his forehead. "And yet what is there like work? There is my young fellow, Castlereagh Talboys, now at Eton. I mean him, please God, for that line where he shall have plenty of work. And when you are Foreign Secretary, Mr. Parker, you will find me coming to you to beg, with the other mendicants—ha! ha!"

"My dear lord, I shall be delighted. I

am only sorry you should think I am of such poor account that I could be of no use now. I have been sitting all dinner-time next a very charming young lady, whom I am sure I have impressed with a higher idea of my power and influence than that."

"Now, now, my dear sir. By the way, was that a young girl they brought to me before dinner? Yes, I recollect now. Is she any connexion of a—a—" and the bishop's face twisted itself into a look of discomfort, "of a clairgyman"—so he pronounced it—"who has really been most troublesome and forward—really so much so, that—"

"Well, yes," the young Secretary answered, coolly; "her father is a pushing man—oh, quite sure to get on. Very shrewd and knowing in his way."

"It may be so; but really I must say"—and the bishop coloured at the recollection of "Livings and Laymen"—"he really is *too* free—quite too intrusive altogether. Really,

Mr. Parker, all I have gone through. You know he doesn't belong to me at all. I believe he is in Brindley's diocese."

"Oh, he is sure to get on," Mr. Parker said again; "he has powerful friends. Very acute and persevering—valuable qualities, those. And a very charming daughter—so natural, so unsophisticated, and yet without a particle of that clumsy rusticity which they confound with nature. I have seen a good deal of her since I have been here. On her young shoulders is the house—half-a-dozen children—marketing—everything. As you can imagine, my lord, they *must* be overrun with *those* blessings."

"If our House," said the bishop, "were to order a return of the children of curates in my diocese, I assure you it would astonish them. So that is the way?"

"I know all about this little *ménage*. In fact, I have had their whole little history told me: all their daily life and cares. And I know that it has so interested me that I

am determined to work out something for them."

This he said slowly, and with his eyes fixed on the bishop's round face. The latter grew a little restless—hemmed, sipped his claret, and interchanged his round legs.

"Upon my word, a very charming description—really interests me. Mr. Godfrey, I *beg* your pardon—quite enough, thank you, quite enough. Coffee by all means."

Polly in the great illuminated drawing-room, sitting on the ottoman with her friend, saw the door open softly, and the gentlemen drop in with a kind of gentle surprise and uncertainty in their faces, as though they might have made a mistake in the room. Why there should be this sort of isolation and coyness in this, seems a little surprising; unless it be put to the account of a certain proper shame and humiliation at the almost satyr-like function society has been compelling them to perform below.

Luxurious and elegant always seems that view which meets their filmy eyes as they enter—floods of soft light, the wax-lights, the calm air of repose and effeminacy, and the soft smile of welcome and even expectancy on the faces of charming women for the soldans who have so graciously come at last.

The bishop entered first—sad, bright, and dewy. There is always uncertainty as to where the first ship will put in. The black episcopal lighter moved heavily across, and dropped gently alongside of Polly on the ottoman, not a little to her flutter and alarm. Living as she had been this last day or two in fairy realms, this seemed the most startling proof of the power of her friendly enchanter.

"We have been talking about you a good deal down stairs in the drawing-room," he said softly.

"About *me?*" said Polly.

"About you!—oh, dear, yes; and some

very nice things were said—uncommonly nice. Very glad, indeed, to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Miss Churchill. Now, do you live far from here?"

"Cumberley, my lord, close by—I and papa, who is vicar."

"Oh, ha! yes, to be sure, quite so. He writes me letters; very persevering, pushing qualities, sure to get on in this world," said his lordship, adopting Mr. Parker's words. "And in the next, too, let us trust," added he almost mechanically, and looking round at the various faces.

A sudden impulse seized Polly.

"Oh, sir," she said—"my lord, I mean—I am afraid you were a little displeased at our troubling you so; but I assure you that nothing—nothing in the world was intended. Papa really thought he was doing what would be acceptable, and until Mr. Chewton came in to us on that dreadful morning—"

"Well, I know, I know," the bishop said,

a little embarrassed. "Really letters come and are sent away; and, of course, I am obliged to leave a great deal to Chewton. Why, what would life be, my dear child, but a pilgrimage on earth? We are below but for a short time, and—and my health would not stand it. Necessarily all this comes on Chewton's back, who, of course, will make a mistake like another man. But really I must say," said the bishop, interchanging his legs restively, as the disagreeable recollection of "Livings and Laymen" recurred to him, "what on earth prompted him to bring up that old pamphlet after so many years, when no one was thinking of it—"

"But," interrupted Polly, excitedly, "*that* was the reason! He said, why *should* it be forgotten? and I assure you he paid a little fortune in London to get it; for he said it had all the caustic, I think, of Junius. I am not sure," added Polly, blushing and half-smiling, "that that was the correct

word; but I looked at it myself, and it seemed *very* powerful."

"Put out" as he was, the bishop could not help smiling a little complacently. "But that is such an old story now. Better far let the old stories stay. Yes, it might have been written with some vigour; for I can put a point on my pen when I choose. And it did make a noise when it came out. But—"

"Oh! it was so clever and piquant," said Polly, with an enthusiasm for which she must be forgiven; "and papa said so. And from the day we heard you speak for the soldiers—"

"Oh, come, come. Were you there? 'Pon my word, Miss Churchill, I see I have a friend and admirer in you. Well, well. The only thing, you see, my dear," continued the bishop, laying one leg in a cozy way across his knee, in a sort of convenient position for cutting off, "your father worries people a little too much. Spends

too much on postage, you see. And I am obliged to give my secretary very particular directions about those sort of cases. You see, I am delicate, and the doctors say I am not to be worried."

"Indeed he did not know that," pleaded Polly most earnestly, and all but putting up her hands to pray indulgence; "indeed, no. He would not have done it for the world. But he has so many to think of and work for at home, and I am afraid Doctor Brindley has taken some dislike to him, and for no reason, that we know. For we have never, *never*, my lord," she added, vehemently, "done anything to him."

"That's very like Brindley—very like—not popular, I believe. Eh? Come now! So I hear. Wants the *savoir faire,* which is everything—everything. Ah! Dear, dear, me," he added with his head on one side; and again, abstractedly, selecting a place for cutting off his limb; "curious!"

The Squire came up now.

"You haven't heard Miss Polly here sing. She has a charming song—such a song!—all about a soldier's wife sitting at her door."

The bishop, now very heavy and charged about the head and eyes, lifted the latter with difficulty, and said, dreamily,

"Do go; go over now, that's a good girl. Sing something. I should like to hear it." And Polly rose with alacrity, and floated over to the piano, where she gave her "Soldier," with more feeling and earnestness than she had ever done before; the Squire standing sentry beside her, and keeping time with his head. The bishop's head, afar off, on his ottoman, shone like a morning sun, looked towards her in somnolent admiration. When it was done, he said, in a solemn and melancholy way, that "it was very beautiful—very beautiful!"

Later, Mr. Parker came up to Polly. "For shame!" he said; "I am shocked at

you! Artful in the highest degree. For shame, to treat the poor bishop in that way! He now says you are a 'sweet girl.'"

Polly blushed; but it was a blush of delight and pleasure.

"Oh, do you think, Mr. Parker," she said, in her confidential way, and putting her face close to his, "that he will do anything?"

"I am sure of it," said he. "Hush! here he comes. We are all going to bed now."

The bishop was coming up, heavy and sleepy.

"Where's Miss—er—ah, yes! there she is. We'll talk over that little matter in the morning. Good night, my dear child," and he held her hand in his. "God Almighty bless you! You sang your little song about the—er—Soldier very nicely—very nicely. Nothing could be in better taste and feeling."

So his glistening form faded out backwards towards the door. So another happy

day for our Polly ended. So did her friend Miss Godfrey come to her, and put her arms about her and say, "Why, dearest, you have captivated the bishop!" And so did the Squire call out, "Ah! got on the blind side of the holy man? Go along, Miss!"

All this was so much music in the ears of Polly. As she looked from one to the other she saw nothing but kindly beaming faces, full of interest and sympathy. It did indeed seem quite secured, and the ground made ready. Long after she looked back to that night as one of the happiest in her life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DINNER.

AFTER breakfast on next morning the bishop read his newspaper and wrote one letter, then wandered softly towards the billiard room, and found the two young ladies there—Miss Godfrey teaching her friend. The bishop looked on for a time with great interest. Then Miss Godfrey left on some household business. The bishop took up a cue in a sort of *degagé* way.

"A long time since I have had a cue in my hand. The poor dear Bishop of Gravesend was ordered it by the doctors, and I had to play him every morning. You see I can do a stroke yet, and a very fair one."

In a languid way his lordship kept knocking the balls about; and after a successful stroke said placidly:

"And so you like my little production, eh? Yes, it made a little noise at the time; and *that* was the reason I would not wish it to be revived now; there are parties, you know, who might not like it. People feel these things at the time, and it would be inopportoon now—oh, highly inopportoon, you see! Hold your cue so, and run your eye along. Dear me—how this all brings back the poor dear bishop! Do you know, it's an unfortunate gift, that of a terse and vigorous style—it's so tempting. Now, you get the balls in a line. The poor old man! that was his favourite stroke! No—no! Don't think, my dear, I am angry with you—I mean, your father. I have heard very good accounts of him indeed. But no worry—no worry; that has been my maxim all through."

"Oh, how kind of you!" said Polly,

"How good! Papa himself will thank you when he comes to dinner."

"God bless me!" said the bishop, stopping short as he was preparing a stroke. "*What!* coming here?"

"Yc-es," said Polly, "at four o'clock."

"Oh, ah, to be sure!" the bishop said, a little fretfully.

Polly saw something was wrong again, and was distresed.

"Why, would you not like—" she said, doubtfully. Then it all flashed on her; and with the old confidential, "cosy," almost coaxing way, she came up to him, as though she was his daughter, and said:

"I will speak to papa when he comes, and indeed, my lord, I engage he will give you no trouble or worry." It was hard to resist her. The bishop was in good humour, made a really surprising stroke, which he had tried to make. The fairy of billiards was on Polly's side, and turned the scale. He was in great spirits in a moment.

"Really that sea air is wonderful," he said. "It is bringing back everything."

About six o'clock, the Rev. Mr. Churchill arrived, extra starched, extra shaved, extra brushed from Bridget's hands, a homage he always paid to official rank. But this was a great occasion. When he was shown into the drawing-room he only found Mr. Parker, busy finishing a letter for the post. He looked up as the clergyman entered, who was bowing stiffly to invisible persons of influence.

"Oh, Mr. Churchill!" said the other with alacrity, "the Squire will be down presently. I am Mr. Parker; but we know you very well, and have heard a good deal about——"

The other bowed complacently.

"Oh! we know Mr. Parker down here. Indeed we do. And has his lordship been—"

"No, it was your charming daughter," Mr. Churchill's lips dropped in a dry tight expression, "who has really captivated us all, and I think very favourably impressed

our good bishop here. He dines to-day, by the way."

"I know," said the other. "I was to meet him. One of our best dignitaries, so large-minded, so liberal, so broad, so accomplished——"

"By the way—I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but I know a man of the world is always glad to get even a sketch of the *carte du pays*. You will, of course, have a good deal of intercourse with him. He will be glad to meet with you, I know, and I am sure you will thank me for a hint or two."

"Oh! I understand perfectly," said the other, with an inexpressibly knowing air. "Don't we know even down here in this rustic hole and corner who wrote that treasury of political wisdom, the 'Thoughts' —eh?"

"Oh yes, of course," said Mr. Parker, a little impatiently, "a store-house of wisdom, and all that. But I wanted to tell you—the bishop has not been well, and I would

suggest, Mr. Churchill, not pressing him,—you understand?—leaving the thing to work itself, you understand? It's in good hands, I assure you. Your daughter, Miss Polly, has been already——"

"You mustn't mind her, Mr. Parker," said the clergyman, earnestly. "She's a mere girl, like other foolish girls. I hope, indeed, she hasn't been meddling, and troubling his lordship, who has so much on his mind."

"Oh, nothing of the kind," said Mr. Parker, a little impatiently. "Why should you suppose that? Here are some of the party."

Mrs. Godfrey and Polly came in fresh as a rose, and flew to embrace her dear papa, who received her rather coldly and with an air of reproof. He was, indeed, absent in mind, looking out for the coming of the bishop. Polly was not at all affected by this reception, for she knew he had much on his mind.

Now the lamps are lighted, and they are

all coming down to dinner. Enters now the bishop, glossy and snake-like as the day before, and a little tired, he says, after the drive. At first he does not see the stiff China figure that is trying to bend and bow low before him; for he always finds, as a matter of course, a number of figures bowing and bending before him whom he is never to know anything more of. The Squire says, "You recollect Mr. Churchill, our vicar?"

"Ah! to be sure, Miss Polly's papa," says his lordship. "How de do, sir? Have you been quite well?"

"Quite well, my lord, since that pleasant day when I had the honour of having your lordship for host."

"By the way," said the Squire, "Darby here was over in your part of the world, and says he saw poor old Morgan this morning, and that he wont last the night."

"God bless me!" said the bishop. "Do you mean the old man at Blethcote?"

"Yes. Why he's had that living to my knowledge close on fifty years. He *can't* last the night."

"There again," said the bishop, with vexation, "is a signal to plague me. I'll have two dozen letters to-morrow. Most indecent."

Mr. Churchill's ears were being turned from one to the other of the speakers like a dog's; his eyes were looking keenly from one to the other. Mr. Parker could hardly keep from smiling. Darby, the county doctor, then gave details, and became important.

Dinner was now announced, and they went down; the bishop, taking the shape of the letter C, drooping over Mrs. Godfrey, and talking gently and fluently all the time of their progress. The Squire cast Mr. Churchill with his admirer, Mrs. Surtees; but that gentleman was looking eagerly over the bannisters as they went down, and when they reached the room pushed past several to try and get close to the one chair that had for him such interest.

"Where's my chaplain and secretary?" said the bishop, in great good humour. "Let her come up near me; I have a good deal to talk to her about. Where's Miss Churchill?"

The clergyman, at the door, craning over the crowd which always cluster in stupid indecision as to where they are to go, and no more considering the lady who was on his arm than the coat-sleeve on which the arm was resting, caught the words, as it seemed to him, "Mr. Churchill," and saw the bishop's questioning face. In an instant he was plunging among the guests, and treading on ladies' dresses, with a smile, and a "Here, my lord!"—dragging, too, his unhappy companion.

"No, no! Not you, my friend, at all. Go down—no. Where's Miss Polly?"

Polly was led up by her other watchful friend in half pleasure, half confusion.

Shall it be confessed what was one secret at least of our bishop's preference for her?

It was a good deal owing to a little fiction of Mr. Parker's, who had that morning rallied the bishop on his rather marked *penchant:*

"What would you say, my lord, to a certain young lady saying *naïvely* that she always thought bishops were cross and ugly; whereas she finds one here,—but I wont go on."

"Oh, nonsense—nonsense!" said the bishop, highly pleased, and looking down at his legs, which were really good workmanship.

Mr. Churchill retired, a little resentfully, to the place indicated. To say the truth, he was not pleased with one "who would spoil everything;" and, indeed, he thought it a slight that she should have been preferred to her clever father. Mrs. Surtees found small profit in his companionship—he being *distrait*, and indifferent even to her open reverence and admiration.

The bishop was hungry, and again

making "as hearty a meal as any one." He was again drooped over his plate, looking to the right and left, and talking fluently as he helped himself, eat or sipped.

Mr. Churchill, uneasily and with some wonder, saw Polly talking freely to the dignitary, and the latter smiling pleasantly, and putting his head down on one side to listen.

The clergyman grew very uncomfortable and sour—"She is spoiling everything with her fiddle-faddle talk"—an indifference that did not at all abate Mrs. Surtees' attention and reverence. She plied him with compliments on that sermon, and protested what longing she felt to hear him again.

"Yes, I shall preach on Sunday again," he said. "I suppose the party will be here, the bishop,—do you know?"

"Oh dear, yes! The bishop stays till Monday."

This put Mr. Churchill in better humour.

"Oh, I shall give you something good on

that day, something very different. Last Sunday it was for the boors of the place,—the common run of article, you must know."

"And how do you find time," asked the lady, in admiration, "with the house to manage, and all that? I suppose your daughter—"

The clergyman had his eye on Polly, who was very animated at that moment.

"Oh, indeed, yes," he said, "most of that has to come on me. I find I must do most things myself, to have them properly done."

"But now, I suppose, Miss Polly will return, to look after things, as there is no one at your house?"

This struck him as a new view—something like a suggestion.

"Ah, very true. Yes, of course she goes back. You know, my dear madam, we can't have it all holiday."

It was a pity he could not hear the confidential talk that was passing between Polly

and the bishop. There was a little pause between the courses; the game was on its way from below, heralded by its peculiar fragrance. The bishop having dined "heartily" so far, and beginning to glow about the head, and to be suffused about the eyes, said, leaning back in his chair:

"Do you know, I like you, Miss Polly? You are a very nice, good girl. I have no daughter myself, I am sorry to say. Mrs. Talboys has gone many years. I have a couple of sons—one in the army—but you know sons are too busy to be affectionate; they have their wives and children. Dear! dear! But I tell you what, Miss Polly, I've a little plan that we must talk over together. Now if anything should happen to poor old Morgan—if this should prove, my dear, to be his final summons into the great 'valley of the shadow'—why—why, I don't know but that we might do something for you. But mum, you know; all between you and me."

The delight, the joy of our Polly may be

conceived; she could have embraced "the good old man," as he appeared to her. Never was she so convinced of the almost divine and spiritual character of the bishops of her church. Her face was all lit up with joy and happiness; she was like a child.

"What shall I say? How shall I thank you!"

Mr. Churchill saw this from afar, and became miserable; the absurd "unidead" girl was ruining all.

The bishop looked round restlessly.

"A little of that sparkling hock again; it is really uncommonly good; I must lay in some at Dunthorpe next year. And now," to Polly, "tell me about Grainger: how do you like him now? I fear you will find difficulty in dealing with him; he has really no self-control, and wants proper respect for those who are above him in ability, years, and station. He is ungoverned, my dear, exceedingly so; and I confess I look forward to your marriage

with some misgivings. It may all come right, of course."

Polly sighed, and cast down her eyes.

"He has been very good and kind to me."

The Squire now called out: "I say, Churchill, they are going to start with the viaduct again. I saw fellows down there to-day. What d'ye say to old Burgess—he's made out his five-and-twenty shillings in the pound, after all; but not before they have nearly killed him. I knew he was sound all the time. But he'll never be the same man again. Never!"

Here was news! Polly listened with a little flutter, and something like joy. Again Mr. Churchill's ears worked.

"He has one son in the church," said the bishop, gently. ("What melons you have! No, no, the ginger, please.") "He has a son in the church, who is a good deal of a favourite with the bishop there — Dr. Tongue. When I was at the palace a very proper looking young man came in, and I

recollect distinctly asking Tongue his name, and he said he was the son of a contractor called Burgess. It must be the same."

Very soon the ladies went away. As Polly left the room and the gentlemen were all standing up "at ease," as it were, to let them pass, smiling with the regulation vacuity, Mr. Churchill eagerly seized the opportunity, and, glass in hand, stole round, and by a sort of *coup de main* carried, in the sense of storming, the chair next the bishop.

The face of that prelate, looking after the disappearing ladies, and turning then to the right, underwent an almost comic change as he saw who was his new neighbour. But the latter had a kind of interested obsequiousness.

"I wished to ask your lordship a very particular question—I mean about that young Burgess you saw with the bishop."

"Oh, to be sure! Pray send on the wine; the Squire is looking at you."

"Would you say, my lord," the clergyman asked, eagerly, "he was a favourite with the bishop?"

"Well, yes; well, yes! Squire, capital this; better than yesterday."

"I thought you'd like it," said the Squire. "I laid that down eighteen years ago, and took every glass that Lubbock could give me."

"But this young man, my lord," said the persevering Mr. Churchill, "was not his secretary, or chaplain, was he, my lord?"

"Oh, I don't know; he might be—yes. No one more likely than Tongue to do a thing of that sort. By the way, I have been telling something to Miss Polly that concerns you—for your benefit—which you shall know in good time, sir."

"My lord!" said the clergyman, in a tumult of amazement and delight, and making as though he would throw himself at the episcopal feet among the napkins.

"My lord! No! This is too good—too generous!"

"Hush! hush!" said the bishop, testily, "Don't make a noise, or worry me. Dear me, do you know, I am a little tired with the day, Squire; but I have made a capital dinner—a full dinner."

His lordship's eyes were blinking a little, and "filling up" fast. He had an air of dreamy satiety; and Mr. Churchill, asking him a question, was mortified at receiving no answer.

Presently the gentlemen began to "escape" to the ladies, one by one. The doctor, Mr. Parker—but not Mr. Churchill: his friend, his "saint," was beside him, in a rather heavy dose.

"We mustn't disturb the bishop," said the Squire. "Come up, Churchill; we'll leave Arthur with him."

And much to his reluctance, the clergyman was taken away. Polly was at the piano. Mrs. Surtees was in ambuscade for

her clergyman, who was now in infinitely better humour, and set himself to being agreeable.

"Don't sing my song," said the Squire, "for your life, miss. We must keep that until the bishop comes up. Do you know, I am getting jealous of his lordship. He is quite making up to my sweetheart there. Sing us something else—an Irish melody; always excepting 'The Last Rose,' which I am tired of."

And Polly, without more pressing, began "When through life unblest we rove," which she discoursed very sweetly.

While she was in the second verse, the door was opened suddenly, and a servant half entered very hastily, then stopping and looking round in a sort of scared way. The impatience of the Squire at this behaviour was extraordinary. He motioned furiously to the man to be quiet, and go out; and, indeed, in the Squire's house, as in many others, the servants had a knack of entering

triumphantly with trays of clattering things exactly in the middle of a song. But this servant stood *ebahi*, as it were, still looking about for some one. At last the Squire rose, and went to him.

"What the d—— is it? What d'ye mean?"

"Oh, sir, his lordship—where's the doctor, sir?"

All heard this. The music stopped. The doctor, with a quick professional instinct, had heard his own name, and came forward And now the son of the house rushed in a little excitedly:

"Where's the doctor? Come down, quick."

The confusion of such a moment may be conceived.

That heaviness about the eyes and head of the bishop had been increasing steadily, rising into his head like a tide. He had indeed dined too "heartily;" and been

dining heartily far too often. And the spectacle that met their eyes as they went down—the florid face fallen back, the gaping mouth, the stiff, rigid lines, the strained neck seen from the opened collar, showed that the dreadful familiar "apoplexy" had seized on him. He was taken away to bed, and the usual desperate remedies applied. A man on horseback was sent away to the nearest town to telegraph for his lordship's own physician, who knew his constitution. That gentleman arrived betimes in the morning. But he could do nothing. He had warned again and again: the bishop had had hints from within, but he would dine "heartily." He could not help it. At the sight of the pleasant dinner, the rich juices, and grateful wines, all resolution gave way. The two doctors burnt and scalded, and applied their almost savage remedies. But it would not do—the claws of this "devil-fish" among maladies would not let go. They closed tighter about him.

He never spoke again. And in *The Globe* of two nights after, clergymen and others read:—

"DEATH OF THE BISHOP OF DUNMORE. We regret to announce the death of this exemplary prelate, which occurred suddenly at Godfrey Hall, Cumberley, on Thursday night. His lordship had been in his usual health and spirits, and had been the life and soul of the dinner table, when he was seized with a stroke of apoplexy. He never rallied, and expired about noon the next day. The deceased bishop was endeared to all who knew him for his kindly nature, his large heart, and abundant charities. This calamity has plunged the whole neighbourhood, where he was well known and respected, into the profoundest grief."

CHAPTER XV.

LETTER FROM INDIA.

POLLY was deeply affected. She grieved over him as over a near relative. Nor were her tears caused by the disappointment which the death had caused her. He had been kind to her and liked her.

But how was her father affected? The party at Godfrey Hall broke up and fell away at once. "Under the circumstances" all went home promptly. When the awful guest Death arrives, all common guests hide their faces and depart. He must have the whole house given up to him and to the family. But Mr. Churchill? He was really overwhelmed by the blow. He did not speak

a word until they got home, where the change to the almost squalor of their domestic establishment was complete. The mean little "cabin," the penury, the humble dress of the children struck even Polly. The lamps were extinguished, the colours faded, the flowers withered, the poetry gone. Here was dull, cold prose.

Then Mr. Churchill's disappointment broke out. "Nice work all this is. Nice mess you've made. All the trouble of years gone for nothing! No, but you must meddle in everything. You know more than your father, of course. I wish to heaven you'd leave my concerns alone, and not busy yourself about me. I saw you talking and worrying the man. Why couldn't you leave it to me? I had it all arranged. I had brought him over. I had a promise out of him."

"But, papa dearest, isn't it all the same, as the poor bishop is no more?"

"It's not all the same," he answered

savagely. "Of course, it is to you, who have to sit and look gentle and talk folly all day. It isn't to me, that have to slave for the whole. I declare I'll run away out of the place and leave the whole concern. Selfish, selfish pack."

He had often used this unkind and unmerited word to Polly, and it had never affected her. But somehow coming, as she now did, from the kindly faces and the midst of generous hearts, from the cloud of sympathies and affections, it gave her a sort of pang; and for the first time it flashed on her, not that she herself was neglected or unjustly reproached, which she would not have minded, but that her father did not care for or understand her. This came on her all of a sudden, like some dreadful revelation, and seemed in one moment to overwhelm her by taking all her interest in life away. She stood looking at him. There were some newly-arrived letters on the table. One was in tissue paper. He knew the writing.

"India!" he said. "That's from him! How coolly he writes. Then I tell you what," he added, turning sharply on her, "I've made up my mind about that. I'll stop it, never fear, and this business has settled it. I'll not put up with his impudence longer. Not I. Why should I? I'm not to be sacrificed to the humours of others, and I'll just write to him this very night and break it off."

"Oh, papa, said Polly, "our honour is pledged to him. We could not."

"We could, though, and we shall. What good is he to me now? Oh, you'll see; take it away; I don't want to read his stuff. Where's that gone?—nothing—nothing in this house ever in its place."

What did he want? The invaluable "Dod." With its accustomed spring, his mind was already travelling away on a new track. Who was Doctor Tongue? What was known about him? What was this fancy about young Burgess? How strange that he had

never thought of that young man's being in the church. He must find him, for he had always had an interest in his brother, the hard-working, well-intentioned, high-spirited young man. About that well-intentioned, high-spirited young man, he could write to know. He was naturally anxious, not having heard of him so long.

"Dod" was very unsatisfactory about Dr. Tongue, the Lord Bishop of Gravesend. There was no pamphlet or book mentioned; no "Sermons" even, and yet there must have been. It was in the nature of things. Stay, there was a "Commission for the Inquiry into the Combination of Small Livings." If he could only get hold of that report! The bishop must have said something or delivered some weighty views on so really important a subject. He would write to London; the Parliamentary papers were always in stock; and after that a letter to the bishop himself would be appropriate. "My Lord,—Interest in the brother of a

young man whom I have long known, and who I believe is deservedly held in high esteem by your lordship," &c. &c. This would do well for an introduction. Then a happy allusion to the commission: "I write to your lordship from the small living of Cumberley: one of that class about which, so many years ago, you dropped words of wisdom, unfortunately not heeded then, and which several even now "—(Quotation to follow. In another draught of the rev. gentleman's letter it was put, to suit the event: "words of wisdom which I recall now, and have brought such profit and blessings to the State." Not having the commission by him, he could not reasonably be expected to determine the matter at once).

Polly meanwhile had stolen away to her room to read her Indian letter; but before she could do that in comfort she had much private kissing and embracing to go through from the children, who had missed her terribly. Then she sat down, and was a little

confounded at the new tone and length of her affianced husband's letter. It ran:—

"CAMP, ——

"DEAREST POLLY,

"I sit down to write a long letter to you; and a very long one I am afraid you will think it. You will see by the address that since I last wrote we have moved some hundred miles. In short what I have long foretold — only no one heeded me — has happened; we are in the midst of war. We have had two bloody battles, in which I have lost a horse, and to-morrow are to storm a fortress here. I am to be of the party. I have a presentiment that I shall not get back safe; it may be a foolish one, but I feel conviction of its truth, and now, at nearly midnight, I want to speak to you in a different way to what I have ever done before.

"My dear Polly, I know very well, and knew when I left you, the impression I left behind on you the last time I saw you: that

of a stiff, cold, even heartless being. Such an impression I meant to leave. Perhaps I am such by this time. But I was not always so, and I did not mean to be so for the future. But to-morrow will come the end, as I believe; and I had better tell you the truth."

Polly's heart began to flutter as she read these strange hints; and yet already she was full of sympathy, and seemed to share the presentiment which he felt. Yet the letter was written weeks—almost months before.

"As you have begun to know the bishop, has *he* never told you of my poor mother, and *her* fate? Most likely not. It was a thing that would not make much impression on him, and fell into a mere shape of business matter. I had a sister, too—Mary Grainger—who was called, just as you are, Polly—and my mother, a young creature; and we were all so happy. I am not going to dawdle over anything romantic; but I

may say that my mother died,—was a gentle creature,—and my father grieved after her for three or four years; and then married a woman with money, and also with a carping, demoniac temper that turned the house into a place for devils. She was not passionate, but always carping and worrying and sneering, not at me, who was at school and whom she saw seldom, but at our gentle and unfortunate Polly. Weary, wretched days and nights they were for *her*. As I learned after, her stepmother hated her, and found in that treatment some indemnity for the poor girl's living so long. My father was a weak man, and did not stand up for her as he ought to have done; and—not to be longer—one night I was summoned home from college by the news that she was ill and dying. I did not arrive in time. I loved that girl in a way you cannot conceive, who have only known me of late; but as I told you, I was very different then—gentle, trusting, and be-

lieving that all men and women were good and generous, and that it was a charming world. I heard it all from him and from a servant—my poor Polly had been worn and fretted out of the world. But I had my retribution. I laid myself out for that, and I made her life wretched. I lived but for that one end, and made her feel all that she had made my sister suffer. Her life was a burden. I tortured her; but in that time, and it lasted six or seven years, I suffered myself as much as her; and at the end I had changed myself into the cold, cruel, almost hateful being that you found me.

"I told you how I laid myself out to meet the world: to give it as good as I fancied it had given me—to meet no one with kindness—to be unthankful and ungracious to those superior, to grind down those below me. I enjoyed the reputation I was making. I liked it to be said that I was hated, and that 'the men' would shoot me if they got a chance. I am

sure they would. Perhaps they may get a chance to-morrow.

"I met the world as I fancied it met me, and with interest. It was in this state of mind that I found myself, when I was obliged to go to that meeting—obliged, I say, because I cared nothing about the soldiers or the wives they left behind. Who had the least sympathy for me? I recollect thinking that very morning I was half-listening to their platitudes, and thinking how much vanity was mistaken for charity, when your father came in, or tried to come in; and beside him was a face that seemed to suggest to me my lost sister. There is really no likeness in the face or figure, for she was taller and larger; but at times a sort of light and look came across your face that was like. It made me thrill, especially a sort of imploring look you have at times. And then I heard your voice, begging that man to let you pass. That was the strangest of all; it

went to my heart. From that moment your presence had the strangest effect on me; from that moment it seemed to me almost as if she was alive; from that time a battle went on within me between the old nature, and a new one that was trying to assert itself. I felt something always drawing me towards *you*, and from *you*. I came away happier and better.

"Then I soon discovered that I was not to be loved by you; but I saw your goodness, your honour and nobleness, your utter unselfishness, and, selfishly myself, determined that once you had consented I would make up for everything, and in time teach you to like me. Forgive me for this; for I saw your love for your father, and took an ungenerous advantage. But I say solemnly you should never have regretted it.

"If you knew what a comfort—what a delight your image, the very thought of you, has been to me in these lonely places here! How the idea that something of *her*

was left to me has cheered and warmed my frozen heart, I cannot describe to you. Perhaps I have done wrong—selfishly, certainly—but now, on the eve of what I believe will be a day of moment and fate, I sit up to write all this, to show you myself as I am, and tell you how much I love you, and to ask forgiveness for the sacrifice I obtained of you. If my presentiment of to-morrow should be false, I shall not hold you to what you have undertaken, though you might think it fit to be indulgent, and think it a charity to make the life of one only too unworthy of you happy. But I must say no more now. I hear the bugles, and must have done. But I have told you all. I shall think, at least, you will—no! the recollection of me that you might have had —and if all should be well,—but I must have done. I write as if I could only have an answer to this, and I am writing as though I could. But this is impossible. Good bye, dearest. Forgive me."

Polly read this surprising document over several times. Every genuine story of the kind won her sympathy; but this sort of tale, a nature having the reputation of being hard and cruel so unjustly, was more specially calculated to act on her feelings. Long ago she had trained herself in accepting the lot that her father had laid for her, and tried to take it cheerfully, and assume that it was good for her. Duty and affection made it easier for her than for other girls. Yet now her eyes travelled over with at least pity and interest to the cold and friendless being sitting in his tent writing. Then she thought how long ago that had been written, and something like anxiety and a wish to know more succeeded.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FIRST MISGIVING.

SHE sat there a long, long time, in a sort of dream, with the letter in her hand. Her window was open—a sort of casement overgrown with thick leaves. The sun gradually went down, and it grew darker. She was roused by her father's voice calling. Then she recollected that it was long past the time for his tea.

She found him quite changed and in good spirits again. "Dod" had done the work. He had written letters, as we had seen, to Doctor Tongue; and had received a gracious reply from that eminent prelate—a passage which might run: "I am surprised at you remembering my poor utterances on

that commission. I believe they did do *some* good, though unacknowledged. But that is all I care for. I hope when you are in this part of the world you will make a point of calling on me," &c.

He *had* been in that part of the world—had made a point of calling, we may be pretty sure of that—had dined. The bishop had said to young Burgess—"a most agreeable, well-informed man—so different from the common rustic run. I wish we had him in our diocese. I daresay we could tempt him, eh?" In fact, scarcely a less number of events could have happened to the "Arabian Nights" gentleman who dipped his head into the tub of water and drew it out again.

"Polly," said he, "I have quite decided about you. That fellow Grainger has always been too free and easy, and insolent. It's outrageous and beyond bearing, and I'll not put up with him any longer."

"Oh, papa!" said Polly. "Why?"

"Why? Every why! This why. If he had something to go on and take airs on, but he hasn't. I've no notion of that sort of thing, humbugging honest men, and he has tried to humbug me. He's not a man of honour, or of his word; for where's his bishop now?"

"Oh, papa, we could not treat any one in that way. We have given our word, and he counts on it, and we must stand by it."

There was something so earnest and even independent in her manner and tone, something so unusual, that he turned to look at her.

"What are you at now?" he said. "What d'ye mean, girl? What have you in your head now? I see. I suppose you are taking airs on the good company you have been in. Always the way. Selfish!—selfish!"

This brought the colour to Polly's cheeks.

"Indeed I am not, papa! I don't wish to be, and it is unkind of you to say so. I agreed

to this—heaven knows at what a sacrifice, and even injustice—to please you! Now I am ready to go through with it. Only read this letter, and you will see that we are bound in all honour."

Annoyed at this rebellion, he looked down at the letter put into his hand.

"I can't wade through all this stuff," he said; then paused, and said triumphantly, "Well, I do read it. What's this? Why the man releases you at once. See here. Why he wants to be off it himself, and I'll take him at his word. A fresh piece of impudence! But you've no sense or understanding, and now take to arguing with your father and laying down the law. But I'll take it on myself. I suppose you wont fly in my face, eh? Is that to be the next thing? God help us! What a life it is! One disappointment, then another, and having to work on all the time for a set of thankless people that will do nothing for you! Go away; leave me; and do as you like."

This was a very trying way to put it for our Polly. She felt that she had done him wrong. That picture he had rushed in with a stroke or two of "one disappointment after the other," went to the centre of her gentle heart and wrung it. She advanced to him with her soft face fixed, and a "Indeed, dearest——"

But he drew back. "Go away, now, and don't worry. I want none of those false endearments;" and she had to go upstairs, thoughtful and troubled; and passed a yet more troubled night.

CHAPTER XVII.

RUMOURS.

THE party at Godfrey Hall had been broken up as just mentioned by the unfortunate catastrophe of the bishop. Mr. Parker and others had gone away; Mrs. Surtees alone remained—one of those adhering guests whom good-natured hosts are far too nice to hurt by more than a hint, and who, when that fails, are content to suffer with patience. Mrs. Surtees was very comfortable, and had tact enough to make herself agreeable to the Squire, first, by not boring him or keeping too much in his company; and next, by a little confidence which she imparted to him, and which he enjoyed immensely.

"Do you know, I remarked it, ma'am! I saw it in the corner of the parson's eye. It would be the best thing in the world for him and his small family. Yes, it would, ma'am. Iv'e set my heart on it, ma'am; so there's no use talking."

It will thus be seen that the lady had rather artfully contrived to make the matter come from Mr. Godfrey himself.

Between her and Miss Godfrey there was no great cordiality. That young lady fancied she detected the arrangement Mrs. Surtees had in view, though she disdained to affect to know of it, even in spite of her father's nods and all but open allusions.

"It was a devilish good thing," he said, "for Churchill. Mrs. S. had a good snug jointure which would keep them both handsomely." The snug jointure was a thousand a year.

In pursuance of his plan, the reverend gentleman was often asked out to the Hall to dinner; and to do him justice, he re-

paired there with no very great alacrity. Alas! there was no bishop there now; and the recollection of the cup of preferment which had been so rudely dashed from his lips, always affected him. He had begun also to understand the widow's design; he would have been sadly obtuse had he not comprehended the Squire's nods and nudges and speeches about "a fine woman" and "a snug jointure of a thousand a year—every penny of it, sir." But his heart was ambitious; he would have preferred *any* sort of advancement or promotion. It was not long before Mrs. Surtees, by no means a sharp woman, discovered this, and went away, so to speak, on that tack. She began to cast about as to whether in the direction of her own relatives she had not some one who could be of profit in this way. What family of ordinary decency and repute but cannot muster a parson or two, or a cousin or sister married to a curate, parson, or archdeacon? She

remembered a very distant third or second cousin, married to an Irish archdeacon Malone. This dignitary she began to introduce pretty often. Now, though Mr. Churchill had but a poor opinion of the Irish branch of the Establishment, looking on it pretty much as the gentlemen of the army do upon their brethren of the militia, this constant iteration began at last to affect Mr. Churchill with some curiosity, and made him ask questions about Archdeacon Malone, the extent of his Irish influence and patronage; until at last he began to think that perhaps he might have made a mistake in leaving this Irish Eldorado so long unworked.

All this time Polly was in a state of eager anxiety. What woman after that letter but would not have felt an interest in the writer, or say curiosity, from the almost dramatic circumstances under which it was written? Naturally, she would wish to know the event; but the mail would not

be in for another week. The battle was not one of the grand decisive battles which required anything special. Miss Godfrey, her friend, came down very often, rather welcoming the opportunity of escape from her visitor, Mrs. Surtees; and they had much confidential talk on private matters. Her father went very often to dine, but usually went alone; and it seemed, on the whole, a better arrangement. And while he feasted and was courted and flattered up at the Hall, the old custom was restored, and Polly sat at home patiently with the children, and tried to bring her mind back into the old tone of drudgery, and perhaps into that old trusting belief which had made her father the most perfect of mortal clergymen, and the one that loved her. She had this long meditation. Still no news came to her; she often thought of Harry, but of him she had quite lost sight; and since he had left them she had never even heard of him. Polly had a certain

pride of her own, and she had made the resolution from the day of his departure to try and wean her heart from all that association at the least.

But now, to the astonishment and delight of the village, arrives one morning along the tramway a whole train of waggons, and on the waggons some fifty or sixty strong men. Again the fires were lighted in the cold engines, and again the bricklayers began to crawl over the clear-cut stone piers and brickwork, which had been left very much like a well cut-up cake. Now chains began to clank, and the strong men to go down into the damp-looking cylinders with lanterns. In short the great Cumberley Viaduct was being constructed by the great firm; and here was Burgess and Younghusband rehabilitated, with their horses and waggons, and windlasses, and engines, and navvies. But, alas! Burgess, the self-reliant, self-made man,

who had raised himself from a depth (morally) as far down as one of his own cylinders, had after a struggle, given way to the mortification, and had been struck down by an all but mortal illness. There had been a cruel combination against him both of enemies and events; but he had shown triumphantly that he could pay his five-and-twenty shillings in the pound.

This event had some significance for Polly, and it was with a profound agitation that she heard the news. But there was a new young engineer, Mr. Pender; who also, like his predecessor, stayed at the Speed the Plough, talked with the landlady, and asked questions about the pretty girl he saw smiling "in the parson's." For this gentleman was of a different pattern from Harry Burgess—had not that reverence with which every gentlemanly mind speaks of absent ladies—and had rather the flippant pertness with which "the commercial travelling" mind views such matters. Harry Burgess—

if Mrs. Holden could have recollected—had asked about "that nice-looking young lady in the window." His successor put a question about "a clipping tip-topper of a gal." Most likely Mrs. Holden thought this last form the most expressive.

She gave him, as usual, a good "ben" of the parish gossip.

"Her father—Churchill—is to be married—I know it—to the widow up at the Godfreys. It is as good as settled—if not already—for I have it all from Mrs. Hitchcock, their housekeeper, who has her eyes on the business, and must know, if any one did. And I can tell *you*, Mr. Pender, Miss Polly ain't pleased—as how could she be, poor thing, having a woman of that sort hoist in on top of her? And so she sits at home there with the children, and never goes next or nigh the place. And Miss Godfrey comes down to see *her* when she has occasion."

This was an ingenious yet not at all un-

natural explanation of Polly's seclusion. At least one that the parish was quite entitled to give in default of more official information. We need hardly say that Polly, though she could not misunderstand the Squire's nudges and nods, had never dreamed of such a thing as being even conceivable *in rerum natura*. As well pillage a shrine, drag down the statue of her gracious Sovereign standing in the market-place of the next town, as offer such an insult to the memory of the departed saint. That last dreadful scene, when she took leave and passed gently to heaven, as our Polly most fervently believed, was ever present to her. Her friend, who knew what she felt, could not bring herself to hint at what she knew was coming on fast.

Mrs. Surtees' cousin—the Archdeacon Malone's "lady"—had been "inspired" to write over fuller and more highly-coloured details. His bishop was a most "charming man"—Bishop Boulger, with whom the

archdeacon could do anything. Need we say that "Dod" had again to give up information about this prelate and his writings? Our clergyman was not in the least daunted by the blank silence unaccountably preserved by the Rev. Mr. Burgess' bishop in reference to a most complimentary letter, which also alluded to a "commission" in which "his lordship had sat many years before. Bishop Boulger had stood up manfully when plain Doctor Boulger, rector of Tinvalley, to the Rev. Mr. Murphy, P.P., in that 'immortal' discussion, which lasted five days, at the Rotunda." This was glad news for Mr. Churchill, and he acted accordingly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DISCOVERY.

BUT now a momentous day had come round for our Polly. The day for the mail from India had passed by, but no letter had come for her. She wondered; but was sure that another day would bring her tidings. Cumberley was not considered very highly in the postal arrangements, a very tiny and collapsed bag being tossed out contemptuously as the mail went by.

But on the next morning—a bright one, and full of augury—came letters, but all for Mr. Churchill. He read one with sparkling eyes.

"Ah! ah!" he said to her, "trust me for managing a thing."

It concerned the missing Bishop Tongue, the bishop of the commission, and was from the young Rev. Mr. Burgess, Harry's brother.

"The bishop mentioned the other day your name before me, and wondered who you were. I was fortunately enabled to tell him, having heard my brother mention your name. Many thanks for your kind mention of him and me in your letter; and as the bishop will shortly put me in a position of which I fear I am rather unworthy, if my little services can then be of use, I hope you will not scruple to ask for them."

"There!" said Mr. Churchill, emphatically, "what did I tell you?"

Simply nothing, he having never made any statement in reference to the matter, and Polly never having ventured to contradict it.

"You will be glad to hear that Harry has been doing wonderfully well, and is in a high position out there—"

"Out where?" said Mr. Churchill, with reasonable impatience.

"We expect him over by this mail, as he is wanted to manage things during my father's illness."

"There's news for you!" said the rev. gentleman, gaily. "Nothing but bright prospects opening on all sides; the difficulty is what to choose. As for that Irish fellow, Malone, *he* may stand by. I am very glad of all this, and for your sake, too, Polly. Between ourselves, we treated poor Burgess badly enough; but we are all creatures of circumstances, all of us. (This was as much as to say "even I.") But now, you see, it is quite a different thing."

Polly turned a little pale.

"How, dearest?" she said.

The little cloud between them had passed off, and she was beginning to believe in this parental Mokanna again.

"How? every how. Why, hasn't this

fellow Grainger behaved infamously—like no gentleman? Hasn't he broken his engagements? But no matter, no; don't talk to me. I have to write now—ever so much."

In great alarm Polly went up to him.

"Oh, no, no, papa! At least, we must wait for the day. Indeed you must!" she added with vehemence.

Her father looked at her, and then turned to his desk without answering—a common habit of his. He wrote many letters that morning; then set out, as he told her, to pay a visit at the Godfreys.

It was a fine summer's day, fresh and balmy. Never did Cumberley look so rich in its green. Polly loved the place, and would have been content to live and die there. She found an indemnification in its pleasant air and landscape for her polite slavery.

She had a weary morning, for the children were specially troublesome, and with the uncertainty and restlessness of her mind,

and the bright sun outside—always a persistent invitation to go forth—she did not apply herself very resolutely to her tasks. When she had at last done she sat down in her father's study, and looked out pensively at the green branches swaying gently outside in the softest of sunny breezes. And then she held a little council over her little troubles.

Suddenly she heard the wooden gate clap to. She started, and rose hastily, for her father would resent this invasion of his study even in his absence. But before she could leave there was a figure standing in the doorway—Harry Burgess! Surprise, pleasure—even joy filled her heart, and forced a cry of "Dear Harry!" from her. He was altered—graver, more manly, and with that composed air of service which gives a man a sort of dignity. His face was well bronzed. She was really overjoyed; yet a little awed at his grave manner.

"And where have you been, dear Harry?"

she said; "and why did you not write, or at least tell us? We could not find out what had become of you."

"What did it matter?" he said. "I have been in India, on railroads and other business."

"What! Where *he* was? And you saw him?—Well?"

"Don't be alarmed," he said, hastily, "he is safe. He passed through that danger with his life, but barely with his life."

"Yes?" said Polly, in much agitation.

"Yes," he went on slowly. "He received dreadful wounds, which have disfigured him sorely; but though his state was dangerous, he could not stay over there. I was fortunate enough to be near him, and was of use, I believe. I came down with him, as he *would* be moved, and went on board ship with him."

"What!" said Polly, starting. "He has left then?"

"Yes," said he, hastily. "He has arrived

—he is in England. He is not ten miles away. And now I have come over to tell you this, that if you would come and see him you might do him more good than any doctor. That was his message."

Polly looked round, as if to seize her bonnet.

"We shall have to wait some time," he said. "The train does not go by for more than an hour."

"Then I can run and see papa," said Polly, in a flutter. "He is only up at the Godfreys. Of course we must go. Oh, Harry! I pity him so. I did not know him until lately, when he told me his history; and it was a very piteous one indeed. But he is ill; I am sure he is in danger."

"Well," said Burgess, in the same grave tone, "it would be idle to conceal from you that it is serious. He has been desperately wounded—in the head and face, cruelly; and, indeed, it is wonderful how he has made the battle he *has* done.

But, as he said, he was *determined* to get home."

They were now walking along the road to the Hall.

"And you?" said Polly, looking at him. "How like you this is! How generous! How noble! And after the way we behaved to you."

"No, no!" he said, hastily; "that is all past and gone. A dream, and a dream of *mine:* such a foolish one! I fancied I was secure; but I always teach myself to consider that a whole lifetime has passed between that time and the present: that I have begun again, in fact. It is wonderful how you can succeed in driving back your thoughts, if you have but some absorbing and gigantic business on hand. It was a little cruel at first, and the other blow coming at the same time; but I fought *both* off. Time and occupation do a great deal. As for Grainger, that was but common charity."

With that he told the whole story of the battle, and of Grainger's bravery and prodigies of valour—how they had been beaten back, and he had led them on again and again. Then he gave her details of his illness, and even of his ravings and mutterings in his fever, and how her name had been on his lips, whether wandering or sensible.

"Generous of me," added Harry Burgess, smiling, "is it not, to tell all this? But there is no merit; for I like the man, and pity him so for his dreadful sufferings, and for what, perhaps, he will have to suffer yet—poor, poor fellow!"

There was a mystery in this which Polly had not courage to ask to be resolved. And indeed it was the delicacy of Harry, which merely hinted such things, and thus prepared her for something which he had not courage to tell.

They were now at the back gate of Godfrey Hall. "Wait here," said Polly, with secrecy. "I shall run in and find papa,

and bring him away. I shall not be long." Harry remained on that little retired spot, looking at the sky pensively; now gazing round at the charming country which he had not seen for so long, and which brought back to him a hundred associations.

Polly passed through the little gate, and was long seen fading out among the trees. That pretty figure turned, looked back to him with a gentle nod, and then disappeared.

This back entrance was close to the house, and a little path led winding to the garden where the greenhouse was—which was indeed almost a part of the drawing-room, being more solid than such things are—with a few statues scattered about.

Polly hurried along, tripped up the steps, and was entering the conservatory when she was stopped by the sound of voices and the irresistible spell which the sound of one's own name always has. Principle, delicacy, restraint, everything must give way before

this curious instinct, and the purest of us passing a door or open window must pause and listen. The motion is well nigh mechanical. In our Polly's instance it was surprise and indecision. She hardly knew whether to retreat or go on. What she heard was: "But, my dear sir, what would you do with your daughter Polly?" Then she heard—oh, what cruel stabs in every syllable for her!—her father's voice, fluent and contemptuous: "Oh that wont stand in my way. She must either do as I want, or provide for herself. There is an aunt that might take her. She positively is a drawback to my getting on. You know, my dear Mrs. Surtees, *selfishness* in a girl is a thing," &c.

Some one was plunging a dagger into her.

Polly could have sank down at these dreadful words, every one of which went through her young heart. She fell back against the door, and though there was not a couple of feet between her and her father,

it seemed at that moment as if some cruel magician had removed her a whole life away from him—nay, had taken the scales from her eyes, dispelled that cloud of soft love in which he had moved, and shown him now a mere parson, white-tied, hard of face, cold—one of those who might pass her by in the street. Some ogre had laid his hand on her heart, and chilled it of a sudden. Down went the fanciful, the darling idol, which had been reverently placed on her chimney-piece so many years, and was shattered into a thousand fragments. No one could ever put the fragments together again. She was astounded at the change herself, and stood there leaning against the door scarcely able to move. The agony of that moment! She looked longingly after the dear image so long loved, as it faded away. She stole back, took a short turn round the garden, to recover herself, then entered the house by the front door. She waited in the drawing-room some time. No one came. Miss

Godfrey was out with the Squire. At last she heard a footstep and a tune hummed softly, and her father entered.

He started when he saw her.

"God bless me!" he said. "What on earth is it now?"

Had he seen the change in Polly's face? She felt a little shiver, then the cruel words came back upon her, "he would get rid of her," and hardened that soft face into firm lines. Yet she felt no anger—it was the intensity of disappointment. She told composedly what she had come for. "We must go to him at once. It is only proper, as he wishes it, and considering the relation we are in to him."

"Then indeed we shall do no such thing!" he answered, impatiently. "I have no notion of it, I can tell you. I have settled all that. He has got my letter by this time."

"What?" said Polly, drawing herself up. "Then, *what* has been written to him? I am entitled to know now!"

Her father started at this new tone.

"None of these tragedy airs and nonsense! It was I settled all this originally, and I unsettle it now. Have you no sense of your father's dignity? He's treated me infamously—cheated me. Get these follies out of your head, and leave the matter to me."

"Then I must go myself," said Polly, in the same calm tone. "That is all."

Mr. Churchill stared, and all but rubbed his eyes. He did not understand this.

"What's over you to-day?" he said, much in the same tone as a profaner person would have said "What the devil's up now?" "And who will you go with, pray?"

"With Henry Burgess. He will take me."

Her father started.

"Oh, where is he? Let me see him! I am so glad of this; I wanted to see him. Did he get my letter?"

"I am going to him now," said Polly, turning away.

Her father was so eager he followed her, and they both came out in the road where Harry was waiting.

"My dear fellow!" said the clergyman, wringing the hand which the other gave him very coldly, "why, this *is* a surprise! Why didn't you come up? I had a letter from your nice brother this morning. I have it here somewhere. Tell me all about him; I am dying to know. What's this about the bishop?" added the clergyman, his face taking an anxious and peering look.

"Another time, sir," said the young man, gravely. "This is a pressing matter, and cannot wait."

"Oh, as for that, I have changed my mind! It would be very improper to have a young girl going about the country; and I can't let her go."

"Father, I must!" said Polly.

"But you surely cannot mean to break off with Grainger? In his present state it would kill him!"

"My dear fellow, you don't understand. That was a mere little misunderstanding. I was very sorry after you went away, but I was undecided at the time; and—and we'll talk the thing over to-day, if you stay to dinner."

"We have only twenty minutes to get to the train," he said, turning away. "I shall be happy to go with you, Miss Polly, if you have no one else——"

They both turned away, and the clergyman was left there bewildered.

CHAPTER XIX.

MAJOR GRAINGER.

IN quiet lodgings in Irnston the unhappy major was lying. He had asked very impatiently all the day, "Had they come?" and "What o'clock was it?" At last, about three o'clock, his servant came softly into his room, and whispered that "Here they were." Then Harry Burgess entered, and behind him, with a soft step, like an angel of light, our Polly. Thin and trembling fingers were held out to her. She came up close, and caught them in both hers.

"Oh, you have come to me," he said, "and I see you at last! How I have dreamed—thought of you night and day all these weary

months! But now you are here!—I see what you are looking at. You see what they have made of me?"

This was what Burgess had prepared her for. One side of his face and head was all covered up in black silk cloths. A dreadful fighting wound from an Indian sabre, had passed down his head and face; but Polly was not thinking of that.

"You will get well again," she whispered. "We will get you well again. You will be quite restored, now that you are away from that dreadful place. Your friends—we, will take care of you."

He was very restless. Burgess had gone away to the window.

"You read all that," he said, "what I wrote you the night before? It was a long story; but I was right, you see. Ah! I knew there was something coming!"

"I did, indeed; and have read it often since. I have it here," said Polly, touching her chest.

He smiled; a light of an overflowing affection beamed in his eyes.

"And why—why did your father write me that letter? He was right, of course; but still he might have left it to me."

"I knew nothing of it, indeed," said Polly, vehemently; "nothing in the world. It was never told to me."

"Never?" he said, eagerly. "I thought not; I was sure of it; you would not have put it so roughly. Why should he suppose I was so cruel and unreasonable? No, you are too good and too angelic. But why should he think me a savage, though? But he knew me when I looked and acted like one. Dearest Polly (if I may call you so), you understand me, at least, and did not give me credit for so unkind a thought."

"But," said Polly, hesitating, and bending over him, "do you mean, that this accident was to make any difference in—in—what I felt to you? If so——"

He half raised himself on his elbow; a

strange look of grief and suspense came into his maimed face; he pointed to the black silk bands, and shook his head.

"There can be but one answer," he said.

"Yes, one answer," said Polly, with a devotion that made him seem to her like a saint—"one answer: that you are the same to me that you were before,—that I should be ashamed of the name of woman if I thought that a change like that made any difference; and that it will be my duty, love, and pride to be always to you the same as I was,—to attend on you in your distress, and carry out what I had so solemnly undertaken!"

A little shy at the excited tone in which she had made this declaration, Polly added, "Now we must not let you talk or excite yourself. But I have said this, merely to put your mind at rest."

Grainger was speechless for a moment; then sank back on his pillows, with a look of

ineffable pleasure and delight. Then he shook his head sadly.

"Speak to the doctor," he said, softly; "he will tell you. I only said that to try you. It will be only for a short time, dearest."

He could not speak for a long time; this excitement, though it soothed, exhausted him. He lay there, with her hand in his, and her gentle face before him. The lights were brought in, and she sat on; but her hour was drawing on, and it was time for her to go. Her father was to have dined at the Squire's; but she found him when she returned late, sitting there impatient. She still felt the chill she had got at the greenhouse door when she saw him. He burst out at once,

"So this is the new line, is it, flying in the face of your father? But it is only what I might expect—ingratitude—*selfishness* right and left."

I know," said Polly, in a trembling voice. "I heard you say that to-day in the green-

house, you would turn me out. Oh," added Polly, bursting into passionate tears, "how could you!—knowing all you did, that my heart was bound up in you, and that I would have died and sacrificed myself in any way for you—God knows I would—and make nothing of what I have done and borne all these years back! But what kept me up was the feeling that I was doing all this for a dear father, who bore with me and loved me! But now, father, I have another life before me. My duty you shall have as before, so far as consistent with other duties."

The astonishment, shame, and humiliation in Mr. Churchill's face was indescribable; he could only think of old commonplaces, and say,

"Well, and why were you listening? I didn't mean that, of course. But I am right; you do nothing for me. I meet nothing but this selfishness on every side. No one thinks of me, though I work—work from

morning till night. Every one wants to follow their own way and their own inclination. What do they care if I work myself into the grave?"

Only that morning, even these threadbare platitudes would penetrate Polly with compunction and compassion. Now, her eyes, cruelly penetrating, unnaturally keen, as one who had been up all night, saw what theatrical shreds and patches they were. Not but that she would not have given the world to have had back her old faith. And an even stranger effect was produced on her father; to whom she also appeared another person, with a little of his own hardness present, filling him even with a sort of awe and restraint in her presence. She was "wrung" and "heartsore," as the people about often said of themselves. She then proceeded to tell him calmly, and with an air of resolution he strove hard to fight against, the course she meant to take. Whatever she might have been persuaded

into before, it was now impossible to go back. "Common honour, decency, and humanity, oblige me not to desert him now, no matter what the consequences."

"Yes, of course; no matter what the consequences to me, now at the end of my days—worked to death—turned on by my ungrateful daughter. And what's to become of me, after all my labour and trouble? There's Burgess now come back, when I had prepared everything, and reckoned on him and his brother. It's shameful; it's disgraceful, and selfish, and undutiful. And you'll be made to repent your behaviour to the father whom God has set over you; and who has worked for you all your life. Never mind; it 'ill come in good time. And you'll be punished, never fear."

So for a long time after Polly had gone to her room he continued to denounce her.

Only the day before he would have found some comfort in this arrangement—have

begun a letter to the sick major, and found out some scheme; but this opposition quite upset him. He was filled with a sudden bitterness and venom to his child. He schemed and schemed, as he walked up and down, all sorts of plans of vengeance to descend on her head.

It was a night long recollected by father and daughter. Long after, when years had passed by—when of a soft evening she was lifting up the heavy tapestries of memory, and with her eyes shaded, as it were, looking out into the dim country beyond, she would turn away from this unpleasant night with a sort of shiver.

CHAPTER XX.

A SWEET NURSE.

AFTER that fatal night Polly went regularly to follow up the new duties she had undertaken. With all his "firmness of character," "worldly vigour of mind," and the rest, Mr. Churchill was a poor weak creature enough. A little show of resolution, and he "went down,"—grumbling, perhaps, but still went down. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Polly, in her new, calm, cold tones, announced that they must go over to Irnstone and stay there for a short time, until *he* should be at least out of danger, and take lodgings near him, that what she proposed was done, after a faint protest, mutterings, grumblings, &c. She

was indeed a little astonished at this almost ready compliance, and did not know that a rumour had come down to Cumberley that the newly-appointed bishop, the Rev. Samuel Buller, D.D., would live a good deal at Irnston while the palace at Dunmore (they were charging the heirs of the late bishop with dilapidation) was being renovated. On the whole he found his stay in Irnston very agreeable, and he carried out the fiction of "a fresh field of labour," as though he had been appointed to a new and more expanded charge. It was a very agreeable change. Heaven knows how our Polly made out the sums necessary for this change, but contrive it she did. Faith will move mountains, and a firm will and earnestness will coin money. There were a few trinkets which she never wore after—but this is speculation.

But who shall describe the comfort, the light that visited the eyes of the wounded soldier as that gentle face every day appeared at the door, and was bent over him

—as that gentler voice whispers to him, talks to him, and a soft hand arranges the black silk bandages. Doctors come and go—and go through their conventional histrionics. They are secretly surprised at his doing so well, which they set down to their own private skill. He does make an astonishing rally, but it is a doubtful battle. Often he talks with her, sitting in his arm-chair, his eyes half-closed. And one night he told her of the dreadful Indian battle where he had suffered so: and then passed to what the young engineer had done for him—his kindness and tenderness.

"I did not know at that time—I mean when I was here—about that; at least I did not care. Now I begin to see all the sacrifice that you would have made. But happily it is not too late. There is no harm done yet," he added, smiling sadly; "and if I have only the pleasure of seeing your face near me just for a short time longer—for it can't be more——"

"Hush!" said Polly, taking his hand. "I wont listen to you talking in that way. This poor face of mine is not such a wonderful talisman. We will have you quite well. The doctors give great hopes, and, I don't know—will it comfort you or make you happier my telling you this?" added Polly, with a great sweetness of nature and earnestness, which took away all air of mortal vanity from the speech—"but I do look forward to the days when you shall be quite well, and we shall be very happy together; and I shall be able to show you how I admire, love, and esteem your generosity and virtues. As for Harry Burgess," she went on in the same earnest tone, "you know, as well as I, what had passed between me and him. It gave us a great deal of pain at the time, when my father wished me to make the sacrifice, for it was one. But I seem to have lived years since then, and we cannot be always selfish and following out our

own wishes; and I say again, if it is any comfort to you to know it, I feel convinced I shall be very happy and contented with you one day."

There was no parade or show of heroism in this speech. It was only a fresh instance of that sweet amiability which was so characteristic of our Polly, and who saw with some trouble that the sick man was uneasy and restless about what he knew must be her real feeling. And indeed her little life had been such a series of sacrifices, of the throwing of every pet inclination under the cruel wheels of duty, that it came more or less easy to her, if not as a matter of course. She spoke as she felt; and had things been ordered so, would have lived contented and even happily in the new sphere.

L'ENVOI.

THE rest will not take so long in telling. Indeed, this little chronicle of Cumberley has been meant for no story, and does not rise to the dignity of story. We have been looking merely at these two characters, father and daughter, with the background of a village. Yet there is an interest in such topics and such a study. Some of us in reality stop at a little town or even at some real little Cumberley, and we see or pass by pretty often, a figure or two, and come home and ask Mrs. Holden, the landlady, for information. That lady gives it with her accustomed loquacity. Each day brings more touches to the picture, and in the end it

is impossible not to be interested. So it may be with this sketch of Polly and her father.

Again, does a real life story always wind up trimly and nicely, at a conventional term?—is everything adjusted within a space corresponding to three or two volumes? Rather, is there not a perverse tendency to obstruction—a kind of hindrance to all arrangement?—and do not matters more frequently drag on in an unsettled, unsatisfactory way for many, many years? Some one will not die, some one will live. So it might have been with Polly, who was prepared to accept whatever lot heaven sent her, and make the most and best of it.

But in course of time—in about two years—the unhappy officer died; which, as friends remarked, using the old useful and conventional phrase, "was a happy release." His sufferings were indeed cruel, from that dreadful wound; but Polly did her duty by him to the end, smoothing

his pillow, and comforting him in every way. And as his sight faded, his last glimpse of earth was a gentle face, and a white-robed angel beside him.

Four or five years later we have a view of Cumberley, with its green as rich as ever, and its grand Viaduct—which people are taken to see—finished. Alas! that there should be the same Vicar of Cumberley—a cold, busy, bilious, and distempered man; who sits in his study all day writing letters; now grown to be the very plague of bishops and deans; and who gives out in the village, to any one who will listen to him, that "he has been ungratefully treated by his daughter!"

Only conceive that!—the daughter the gentle Polly, with whom he stays six months in the year, and might stay twelve. "They will do nothing for me, sir," he complains, "and they have a fine fortune —I who have done so much for her!"

They had striven and were always striving —Polly and her husband, Harry Burgess. But what could they do? The bishops declined him *en masse*. His marriage with the widow he had broken off himself, on what he fancied was another gorgeous break in the clouds of preferment.

Polly would have had him with her always; indeed, has much compunction about the thought of that marriage, which we may doubt she would have ever entered on had he not even urged her to it; but she stipulated, in her settlements almost, for that six months;—is always sending him "things," and wearies her gentle head with little ambuscades which she plans for their unwary bishop to drop into. She may succeed one of these days: for such affection must move mountains, and even win over bishops.

THE END.