

notice: and that the chalices had not been melted down into communion cups according to the orders issued, and so on. And that at West Grinstead, moreover, the Blessed Sacrament was there still—praise God—yes, and was going to remain there. He spoke freely before Isabel, and yet he remembered his courtesy too, and did not abuse the new-fangled religion, as he thought it, in her presence; or seek in any way to trouble her mind. If ever in an excess of anger he was carried away in his talk, his wife would always check him gently; and he would always respond and apologise to Isabel if he had transgressed good manners. In fact, he was just a fiery old man who could not change his religion even at the bidding of his monarch, and could not understand how what was right twenty years ago was wrong now.

Isabel herself listened with patience and tenderness, and awe too; because she loved and honoured this old man in spite of the darkness in which he still walked. He also told them in lower tones of a rumour that was persistent at Chichester that the Duke of Norfolk had been imprisoned by the Queen's orders, and was to be charged with treason; and that he was at present at Burnham, in Mr. Wentworth's house, under the guard of Sir Henry Neville. If this was true, as indeed it turned out to be later, it was another blow to the Catholic cause in England; but Sir Nicholas was of a sanguine mind, and pooh-poohed the whole affair even while he related it.

And so the evening passed in talk. When Sir Nicholas had finished supper, they all went upstairs to my lady's withdrawing-room on the first floor. This was always a strange and beautiful room to Isabel. It was panelled like the room below, but was more delicately furnished, and a tall harp stood near the window to which my lady sang sometimes in a sweet tremulous old voice, while Sir Nicholas nodded at the fire. Isabel, too, had had some lessons here from the old lady; but even this mild vanity troubled her Puritan conscience a little sometimes. Then the room, too, had curious and attractive things in it. A high niche in the oak over the fireplace held a slender image of Mary and her Holy Child, and from the Child's fingers