

it "Yes, madam, a conventicle, in which is also perpetrated the further enormity of female preaching. I was also informed that in this conventicle the most pointed allusions are made to the clergy; that it is spoken of as a great marvel that any good gift or grace should be given to the bishops or curates; and that last Sunday evening it was actually stated, in the most offensive manner, that it would be a good thing indeed if the priests showed forth God's glory, either by their preaching or by their living. Madam," concluded the vicar, having, I suppose, exhausted his ammunition, and relapsing into his usual nervous and courteous manner,—“madam, a clergyman, a stranger, does not know what to believe. I would have preferred seeing Captain Trevlyan; but since your servant told me he was out, I did not like to wait.”

“Sir,” said mother, who by this time had resumed her seat and her composure, “you have acted with true courtesy and frankness. On the winter Sunday evenings we have been in the habit of collecting our two servants, with a few of our ailing and aged neighbours, to read the Church service to them and some passages from the Homilies.”

“The Church service and the Homilies? A very primitive and praiseworthy custom, madam!” said the vicar, evidently greatly relieved, “and only a few aged people, within the legal number, no doubt; not more than thirty-nine?”

“I never counted, sir,” said mother.

“No doubt, my dear madam, no doubt; but you would in future be particular on that score. The times are perilous, madam, and these Methodists seem to have penetrated even here. No doubt my informant was mistaken.”

“Perhaps, mother,” I ventured to suggest, “the vicar’s informant was a Dissenter. You always read the prayer, ‘O God, who alone workest great marvels, send down on all bishops and curates,’—and last Sunday father read the Litany,—and you remember ‘both by their preaching and living.’”

“Exactly,” said the vicar, seizing at the escape, “the young lady’s suggestion shows great acuteness. And my informant may himself be a dangerous person, a nonconformist, perhaps even himself a Methodist.”