

bearing the surname or the christian-name of Marcus, who had been caught cheating at cards, and whose reputation had exploded like a shell. A certain Lady Cicely Morland was frequently mentioned also, with a blame that was akin to pity, as having once again been her own worst enemy, by what seemed her besetting weakness—a public lapse from sobriety; whilst another lady, with whose name Seaton himself was familiar, she being now on her trial for maltreating one of her children, was much in request as a victim of indignant conversational justice. Opposite to Seaton was a dignitary with a starched face, whose garb proclaimed him a bishop. He alone, with a soft-voiced lady next him, seemed lost to the world in the privacy of some superior intercourse; and he trifled meanwhile with a curious antique spoon, which he eyed superciliously as though it were a Roman doctrine.

Seaton at last, however, began to feel somewhat happier, when Mrs. Vernon, freeing herself from his rival, turned to him with an air of intimacy; and having soon ascertained that all the guests were strangers to him, she discreetly lowered her voice and set herself to give him an account of them. One was Lord Restormel, an ex-Viceroy of India. Another was Mr. Brompton, once a Roman Catholic priest, who had married a wife and invented a new religion. There was also a girl—a certain Miss Agatha Hagley—with frank protruding eyes and something like a splutter in her utterance. “And that,” Mrs. Vernon continued, “is the Bishop of Glastonbury facing you. The lady,” she said in a whisper, “who has been talking to him about sermons and services is the wife of Captain Jeffries, my neighbour. She’s the largest-hearted woman in the world. She never says ‘No’ to man, and she never abuses a woman; and the odd thing is that the saintliest clergy adore her as much as secular sinners, though we hope in a different way. The man with the sparkling eyes and eager gesticulating hands is Mr. Hancock, the editor of ‘The Dictionary of Contemporary Life.’ There’s no one he doesn’t know, and there’s nothing he won’t talk about. The white-haired lady by Mr. Glanville is