

Hilda Fairhope walked as rapidly as her pride would permit. She was not exactly frightened, but she was bewildered and angry. She had never been thus molested before. From early childhood she had walked alone about her father's parish as though the whole place belonged to her. Every man, woman, and child—and certainly the majority of the cats and dogs—knew and loved her. And now to have been treated with such rudeness in the midst of her own domain! The thing was intolerable and scarcely credible. So Miss Hilda walked towards the gate at the lower end of the field quickly but proudly, and as she went she laughed to herself to think how promptly the tramps would be dealt with and her own dignity vindicated should anything in the shape of a man—ay, were it only the most boorish plough-boy—chance to happen on the scene.

But while Miss Fairhope is consoling herself with visions of a well-timed and more or less chivalric interposition, let us fix her for the reader amid her people and normal surroundings.

The parish of High Pixley, of which the Rev. George Fairhope had now been rector for some dozen years, was situated in that upland part of Kent which presents so strong a contrast in all its characteristic features to the district known as the Weald. Here is no "garden of England," but rather a rolling expanse of pasture-land, diversified by patches of tillage and "shaves" of underwood, extending in waving lines along the hillsides, or filling some miniature valley or "bottom" with foliage. The soil is for the most part poor, and its shallowness is revealed by the white streaks of