

CHAPTER XXIII.

Pluralities—Clergy Reserves—Another New Church—A Ferry—A Perilous Adventure—Another Grace Darling—Humane Society—An Interesting Scene.

DURING the last half-century a great deal of violent discussion has arisen in England on the subject of clergymen holding more livings than one. This system was at one time carried to such an extravagant excess as to induce the British legislature to take the subject into its consideration as a grave question of national importance. It was time indeed that it did so, as it had become so palpable and obvious an evil as to give rise to the most bitter feelings of animosity against the Church, and was the war-cry of many of her most insidious enemies. In admitting, however, the necessity of legislative interference for the correction of this evil, we do not concede to our opponents the point they have always so strenuously contended for, namely, that this evil existed, and this interference became necessary, in consequence of an inherent and constitutional defect in our glorious Establishment. On the contrary, I maintain that the evil originated in the zealous and unwearied labours and exertions of the clergy during a very long period, when such labours were totally and absolutely unrequited, and during another of perhaps equal or longer duration, when they were but very partially remunerated. When, however, such a change occurred in the whole circumstances and economy of the country as to increase the value of these livings more than fivefold, and some such instances have occurred within my own recollection, then was the outcry raised against pluralities, and the ill-paid and starved incumbents of the same parishes half a century before were forgotten.

I have been led into these remarks from the circumstance of my being to all intents and purposes a pluralist myself: but unfortunately for me, my incumbency falls within the category I have first adverted to, namely, the period during which clerical