

CHAPTER VIII.—POPULARITY OF ILLNESS.

HE did get through them, feeling as if every eye were upon him, every tongue ready to talk about him. He forced himself to refrain from looking towards the dim corner; he hoped that to-day she would not be there; that he might be spared only this once. And yet, when his self-restraint gave away, and he did look, a sharp pang of disappointment came over him to see that she was really absent. He could not keep his thoughts fixed on that sermon; they wandered off into interminable conjectures and forebodings. Why was not she there? What was happening at the Red Grange? What would she have to suffer; and above all, why was he debarred from knowing her trouble and helping her to bear it?

The service was over at last, and the congregation swam into a confused mass before his eyes, as they left the church. He was dizzy and faint; he caught the handrail to save himself from falling; and a terrible fancy that he was not himself, that his ideas were growing confused, and he would be no longer master of his words or actions, took hold of him.

He fought against it bravely till the evening; he got through the second service with no very distinct recollection of anything except his own desperate efforts to maintain his composure; to look like other people, to walk and speak steadily—something like the efforts of a drunken man, which result in a superhuman gravity.

That evening, the rich churchwarden had a hard struggle with himself, which ended in his taking his hat and walking off resolutely towards the curate's lodgings. He was not on good terms with Ralph any more than were the rest of his parishioners; but he couldn't see him look like that, and ask no questions.

"We have all been against him," thought the warden, "every one. And it's uphill work for a spirited young fellow. I shan't let him kill himself, anyhow."

But Ralph alone in his prison, heard the good-natured warden's voice, and all his terror started up afresh at the idea of having to speak to a stranger. He could see no one; he was ill, tired, and worn out. He meant to get some one to take the duty for him for a few Sundays, and go away; he wanted change.

"The very best thing he could do," said Mr. Smith, "rather cold yet for going out, but rest and change would effect wonders."

Rest! What mockery to use the word! What rest could there be for Ralph in his unceasing struggle after the right, that he might do it at any cost?

Did Hester care for him? Had his false mask of friendliness imposed upon her? It was impossible.

He looked upon his whole career as a failure. The parish had lain before him like a chess-board, whose pieces he was to move at will. In every way he had failed, and now he was incapable of work; incapable of reasoning or seeing clearly. He must go away and try what time and rest, or at any rate freedom from work would do for him. A few days more and the room in Laura Place was vacant.

(TO BE CONCLUDED).

THE BISHOP'S VETO.

There is in the minds of some persons a vague idea that what is called the "veto power" in the hands of the Bishop sitting in the Diocesan Synod will probably be exercised in such a way as to interfere with free discussion and liberty of action on the part of the clergy and laity. And, unfortunately, this erroneous impression has been encouraged, and it is to be feared deepened, by what has elsewhere been said and written upon the subject. With a view of putting before the members of the Church in