

would be so nice if you and the Colonel and a few more of our friends would come and meet him."

"But, my dear Mrs. Prendergast! that's the very thing Mrs. Stinchcombe was speaking about. She tells me Bishop Browne is going to stay with her."

"Oh well, but really you know, Mrs. Rintoul, Mr. Wilkinson made a point of specially asking me to entertain his Lordship. I suppose Mrs. Stinchcombe fancies because she has lived here all her days that she is the principal person in the place, in fact, the *rankest* lady in Verneuse, as her domestic said to my cook Azile, Ha Ha! Of course you have noticed her ridiculous habit of alluding to her lamented husband as "the squire." If any one may be said to hold that position here, it is Mr. Prendergast of course, for although we only spend the summers in Verneuse the seigniorly originally belonged to his family. No, depend on it, Mrs. Stinchcombe has simply assumed that of course the Bishop is to go to her, whereas, by previous arrangement I am to have him."

"You don't think Mr. Wilkinson could have made a mistake in any way? He is slightly forgetful you know."

"Oh dear no! There is no mistake about it. His errand this morning was specially to settle about it."

After a little, Mrs. Prendergast departed leaving Mrs. Rintoul in a state of delightful uncertainty as to what to do, or how to act.

The Bishop's visit was a great affair in Verneuse. Verneuse was not a popular summer resort, though half a dozen families went there regularly year after year and their doings and sayings were carefully preserved like the citron-melons and rhubarb with sugar, lemon, ginger, and water to suit taste, and to afford a palatable variation to the flatness and staleness of the winter supply. If all the treasured scraps of conversation brought forward by the various denizens of Verneuse, as having been held with his Lordship at these seasons, had been pieced together, he must have multiplied words at a rate not exceeded by the latest improved typewriter. And this was all the stranger seeing that the dignitary in question depended on the scarcity of his favours for their value, as on the paucity of his speech for its weight. Otherwise his modesty feared the effect of no stronger impression than that made by any lesser black-coat.

His apprehensions were baseless however.

Being their closest approach to a title, the country folks, gentle and simple, were not apt to lose sight of the distinction, though some might feel slightly foggy as to the correct style and usage in addressing him. A vast amount of meek brag originated with his Lordship for a text.

Even Mrs. Murphy, the Rectory charwoman was wont to browbeat the lesser ladies of her clientèle by the boast that "Deed an many's the time I scrubbed the flure of His Bishop, Lord Browne's room."

So it was that the Bishop's visit, with the elections and the summer guests, perennially held the position of epochs in Verneuse and occasioned more mind-aching than would a big failure, a fire, or the latest elopement in town.

Every one knew when Mrs. Stinchcombe stickled for the finest pair of Louis Desjardin's spring ducks and sent his two youngest boys on a hunt for cress. Every one was aware that she had ordered a new chest of tea from town; also that she had insisted on old Madame Ladurantaye making 6 lbs. of butter from June cream only when the month was barely a week old. At that relaxed hour of evening when Leduc's general store and Post Office was full of loungers and gossip-mongers, Mrs. Stinchcombe's maids Philomène and Delphine rejoiced to watch the sparkle of cupidity in the eyes of the raftsmen and farmer lads, and the flash of jealousy in those of Mrs. Prendergast's girls whilst they detailed the sets of old silver and glass that had been rubbed up in the past week, easily confident that neither the valour of the men nor the resources of the maids were equal to the attainment of such grandeur. They liked to dilate on the wonderful texture of the ancient damask table linen with its pattern of a hunt in full cry, which had been carefully drawn from its blue paper wrappings and laid at dewfall under a layer of apple-blossoms to restore its complexion. They impressed their audience with the conviction that few, very few, possessed goods and chattels deserving of such care and made Marie and Azilda "Prendergast" understand themselves to be minions of an upstart. Meanwhile these two damsels lacerated the soul of Leduc by enumerating the contents of various lists sent to the city grocer, confectioner, etc., articles as foreign to his imagination as to his shelves. And when they offered a